

SPIRITUAL LIGHT

*Instructions in the Faith
for
Spirit-filled Believers*

John David Clark, Sr.

Spiritual Light
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WHY ME AND WHY THIS BOOK

(original introduction - October, 1980)

Early in this century, when the Pentecostal experience was freeing the hearts and souls of so many in America, there was a small, scattered group of Pentecostal ministers who began to teach a doctrine they claimed had been revealed to them by God. They stirred many a mind with this teaching, but it never gained wide acceptance. Only a very few congregations, sprinkled among the Pentecostal community, held to this doctrine.

A very young and relatively well educated Pentecostal minister, George Clark (now approaching his 80th year), was recruited by his Overseer to visit these congregations and bring them back to the standard denominational line. This he assayed to do, and, in fact, he did persuade some of the ministers to refrain from teaching such things in regular services, at least until they "got more light on it."

Not long afterwards, "Preacher Clark", who is my father, became increasingly burdened for the denominational divisions which existed among Pentecostal people, and, determined that God could unite the body of Christ, he began to pray for the answer. He supposed that he would pray an hour or so, but his communion with God did not stop until weeks later.

From that time, miracles and healings became an integral part of my father's ministry, and, in addition, God began to teach him scriptural and spiritual truths for the sake of uniting His people. Much to his surprise, the truths which God began to open to my father were the very doctrines he had labored to convince those small, scattered congregations to renounce.

Forthwith, he returned to each congregation to tell them their pastors had been right and that he had been wrong. Having fulfilled that responsibility, he went directly to the Overseer, sat down with

him and the Bible, and showed him the truths he now understood. The Overseer could not argue with what was laid before him. He simply said, “Brother Clark, we cannot change 30,000 people [approximately the number of Church of God members at that time].” Then he added as he and my father embraced and wept, “Brother Clark, please don’t leave the church.”

My father didn’t leave. Later, however, his license was revoked and he was ousted from that denomination for “teaching doctrines contrary to the church.” But contrary to the church or not, the truth had to be taught to God’s people, and my father and others continued preaching and teaching wherever possible the doctrines no man taught them.

By the time I was born, the dust of those early events had settled; the participants were growing old and dying. The non-denominational prayer meetings my father led at Grandma’s house had been continuing fairly regularly for nearly 20 years. My father was 50. My mother was 26 years younger.

I knew of, but never knew any other religion than those home prayer meetings. There were no committees, building funds, or bazaars. There were no contentions for authoritative positions. There were no patterned forms of worship. The saints would gather on Sunday afternoon in Grandma’s living room and begin to pray or sing or testify to whatever God had done for them or through them that week. This is the faith I learned.

At age 22, just months before I entered the seminary, I could not have told you what a seminary was. (At times I still wonder.) Nevertheless, my only difficulty in being accepted to the seminary was the requirement of a recommendation by the “Board of Deacons” of my local church. There was no such thing down at Grandma’s. All of those sorts of ecclesiastic or ritualistic systems and ceremonies were foreign, strange, and a little suspicious to me. I was an alien to the Christian religious world as you know it.

I still am numbed by confusion when asked to what denomination I belong. I haven’t yet found an answer to that question which does not communicate hostility. When I say “independent”, my utter and willing dependence and reverence for Christ and my brothers and

sisters everywhere, is belied. Or when I say “none”, that communicates a rebellious, government-despising spirit. I never will forget the contemptuous eyes of one professor at seminary when he looked at the “none” on my transcript and demanded, “And just what is it that you have against the organized church? Don’t you believe in God?”

So, I really haven’t learned the gentlest response for questions concerning to which faith I belong, for that there exists but one faith in God’s kingdom is all I have ever been taught and experienced.

After seminary, I entered for a short time the Oral Roberts Graduate School of Theology. While there, I heard a professor express regret that there was no unifying theology in the Pentecostal-Charismatic community. Coming from every denomination and social level, spirit-baptized people hold to all kinds of ideas and creeds concerning salvation, Spirit-baptism, and other spiritual experiences and doctrine. He said that the Spirit-baptized people needed a uniting theology, and he was speaking the truth. My desire to write this book received that much more impetus from his words, because I knew the truth that he was saying God’s people needed! I knew then, as I know even more surely now, that the uniting truths which God’s people are looking for and needing are the simple truths I had known from childhood.

Shortly thereafter, I left Oklahoma and returned to the prayer meetings and fellowship of the saints who had taught me Christ. I wanted to record the divinely revealed truths I knew would help the children of God who were scattered everywhere. Burdened by the divisive doctrines and deadened forms I had seen among God’s people, I prayed for guidance in the presentation of the way. I prayed that I might be granted understanding and ability to communicate faithfully to God’s children the beauty and order and freedom I had always known of Christ, and to show my brothers and sisters of every denominational persuasion how they might be one in faith and practice as well as in spirit. And for the sake of His own dearly beloved people, God has enabled me to write these things.

This book is for the body of Christ and all who would be a part of it. The contents are not contrived. They are revealed and eternal.

They will heal broken fellowships in Christ's body. They will enlighten and encourage and embolden. They will set free. They will bring peace, give joy, and make room for the perfect love of God.

With my heart, I give thanks to God for my determined father, who would not compromise his heavenly light for earthly convenience. God will reward him the reproach he suffered for the name of Jesus. And to the saints who have supported him and other ministers with this healing message, this work belongs as much as to me. For without their prayers, patience, and exhortations I might have fallen to wolves long ago.

To every brother in every place, grace, love, and truth, and the fellowship of the Spirit, be your soul's world. And may the things you now read work God's will in your heart.

INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD PRINTING

(JANUARY, 2008)

Much has changed over the twenty-eight years since this, my first book, was produced in 1980. My father, "Preacher Clark", died on Passover morning in 1989, at the age of 88, and mother died in 1985, one day short of her 58th birthday. Except for Uncle Joe's widow, Aunt Myrtle, all the other old saints have passed on, too: Sister Dell, Sister Millie, Brother Frank, Uncle Joe, Aunt Leatha, Sister Manning, and the rest. In 1992, lightning struck the farmhouse Grandpa built, the house where the saints had met and prayed for many years. Aunt Leatha watched helplessly as her birthplace burned to the ground. She was the first child born in that house (in 1921) and the last person to live there.

As those old warriors of the faith were leaving to go to their eternal home, God was adding souls to comfort us, and another generation of saints is now being brought up to know the truth and to love it.

Jesus taught me the lessons you will read in this little book, and I am trusting him now to give you the discernment you will need in order to determine whether or not I am telling the truth.

My journey of faith began when I humbled myself to Christ in those little country prayer meetings so long ago, and that journey continues as I humble myself to Christ now to listen to the Spirit of truth and obey it. I cannot adequately express my gratitude for the faithful hearts who have encouraged me from the beginning to follow the sometimes astonishing voice of Jesus, no matter where that voice led me: my wife Barbara, whom God sent me as a gift I can never repay, Earl and Betty Pittman, my elders in the Lord and spiritual

children of my father as much as I, Glen Bartow, “*an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile*,” and Ellen Payne, my kinswoman within and without. I mention their names as a small token of my gratitude for the love of God they have shown me over these many years and through great trials. God alone can give them a fitting reward.

To the saints of God everywhere, but especially to the dear saints who gather at my house, I humbly offer this third edition of my first work. May God keep your hearts in His love until we meet in heaven, and may He richly bless you forever.

MY CREDENTIALS

The only credentials that exist in the kingdom of God are the credentials of the anointing of God. Earthly academic degrees and religious titles are utterly worthless for edifying the saints. In Matthew 16:17-18, Jesus told his disciples that only what is revealed by God would edify the household of faith. In other words, only what comes from the Father is safe for the children.

God loves His children with all His heart. That is the reason that we see, throughout the Bible, the death penalty imposed on men who taught God's children false doctrine. The four chapters in this book are ordained by God for you to read. They are the result of four revelations from Jesus to me as a young man. I did not devise these things or glean them from other men's teachings, and the truths presented in this book will stand the test of the Scriptures and of the Spirit.

I begin each chapter with a brief description of the moment Jesus spoke to me concerning the truth taught in that particular chapter. Those four experiences from God are my authority, and my only authority to write these things to His precious people. But that is enough.

MY CREDENTIALS FOR WRITING CHAPTER ONE: THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

In the summer of 1975, after I had completed my first year of Seminary, I happened to meet my father in a little hallway that ran between his living and dining rooms. He was 73 years old, a holiness preacher from the old school who, early in the 20th century, had been anointed with power to heal the sick. I don't remember how the subject of praying in Jesus' name came up, but he made a comment that left me puzzled. He said, "You'll see these modern Pentecostal preachers lay hands on people to be healed and say at the end of their prayer, 'In Jesus' name we pray', but nothing happens." Then he added, "Jesus said if we asked *anything* in his name, he would do it. That means somebody's got it wrong. Either Jesus told something wrong when he said he'd do whatever we ask in his name, or saying 'in Jesus' name' to the end of a prayer is not what Jesus was talking about."

As Paul once said, "My mind was unfruitful." I stood there with nothing to say.

My father didn't give me the answer. He calmly walked away as if the conversation was over and left me staring at the wall, wondering what it really means to pray "in Jesus' name".

My mind was so occupied with the issue my father brought up, I didn't even consider how very odd it was for him to bring up such an important issue and then walk away without helping me to resolve it. Only years later, replaying that sacred scene in my mind, did I realize how strange it might have appeared to a third party looking on. But by then, I understood what had really happened. The Spirit had my father to put that issue before me and then walk away because Jesus had determined, on that day, to

take over my education in the things of God. I feel certain that my father himself did not realize what the Spirit was using him for; but then, whenever someone is “walking in the Spirit”, he is constantly doing good things far beyond his own comprehension.

After my father left me standing there in the hallway without an answer, I determined to read every verse in the Bible that had the word “name” in it. Maybe by doing that, I could learn what asking “in Jesus’ name” meant. Having gathered the necessary materials, a notebook, a Strong’s Concordance, and my Bible, I entered into my task, beginning in Genesis.

Whenever I came to a verse with “name” in it, I would copy it, by hand and in full, into the notebook (computers were not yet available), sometimes including the verses before and after, so that I wouldn’t lose the overall sense. Many hours passed, as I carefully went through the fifty chapters of Genesis. I did not know that Jesus was waiting for me to arrive at the twentieth chapter of Exodus.

So I continued working my way through the long list of verses that had the word “name” in them, until my concordance led me to the instance of “name” found in Exodus 20:7. Suspecting nothing of what I was about to experience, but hopeful at every verse, I turned the pages of my Bible and read,

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain.

When I read that Scripture, suddenly, and for the first time in my life, the word of God came to me, and it brought a flood of inner light that I cannot describe. It was the Lord Jesus, and he gently spoke to me and said, “John, what in that verse has anything to do with speech?”

In response, I started to raise my hand to point to the word in Exodus 20:7 that had to do with speech, but, astounded, I realized for the first time ever that there wasn't one. Throughout my life, I had understood that commandment of God in Exodus 20:7 to be a prohibition against using foul language. Now, because Jesus had spoken, that vain tradition no longer made void the word of God. God's true meaning, understood now for the first time in my life, filled me with wonder. It was very much as if I had lived in the dark my whole life and someone had suddenly turned on all the lights in my house. I felt as if I needed to read the entire Bible again, this time from the right perspective, for what I saw was truly breathtaking.

And now, what the Lord Jesus graciously showed to me that day, long ago, I humbly pass on to you, with my love in Christ.

CHAPTER ONE

The Third Commandment

MARRIAGE

“Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD unto Jerusalem: Your birth and your nativity is of the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite. And as for your nativity, in the day you were born, your navel was not cut, neither were you washed in water to supple you. You were not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things unto you, to have compassion upon you; but you were cast out in the open field, to the loathing of your person, in the day that you were born. And when I passed by you, and saw you polluted in your own blood, I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live!

“I have caused you to multiply as the bud of the field, and you have increased and waxed great, and you are come to excellent ornaments. Your breasts are fashioned, and your hair is grown, whereas you were naked and bare. Now when I passed by you, and looked upon you, behold, your time was the time of love, and I spread my skirt over you, and covered your nakedness. Yea, I sware unto you and entered

into a covenant with you, says the Lord GOD, and you became mine.” (Ezekiel 16:1-8)

God was speaking through the prophet Ezekiel to His wife, Israel. He was recalling the time, nearly eight centuries earlier,¹ when He rescued His beloved out of Egyptian slavery and led her to a desolate mountainous region of the Sinai peninsula, where He entered into a covenant of marriage with His beloved Israel. It was an incredibly eloquent proposal of marriage which the Lord had made:

“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you will be a peculiar treasure to me above all people, for all the earth is mine. And you will be to me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.” (Ex. 19:4-6a)

When Israel accepted God’s marriage proposal (Ex. 19:8), the date was set for the marriage ceremony:

“And be ready against the third day, for on the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai.” (Ex. 19:11)

What follows in the next chapters of Exodus is the account of that sacred ceremony, the making of the covenant of marriage at Sinai, when Israel was joined to her God and became His people.

TAKING THE NAME

When a man and a woman are united in a covenant of marriage, they become “one flesh” (Gen. 2:24), and this “one flesh” bears but one name. For example, when *Barbara Myers* married me, *John Clark*, she became *Barbara Clark*. She took my name.

Similarly, when we enter God’s covenant, we become one with Him in spirit (1Cor. 6:17). And in entering into God’s “family”, we take the family name. Paul once wrote: “*I bow my knees unto the*

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. 3:14-15).

This is what happened at Mt. Sinai. Israel took God's name, promising to be His alone, while He promised that she would be "*a peculiar treasure unto me above all people.*"

Now, there are fundamental conditions to every covenant, whether it is a business contract among men or a spiritual covenant, as here at Sinai. In a marriage ceremony, these fundamental conditions are called "wedding vows", and the wedding vows of God's covenant with Israel are preserved for us in Exodus 20:1-17. They are popularly known as "the Ten Commandments". But what they really are is the agreement between God and His people concerning the fundamental requirements of life as a part of His holy family. The third of these ten commandments is this (Ex. 20:7):

"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain."

SPIRITUAL ADULTERY

The primary purpose for marriage, especially in the ancient world, was procreation. Only by having children could the family name be carried on.

This was also the purpose of that holy marriage at Sinai. God was to be the head of the family. Israel was to bear Him children. If Israel would be faithful to her husband, His light and mercy and truth would spread throughout the world as membership in His family grew and grew. If she were unfaithful, there would be no light in the darkness, no instruction for the ignorant, and Israel would have entered into covenant with God to no good end. Being spiritually barren, she would have taken His name fruitlessly, for nothing – in vain!

To "take God's name" means *to bear His name*, to become a part of the family that is called by His name, to enter into covenant with Him and become His. To take His name *in vain* is to enter into covenant with Him and then fail to live up to the terms of the

covenant, resulting in fruitlessness. The wise man in Proverbs 30:9 said that he could take God's name in vain being a thief. We could as well say that a believer who has become a glutton, or a liar, or an adulterer, or who lives in any way that is contrary to God's will, has taken God's name in vain. This is what the Third Commandment warns God's people not to do. It does not specifically forbid what is commonly called "cursing" and using the word "God" as part of that foul language. There are other Scriptures which forbid the misuse of the name of "God" (e.g. Lev. 19:12a; 24:10-23).

The Third Commandment charges God's people to bear His name faithfully in holiness, for the way to God's mercy is lighted by the lives of His people. And if God's own are living in darkness, how much greater is the darkness which is already in the world! Therefore, God plainly warned Israel that "*the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.*"

The young bride Israel was to do just that. Rather than bear God's Law and light to the nations, she partook of the idolatry and immorality of those nations. She prostituted herself and God's gifts by disobeying His commandments and following the ungodly ways of the heathen. In yielding herself to foreign gods, Israel became a spiritual adulteress, bringing a reproach upon the holy name of Jehovah, the holy name she bore. Israel took the name of the Lord in vain.

Returning now to the chapter in Ezekiel with which we started, let's continue reading God's powerful message to Israel concerning His care for her in her impoverished youth:

"Then I washed you with water; yea, I thoroughly washed away your blood from you, and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you also with broidered work, and shod you with badgers' skin, and I girded you about with fine linen, and I covered you with silk. I decked you also with ornaments, and I put bracelets upon your hands, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel on your forehead and earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head. Thus were you

decked with gold and silver, and your raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and broidered work; you ate fine flour, and honey, and oil.

“And you were exceeding beautiful, and you prospered into a kingdom. And your renown went forth among the heathen for your beauty, for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon you, says the Lord GOD.

“But you trusted in your own beauty, and played the harlot because of your renown, and poured out your fornications on every one that passed by; his it was. And of your garments you took, and decked your high places with diverse colors, and played the harlot thereupon; the like things shall not come, neither shall it be so. You have also taken your fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given you, and made to yourself images of men, and committed whoredom with them, and took your broidered garments, and covered them, and you have set my oil and my incense before them. My meat also which I gave you, fine flour, and oil, and honey, wherewith I fed you, have you even set it before them for a sweet savor; and thus it was, says the Lord GOD.

“Moreover you have taken your sons and your daughters, whom you have borne unto me, and these have you sacrificed unto them to be devoured. Is this



of your whoredoms a small matter, that you have slain my children, and delivered them to cause them to pass through the fire for them? And in all your abominations and your whoredoms you have not remembered the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, and were polluted in your blood.

“And it came to pass after all your wickedness, (woe, woe unto you! says the Lord GOD) that you have also built unto you an eminent place, and have made you an high place in every street. You have built your high place at every head of the way, and have made your beauty to be abhorred, and have opened your feet to every one that passed by, and multiplied your whoredoms. You have also committed fornication with the Egyptians your neighbors, great of flesh, and have increased whoredoms, to provoke me to anger. Behold, therefore I have stretched out my hand over you, and have diminished your ordinary food, and delivered you unto the will of them that hate you, the daughters of the Philistines, which are ashamed of your lewd way. You have played the harlot with them, and yet could not be satisfied. You have moreover multiplied your fornication in the land of Canaan unto Chaldea; and yet you were not satisfied with that.

“How weak is your heart, says the Lord GOD, seeing you do all these things, the work of an imperious whorish woman, in that you build your eminent place in the head of every way, and make your high place in every street, and have not been as an harlot, in that you scorn hire, but as a wife who commits adultery, which takes strangers instead of her husband!”

(Ezek. 16:9-32)

HISTORY OF INFIDELITY

Prophet after prophet was sent to Israel, pleading, warning, delivering to her the great Husband's commandments for His household. And prophet after prophet was scorned, beaten, and even murdered for his effort. When the Lord Jesus neared the time for his own betrayal and death, he wept and grieved aloud:

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You who kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together... and you would not!" (Mt. 23:37)



So Israel was left alone, but only after mercy upon mercy had been shown to her for her unfaithfulness, and chastisement upon chastisement had befallen the nation, until both mercy and chastisement had lost their effectiveness.

God had kept her alive in the desolate wasteland of Sinai forty years because He had promised Abraham that his children would live, even though keeping her alive meant keeping her alive to dirty His name in heathen worship and disobedience. He won battles for her and established her in the land He had promised, only then to watch as she compromised the honor of His name for the savagery of godless living. And when, because of her own disobedience, foreign nations humbled her, He still cared for her and caused deliverers, called "judges", to rise up and break the yoke of foreign domination.

"And when the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge, for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by

reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them. And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them. They ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.

(Jud. 2:18-19)

And Israel could not answer God's haunting question, "Why have you done this?" (Jud. 2:2).

LIKE ALL THE NATIONS

After several centuries of living among heathen who were led by kings of their own rather than by God,² Israel approached Samuel, whom God had raised up to judge Israel, and told him, "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1Sam. 8:5b).

"But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."

(1Sam. 8:6-7)

The Lord then warned Israel, through Samuel, that the kings over them would be severe rulers, and He pleaded with them to be content with His own merciful kingship, but they replied:

"Nay! But we will have a king over us so that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us, and fight our battles."

(1Sam. 8:19b-20)

And when God's word came to pass, and the harshness of kingly rule divided the nation in half (1Kings 12:1-20), He still cared for her and sent His messengers to the northern half of the kingdom (called Israel) and to the southern half (called Judah), preaching love and

forgiveness, pleading with Israel to turn from following the nations and to be reconciled to God.

He sent Isaiah: (1:18):

“Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

He sent Jeremiah (3:12-14a):

“Return, backsliding Israel, says the LORD, and I will not cause my anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, says the LORD, and I will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the LORD your God and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree and have not obeyed my voice, says the LORD. Turn, O back-sliding children, says the LORD, for I am married unto you.”

He sent Ezekiel (33:11):

“As I live, says the LORD God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?”

He sent Hosea (11:8):

“How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim?³ My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.”

He sent Joel (2:12-13):

“Therefore also now, says the LORD, turn you even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your

God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness.”

He sent Micah (6:3):

“O my people, what have I done unto you? and wherein have I wearied you? Testify against me.”

He sent Zechariah (1:3):

“Turn unto me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you.”

He sent Amos, Elijah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, and others less known to us, but not to God. And when He sent the last prophetic voice in the Old Testament crying, *“I have loved you, says the LORD”* (Mal. 1:2), Israel was no longer His bride, but was married to vain paganism (Mal. 2:11) and could only respond in utter blindness and bitterness, *“Wherein have you loved us?”* (Mal. 1:2).

And through the next four centuries,⁴ one of the blackest prophecies ever spoken to Israel became a living reality: no more prophets would be sent to guide her in the paths of God.⁵

“Behold, the days come, says the LORD God, that I will send famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst.” (Amos 8:11-13)

And it was so.

HOPE IN THE DARK

Those four dark, silent centuries saw the land of the Jews wracked with cruel wars, treachery, confusion and fear. The very sacredness of Israel’s faith grew stale. The temple was defiled by heathen intruders. The High Priesthood became a political prize. The

Law was surrounded, so as to protect it they said, by a tall, cold fence of uninspired tradition.

The religious harshness and emptiness of opinionated traditions resulted in the slow rise of sects within the Jewish religion during that time. There arose the Pharisees, the Sadducees, Zealots, Herodians, Essenes, and other faiths within Israel itself. Each had its own particular doctrine and standards, and each claimed to be the right way. Israel could no longer offer deliverance to a confused world; she was herself confused.

And as the end of this dark era neared, the situation in Israel grew desperate. The covenant of God was distorted, twisted by men of great mind and empty soul. God's original, loving intention for making that first covenant was now so foreign to what was taught by Israel's leaders that those who were persuaded to become Jews were no longer being converted to God's faith. Jesus described the situation in blunt terms:

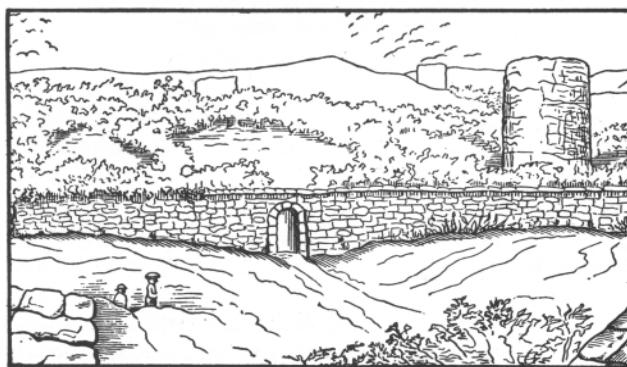
“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.” (Mt. 23:15)

This means that Israel's pastors converted people not to God's covenant, but to *their interpretation* of God's covenant. It means that the religion then taught and observed by the Jews was not the religion God originally gave the nation. It meant that throughout the synagogues of Israel, rabbis were telling the congregations that they were prepared to meet God when they were not prepared, that God was their God when He was not, and that they could expect rich blessings and great favor, when only disaster and ruin lay ahead. The people were being taught to long for the day of the Lord (for surely He would greatly reward them!), but did anyone consider the words of Amos?

“Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! To what end is it for you? The day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.” (Amos 5:18)

During these long centuries, when the word of the Lord was not heard in God's vineyard, many traditions budded and grew and were added by Israel's pastors to her religious diet. They appeared authoritative, but all of them were wild, poisonous fruit, and everyone who ate of this fruit partook of its degenerate nature. Years before, Isaiah had sung this sad song of his well-beloved God and His vineyard:

*"My wellbeloved has a vineyard in a very fruitful hill.
And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof,
and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower
in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein.
And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and
it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants
of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you,
between me and my vineyard. What could have been
done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?
Why, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes,
did it bring forth wild grapes? And now go to; I will
tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take
away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up, and
break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden
down, and I will lay it waste. It shall not be pruned,
nor dug; but there will come up briars and thorns. I
will also command the clouds that they rain no rain*



on it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant plant, and He looked for judgment, but behold oppression, for righteousness, but behold a cry.”

(Isa. 5:1b-7)

Amid all the frightening words of doom and ugly pictures of destruction found in the ancient scrolls of the prophets was one last, bright hope. In enigmatic terms, the prophets spoke of one who would come to restore and reconcile the people to God, and the hope which these promises sparked prevented the future for God’s vineyard from seeming so utterly dark, for out of its dried and broken stumps and roots would rise God’s great apostle. Isaiah again (11:1,2; 53:2):

“There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch will grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him. He will grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground.”

Said Zechariah (6:12):

“Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH! And he will grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD.”

And Hosea (14:5b-6, 9a):

“He will grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches will spread, and his beauty will be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. Who is wise, and he will understand these things? prudent, and he will know them?”

FOR OUR ADMONITION

The purpose of God’s choosing of Israel was the blessing of others; it was to make people a vehicle of His great care and healing and peace. When God’s people humbled themselves before Him in obedient holiness, godly fruit was produced. When pride,

compromise, and greed worked in His people and, so, hindered His working through them, what good fruit could have been produced? In the end, the kingdom of God was taken from Israel and given to others who would be more faithful in “*bringing forth the fruits thereof*” (Mt. 21:33-46).

But have we done so? Have we, the called-out ones, been the light of the world, the salt of the earth? Have we kept ourselves from the errors of ancient Israel? Have we escaped the shame of division? Are there any congregations of strangers to the grace of God being told that they may look with joy to what lies ahead?

The next question is even more sobering than those above. For if God so fiercely punished a guilty Israel, will He fail to punish guilty believers now? Some of the last words spoken by Jesus on this earth warn us not to think so. Gathered with his disciples on the night before he was crucified, the man called “the Branch” carefully labored in words that they might understand:

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit He takes away. And every branch that does bear fruit, He purges, that it may bring forth more fruit.

“Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can you, except you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches: He who abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit, for without me, you can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered, and they gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”

(Jn.

15:1-6)

No, God has changed neither His standard nor His purpose for His people. For the sake of all men, the redeemed are allowed to live, that in demonstrating before all men God’s way of life, some of them might choose to honor Him.

The body of Christ needs to examine its faith, its traditions, its methods, and its goals. If division in Old Testament Israel was an indication of confusion and error, can the confusion of sects that God's children join now indicate anything else? Will we point the finger at Israel and wonder why she chose to die, not heeding the Scriptures, when our own Scriptures tell us that as long as there are divisions among us we are carnally minded (1Cor. 3:3) and to be carnally minded *is* death (Rom. 8:6).

And when we cross land and sea to make a convert, whose convert is he? Christianity's or Christ's?

Or if a poor, unschooled and unheard-of preacher boldly proclaimed that many of the most famous, most revered religious leaders among us were blind guides, would we be so offended that we would not even consider it?

Israel compromised holiness, increased her membership rolls, and God cut her off. Will He look at the congregations His children have joined and see less compromise? It is imperative that God's children be taught to *know* that Israel's fate is not unrepeatable, that *any* people who bear God's name must bear that name in holiness or be destroyed! Taking the name of the Lord in vain is still sin, and it will not go unpunished.

The body of Christ must hear her own prophets! If so, we will understand that the things which happened to Israel "*happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*" And we will also see the good in Paul's warning, "*Wherefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall*" (1Cor. 10:11-12).

On another occasion, referring again to God's judgment against His unfaithful Old Testament people, Paul warns New Testament saints (Rom. 11:20b-22),

"Be not high-minded, but fear, for if God spared not the natural branches [the Jews], take heed lest He also spare not you. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity, but

toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you, too, will be cut off.”

We must come to know, fully know and take to heart, that first of all, *there is such a thing* as taking the Lord’s name in vain and that, secondly, the only people who *can* take God’s name in vain are those who have taken His name at all: believers in Jesus. We must (we must!) come to know the fear of God and the fierceness of His wrath against *His own people* who bear His name in vain by living ungodly lives.

We are no better than the ancient Israelites. We are equally capable of being led astray and persuaded to call good, evil, and evil, good, to love darkness rather than light and cling to lies instead of truth. Therefore, we tremble for our need of God’s mercy, and for His power to grant it.

From the beginning, God has been open and direct with those who come to Him concerning His simple requirements:

“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.”

I know that there are many religious leaders who teach that because of the blood of Christ upon us, God does not see, or does not take into account, our sins. But it is not true that we are counted good in God’s sight for Jesus’ sake, *even* when we are disobedient to Him. That is an old heresy, and it wearis God to even hear such nonsense:

“You have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet you say, Wherein have we wearied you? When you say, Every one that does evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and He delights in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?” (Mal. 2:17)

We need to reject doctrines that flatter us and eventually, when they have finished their rambling course, make what is wrong seem

right. The truth is and always has been simple: Obey God and live, or disobey Him and die. It is when we are seduced by sophisticated theology and glittering religious manners that we become confused, divided, carnal. Those who do righteousness are righteous (1Jn. 3:7-10); those who do evil are evil. The righteous will be saved; the unrighteous will be cast into the Lake of Fire. That's the gospel.

Jesus gives us wisdom and power to overcome the flesh and live godly lives so that at the Final Judgment we may stand pure and innocent before his judgment seat. He came and suffered to take away our excuses for sinning; but we have often used his sacrificial act as our excuse to continue in it.

If we hope to enjoy the promises of eternal life that God offers us, we must learn the lesson which Israel's failure teaches (cp. 1Cor. 10:1-12); namely, that being the people of God, bearing His holy name, carries with it the responsibility of faithfulness to God by walking in His holiness. It teaches us that without holiness, no man will see God (Heb. 12:14), whether he is one of God's own or a sinner who has never tasted of the grace of God in Christ.

BEFORE WE CONTINUE

Refusal to consider seriously and humbly the possibility of spiritual error was a hallmark of Israel's elders. They could have continued to revere their traditions, yet be willing to consider the prophets' and Jesus' words, and, thereby, be helped. But their unwillingness to hear, their readiness to condemn any suggestions that they had misunderstood, ultimately ruined both them and the nation. A willingness to hear is a mark of righteous people; only the guilty are hardhearted.

Because the truths in this beginning chapter help quicken our minds to the real possibility and awful consequences of developing (even unintentionally) spiritual hardness to truth, I consider it to be merely the introduction to what this book really has to say. For much of what is being taught to the saints today, and much of their religious practice, is not of God. In fact, the sects that most of God's children have joined are contrary to Christ because they divide and confuse God's children. Merely belonging to different sects which teach

conflicting doctrines hardens their hearts against God's truth. And it is only in remembering with what steadfast confidence in their own righteousness that Israel slaughtered the prophets that we can be warned to listen for the chastening word.

In His fear, we sheep of His pasture must earnestly and humbly examine ourselves and our faith, for much of the responsibility to be led rightly lies squarely upon the shoulders of each follower. If I stand before God "poor, blind, and naked", my shepherd may well answer for it, but neither will I be guiltless. Every one of us shall give account of himself to God (Rom. 14:12).

It is certainly nothing new to your ears to hear that the body of Christ is "off track". We all sense that something is amiss. The presence of so many divisions among us is an indication to every good conscience of some pervasive yet hard to define error which owns great influence over God's people. Differences in doctrine, ordinances, standards, and governments are so obviously ungodly that at times they have even been defended – on the basis that God would not allow such awful things to exist among us if indeed they were so ungodly. But at heart, we all know fully well that it is not as it should be.

The Spirit of God is calling to you right now, as it is calling to everyone who is looking for the right path, "*Come out of her, my people!*" But God is not merely calling us out of confusion; He is calling us into His light. Let us go to Him outside the gate!

The chapters that follow will, for many of you, initiate a difficult task of re-examination. They will require all of your faith, your attention, and your prayers. In reality, you will not be judging their contents; they will be judging you.

Saints everywhere are longing for a move of the holy Spirit throughout the world that will eventuate the uniting of all who trust in Jesus, bringing all believers together into the one faith, the one hope, and the one mind of Christ. However, much depends on what we, as believers, do. There are many beliefs to be abandoned, many traditions to be discarded, many confessions to be made, and much chastening and pruning to be received. And if God's recording of Israel's failure to do these things, and His recording of the results, do

not make us willing (yea, eager!) to examine in earnest our own beliefs and to be willing to hear words not easy on our souls, then will be fulfilled the words of Solomon (Prov. 1:24-26):

“Because I have called, and you refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, but you have set at nought all my counsel, and would have none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes.”

The messages that now follow may be a tiny part of our God's call to the divided and confused household of faith. Still, they are a part. They will not all be easy to accept, but they are all true, and we all need them. They will stand the tests of scriptural examination and endorsement of the Spirit.

There is nothing to be gained by strife and faultfinding. We have all been wrong, and we will stay that way if we refuse God's help. These truths require humility from me as well as you, and you will find no spirit of strife or self-aggrandizement in this work. There is, however, everything to be gained by instruction in righteousness, and the Spirit of truth has given me these messages for this time for the body of Christ.

“My son, if you will receive my words, and hide my commandments with you so that you incline your ear unto wisdom and apply your heart to understanding; yea, if you cry after knowledge and lift up your voice for understanding; if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding. He lays up sound wisdom for the righteous; He is a buckler to those who walk uprightly. He keeps the paths of judgment and preserves the way of His saints. Then you will understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.”

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(Prov. 2:1-9)

MY CREDENTIALS FOR WRITING CHAPTER TWO:
THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST

When I began my walk with Christ Jesus, I had a deep hunger to know the Bible, even the most complicated and confusing parts. As part of my quest for biblical knowledge, I set out to study the details of the tabernacle which Moses and Israel built while they were camped at Mount Sinai. These details are given in the last sixteen chapters of Exodus, and I happily familiarized myself with the measurements of each piece of furniture, the materials used in the construction of the tabernacle, and it's coverings and curtains, it's boards and bars, the courtyard, the two altars, and everything else associated with the holy place where atonement would be made for Israel's sins.

I took detailed notes of everything I read, but I did something much more important than that. Every day while I was doing my research, I watched the clock on my shelf by my desk, and at the top of every hour I would put down everything and fall to my knees and pray to God, that He would help me understand what I was reading.

I remember pleading with Him to show me why He gave these instructions to Moses. I remember confessing to Him my faith that he had a wise purpose for everything, that these tabernacle details were not random, that my professors were wrong in telling me Moses' tabernacle was an assimilation of elements from various heathen temples. I confessed to God my faith that the Bible was true, that He really had revealed these things to Moses while he was with God forty days on the top of Mount Sinai, and that I believed with all my heart that the design and purpose for that tabernacle was relevant to the lives of believers today, if we only had the eyes to see it!

I did this at the top of every hour, every day as I studied the details of Moses' tabernacle. When my study was completed, I reviewed the 3x5 cards on which I had taken notes and then, I put it all away. I had learned much, and was content with that, but I did not know that God had accepted my prayer to reveal to me what Moses' tabernacle really represented.

Shortly afterwards, I was preaching one Saturday night to a small congregation far out in the country, and I found myself talking about the sacrifice of Christ. I was explaining things about that sacred event which I, myself, did not understand. I did not realize what was happening, since this had never happened to me before. The holy Spirit was revealing something to me as well as to the congregation, using my own mouth to speak hidden mysteries, right in the middle of my own sermon! It was wonderful!

All of a sudden, this glorious experience was interrupted by an angry man. He jumped up and started quarreling before us all about a doctrine he had been taught. Apparently, he felt threatened by this new thing that I was preaching, and was so offended that he became enraged. I was stunned. In just a few minutes, he stormed out of the meeting, with several other people following him. I didn't finish my sermon; the flow of the Spirit had been interrupted and my attention diverted. Those of us who remained, knelt and prayed, and then went home.

The following Wednesday night, I had an appointment to return to the same little congregation and preach again. As I drove south on Highway 39, about halfway between my hometown of Henderson and Louisburg, the Lord, quite unexpectedly, interrupted my thoughts by asking me a question. It is difficult to describe exactly how it happened, but the answer to the Lord's question was enfolded within the question itself.

The question was, "Where was Christ when he was sacrificed?" The Lord gave me enough time to ponder the question so that I knew I did not know the answer; however, somehow, at the same moment the question came, God created in my heart the knowledge of the answer. It is impossible to describe the event adequately. All I can say is that, suddenly, I understood that the sacrifice of Christ took place in heaven, in the presence of the Father, not on Earth, hanging on a cross before men. Furthermore, because I had prepared myself to receive that revelation by studying the Bible and humbly seeking God's help, I was now equipped to use the Scriptures to explain to others what Jesus had shown me.

All those long hours of studying the tabernacle of Moses paid off, with enormous dividends. All the prayers, at the top of every hour, now seemed well worth the time. I felt rich, for at last I understood the Scriptures which spoke with such power of the sacrifice of Christ, especially those in Hebrews, chapters 8-10. The reasons for building the Old Testament tabernacle made perfect sense. God *did* have a holy purpose for it, and that Old Testament sanctuary *was* relevant to our life in Christ Jesus!

All the pieces of that puzzle began to fit together, and I marveled at the astonishing picture that I now saw. A hundred questions of my own had been answered in that one, precious, holy moment.

With the revelation of God now guiding my heart, I set about to gather biblical information concerning the sacrifice of Christ, that awful, pivotal event in human history, and that labor is now offered to you, in the chapter that follows.

CHAPTER TWO

The Sacrifice of Christ

LIGHT ON PENTECOST

“Then, indeed, the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.”

(Heb. 9:1)

“For Christ has not entered into the sanctuary made by human hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”

(Heb. 9:24)

The Day of Atonement, “Yom Kippur”, was the most holy day of the Old Testament calendar. It was the day when the high priest of Israel entered into the presence of God to offer the blood of sacrifice for the sins of all the people of Israel. This ceremony took place at the tabernacle, and to fully grasp the significance of the event of Yom Kippur, we must first understand the significance of the tabernacle itself.

The Old Testament tabernacle was built by men, but it was designed by God. God showed Moses the design for the tabernacle when Moses was with Him on Mt. Sinai forty days and nights (Ex. 24:18; 25:9, 40; etc.) Centuries later, when the time came for a temple⁶ to be built in Jerusalem, we are told that its pattern, similar to that of Moses’ tabernacle, was given to David “by the Spirit” (1Chron. 28:11-12).

Seeing, then, that the tabernacle (and later, Solomon's temple) was not of men's design, we should not be surprised to learn that it was more than just an earthly tabernacle, that it represented a spiritual reality. And the spiritual reality that the tabernacle represented is heaven itself, God's true tabernacle (Ps. 102:19; 104:2; Isa. 40:22).

THE COPY AND THE TRUE

The tabernacle was divided by a veil into two rooms. In the first room, called "the holy place", was a candlestick with seven branches for seven lamps, or candles (Ex. 25:37). In his vision of heaven, John saw that "*there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God*" (Rev. 4:5). So, on earth, the seven flames of the candlestick were dead, earthly flames, but the flames they represented in heaven were living flames, seven special "*spirits which are before God's throne*" (Rev. 1:4).

In the second room, the "most holy" place, were two cherubim, each molded onto opposite ends of the mercy seat (God's earthly throne) that sat atop the ark of the covenant. To these were added, in Solomon's temple, two huge cherubim standing on either side of the mercy seat. These cherubim were carved from olive tree wood and covered with gold (1Kgs. 6:23, 28). So, on earth, these beings were made of dead material, wood and gold, but young Zechariah was told by an angel that these two olive trees represented "*the two anointed ones that stand by the LORD of the whole earth*" (Zech. 4:14).

Throughout the whole of Moses' tabernacle, as well as Solomon's temple that came later, cherubim were carved on the doors and walls, sewn onto the curtains and veils, and chiseled onto the furniture (1Kgs. 6:32, 35; 7:36, etc). When the priest entered the temple, he felt surrounded by that "*multitude of the heavenly host*" – living beings in heaven, though mere dead figures in heaven's earthly replica.

Leaving the many other impressive heavenly correlations of the tabernacle for your personal study, let's look now at the tabernacle as a whole.⁷

The Bible speaks of three heavens. The first is the place of clouds and birds and wind. The second heaven is the place of stars, moons, and planets. Into these two heavens, as the invention of airplanes and rockets have proved, men may freely go. But into the third heaven no man in a fleshly body has ever gone, or will ever go. Correspondingly, the tabernacle was divided by a veil into two rooms: the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place (Ex. 26:33). The Holy Place, where priests were constantly present, was exactly twice the length of the Most Holy (1Kgs. 6:2, 20). And, though the priests had free access to this Holy Place (first two heavens), they were not allowed into the Most Holy (third heaven). The privilege of passing through the veil into the Most Holy Place of God's personal presence was reserved for the High Priest, and he was allowed there but once each year – on the holiest day of the Old Testament calendar: Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

The veil, and what it represents, is most significant for an understanding of the work of Christ. What did it represent? Isaiah gave us a clue when he said that God would someday do away with "*the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations*" (Isa. 25:7). This veil, spread over all people, is human flesh, as Hebrews 10:20 explains. In their flying machines, men may go, and have gone into the first two heavens in fleshly, physical bodies; but in order to enter into the very presence of God, we must pass through the veil; that is, our fleshly bodies must be changed in order for us to see God. This "passing through the veil" is called "glorification" in the New Testament.

As I have said, Yom Kippur was the one day in the year in which the High Priest was allowed to pass through the veil into the presence of God in the Most Holy Place. There, as atonement for the sins of the whole nation, he sprinkled the blood of the sacrificial animal on the mercy seat. But in order to have blood to offer to God, the victim must have *already* been slain.

Think about that.

The sacrificial victim was slain *outside* the tabernacle. Then, the High Priest entered with the blood into the tabernacle, then through the veil into the presence of God to make the atoning sacrifice. The

slaying of the animal outside the earthly tabernacle was the pattern for the slaying of Jesus outside God's true tabernacle (heaven).

The entrance of the High Priest into the earthly tabernacle to offer the sacrifice of atonement foreshadowed Jesus' ascension into heaven,



"for Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest enters the holy place every year with the blood of others, for then must he often have suffered from the foundation of the world. But now once in the end of the world he has appeared [before God in heaven] to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

(Heb. 9:24-26)

AN IMPORTANT DETAIL

Over long periods of time, words often undergo a metamorphosis. Their meanings change. An example of this is the word "offend". In the era when the King James Version was written, the meaning of "offend" was usually "to cause sin". For example, Jesus said, "*If your right eye offend you, pluck it out*" (Mt. 5:29). But now "offend" most often means "to insult" or "to hurt the feelings of". The meaning has changed. Among other such examples of change in meaning is "sacrifice".

I once asked my students to give me a synonym for "to sacrifice". I gave them this sentence:

"The man is going to sacrifice the lamb."

Next, I removed "sacrifice" from the sentence and asked them to replace it with a synonym. You do it. Fill in the blank with another word for "sacrifice":

"The man is going to _____ the lamb."

What word did you think of? To kill? To give up? To slaughter? If so, you are correct in modern usage but incorrect biblically speaking. In the Bible, "to sacrifice" never means simply to kill. Killing the victim always *preceded* the sacrifice; **to sacrifice is to offer the slain animal to God.** "To sacrifice," then, is to offer something to God that has been prepared to be offered. In the case of an animal, the killing was only part of the preparation for sacrifice; it was not the act of sacrifice itself.

Christ, then, was no more sacrificed on the cross of Calvary than the Old Testament animal was sacrificed where it was killed. His crucifixion was only part of the preparation for the sacrifice which followed. On Yom Kippur, had the Old Testament High Priest killed the animal and then not entered into the tabernacle to offer its blood to God, there would have been no sacrifice. And had Jesus been killed and then not risen from the dead and ascended into heaven (the true tabernacle) to offer himself to God, there would have been no sacrifice. In both cases, the sacrifice was made possible by, and followed, the death of the victim. The earthly High Priest entered into the earthly tabernacle with the blood of goats and calves, but Jesus, the High Priest of heaven, entered into the

"greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this world. Neither with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own blood he entered in once for all into the holy place." (Heb. 9:11b-12)



Jesus did not ascend into heaven because the sacrifice was complete; rather, he ascended into heaven to complete the sacrifice. Unorthodox as it sounds, the Spirit and the Scriptures teach us that Jesus had to die before he could offer himself to God as a sacrifice for our sin. Before his death, Jesus had nothing to offer.

PASSING THROUGH THE VEIL

It is interesting to focus for a moment on the specific time that Jesus was glorified, or “passed through the veil”. We know from observing the earthly pattern that, since the veil was inside the tabernacle, the Lord’s “passing through” took place inside the tabernacle. So, according to the pattern God gave to Moses, Jesus’ glorification took place after he entered into God’s heavenly tabernacle and entered the very presence of God.

Jesus’ ascension into heaven followed the three days he spent preaching in the heart of the earth (Mt. 12:40; 1Pet. 3:19) and the forty days he spent on earth *“speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God”* (Acts 1:3). And seven more days of consecration are accounted for after his ascension (Lev. 8:33-36). This total of fifty days accounts for the fifty day period between Passover and Pentecost.

There is some doubt as to exactly when we should start counting those fifty days. Still, though we may not be able at this time to pinpoint the precise day or hour that Jesus passed through the veil to offer himself to God on our behalf, we know that precious event took place only after his ascension into heaven in the first chapter of Acts, and at least seven days after that.

Whenever the precise moment Jesus’ glorification occurred, that glorification was our deliverance. For when God, as Peter preached in Acts 3:13, “glorified his Son Jesus” with the glory which was his with God “before the world was” (Jn. 17:5), the Spirit of God was sent down from heaven upon a large group (about one hundred twenty) of Jesus’ disciples on Pentecost morning.

John (7:37-39) told us that the Spirit would not be given until Jesus was glorified (not crucified or resurrected). “Glorification” means to be changed from life in a fleshly body to life in a spiritual body, being changed from mortality to immortality, from a body subject to disease and sickness to an incorruptible body. Glorification is synonymous with “inheriting the kingdom of God”. Those born of

the Spirit are heirs with Christ, but as long as we are still in these fleshly bodies, the inheritance has not yet been received. Paul told the Corinthian believers:

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

(1Cor. 15:50-53)

We will all be changed! We will all pass through the veil, for Christ “will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious [glorified] body” (Phip. 3:21). What a wonderful promise! In these bodies of flesh we cannot see God as He is; it would kill us to do so (Ex. 33:20). And although “it does not yet appear what we shall be . . . we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we will see him as he is” (1Jn. 3:2). This glorification of the body is the “passing through the veil”; it is the promised inheritance of sons.

If you are a faithful child of God and die blind or lame, God has promised you that you will not spend eternity in a blind or lame spiritual body. A glorified body will not have our physical inadequacies, or missing parts, or scars. The “mansions” Jesus is preparing for us are perfectly glorious, eternal and whole. John did not see any blemish on the glorified Jesus in his revelation of the Lord (Rev. 1:13-14):



“And in the midst of the seven lampstands [was] one like the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and

girded up to his chest with a golden girdle. His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like a flame of fire. And his feet like unto fine brass, glowing in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.”

There are no blood stains on the robes Jesus now wears, no thorn pricks in his forehead, no lash marks on his back. He has passed through the veil that was subject to those things.

When Jesus came out of the tomb, however, he was not glorified. He was still in the same body of flesh that had been nailed to the tree. The nail prints were still in it; the spear wound was still there. He even had to tell his disciples, before they would believe it, that he was not (yet) a spiritual being. He said in Luke 24:39b:

“Handle me, and see; for a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see me have.”

So, if he was yet in a body of flesh and bones, he obviously was not yet glorified. And if not yet glorified, then the Spirit was not yet available because the sacrifice had not yet been made.

ONE ASCENSION, NO RETURN

The book of Hebrews adds this instructive note to our study:

“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth [waiting] till his enemies be made his footstool.” (Heb. 10:12-13)

The fact that Jesus sat down at God’s right hand after offering himself as our atoning sacrifice is important, for it means (1) that he did not (as many teach) return to earth after he offered himself to God, and (2) that he will not return to earth “*until his enemies be made his footstool.*” Of course, in Spirit, both Jesus and the Father returned at Pentecost (Jn. 14:16, 20, 23). But as for Jesus’ personal presence, let it suffice to remind the reader that we are looking for his

second coming, not his third or fourth. After his first visit, he sat down.

THE WITNESS

Not all that these truths imply concerning the doctrine of Christ is immediately evident. Some elaboration is, therefore, in order.

When Jesus ascended (Acts 1:9), he ascended out of the range of human sight and hearing. And in the heavenly temple into which he ascended, there were no microphones, tape recorders, cameras, or newsmen to record and report to people on earth as to what had occurred. Jesus, being glorified, sat down at God's right hand and has not returned to earth since then. No angels were dispatched to report the accomplishment of the sacrifice. How, then, did the one hundred twenty faithful followers of Jesus find out that the sacrifice had been made and accepted, and that Jesus had been glorified with God? John gave us the simple answer:

"It is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth."
(1Jn. 5:6b)

While with his disciples, Jesus had foretold of the Spirit's coming and the purpose for it:

"But when the comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceeds from the Father, he shall testify of me."
(Jn. 15:26)

The followers of Jesus could testify of seeing his miracles, his suffering, his resurrection, and his ascension. They saw these things for themselves. They did not need the holy Ghost to reveal to them that these events occurred. But as to what happened beyond the clouds into which Jesus disappeared, the disciples were completely ignorant – until the Spirit of God came from heaven into their hearts, testifying that God the Father had accepted the Son's sacrifice and that "*God also has highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name*" (Phip. 2:9).

The Spirit of life given at Pentecost was, and is God's own immutable testimony of His Son. We could even say that the Spirit that came at Pentecost is God's Word concerning His Son (cp. Eph. 6:17). And so, to receive God's Spirit demonstrates one's faith in what He says about His Son (cp. Jn. 3:33). On the other hand, the one who rejects God's Spirit "*has made Him a liar because he has not believed in the witness which God has given concerning His Son*" (1Jn. 5:10b).

The Scriptures, then, leave us no alternative. Either we receive God's holy Spirit and, so, declare before men that He has spoken the truth about His Son, or we reject God's Spirit, His personal testimony that Jesus is Lord, and thus declare that God is a liar. This doctrine of John's is sobering in its simplicity. Those with the baptism of the holy Ghost have believed that God is true and are worthy of salvation, and those without it have made God out to be a liar and are worthy of the damnation that is coming.

Another truth that is made obvious, once the Sacrifice of Christ is rightly understood, is that when the Spirit came at Pentecost, it came for the first time. The disciples received the holy Ghost when they were baptized with it on the day of Pentecost, and not before.

Jesus' ascension in the first chapter of Acts preceded both his sacrifice and his glorification. When the sacrifice was accomplished, he sat down (Heb. 10:12-13); he did not return to earth.⁸ If then, Christ's sacrifice and subsequent glorification were not accomplished until Acts, it is clear that the Spirit was not available until Acts, for the Spirit came as a result of the sacrifice (cp. Jn. 7:37-39) and as God's witness to the Son's glorification.

The disciples, therefore, received the Spirit at Pentecost when they were baptized with it, and not before. This means that they were converted on the day of Pentecost because receiving the Spirit is what conversion is (see Rom. 8:9b). Just a little study of the Scriptures will show that baptism with the Spirit and receiving of the Spirit happened simultaneously in every recorded case: the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17), Paul (Acts 9:17-18), Cornelius (Acts 10:44-45), and the twelve Ephesian disciples (Acts 19:1-6). Every person who has ever received

the Spirit of God received it when he was baptized with it. But we will deal more with that point in a later chapter.

ACTS 2:4

All that we have studied withers and comes to nought without taking the next step and observing the practical result of the sacrifice of Christ in the lives of his followers. Since the receiving of God's Spirit happens at conversion, this means *the disciples were not converted until their experience during the feast of Pentecost, in Acts chapter 2!* There is nothing in the gospels that suggests that the disciples were born again before the book of Acts. On the contrary, long after he had called his disciples to follow him, Jesus spoke of their conversion as a future event (Mt. 18:1-3), even up to the last hours of his earthly life (Lk. 22:32).

While it is true that the disciples were chosen (Jn. 15:16-19), separate from and hated by the world (Jn. 17:14), loved by the Father (Jn. 16:27), and ordained to spread the word of the kingdom with power (Mt. 10:1-8), they still were not sanctified (Jn. 17:17), they were not in Christ (Jn. 17:11, 21-23), the love of God was not in them (Jn. 17:26), nor did they have the Spirit (Jn. 14:15-17; cp. Jn. 7:37-39). All these things would happen to them at their conversion.

Jesus' passionate desire was to have the disciples to be one with him in the Father (Jn. 17:20-23). And as much as Jesus would have savored having fellowship in spirit with his disciples while he walked on earth, he knew that it could not be until he paid the awful price. His death was the precondition of their regeneration. The utter aloneness of Jesus in this sense is an often overlooked part of his earthly suffering which must have been among his heaviest burdens. His beloved disciples would not really understand him until he went away and the Spirit had come.

During his last supper discourse, Jesus compared the spiritual condition of his disciples to a woman in labor. Conceived by the word of life, they had continued with Jesus until, at the end of his earthly ministry, they were near the hour of birth (Pentecost). Jesus said:

“Truly, truly, I say unto you, that you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and you shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And you now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.” (Jn. 16:20-22)

BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

The doctrinal separation of conversion and baptism is one of the most puzzling and indefensible developments in the history of faith. Paul plainly taught that the baptism of the holy Spirit was the means of entering the body of Christ (Rom. 6:1-4; 1Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12). Peter just as plainly taught that the resurrection of Christ brought about the baptism that saves us (1Pet. 3:20-21).

Yet, somehow, despite these Scriptures, and Jesus' own teaching, and the accounts of conversions in Acts, the belief that conversion occurs before receiving the holy Ghost baptism is practically ubiquitous among modern believers. And with the abundance of such clear, contradictory evidence, it is astonishing that such a doctrine should have ever gained such widespread acceptance.

Let's take a closer look at conversion and baptism right now.

MY CREDENTIALS FOR WRITING CHAPTER THREE: CONVERSION AND BAPTISM

For consecutive evenings in early 1978, after coming home from work, I was driven by the Spirit to study the Scriptures and to write. I do not remember what the subject was on the first night, but on the second night, I felt led to write on “The Smoke and the Glory”. It was an examination of the effect God’s glory had on men when it filled Moses’ tabernacle and again, later, when it filled Solomon’s temple. Then, on the third night, I felt impressed to research and write on the relationship of conversion with baptism. After being engaged for a couple of hours or so with my study, the Lord opened up my understanding, not merely about baptism and conversion but about Paul’s passionate view of the subject. What the Spirit showed me was that the perverse doctrine that Paul spent his entire life opposing is the very doctrine held most dear by many of God’s children now.

Paul earnestly warned the saints not to think that one must be in covenant with God before receiving the baptism of the holy Ghost, that one does not even belong to Christ until he is in possession of the holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9b). In spite of Paul’s mighty effort, however, the doctrine he hated is promoted as gospel now among the people of God.

Will we ever be free of it? Hopefully, what you read now will help you as you make your own life’s journey toward the “liberty of the sons of God.”

CHAPTER THREE

Conversion and Baptism

TWO GOSPELS

“And he said to them, Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who believes not will be damned.” (Mk. 16:15-16)

“...when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water, the like figure where unto baptism does also now save us.” (1Pet. 3:20-21a)

From the above Scriptures, we can see that salvation will be given only to those who have been baptized. But the question that must be answered is this: “Is the baptism required for salvation a baptism with water or the baptism of the holy Ghost?”

The earliest saints (who were nearly all Israelites by birth) practiced two baptisms. They baptized the penitent with water, with instructions to expect the holy Ghost baptism to follow. Peter’s message to the Jewish multitude at Pentecost was the norm: *“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the holy Ghost”* (Acts 2:38).

But the apostle Paul taught a doctrine he claimed had been revealed to him personally by Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:11-12), a doctrine

which excluded water baptism. He taught that, as far as salvation was concerned there was only one baptism (Eph. 4:5) and that this one baptism was the baptism of the Spirit (1Cor. 12:13). The few water baptisms Paul did administer bothered him (“*for Christ sent me not to baptize*”), and he regretted ever having been involved with them (1Cor. 1:14-17).

The apparent contradiction of Peter’s message with Paul’s is only that. Apparently. Neither Peter nor Paul was wrong at the time and in the places they ministered. The key to seeing the harmony of their teachings is to see the different peoples to whom Peter and Paul were sent.

Paul wrote in Galatians 2:7, “*the gospel of the uncircumcision (Gentiles) was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision (Jews) was unto Peter.*” Peter’s message of the need for water baptism was for the *Jews only*.⁹ In fact, the entire faith of Jesus was withheld from Gentiles by the earliest believers. God even had to repeat a shocking vision to Peter three times before Peter would even consider traveling to a Gentile’s house to preach (Acts 10).

THE BROADER VIEW

The doctrine of conversion for Gentiles was a complicated one before Paul had his revelation. In order to receive the Spirit they were expected, first, to become Jews by circumcision, submitting to the Mosaic Law, and, in a spirit of repentance, be water-baptized in Jesus’ name. Only then were they to receive the Spirit baptism. This is what all earliest believers taught, and for that earliest time, it was true.

The distinction between Jew and non-Jew, and the one ceremony that represented all ceremonies, was circumcision. The genealogical line of Abraham was distinguished by circumcision, and the Gentiles, being outside that line, were disqualified from the very *availability* of Christ. The promise was to Abraham’s seed, not to other peoples. The earliest Jewish saints believed – and it was true in the beginning of the New Testament – that if the Gentiles became Jews by receiving ritual circumcision, then they were candidates for the message of the gospel and could receive the Spirit. Gentiles were considered unworthy to have Christ preached to them. Only Jews were ordained

to hear the gospel. And again, at that earliest time in New Testament history, that was true (cp. Acts 3:25-26; 13:44-46; Rom. 2:9-10).

Without a revelation from God, the Jewish community of believers could not have believed anything else concerning Gentiles. After all, Jesus himself said that he was sent only to the house of Israel (Mt. 15:24; Rom. 15:8). When a Gentile woman came to him, begging for help, he refused at first to speak to the poor woman, and when he did speak, he called her a dog (Mt. 15:25-26). Moreover, when he sent the disciples out, he strictly commanded them not to go to the Gentiles (Mt. 10:5). The disciples, without any doubt, understood his later command to go to “the uttermost part of the earth” to mean that they should preach only to Jews and Jewish converts who were scattered throughout the nations of earth. So, in the earliest New Testament era, the doctrine concerning Gentiles was clear and firmly fixed.

It was at this time that Peter had his visions from God and was led by the Spirit to preach Christ to a household of Gentiles. And when God’s holy Spirit descended on those Gentiles (those “dogs”, to use Jesus’ term for them), the six companions of Peter, all Jews, were utterly dumbfounded:

“And they of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.”

(Acts 10:45-46)

Here at Cornelius’ house, God not only by-passed the heretofore required water baptism, He had by-passed the entire Law of Moses! Moreover, He had by-passed the very thing that made the Jews a distinct race of men – circumcision! God had given His precious holy Spirit to “dogs”! Up to that moment, the body of Christ was exclusively Jewish. Every person who had received the baptism of Christ had either been born Jewish or been converted to Judaism; but at Cornelius’ house, God was showing Peter and the household of faith a new and amazing thing.

Peter, James, John, and the other leaders in the body were spiritually discerning enough to recognize the meaning of Cornelius' baptism (cp. Acts 15:1-11). Their previous message had not been in error. Christ had to be preached first to the Jews (cp. Acts 3:25-26; 13:44-46; Rom. 2:9-10); therefore, if Gentiles were to receive Christ, it was necessary, in the days immediately following the day of Pentecost, for them to become Jews. But when more and more Jews refused to obey the gospel, God by-passed them altogether to reach the Gentiles with His grace, baptizing them into the body of Christ without requiring them to be Jews by submitting to the Law God had given the Jews.

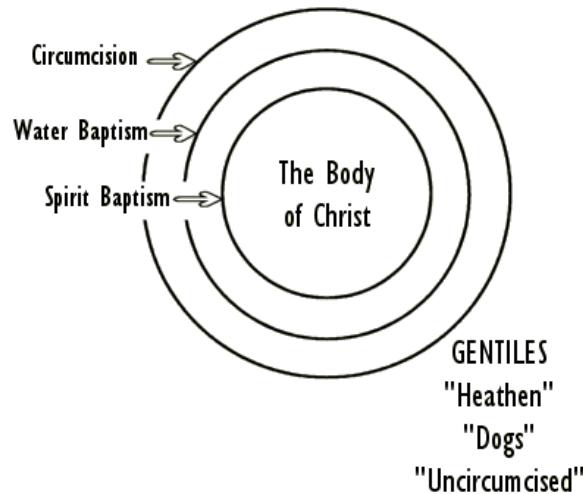
But the recognition on the part of these few leaders that God would baptize Gentiles by the Spirit into the body of Christ did not resolve two crucial issues. First, it did not change the fact that Peter, James, John, and the other leaders were sent only to the Jews. By acknowledging the work of God upon the Gentiles, those apostles were not thereby sent to the Gentiles. Second, their recognition of God's work did not settle the question for others in the body. A sizable portion of Jewish believers either could not or would not have fellowship with any Gentile unless he submitted to the Law, no matter what Christ had done for that Gentile (cp. Acts 15). Clearly, as one elderly mother in Christ used to tell me, "God needed another man." And the man He chose was Paul.

CIRCLES

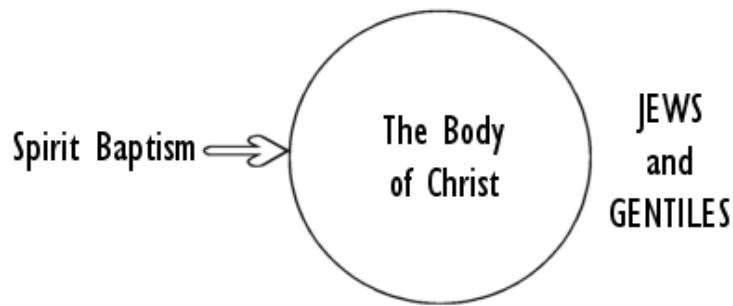
For three years after his Damascus road encounter with Christ and subsequent spiritual baptism, Paul spent his time in deep prayer and study in the Arabian Desert region (Gal. 1:15-18). Having discovered himself warring against the truth of God because of the understanding he had received from human instructors, he refused to seek the counsel of men, be they rabbis, apostles, or whatever. He had learned, as no other man had learned, the vanity of dependence on tradition, however long established, or wise men, however revered and capable. He had learned that he must receive his instruction from God or run the risk of discovering himself opposing, in devotion to God, God's own truth. And when Paul did begin to proclaim the

gospel, his message not only challenged sinners but it also challenged the spiritual fiber of believers. If angels had been a part of the believing community, Paul's astonishing gospel would probably have challenged them as well. As for Paul, he uttered a curse upon any creature in heaven or earth who would dare teach anything contrary to his doctrine (Gal. 1:6-12).

The earliest believers had from the beginning known that only those Jews who believed in Jesus would be saved from the coming wrath. The end result of an unbelieving Jew, they knew well, would be the same as the uncircumcised Gentiles. But they steadfastly affirmed the distinction, as the Scriptures and Jesus himself had done, between the Gentiles and the chosen people of God, to whom, alone, the promise of the Messiah was given. They would have drawn a picture like this:



But Paul's revelation was that there was no longer *any* distinction in God's sight between Jews and Gentiles, for "*all have come short of the glory of God.*" Outside of Christ, all were sinners, and the only Jews that now existed in God's sight are those who had been circumcised in heart by the Spirit (Rom. 2:28-29). Paul's diagram would have been like this:



Paul commanded his converts to cling to this simplicity of Christ (2Cor. 11:2-3),

“for he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

(Rom. 2:28-29)

The earliest believers could easily receive Paul’s teaching, “*for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body*,” but many of the same people staggered at the rest of his sentence: “*whether we be Jews or Gentiles*” (1Cor. 12:13).

Add to this, the fact that Paul taught that Christ is the end of the Law, and you can imagine the opposition Paul faced from within the ranks of the Jewish believers, besides the usual hazards of a missionary evangelist preaching a crucified and resurrected Lord.

In practically every one of Paul’s letters, this issue is mentioned. In some of them, it is Paul’s major concern.¹⁰ The following lengthy excerpt from the letter to the Gentile assembly at Ephesus is an excellent example of Paul’s declaration of the Gentiles’ privilege to receive Christ, and, as it is often the case, what Paul does not say (in brackets) is as instructive as what he does say:

“Wherefore, remember that you being in time past Gentiles in the flesh (who are called ‘Uncircumcision’ by that which is called ‘the Circumcision’ in the flesh made by hands), that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus [Paul intentionally omits anything else] you who sometimes were far off [from God] are made nigh by the blood of Christ [another intentional non-reference to the Law]. For he is our peace, who has made both [Jew and Gentile] one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition [the Law] between us, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain [Jews and Gentiles] one new man, so making peace, and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body [the body of Christ, not the nation of Israel] by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby, and came and preached peace to you which were afar off [Gentiles], and to them that were nigh [Jews]. For through him we both have access by one Spirit [and nothing else] unto the Father. Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit [alone].”

For this cause I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles [had Paul not preached a gospel for the Gentiles, the Jews would not have caused his arrest in Acts 21], if you have heard of the

dispensation of the grace of God which is given me toward you, how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote before in new words, whereby, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs [with the Jews], and of the same body, and partakers of His promise [to Abraham] in Christ by the gospel. Wherefore, I was made minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of His power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

(Eph. 2:11-3:8)

Try to imagine the radical nature of Paul’s doctrine to the orthodox ear of his time. To the earliest believers, almost entirely Jewish, the Gentiles were “dogs” (in Jesus’ words), considered to be so unclean that they were unfit even to eat with or visit. Yet Paul was declaring, contrary to everything he or other Jews had ever been taught, that spiritually “*there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek*” (Rom. 10:12a). For Paul to say that these uncircumcised foreigners were now one with the saints of Christ, “fellow citizens” of God’s kingdom, and partakers of Abraham’s blessing, was the purest heresy, even blasphemous, to most Jews, including Jewish believers. They would have considered Paul’s doctrine to be demeaning to their God-given heritage and contrary both to the Scriptures (as they understood them) and the example of Jesus himself, who preached only “*to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*”

The promise of God was to Abraham and to his children, and for Paul to claim that God had sent him to the heathen to preach Christ seemed heretical and utterly indefensible. But God had revealed to Paul that Abraham’s children were not those that came from his flesh but those who demonstrated the same kind of faith Abraham had.

And if those who had faith happened to be uncircumcised, what of it? Paul pointed out the indisputable fact that Abraham was justified by faith while he himself was still uncircumcised (Rom. 4:9-10). Paul further explained that Abraham

“received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they be not circumcised, so that righteousness might be imputed unto them also, and the father of circumcision to those who are not just of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of the faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.” (Rom. 4:11-12)

God is the one who persuaded Paul to believe that the only children Abraham had are those who have faith in Christ. Some of Abraham's physical descendants did have faith, but those who did not were not his children (cp. Rom. 9:6-8). Jesus hinted at this truth during a heated exchange with certain Pharisees:

“They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus said unto them, If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God; Abraham didn't do this.” (Jn. 8:39-40)

The Jews of this period considered any uncircumcised man to be permanently separated from the blessings of Abraham, and they cannot be condemned for thinking so. Jewish believers also understood the standing of Gentiles before God to be that way, based on their understanding of Jesus' ministry, certain Old Testament Scriptures, their traditions, and the fact that God, up to that time, had given the promise of the holy Ghost to no one but Jews who loved and kept the Law.

But when God, first of all, baptized Cornelius and his household with His holy Spirit, and then sent Paul to declare that Abraham's

heirs were those of every nation who demonstrated Abraham's kind of faith (Gal. 3:6-9), a new light began to shine in the world.

Before that time, Gentiles had been taught that if they wanted to receive the baptism of the Spirit, they must first be circumcised (i.e., become Jews) and submit to all the ordinances of the Law of Moses, including John the Baptist's water baptism in Jesus' name. But God's revelation to Paul, and to Peter at Cornelius' house, was that all God required of Gentiles in order for them to receive the promise of the Spirit is obedient faith in Jesus. It was a gnat which many a Jew had great difficulty swallowing. For Paul to teach that Cornelius and other redeemed Gentiles were Abraham's children, while many Jews were not, was the sheerest nonsense to them, completely contrary to all truth that God had revealed up to that time, as they understood it.

SAME WRONG MESSAGE

In the light of these things, consider the traditional doctrine among Pentecostal believers today concerning the baptism of the holy Ghost. As a whole, most of them are adamant that sinners must be converted before that baptism may be received. Some Pentecostals insist not only on conversion preceding Spirit baptism, but on an additional experience they call sanctification that is received between conversion and Spirit baptism. Still others, such as those of the "Oneness" faith, insist that water baptism is required before one should receive the holy Ghost baptism, just as the very earliest believers did.

So, the message that sinners receive from the body of Christ today is practically the same message that Paul spent his life in Christ opposing. That erroneous message is that sinners must become God's people in order to qualify to receive the holy Ghost baptism. Standard doctrine today among Pentecostals concerning Spirit baptism is that it is only for God's people, only for those who have already been converted. But the revelation that burned within Paul's soul was that the holy Ghost baptism was not for saints, that *this baptism cannot possibly be for people in the kingdom of God*, for it is by the baptism of the holy Ghost that people enter into the kingdom of God. The baptism of the Spirit cannot follow conversion for it *is* conversion! It

can only be for people outside the body, for no one inside the body is without it.

Even at present, after so long a time, God's people are still drawing circles around the baptism of the Spirit which God has not drawn, leading sinners through all sorts of admissions, confessions, and initiations before instructing them to seek the baptism. And God is still surprising those who cling to such things, as He surprised Peter's companions at Cornelius' house, by baptizing people into the body of Christ simply because they come to Him in the name of His Son Jesus, hungering and thirsting for the "*righteousness, peace, and joy of the holy Ghost*".

Paul's gospel, not Peter's, fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy of a way being made that would be so simple even fools would not have to err while walking in it (Isa. 35:8). The only prerequisite for receiving the holy Spirit and being cleansed from all sin, according to Paul, is repentance in the name of Jesus. Anything else added by anyone is godless tradition. Conversion neither precedes nor post-dates spiritual baptism, for it is spiritual baptism which converts. There is not one example in the New Testament of anyone being converted before being baptized by the Spirit.¹¹ And though there be many thousands testifying today of being born again (or "saved" as they say) before receiving the holy Ghost baptism, not one of them is with understanding. We may have a change of mind and heart, we may be touched by God's love, or be delivered of evils great or small, and yet be unconverted. There are many genuine, thrilling, and healing experiences with Jesus that we may have without being born again! But there is only one genuine experience of new birth: Pentecostal baptism.

There is no such thing as a non-Spirit-baptized member of the body of Christ, for we are made members of the body of Christ by the baptism of the Spirit. This was the major doctrinal battle of Paul's time, and it remains one of the great doctrinal battles for us to win, for the glory of God and the good of God's people.

The fundamental problem with the Jews of Paul's time requiring circumcision for Gentiles, or requiring John's baptism, or any other ceremony that was under the Law God gave them, is similar to the problem caused by Christian sects in requiring their ceremonies. The problem is this: the use of any ceremonial rite implies that Christ alone is not sufficient. The holy works of the Law were made useless for obtaining salvation by what Jesus did, and if useless for salvation, then those ceremonial works became nothing but vain ritual. Isaiah boldly prophesied that the day would come when God would turn the holy works of the Law into vain, sinful exercises deserving of the death penalty:

“He who kills an ox [will be] as if he slew a man; he who sacrifices a lamb [will be] as if he cut off a dog’s neck; he who offers an oblation [will be] as if he offered swine’s blood; he who burns incense [will be] as if he blessed an idol.” (Isaiah 66:3)

For anyone among the Gentiles in Paul's day, and for anyone at all now, to practice ceremonial rites is to imply an insufficiency in Christ. Jesus does not need and does not use any form of water baptism to save sinners. His baptism, his circumcision, his sacrifices, his garments for worship, his communion, and all other elements of service to God in this New Covenant, are spiritual. The chapter following, which deals with the relationship between salvation and works, will examine this aspect of the gospel in detail.

MY CREDENTIALS FOR WRITING CHAPTER FOUR: SALVATION AND WORKS

One evening at home, while I was still a seminary student, my wife and I decided to read the Bible. We chose to read Paul's letter to the Galatians, and when I read aloud the first words of greeting from Paul, I felt, as if a weight, the soberness of the holy Spirit settle upon me. I cannot say that I *read* the book of Galatians to Barbara; I *preached* it – all six chapters! But I did not preach it to her alone; I preached it to myself!

When I had completed my sermon, I could remember certain phrases I had used – I could even have written out some of the very words that came out of my mouth – but I could not have given an explanation of what those words meant if it had been demanded of me at gunpoint. I wondered at some of the things I had said, and I knew that God had visited me, but what did it all mean?

Some weeks after that precious experience, I recorded a sermon for our weekly radio program, and based my message on some of the things I remembered God had spoken through me that night at home with my wife. On the night that the program aired, I was visiting in the home of Brother Earl Pittman, who was listening intently to the message, leaning forward in his chair. At one point during the sermon, with great feeling, Brother Earl said, "Man, that is good!"

But I was sitting there, still wondering what I was talking about! I still did not understand my own message. So, I replied to Brother Earl, also with great feeling, "Well, explain it to me!"

But all Earl could do was look at me. He had been rejoicing in the message, but until that moment, when I implored him to explain it to me, I think he did not realize that he didn't

understand it either! We both could feel the liberating joy of the message; there was no doubt that God was saying something very important to us, but what was the truth God was trying to show us that gave our hearts such inexplicable joy and peace?

In about six months or so, the Lord graciously allowed me to understand the message I had preached, and it is, indeed, a message that will bring great liberty and joy to God's people everywhere. In this chapter, I have explained in full this precious, hidden truth that is so great that it made Brother Earl, as well as my wife and I, rejoice in it before we comprehended it.

CHAPTER FOUR

Salvation and Works

IGNORANT AND UNSTABLE

“For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.”

(Eph. 2:8-10)

“And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which some things difficult to understand, which they who are ignorant and unstable twist, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.”

(2Pet. 3:15-16)

There are, indeed, some things difficult to understand in Paul’s letters, and Ephesians 2:8-10 is one of them. Those verses, as much as anything Paul ever wrote, have been twisted by “ignorant and unstable” men to the destruction of many a soul. Let’s take a careful and prayerful look at these and similar Scriptures which will, I’m sure, open to you a new world of understanding of the Savior and of God’s will for His people everywhere.

STATING THE QUESTION

In saying that our salvation is “not of works,” was Paul saying that the behavior of believers is not taken into account, concerning their hope of salvation? Is he really saying, as some teach, that regardless of whether God’s children do good or evil in this life, they will still receive eternal life with God? Of course not. Paul wrote:

“But after your hardness and impenitent heart, you are treasuring up for yourself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds. To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, [God will give] eternal life, but unto those who are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, [God will pour out] indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that does evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile, but glory, honor, and peace, to every man that does good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.”

(Rom. 2:5-10)

Clearly, eternal life will be given only to those who do good, and eternal damnation will be given to “*every soul of man who does evil*.” How, then, could Paul say that our salvation does not depend on works? Furthermore, if our deeds do not determine whether we will be saved or damned, how could Jesus speak of the dead being raised, “*those who have done good unto a resurrection of life, but those who have practiced evil unto a resurrection of damnation.*” (Jn. 5:29)?

Was Peter giving empty warning to *believers* when he wrote:

“But as he who has called you is holy, so you be holy in all your conduct, for it is written, Be holy, for I am holy. And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.”

(1Pet. 1:15-17)

In John's great vision called Revelation, Jesus told him that only those who obeyed his commandments would be permitted to eat of the tree of life and enter into the city of God (Rev. 22:12-14). Besides this, how many of the prophets and apostles warned God's people that a Final Judgment was coming upon all men and that this Final Judgment will be based on their works! David (Ps. 62:12), Solomon (Prov. 24:11-12; Eccl. 12:14), Jesus (Mt. 16:27), John (Rev. 20:12-13), along with every writer of the books of the Bible, taught us that our works will determine our eternal destiny.

How then could Paul say that salvation was "not of works"?

The answer is easily seen once the word "salvation" is properly defined.

Basically, what is taught by many of the religious in this culture is that when a sinner repents and is converted, he "gets saved" at that moment. Therefore, as the current persuasion holds, everyone who believes has already received salvation, so that the body of Christ is comprised of "saved" people. But in the Scriptures we see a significantly different understanding of salvation. For example, Paul wrote, "*now is our salvation nearer than when we believed*" (Rom. 13:11). If "salvation" means "conversion" as Christians teach, then what was Paul saying? Our conversion is closer than when we believed? Or, when Jesus said, "*He who endures to the end shall be saved*", was he teaching that whoever endures to the end will be converted"? Of course not.

These Scriptures obviously conflict with the popular misuse of the word "salvation", for it never uses that word as a synonym for "conversion". Paul understood conversion to be the first step toward the salvation of God, which salvation would be given only to those who were converted and afterward were faithful to God.

Old Testament Israel again provides the prime example of this truth. Leaving Egyptian bondage, the people were led by Moses through the Red Sea into the Sinai Wilderness. There, they grieved God with sin until He refused to allow them to enter the promised land of Canaan. Every Israelite male twenty years old and older was condemned to die in the wilderness.¹² Forty years later, when they all

had died, Joshua led the remaining Israelites across the River Jordan into Canaan.

This journey had six major steps:

- 1 - Egypt
- 2 - Red Sea
- 3 - Mt. Sinai
- 4 - Wilderness
- 5 - Jordan River
- 6 - Promised Land

In a spiritual sense, these six steps exist in the New Testament, with different titles:

- 1 - Sin
- 2 - Repentance
- 3 - Conversion
- 4 - Life as a believer
- 5 - Death
- 6 - Salvation

Salvation is our hope; it is something we turn from sin to obtain. We cannot say that we have received salvation simply because we have turned from sin, any more than the Israelites could claim to have entered the promised land simply because they had crossed the Red Sea! Our Promised Land of eternal peace and rest is certainly promised to us who have been delivered from the bondage of sin; still, we must faithfully follow the cloud across the burning desert of this life in order to obtain it.

HEBREWS

So few people enjoy or appreciate the book of Hebrews that I have called it “the Leviticus of the New Testament.” I have concluded, however, that a major reason for the difficulty in understanding Hebrews is the popular misconception concerning the meaning of the word “salvation”. If someone were to say to the author of Hebrews, “I got saved last night,” the author of Hebrews would probably wonder why that person was still here on earth, for

the author of Hebrews unequivocally taught that “saved” people are those who faithfully served Christ all their days and now are with him. The rest of us are in the wilderness, on our way toward salvation.

Listen to this God-given exhortation to God’s people concerning Israel in the wilderness:

“Therefore, just as the holy Ghost says, Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the wilderness, when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation and said, They always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways. So I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.

“Consider it, brothers, that there be not in any of you an evil heart of unfaithfulness, in departing from the living God. Rather, exhort one another each day, while it is called ‘today,’ in order that none of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we firmly maintain our confident beginning until the end. This is the reason it is said, Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.

“For who, having heard, rebelled? Was it not those who had come out of Egypt with Moses? And with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not those who sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter into His rest, but those who disobeyed? And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

“Therefore, let us fear, lest, having a promise left to us of entering into His rest, any of you seem to be excluded. For we have heard the gospel as well as they, but the word which was heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith by the hearers. . . .

Therefore, let us labor to enter into that rest, lest anyone fall in the same pattern of disobedience.”

(Heb. 3:7-4:2, 11)

Not all who were rescued from Egyptian slavery were allowed to enter the promised land, and not all who have been converted to Christ will be saved. Salvation will be given only to those who are faithful to their Deliverer and who do not harden their hearts against Him *after* He brings them out of bondage.¹³

This is the importance of “today” for God’s people everywhere. Having yesterday obeyed God’s commandment to repent and believe the gospel, are we still, today, yielding to His command? Or has the deceitfulness of sin subtly dulled our ears and hardened our hearts to what He would yet have us to do? In this sense, “*today is the day of salvation*” (2Cor. 6:2), for it is only our present spiritual condition that counts before the Lord. Or, as my revered father taught the flock of God under his care, “The only thing that matters with God is this day onward.”

It is the constant theme of every biblical teacher that members of the body of Christ are required to be faithful unto death in order to be counted worthy of salvation. This was Jesus’ message to all seven of the pastors in Revelation (2:7, 11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21). And those exhortations were consistent with the message he gave while he was still among us:

“And then will many be offended, and shall betray one another, and will hate one another. And many false prophets will arise, and will deceive many. And because iniquity will abound, the love of many will wax cold. But he who endures unto the end, the same will be saved.”

(Mt. 24:10-13)

HOPE

If believers are not yet saved, one might ask, then what is the difference between saints and sinners? The answer is *hope*. To be without Christ is to be without any hope of salvation (cp. Eph. 2:12). But for Christ to dwell in us is to have hope of eternal life (Tit. 1:2;

3:7). Christ within us is a source of joy about which the world knows nothing (Rom. 5:2), as well as a source of boldness that the world has always misunderstood (Heb. 6:17-20), and that precious hope is a primary motivation for keeping ourselves from worldliness (cp. 1Jn. 3:2-3). Having the hope of salvation compels us to live so that we might receive it. Paul wrote:

“For we are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope. For what a man sees, why does he yet hope for it? But if we hope for that which we do not see, then we wait for it with patience.” (Rom. 8:24-25)

KEPT BY POWER

Because Paul wanted to see his converts saved in the end, he continually warned them to obey Christ and be separate from the world. The surest way to accomplish this separation was, and is to be filled with the Spirit of God, for it is only God’s power by which the saints overcome the unbelief, lust, and fears of the world. Outside the keeping power of God’s Spirit, we all are certain to fall for the clever devises of Satan, the errors of foolish men, and perhaps most dangerous of all, our own opinions and desires. Peter wrote:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and unto an incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance, reserved in heaven for you who, through faith, are kept by the power of God unto the salvation ready to be revealed in the end time.” (1Pet. 1:3-5)

When Paul wrote that the gospel of Christ is “*the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes*” (Rom. 1:16), he was agreeing with Peter; that is, he was saying that salvation will be given to every believer who trusts in God’s power until salvation comes. He was not saying that sinners are given salvation at their conversion.

Paul exhorted believers to learn to rely on the power and wisdom of God's Spirit. Men may sound theologically profound and have impressive personalities, but God, and God only, is worthy of utter trust, and God only has power to save. He told the Corinthians:

"My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

(1Cor. 2:4-5)

Salvation will be given to believers who walk in the Spirit and do God's will. In order to be able to live that way, we must let Christ live in us; we are incapable of godliness without God. But with God, we may have power over our own base desires, power to humble ourselves to do His will, and we may have this power in every situation we face.

GLORIFIED

Salvation, then, is the hope and the goal of a believer's life, not their conversion. So, how did so many of us develop such an odd understanding of salvation as to confuse salvation with conversion? That is hard to answer. It may be in part because conversion is such a wondrous gift of God that it is a kind of salvation, if we define salvation in this case as "rescue". Indeed, the New Testament writers, in rare instances, do use the word "salvation" in this manner (e.g. 2Tim. 1:8-9; Tit. 3:5; Jude 5). Fairly common as well are references to a present state of "being saved," with the understanding that in these cases the definition of "saved" is "*kept from committing sin by the power of the Spirit*" (cp. 1Cor. 1:18). No biblical writer would ever have considered someone "being saved" if that person were living a sinful life. A believer who is practicing sin is being lost, not being saved.

Beyond all contradiction, however, the major biblical use of "saved" or "salvation" is in reference to being glorified with Christ at the end of the world. The primary emphasis of the biblical writers was the preparation of the members of the body of Christ to receive their

inheritance: the salvation of their souls. The apostles never boasted of already being saved, although they humbly expressed their confidence that they would be saved in the end (e. g. Acts 15:7-11).

TWO ROCKS

This light on salvation will seem, for many, to contradict the two most quoted passages of Scripture concerning salvation: Romans 10:9-10 and Acts 16:29-31. These Scriptures provide two classic examples of misinterpretation of Scriptures because of tradition and neglect of context.

First, let's consider Romans 10:9-10, in its context:

“For Moses describes the righteousness that is of the Law, saying, The man who does those things will live by them. But the righteousness that is of faith speaks this way: Say not in your heart, Who shall ascend into the heaven (that is, to bring Christ down from above), or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead).”

“But what does it say? The word is near you, even in your mouth and in your heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach, that if you will confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and will believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

After Moses gave Israel the commandments of God at Sinai, he led them in their forty years of wilderness wanderings until they approached the border of the promised land. There, within sight of “Canaan’s fair and happy land,” Moses was to die, but not before delivering a final, lengthy sermon to the nation. The entire book of Deuteronomy is comprised of little else besides this last sermon of Moses. In it, he not only reviewed and restated basic elements of the Law (hence the name “Deuteronomy” meaning “second law”), he also summarized Israel’s wilderness experiences, along with giving many

new commandments and exhortations to obedience when they crossed Jordan to possess Canaan. And when Moses had reminded them of all they had learned and experienced, he took a few moments more to make clear to Israel that he had given them all they needed to know in order to do the will of God. God's word was now in their hearts, not hidden in some distant place; therefore, they could do God's will and had no claims on ignorance. Moses said (Deut. 30:11-14),

"For this commandment which I command you this day is not hidden from you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, Who will go up for us to heaven and bring it [the commandment of God] unto us, so that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very near you, in your mouth, and in your heart, that you may do it."

The heathen nations around them would have to hear the commandments and study them if they were ever to know God's will. But Israel had lived with God's commandments forty years now, and knew them, and had no need to search for them.

WHAT SINNERS CANNOT DO

This was, as well, the spiritual condition of the Roman believers to whom Paul wrote. Just as Moses was speaking to people who had received and learned the Law, Paul was speaking to people who had received and learned Christ (cp. Rom. 1:7-12). Thus, when he (quoting Moses) told the Romans, "*Say not in your heart, 'Who shall ascend into heaven?'*" it was because Christ was already in their hearts that they needed not send to heaven. These Roman believers, like the Israelites in Deuteronomy, already knew God's commandments; they already knew what was required of them in order to be saved in the end.

“The word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach.”
 (Rom. 10:8)

The “word of faith” was already living in the hearts of the people to whom Paul was speaking. They already knew the will of God for their lives. It was not something hidden or distant from them. It was simple and clear to their minds. The word which God had planted long ago in the heart of each of these saints was *“That if you [saint of God] confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you [saint of God] will be saved”* (Rom. 10:9).

So, in Romans 10:9, Paul was not explaining to sinners how to be converted; he was reminding the saints of what they must do to be saved! **Sinners cannot confess Christ.** The very act of sin denies him (cp. Tit. 1:15-16). The only confession a sinner can make is the confession of sin! The saints, those in whom Christ dwells, are the ones who are to confess Christ, and they are to do so “unto salvation”; that is, to the end.

Consider this question Paul asks in verses 13-14a:

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?”

In other words, an unbeliever cannot do what the Bible refers to as “calling on the name of the Lord.” The biblical phrase, “calling upon the name of the Lord”, is used exclusively of communication of believers with God (e.g. Acts 9:14; 1Cor. 1:2; 2Tim. 2:22; 1Pet. 1:17; see also Zeph. 3:9). What Paul is saying is that only the born-again people who keep communicating with God will be saved in the end, for they alone (by God’s Spirit – Rom. 8:15) are able to call upon the name of the Lord.

The confusion of “saved” with “converted” during the twentieth century led to a tragic misunderstanding of Romans 10:9-10. In the last half of that century, this error actually became standard among millions of believers. It was not used as an exhortation to believers to

be faithful unto salvation, but as an exhortation to sinners to do something they cannot do (confess Christ) in order to receive what sinners cannot receive (salvation).

It is not impossible for sinners to repent and be converted; it is impossible for them to be saved – unless they first repent and are converted. When Paul wrote that “*Christ came into the world to save sinners*” (1Tim. 1:15), he quickly added “*of whom I am chief.*” He had in mind the mighty love and mercy of God in Christ’s coming and dying for sinners so that they might find forgiveness and, at the end, be saved from the destruction of the world and the wicked. Paul was not saying that he was still practicing sin or that sinners could expect to be saved at the end of the world. Instead, he was recalling the evil person he had been and the blasphemous acts against God he had committed before Jesus stopped him. No sinners will be saved at the final judgment. Peter points this out with a question:

“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God. And if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of those who obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (1Pet. 4:17-18)

When the twentieth century tradition of defining conversion as salvation is combined with Romans 10:9-10, those verses do seem to be instructing sinners as to how to be converted. But when we rightly understand what salvation itself is, and when we understand the Old Testament context of Romans 10:9-10, it is easy to see that Paul was speaking to the saints at Rome *concerning something that yet lay before them!* Those verses are not for sinners; they are for the children of God, those who have repented of their sins and have been converted.

ACTS 16

Having said these things concerning Romans 10:9-10, the famous verses from Acts 16:30-31 should need but scant attention. The context (vv. 16-34) clearly shows that the jailor’s question, “*What*

*Believe on the Lord
Jesus Christ, and
thou shalt be saved,
and thy house.*

Acts 16:31



must I do to be saved?” should not be taken to mean, “What must I do to be converted?” Feeling the tremendous force of the earthquake, he thought his city (and himself in particular) was being destroyed by God for their mistreatment of Paul and Silas. Consequently, in this scene, he came running into the innermost prison to plead with Paul and Silas for instructions on how to escape the wrath of their God. Paul’s response was complete:

*“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,
and you will be saved, and your house.”*

No doubt, the jailor was at that moment willing to do just that. My guess is that at that dreadful moment, he would have been willing to believe anything Paul said. It is only conjecture, but when Paul told him to believe in Jesus, the terrified man probably replied, “I do believe! I do believe! . . . Who is he?”

The jailor needed to know who Jesus was and what he demanded of him. Paul must have thought so, too. Verses 32-34 tell us that Paul went to the jailor’s house and “spoke unto him the word of the Lord.” Subsequently, the jailor and his household were baptized (with the Spirit).¹⁴ Thus the jailor began “believing on God with all his

house" (v. 34). And having begun to believe, the promise that he should be saved was his, if he continued in the faith.

PAUL AND TIMOTHY

A good way to demonstrate the differing attitudes of biblical saints and modern believers concerning salvation is in this manner. Paul wrote to his beloved fellow-laborer Timothy:

"Take heed to yourself, and to the doctrine; continue in them. For in doing this, you will both save yourself and those who hear you." (1Tim. 4:16)

Had Timothy been a typical modern believer, he might well have written Paul this response:

Dear Brother Paul,

I know I'm already saved, and nobody can make me doubt that! Don't you remember? You taught me that salvation is not of works (Eph. 2:8-9)?

Love,

Timothy

SAVED THROUGH FAITH

We are saved by grace through faith; therefore, faith is a very valuable possession. But faith may be weakened or lost through disobedience, neglect, or deception. And with the loss of faith, the hope of salvation is also lost.

Another word for "faith" is "confidence." And, as with faith, confidence is not something we may simply decide we are going to have. It is not something that is of the will of man. Rather, it naturally arises from a clean heart. Guilt replaces faith when disobedience occurs, for guilt itself naturally arises from an unclean heart. Saving confidence, or saving faith, is, therefore, a quality that exists only in the hearts of children of God who live clean, obedient lives.

As a young boy, my father was commanded by his father to have the kindling chopped by the time he returned from work. During the

day, he not only chopped the kindling but he also shucked the corn. At sunset, he eagerly was waiting for his father to come home to see what he had done. This eagerness is the biblical equivalent of faith, or confidence. His heart was clear. He obeyed his father's commandment, and then he had "gone the second mile" to do things he knew would please his father. John wrote:

"Loved ones, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God, and whatever we ask, we receive from Him because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight."

(1Jn. 3:21-22)

The opportunities we have to obey God and then go the second mile to please Him are precious, fleeting opportunities. To neglect to do good is to become destitute of faith, for faith is the spiritual result of doing good. Consider this fatherly, compassionate exhortation found in Hebrews:

"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which has great recompense of reward. For you have need of patience, that, after you have done the will of God, you might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe unto the saving of the soul."

(Heb. 10:35-39)

This "saving of the soul" is what we hope and live for. It is the reward of righteousness. It is eternal life and rest. Accordingly, it is the one blessing Satan most envies.

It was not without purpose that the leaders of the earliest saints strictly warned them to be diligent in prayer, faith, goodness, and love, and to be perfect and pure and free from every ungodliness. They knew our salvation depended on it! During and since that time, it has

been one of Satan's highest priorities to convince us that this is not true.

If he can convince us that salvation will be given without regard to the quality of our lives, then half the battle of drawing us into godless living is won. If he robs our hearts of the understanding that "the wages of sin is death", then he can easily rob our hearts of the fear of God. And if the fear of God is not a part of our lives, evil will not seem as hateful as it is, for the fear of God creates hatred for evil (Prov. 8:13). And if Satan can deceive us into believing that sin is not as dangerous as it is and that holiness is not as precious as it is, his desire to moderate our zeal for righteousness and obtain salvation will eventually be accomplished.

Your salvation depends upon your deeds in this life. That is the message most hated and dreaded by Satan, for that is the only message which will stir people to seek a holiness before the Lord that they can know about. If people *really* believe that the kind of life they live will determine their eternal destiny, they will fear to do evil, learn to despise it, resist it, stand up against it, and condemn it, and that is exactly what Satan does not want.

For this reason, he persecutes every person whose life and voice speak out against sin. Jesus told his brothers (Jn. 7:7):

"The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify of it, that its works are evil."

Yet, in the face of the hatred of the world and the suffering which will ensue¹⁵, Paul steadfastly commanded God's children to "*have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*" (Eph. 5:11).

What many believers have been lulled into neglecting is the hatred of evil and the denunciation of it, both by word and deed. That is an essential element of true holiness. There is no holiness without it. And if no holiness, then no hope of ever seeing God (Heb. 12:14).

ERROR IN THE NAME OF TRUTH

But not all that at first appears evil may be evil, and not all that appears to be right is always right.¹⁶ We must bury ourselves in the

love of God and wisdom of His Spirit in order to learn what is truly good (that we might do it) and what is truly evil (that we might hate it). Paul said that Satan disguises himself as “an angel of light” (2Cor. 11:14). In other words, he propagates error in the name of the true Lord. And the sole reason for his disguise is to gain influence among God’s people. Any doctrine or tradition that leaves room for any work of darkness is of him.

There are many conflicting doctrines held as true by the multitude of sects within Christianity. Most of them are not directly from Satan. They are simply misunderstandings and opinions of men, which are not usually binding on the soul and are often outgrown and eventually forsaken. But there is a spirit of bondage that comes with the present confusion of salvation and conversion which men did not invent, and which bondage men are hardly able to escape.

One brother confessed to me that when he first heard this message, a spirit of fear troubled him. He was afraid the Lord would be angry with him if he confessed that he had not yet received his salvation, that it was the reward toward which he was striving in Christ. But it wasn’t the Lord’s anger he was sensing. And he is today more prepared to receive salvation than he was when he claimed he already had it. And had he not been taught that doctrinal error in the name of Jesus, it would not have bound him at all. For it was his love for Christ and his desire to please him that was compelling him to cling to what he thought Jesus wanted him to believe and confess.

FULL CIRCLE

Still, all false doctrines, whether of men or of Satan, have one common characteristic. They all excuse or condone at least one spiritual blemish in the lives of their adherents. Sometimes it takes a while for those blemishes to be made manifest, but they will show. As a result, the adherent to any false doctrine is made vulnerable to the influence of at least one unclean spirit. It is a dangerous thing to believe a lie about God.

Jesus said that if we continue to follow him, we would come to know the truth, and the truth would set us free (Jn. 8:31-32).¹⁷ The truth neither condones nor excuses any sin among the saints, because

the truth is that Christ is sufficient for your perfection in this present world (cp. Tit. 2:11-14).¹⁸ The truth leaves no room for demonic influence because “*God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all*” (1Jn. 1:5b), and “...as He is, so are we in this world” (1Jn. 4:17b).

As all the New Testament Scriptures show, the doctrine of the apostles is that the saints are to be God’s light to the world, and any saint who will not be what the Father has commanded him to be will not be saved. Jesus warned his disciples:

“Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning. And you yourselves be like men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding, so that when he comes and knocks, they may open for him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he comes will find watching. Truly, I say unto you, that he will gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he comes in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have allowed his house to be broken through.

Be you therefore ready also, for the Son of man is coming at an hour when you think not. Then Peter said to him, Lord, do you speak this parable to us, or also to everyone? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that



servant, whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing. Of a truth I tell you, that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But and if that servant should say in his heart, My lord delays his coming, and begins to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken, the lord of that servant will come in a day when he does not look for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.” (Lk. 12:35-46)

Obedience or disobedience will be the determining factor in the judgment of every child of God. Salvation or damnation rests in the moral quality of each saint's life. And so, we are now come full circle and are returned to our original question: If we must live holy lives in order to receive salvation, how then could Paul say that salvation is “not of works”?

PAUL'S GREATEST CHALLENGE

Let us understand *what kind of works* are of no use to help us attain to salvation. There are many different kinds of works mentioned in the Bible: works of the flesh, works of the Spirit, works of the devil, good works, and others. So, let's allow Paul himself to tell us what kind of works, or deeds, are no longer of any use for justification before God:

“Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.” (Rom. 3:20)

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law.” (Rom. 3:28)

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the Law; for by the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified.” (Gal. 2:16)

In saying that salvation is “not of works,” Paul was not saying that salvation is not of *good* works. Paul’s message was that the *ceremonial* works prescribed by Moses’ Law were no longer of any value; they were dead works, useless in the soul’s preparation to meet God. In order for anything to be a work of the Law, these four criteria must be met:

1. It must have been ordained by God for men to do or to make.
2. It must have been ordained during the time in which the Law was in effect (from Exodus 20 to Acts 2:4, though it may have been practiced before or after).
3. It must be ceremonial in nature or purpose.
4. It must point to a spiritual reality.

Physical circumcision, for example, is a work of the Law. Though given to Abraham before the Law (Gen. 17), it was also commanded by the Law (Lev. 12:2-3), as a ceremonial act that showed a man’s connection to Abraham. It also represented spiritual circumcision in the heart, as Paul explained to the believers in Rome (Rom. 2:28-29).

Using the above criteria for works of the Law, take some time to determine for yourself which of the following are works of the Law and which are not:

1. the veil in the temple
2. Moses’s rod
3. the Day of Atonement
4. the opening of the Red Sea
5. holy water (Num. 5:17f)
6. David’s sling
7. the passing of the wine and bread at the last supper
8. manna
9. the washing of the disciples’ feet (Jn. 13:4-15)
10. the golden calf (Ex. 32)
11. robes and costumes for worship (Ex. 28:1-4f)
12. the cloud of glory (Ex. 40:34-38)

13. the Passover
14. the rainbow
15. water baptism

For reasons which will be made even clearer as we continue, the correct answer is that all the odd numbered items are works of the Law and all the even numbered items are not.

The works of the Law were prophecy without words, prophecy acted out rather than spoken. What they symbolically prophesied was the kingdom and glory of Jesus Christ; and when he accomplished his work, the purpose for having symbolic works is finished. Therefore, as Paul emphasized, for believers now to perform works of the Law implicitly denies their fulfillment in Christ.

Paul's greatest challenge, and perhaps ours today, was to communicate to the hearts of God's people that Christ *alone* is sufficient. Those who were trying to lead Paul's Gentile converts into the Law's symbols were, as he said, only trying "*to make a fair shew in the flesh*" (Gal. 6:12). But more than that, those who had been spiritually circumcised in heart, who then submitted to circumcision of the flesh, were saying in effect that Christ, the fulfillment of that Old Testament symbol, was insufficient. This is why Paul asked the Galatians "*having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?*" (3:3).

The entire Galatian letter has to do with this crucial question. Paul had started this Gentile assembly in the liberty of the Spirit, but others came behind him bringing the message Paul battled throughout his ministry; namely, that it was necessary for Gentiles to be circumcised and obey the Law in order to be saved in the end (cp. Acts 15).

What Paul could not get so many of his sensitive Jewish brothers to understand was that Christ had not destroyed circumcision; he had perfected it. He had not destroyed the sacrificial system; he had become the perfect sacrifice. He had not destroyed the High Priesthood; he had simply become the perfect High Priest. And so it was with every other work of the Law. To be in Christ is to be beyond those carnal symbols. And to have been taken by the Spirit

beyond the works of the Law, and then turn to them, is to go backward and declare that the Christ you met was insufficient - to "fall from grace" (Gal. 5:4).

REMNANTS OF WORKS

All those things being understood, let us look at some ways in which present day believers are still clinging to remnants of works of the Law which Christ fulfilled.

First, and most prominent in our day, is water baptism. It was a work of the Law. It was ordained by God during the time of the Law (e.g. Lev. 14:8; Mt. 3:1), being a symbolic religious ceremony which pointed to the spiritual baptism of Christ.

The earliest believers, composed exclusively of Jews, rightly continued baptizing in water, as well as circumcising, offering sacrifices, and following every other precept of the Law. But Paul's message to the Gentiles was that in Christ, there is but one baptism (Eph. 4:5), and that this one baptism is in spirit (1Cor. 12:13). Having received the spiritual baptism of Jesus, the reality to which Old Testament water baptism pointed, where then is the need for a fleshly baptism? Paul's message, for which he was persecuted by both saints and sinners alike, was that the only baptism that counts for salvation is Jesus' baptism of the holy Ghost (cp. 1Pet. 3:20-21). And to practice the symbol after being baptized by Christ is to imply an insufficiency in Christ's fulfillment of that work of the Law.

Another example of a ceremonial work such as the Law commanded is special robes for worship. Our robe for worship now is to be the righteousness of God. Choir robes, nuns' habits, clerical collars, ministerial drapery, are all extensions of the era of symbols, a step backward from Christ. And whoever is involved in the use of such things simply has not realized the commanding sufficiency of Christ's fulfillment of the Law.

THE SUBSTANCE INTENDED

Christ was the master of communicating heavenly doctrine using earthly motifs. But it is both the blessing and the burden of God's teachers that in communicating to humans, earthly words and ideas

must be employed. A blessing, because familiar earthly realities may communicate the loftiest eternal truths to the simplest folk. A burden, because most of the time most of the people will seize upon the vehicle used rather than the substance intended.

Consider the washing of the apostles' feet in John 13:4-15. Peter asked, "*Lord, do you wash my feet?*" Jesus responded, "*You do not now understand what I'm doing, but later you'll understand.*" Peter obviously knew that Jesus was washing his feet, but he did not understand what Jesus was really doing. Jesus was simply using the earthly example of feet washing to communicate a heavenly message which would be understood by them only at a later time, when the Spirit came. He was not ordaining foot washing ceremonies; he was trying to communicate a spiritual truth to carnal minds!

Such is exactly the case with what is referred to as "holy communion." Jesus never intended for his followers to re-enact the physical last supper. His giving, and their consuming, of earthly bread and wine was merely the earthly vehicle used to communicate a spiritual reality which they would understand only after he was gone and the Spirit had come. The disciples did not know what Jesus was saying when he told them to eat his flesh and drink his blood (Jn. 6:53-56) any more than they knew what he was doing when he washed their feet. This is what he told his disciples they had to do to inherit eternal life:

"Therefore, Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I tell you, if you don't eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you do not have life in you. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up in the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him."

Anyone can see that Jesus was speaking figuratively here. But on that day, many of Jesus' disciples did not see that, even though the Lord promptly added this explanation:

*“It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh is worthless.
The words that I speak to you, they are spirit, and
they are life.”* (Jn. 6:63)

It is the Spirit that the saints drink together (1Cor. 12:13). And our fellowship with one another is the spiritual bread that we eat together!

*“I speak as to wise men; carefully measure what I say.
The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not our sharing
in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it
not our partaking of the body of Christ? For we,
being many are one loaf, one body, for we all share in
the one loaf.”* (1Cor. 10:15-17)

LIVED FOR US

The time is passed when we should have understood these things and should have been enjoying the liberty of Christ from ceremonial works. We should have already understood what “works of the Law” means, and should have spent the time and money wasted on them in prayer or study or almsgiving or some other work that will count for good when we face God. The only thing worse than having been entangled with those dead symbols for so long is to continue to be entangled with them.

It is rightly proclaimed that Jesus died for us. But how few understand that he also lived for us! Born under the Law for us, he was circumcised the eighth day for us, was baptized in water for us, kept the holy days and feast days for us, and fulfilled every other work of the Law for us. And once we are baptized by the Spirit into Christ, God not only considers us to have been crucified with him (Rom. 6:6), buried with him (Rom. 6:4), and risen with him (Col. 2:12), He also considers us to have been circumcised with him (Col. 2:11), and to have fulfilled the Law in every other respect.

Because of Jesus, we do not observe feast days, do not circumcise in the flesh, baptize in water, or perform any other work of the Law. Jesus did all that for us. His doing those things means we

need not do them, just as his dying for us means we need not die for our own sins. *He* is our righteousness. And he is sufficient.

To refuse Christ is to imply that his work was not godly. To come to Christ and *then* partake of carnal religious symbols is to imply that his work was not godly *enough*.

FREE TO OBEY

It is this message of liberty from works of the Law that was “twisted,” in Peter’s words, by “ignorant and unstable” men into a doctrine completely contrary to everything the Scriptures and the Spirit teach, a doctrine with an appeal which has not died.

On the basis of Scriptures such as Ephesians 2:8-9, Paul's message of the worthlessness of works of the Law has been misrepresented to mean that works of any kind are worthless, and that the reward of salvation will be given to anyone who has been converted, whether he lives a holy life or not. Those "ignorant, unstable men" were persuasive, however, and won converts, while the apostles labored to keep their alluring error from spreading, Jude wrote:

“I will therefore put you in remembrance, though you once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.” (Jude v. 5)

Paul warned the Corinthians not to listen to clever speakers who said that one could live an ungodly life and yet inherit God's kingdom:

“Or do you not know that the unjust will not inherit God’s kingdom? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor catamites, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor greedy folk, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor the rapacious, will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1Cor. 6:9-10)

It was never imagined by Jesus, Paul, Jude, or any biblical writer, that the reward of salvation would be given irrespective of one's works. Certainly, believers have been freed by the sacrifice of Christ

from works of the Law, but believers are not freed from the obligation to work. The body of Christ is indeed free from the handwritten ordinances of the Law, but that does not mean that we are without standards or that we may make up our own. That we are delivered from the Law of Moses does not mean that we are lawless.

By the power of the Spirit, God's people are free to obey God. No man without a Spirit-renewed mind can obey God "*because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the Law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you*" (Rom. 8:1-9a).

CONCLUSION

God's children are free to renounce two pernicious digressions from the truth. First, we must refuse fleshly ceremonies that waste our time and money. Water baptismal services are a waste of time. The baptism of Christ is sufficient. Bread and drink should be consumed at home or given to the poor; when we come together, let us partake of the Lord's supper, which is the communion of his blood (his Spirit) and the communion of his body (our brothers and sisters). Money spent on uniforms for worship is wasted – let us "put on Christ", and then come together to worship. And this we will do when we truly realize that Christ alone is sufficient!

We need desperately to move from shadows to the light of the Son, and then to stand firm in the liberty of Christ. The world needs to have grace ministered to it; neither ceremony nor symbol can cleanse a soul.

Secondly, we must learn, and teach, that the wages of sin is death – for the saint as well as for the sinner. We will be saved or lost depending on our works. If we, through the strength of God's Spirit, live holy lives, we will someday see our God; but if we do not do God's will, we will be damned. The body must escape those alluring doctrines which would have us believe we may live un-full-filled spiritual lives and yet be saved in the end. "*For if you [God's people] live after the flesh, you will die, but if you [God's people], through*

the Spirit, put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” (Rom. 8:13).

Peter will conclude this message with this inspired exhortation found in 1Peter:1:17-18:

“And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear, forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain way of life received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

Amen

Footnotes

1. (Page 6) Ezekiel prophesied during the sixth century BC. The Exodus most likely took place during the fourteenth century BC.
2. (Page 12) The length of time from the possession of Canaan by Israel until the time they demanded a king is between four and five centuries.
3. (Page 13) Admah and Zeboim were two cities destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah. See Gen. 19:24-25 and Deut. 29:23.
4. (Page 14) At the time of the latest historical books of the Old Testament (Ezra-Nehemiah), the Medo-Persian Empire ruled the world. At the beginning of the New Testament books, Rome ruled the world. This means that between the time of Ezra-Nehemiah and the time of Jesus, the Medo-Persian Empire fell, Greece ascended and descended as a world power, and Roman rule spread over the known world. Approximately, the time for all this involved 400 years.
5. (Page 14) For example, one may consider the story of the defiled altar in 1Maccabees 4:36-46.

The presence of Anna the prophetess (Lk. 2:36-38) does not contradict this. She certainly was not a prophet in the vein of Elijah, Isaiah, or the many other well-known prophets who were called to guide or chasten the nation. God's presence was still with Israel to some degree all through this period, so that even Caiaphas, one of Jesus' enemies, prophesied under His power (Jn. 11:49-52), and healing was, in small measure, provided for (cp. Jn. 5:1-4).

6. (Page 29) For purposes of distinction, “tabernacle” should be used when referring to the tent of worship which Moses constructed at Mt. Sinai, and “temple” should only be used when referring to Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem.
7. (Page 30) For example, compare these similarities between heaven and its earthly counterpart:
 - A. Made without hands: 1Kgs. 6:7 with Heb. 9:11
 - B. The ark within it: 1Kgs. 6:19 with Rev. 11:19
 - C. Foursquare: 1Kgs. 6:20 with Rev. 21:16
 - D. Pure gold: 1Kgs. 6:21-22 with Rev. 21:18
 - E. The two cherubim: 1Kgs. 6:23, 27, 28
with Zech. 4:3-5, 11-14; Rev. 11:3-4
 - F. Cherubim figures: Ex. 26:1, 31; 1Kgs. 6:29, 32, 35;
7:29, 36 with Ps. 68:17; Mt. 26:53; Heb. 12:22;
Rev. 5:11
 - G. Posts: 1Kgs. 6:33 with Isa. 6:4a
 - H. Foundation: 1Kgs. 7:10 with Rev. 21:19-20
 - I. Molten sea: 1Kgs. 7:23 with Rev. 4:6a, 15:2
 - J. Curtains: Ex. 26:1 with Ps. 104:2; Isa. 40:22
8. (Page 38) The disciples could not have received the Spirit in John 20:19-23. Jesus here only ordained them (1) to receive the Spirit (v. 22), and (2) to go out and begin to preach (v. 21), and (3) to forgive and retain sins (v. 23). None of those things happened at that time.

It cannot be concluded from Jesus’ words to Mary Magdalene after his resurrection (Jn. 20:17) that he had already ascended to the Father, made the eternal sacrifice, been accepted and glorified by God, and then entered again into his fleshly body to return to earth. Some teach that he had done so in order to give the holy Spirit to the ten disciples in this scene (Thomas was not there) and then, later, returned to the Father in order to send back the baptism of the Spirit.

Besides this being an unreasonable and inexplicable order of events, it contradicts the immense weight of clear scriptural evidence. For instance, Jesus told his followers that what they

would receive at Pentecost was “the promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4). But if the disciples received the Spirit *before* Pentecost, then “the promise of the Father” is the *baptism* of the Spirit, and not the Spirit itself (contrary to Gal. 3:14 and Eph. 1:13, etc.)

Another minor point. That Jesus could appear into a room with its doors and windows shut and locked is not the proof that some suppose it is that the Lord was in a glorified body before his ascension. After all, which takes more power to do, to appear in a room with locked doors or to walk on water? Jesus had that kind of miracle-working power the entire time he was here on earth. Moreover, Philip was involved in a very similar miracle in the book of Acts, and he certainly was still in his fleshly body (Acts 8:39-40).

9. (Page 44) As will be explained in detail later, this was because water baptism was a work of the Law – to which all Jews (but only Jews) were obligated.
10. (Page 48) That Gentiles who were converted had been cleansed sufficiently by the blood of Christ to be worthy of acceptance into the fellowship of the rest of the (Jewish) body of believers without submitting to the rites of the Mosaic Law is more than a socio-religious issue between Jews and non-Jews. It is a matter that goes to the heart of the gospel. Paul understood that it was no less than a question of the degree of the sufficiency of Christ for our salvation.

The issue is this: Is Jesus Christ, by himself, able to sanctify the Gentiles so completely that they are fit company for sanctified Jews, who were ritually pure according to the Law of Moses? It was Paul’s contention that whether a person is Jew or Gentile, the Law’s ceremonies were irrelevant to the question of justification before God. Paul’s astonishing and much-hated doctrine was that by the holy Spirit, Christ cleanses both Jew and Gentile through faith (Rom. 3:28-30), without the employment of any ceremony whatsoever. Whether one is circumcised or uncircumcised is no longer relevant, as concerns being acceptable

with God (Gal. 5:6). This was a revolutionary doctrine, but Paul was adamant: Jesus Christ *alone* is able to supply *everything anybody needs* to be pure in God's sight and prepared to meet God in peace.

We may approach the same truth in this manner: God accepted Abraham's worship upon the high places of Canaan (Gen. 12:7-8). But when, under the Law of Moses, God ordained Jerusalem and the temple to be the acceptable place of worship, it became idolatrous for men to worship in high places as Abraham did (cp. Deut. 12:1-14; Jer. 2:19-20; 3:1-6; Ezek. 6:1-7). Later, God again moved the acceptable place of worship, this time out of the ceremonies and forms required by the Law and into the Spirit (Jn. 4:19-24), and, in time, it became idolatrous for the Jews to continue serving God according to the Law of Moses. For the Gentiles, it was idolatrous even to start worshiping God according to Moses' Law, for it never was for them.

Now, for us all, Jew and Gentile, to worship God in spirit is, and will remain forever, the only acceptable way to worship. The Law's rites are now "dead works".

This issue is Paul's major concern in his letters to the saints in Rome, Galatia, and Colossae, while it plays a major role in the books of Ephesians, Philippians, and Hebrews. The issue is also touched on, in his other letters. The arrogance of many of the Jews against the Gentiles is often mentioned by Paul. In one case, he says that he has even been forbidden by the Jews to so much as speak to Gentiles (1Thes. 2:14-16).

Considering the attitude of his contemporaries, especially the attitude of the community of faith at that time, Paul's determined preaching to the Gentiles is indication of his determination to obey God and make the Gentiles aware of their newly granted privilege to eternal life, apart from the Law and its ceremonies.

11. (Page 53) Receiving the Spirit *is* conversion, for "*If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*" (Rom. 8:9). That the baptism of the Spirit is when the Spirit is received is an important point. This may be more easily understood with

reference to Romans 8:9. With that Scripture in mind, please read the stories in Acts which include baptism of the Spirit (Acts 2, 8, 9, 10, 19), asking the question, “When did those people receive the Spirit?”

12. (Page 59) With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, the faithful spies. See Numbers 13, 14.
13. (Page 62) The bride of Christ is not the entire body of Christ. Rather, the bride of Christ will be comprised of the members of the body who have been faithful to God until death.
14. (Page 69) Paul would not have baptized a Gentile with water. That would have been contrary to everything he taught the Gentiles. Jesus did not send Paul with Peter’s gospel, which included John’s water baptism, so that he would have baptized Gentiles with water, as Peter once did (1Cor. 1:13-17; Acts 10:46-48).
15. (Page 72) Though not much preached now, it is an integral part of the gospel that those who obey it will, *without exception*, suffer for doing so. (Mt. 5:10-12; 2Cor. 1:3-7; Phip. 1:29; 2Thes. 1:5; 2Tim. 2:12; 3:10-13; 1Pet. 4:1, 12-19).
16. (Page 72) To discern between good and evil is not easy for young converts to do. According to Hebrews 5:14, it can only be accomplished by those who are of full age in Christ.
17. (Page 73) It is important to note that Jesus did not say, “He that *begins* to follow me is free.” He said rather that if we would *continue* in his word, we would learn the truth and be made free (Jn. 5:31-32). Babes in Christ, Paul said, are still of a carnal mind (1Cor. 3:1-2). It takes time for the mind of Christ to develop in us. See Ephesians 4:11-16, and note #16 above.
18. (Page 74) Perfection in Christ *is* attainable in this life. It is commanded of us by Jesus in Matthew 5:48. Of course, not even Jesus achieved the kind of perfection that carnally-minded

men expect. But perfection before God is provided for in the atonement and is expected of the saints.