



# DISCIPLESHIP

FAITH BIBLE  
INSTITUTE

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# Lesson One

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## ***What About Salvation?***

*Lesson Text:* I John 5:11-13

*Lesson Objective:* To help lead you to a Biblical understanding of what salvation involves and how to know that you have eternal life.

**Introduction:** The term "saved" has a number of synonyms or equivalent terms. We can say one is born again; has eternal life; is a child of God; is a member of the family of God; is regenerated, or made alive; is justified and forgiven; or delivered, and many more. Each of these are descriptive terms of the change that has taken place spiritually in our lives when we have repented of our sins and have trusted in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as the means of our salvation. This will be better understood when we search the scriptures and find out what God has to say about this subject. We can not cover all subjects, but we will hopefully provide enough information to help satisfy the hungry and inquisitive soul. I hope you will consider this a lifetime challenge to learn of the wonderful blessings that God has provided for those who will trust Him. The more you study and dig into God's word, the more riches you will find. We will try to look at the basics and discover what is necessary for your enrichment and spiritual growth.

### Getting A Better Understanding

We need to back up just a bit and look at sin from God's perspective if we are to properly understand what it means to be saved. Sin, as an act, is the transgression of God's law. It is missing the mark. More importantly it is the result of man's inherent depravity. Man was created in a state or condition of holiness and voluntarily chose to fall from that state. Because of that action, all mankind are born sinners. The Bible teaches us that we do not become sinners because we sin, but that we sin because we are born sinners. It is because of sin that God calls upon men everywhere to repent. Because of sin, all mankind are now considered to be guilty before God. We are guilty of breaking God's law. With God it doesn't matter if we are guilty of a minor infraction, or a major one. He has stated in James 2:10 "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."

This problem of sin creates an additional one, which is God's punishment of sin. God declares that sin earns wages, and those wages are death, or separation from God. Everyone on this earth is born a sinner, separated from God because of sin. If we die in this same state we will go into an eternity separated from God. More directly to the point, those who are still in sin at the time of their death are cast into hell. Hell will eventually be cast into the lake of fire. God is holy and He can not allow sin to enter into His presence. Therefore, the problem of man's sin must be dealt with, or he will face an eternity separated from God.

Man is incapable of escaping this terrible ruin on his own. Man is insufficient in his power to "save" himself from this awful death, this horrible separation from God. God has openly declared that it is not by works, but by faith that we can be saved, or delivered from this alarming destruction. God describes man, in Ephesians 2:1, as being "dead in trespasses and sins." God uses this word picture to help us understand what plight man is really in. A dead man can do nothing to help himself. A lost man can do nothing to save himself. He must be dependent upon what God has already done, and what God has already provided. Salvation is not received because we "turn over a new leaf," or because we join a church, or are baptized. We do not remove the guilt of our sin, before God, by attempting to start over and live a better life, or by some ceremony. We need to not only be saved from our sin, but from our inability to do anything about this sin.

## The Good News Of The Gospel

Now that we better understand what we need to be saved from, we can direct our attention to how a person is saved. It is important to stress that God cannot rightfully forgive sin without payment for the penalty of sin. God's forgiveness of sin, and our deliverance from sin and its penalty, depends upon God's requirements for justice being met. We can compare this to our own judicial system. If you are found guilty of a violation of the law and a penalty is issued, before you can stand in a just position before the court, payment must be made. In the eyes of the court, you are considered just, once payment, or restitution, has been made. In order for man to stand in a just position before God, payment for the penalty of sin must be made. As already stated, it is impossible for man, himself, to pay the penalty God requires in order for His justice to be met.

By looking at things from God's perspective we find that man is a sinner. We also learn that man is lost and condemned before God, and he is incapable of saving himself. Moreover we see that the penalty of sin, and God's holiness, requires the condemned sinner be punished. The good news is that we are saved, or delivered, from this penalty by grace, through faith. Grace is God's unmerited favor, and the power to comply with what He has commanded. In Romans 10:8-10, God says "But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." In order for one to be saved, and know it, they must place his or her trust, or faith, in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, according to the scriptures. This belief cannot be a mental or intellectual assent to some facts alone. From this passage we can see that believing must be done from the heart, or from the whole man.

The moment a person exercises faith in Christ they find they are no longer condemned. It is by faith that a sinner is justified, or made right before God. While we understand that man himself cannot pay for the penalty of sin, we also understand that Christ has taken our sins upon Himself that we might be saved. It is Jesus Christ that has paid for the penalty of sin, and it is by the death of Christ that we are reconciled to God. The good news is that though the wages of sin is death, "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ met the penalty God demanded. This is the greatest demonstration of God's love for us. In Romans 5:8, we read, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He died on our behalf. Christ's life and death satisfied the requirements, or the demands, of God's law. In writing about what Christ did when He died, one author wrote, "Christ suffered the exact equivalent of that which those for whom He died would have suffered in hell." Though all of us are guilty sinners before God, God has provided the means by which we can be delivered from any penalty His justice requires. God does not overlook our sin, but He forgives our sin based upon what Christ has done in our interest. God has promised eternal life and forgiveness to those who will but believe and trust in Him.

## The Security Of The Gospel

Once a person believes, God promises that person eternal life and freedom from condemnation. If I believe that Christ died for me and I have placed my trust in Him, I no longer have to worry about my eternal future. I have been saved from the penalty of sin and from the power of sin. When a person is saved, or born again, they receive spiritual life. John 5:24 states that they have "passed from death unto life." Nothing can now separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. We need to understand that God is the only one who can condemn anyone, His judgment is final. Christ has fully satisfied the requirements of God's law and justice. Therefore there is no power, no higher authority, which is able to condemn us. Nothing can take the eternal life that God has given to us away. A true believer has committed his eternal destiny into the hands of God through Jesus Christ. Like Paul we can say as he did in II Timothy 1:12 "...For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

Our security in this salvation is not dependent upon ourselves, but upon the power and love of God. Our main concern should be that we have rightfully placed our trust in what God says will save and nothing else. At the beginning of this lesson we used I John 5:11-13 as our main Lesson Text. These verses clearly declare that those who believe in Christ have eternal life, not temporary life. It also proclaims that this was written so we might know we have eternal life. This is in essence talking about assurance of salvation. Our assurance is based upon the

faithfulness of God. Will God be faithful to the promises He has made in His word? He has promised eternal life, freedom from condemnation, and to keep all those who will put their trust in him. It is a great comfort and encouragement to know that God cannot lie.

Christ has promised to "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." We can have full assurance of our salvation because of the promises and the faithfulness of God. In order for one to lose this salvation means God would have to be unfaithful to His own promises. This is an impossibility. God has given to us eternal life and we are promised in John 10:28, that we "shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand!" To lose this life would make God a liar and Christ a failure since this life and our deliverance are dependent upon God alone. Our enjoyment and assurance of salvation are a matter of trusting the word of God and the faithfulness of God. What a joy to know we are eternally secure in the salvation of God. This should give us ample reason to praise Him for our deliverance from the penalty and power of sin. Glory to God for His marvelous mercy and grace.

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## Study Questions

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1. According to Romans 3:10, before an individual is saved, they are considered to be \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Romans 3:23 adds that all of us have \_\_\_\_\_ and come short of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. When we talked of sin in our lesson we mentioned that it was a transgression of God's Law, but we also mentioned that it is what?
4. How many sins must one commit in order to be guilty before God?
5. In what verse did our lesson tell us that the wages of sin is death?
6. Look at Titus 3:5 and explain how a person is not saved.
7. All of man's works are considered to be as what, in Isaiah 64:6?
8. According to John 14:6 what did Jesus declare Himself to be?
9. In Acts 4:10-12 Peter proclaims "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby \_\_\_\_\_."
10. In the previous two questions we learn there are how many ways of salvation.
11. Romans 5:1 tells us that a sinner is justified, or made right before God, by what?
12. In I Corinthians 15:3 what does it say Christ died for?
13. What promise do we find in Romans 10:8-10?
14. According to the promise of Christ in John 6:37, do we ever need to fear being cast out from the presence and protection of Christ?
15. Read John 10:28 and tell what cannot happen to those who are given eternal life?
16. In your own words tell how a person can be saved.
17. For what can you be most thankful?

# Lesson Two

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## ***What About The Spiritual Life***

*Lesson Text:* Galatians 5:16-17

*Lesson Objective:* To help you to understand the difference between relationship and fellowship with God, and how we can maintain a close walk with the Lord.

**Introduction:** Once an individual has been saved, it is important for them to learn that they need to begin to learn. The Christian life is one of development or decline. If we study the Bible, pray, and unite with other believers in a sound Biblical church, we have begun an important first step in developing a Christian life that should be filled with joy, peace, love, and stability. If we fail to submit ourselves to the teaching and preaching of God's word, and if we neglect prayer and fellowship with other believers, we will have taken the first step towards weakening our ability to enjoy our justified position before God, and the spiritual life He has implanted within us. The Apostle Paul wrote a letter to Christians located in an area known as Philippi. He had been saved for nearly thirty years when he wrote this letter. He was possibly near 60 years of age. Yet, when he wrote this letter he told them he was not yet perfect and that he was pressing on "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." He recognized he still had things to learn and areas in which to grow spiritually. This will be a helpful attitude to have throughout our lifetime. Just remember we are not alone in our walk. God has given us the Holy Spirit as our guide, and he has given us other believers who walk the same paths we do.

### Learning The Language

God has used terms, words, and principles within the Bible that are not difficult to understand. He has given us word pictures to help us understand spiritual truths. One such word picture is the family of God. He has used the same language we use to describe a physical human relationship to describe our spiritual relationship to Him. We were "born" into the family of God. We are "sons" or "children" of God. God is our "Father." Once a person is born into the family of God there is a new relationship. This new spiritual relationship will never change. No one with any common sense would ever think someone could be "unborn" physically. Our only exit out of this life is through death. This same reality is true concerning our spiritual life. The only difference is that God has promised those who live and believe in Him shall never die. We will die physically, but never can a child of God die spiritually. Our position, as children of God, is said to be "kept by the power of God." God cannot fail in His purpose or His power. His purpose is to save us and our salvation depends upon His power to keep us saved.

What does change within the human family? I have been my parent's child since I was born. I will be their child even after they or I have died. It is not the relationship that changes, but the fellowship. While my conduct as a son or daughter of my parents cannot affect my relationship, it will affect my fellowship. What we do as Christians cannot affect our relationship. It will, however, affect our enjoyment as a Christian and our fellowship with God. When our conduct is considered to be sin, or sinful, it breaks our close walk or fellowship with the Lord. Take a look at Isaiah 59:2; "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear". Sin affects our prayers being heard, our enjoyment of God's blessings, and our personal walk with the Lord and other believers.

### The Means Of Restoration

We should understand by now that when we sin we create a problem in our fellowship with the Lord. When this happens, God is not an inactive God. Because God loves us He takes immediate action to bring us back into fellowship with Him. Read the passage in Hebrews 12:5-11. Notice we find three degrees of discipline mentioned. the first is rebuke; then chasten; then scourge. This is much like it is in our physical family except that God's method and motive of discipline is superior to ours in every way. We may find a simple rebuke from a passage of scripture, a message or a lesson. If we ignore the rebuke His correction will take a stronger form called chastening, or further on

to the scourging. His purpose is for our benefit and to our advantage. It is also helpful to understand that the rebuke, chastening, or scourging is not punishment. The punishment for our sins was paid for by Jesus Christ on the cross. The penalty was death. What pain we may feel as a result of the corrective discipline will never hurt as much as the consequences of sin if left uncorrected. As a father, I have had to administer correction to each of my children. They didn't enjoy it and they had a hard time understanding this was for their benefit. If I did not discipline them, trends would develop in them that would prove to be to their detriment.

What are we to do when we find we have sinned, or that God has rebuked us? In a passage of scripture in I John chapters one and two we can learn a great deal. Notice verse nine of chapter one. Look at the word "confess." Confession is not done to a preacher, friend, or family member. This is an act between you and God personally by the ministry of Jesus Christ. Confession is the acknowledging of our sin before God. It must come from the heart, or be sincere. This will include a forsaking of the sin as well as a sadness over committing the sin. We must be sorry for the sin, not just sorry we got caught sinning. When we do confess our sins we find the blood of Christ cleansing us. This is the manner in which God removes the guilt over our sin and allows us to enjoy His forgiveness. When we have understood God's discipline and how we have done wrong we should confess our sin before God immediately. Be sensitive to the Lord, never wait to confess or your heart can become hardened in sin. Remember God chastens those whom He loves. Discipline is a sign that we have sinned, but also that God cares about us and wants the best for us.

## The Difficult Reality

In our Lesson Text we find the words "walk in the Spirit." This term is used to signify the maintenance of our fellowship with God as we have been explaining. But it is more than just confessing and forsaking sin. It includes our following of the Lord's leadership through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. When we believed, we were sealed with the Spirit by God. This is as if God placed a seal of ownership in us. We were given the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is considered to be a down payment of our eternal inheritance. This makes certain that in due time the full inheritance will be given to us. Our Lesson Text speaks of the reality of either walking in the Spirit, or in the flesh. It is our choice as to which we will follow. Since God has given us the Holy Spirit, we are to follow His leadership in our daily lives. The problem is the old nature, or the flesh, has not been eradicated, or removed. Remember in our first lesson we learned about being a new creation, or creature? We were given a new nature. These two, the old nature and the new nature, are opposed to one another. They follow two different directions. The flesh seeks to satisfy itself. The new nature seeks to satisfy and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. The predicament is they are not just opposites that live far apart. They live face to face in us with a constant clash of interests. The only way to block the cravings of the flesh, or what "we" may want to do, is by walking in the spirit. When we do not listen, or follow, the leadership of the Spirit, we sin. When we sin we grieve the Holy Spirit. We grieve God. This requires confession and restoration of our fellowship with God. This is a reality every Christian must live with. Praise God He has made it possible for us to conquer the flesh, or if we fail, to find forgiveness and cleansing from our sins through Jesus Christ our Advocate.

## Who Runs The Show?

Throughout this lesson we have often referred to Jesus Christ as Lord. The word Lord means master. In the days in which it was used more commonly it was used to describe one in authority. Jesus Christ is our master, our owner, our commander in chief, our God. In Acts Chapter two and verse thirty-six we are told "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." It is not a question as to whether we make Jesus Lord, God has already made Him Lord. We are to know He is Lord. What does all of this have to do with relationship, fellowship, or walking in the spirit? To maintain a sweet fellowship, and to walk in the spirit, it is imperative that we submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We must recognize Him as our master through out our daily walk. We are not supposed to recognize His authority in our lives only on special days or Sundays, but all through the week. This requires surrender, dedication, and trust. We must surrender our will for His. We must dedicate ourselves to His directives, which we find within the Bible. And, we must trust His wisdom and His love. God knows more than we do even about ourselves.

Can you imagine a child of five or six telling his parents that they are going to ignore the parents direction and chose their own way? Can you imagine this same child deciding they knew better and would no longer be eating the food they set in front of him or go to bed when they said, or to school any longer? This child may sincerely

believe it understands and has figured it all out. That would not change the fact that this child would be starting on a quick path to destruction. This child would soon learn the meaning of trouble and disappointment. No parent with any understanding would allow a child to make these determinations for themselves. They would not do so because they wanted to control that child or to make it's life miserable. they would correct the child, and direct the child because of their love for that child. God doesn't want to deprive us of enjoyment. God wants to give us the very best. Understand that God's love for us is unconditional and seeks our best and betterment. Since this is so, what better way for us to live than by acknowledging His Lordship, resting on His promises, and following His lead. Remember; "God always gives His best to those who leave the choice with Him."

## Study Questions

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- 1.How soon will it be before you never need to learn anymore about the Bible or about living the Christian life?
- 2.What was Paul still trying to do even at the age of sixty?
- 3.What is the difference between relationship and fellowship in reference to our spiritual lives?
- 4.What can affect my spiritual relationship with God?
- 5.What can affect my spiritual fellowship with God?
- 6.Give a reference to a verse of scripture that shows how you arrived at your answer to question number five.
- 7.What are three terms God uses to help us understand His way of discipline:
- 8.What do you think is the difference between correction and punishment?
- 9.Why do you think God disciplines us when we sin?
- 10.What would you think if God did not discipline some one who sinned?
- 11.What should be our first response when we become aware of sin in our lives?
- 12.What scripture would you use to tell another Christian about how to enjoy the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ if they have fallen into sin?
- 13.When we believed we were sealed with the
- 14.This seal is a sign of ownership and a promise of what?
- 15.What two things were said to be opposed to one another?
- 16.How has God made it possible for us to conquer the wrong desires of the flesh?
- 17.Who is said to be on our side if we do sin?
- 18.Who made Jesus both Lord and Christ?
- 19.What does it mean to say we recognize Christ as the Lord of our life?
- 20.In your own words tell what you think the benefits are of walking in the Spirit.

# Lesson Three

## ***What About Baptism?***

**Lesson Text:** Acts 8:35-38

**Lesson Objective:** To help us understand what the Bible definition of baptism is; the prerequisites of baptism; the purpose of baptism; and authority involved in baptism.

**Introduction:** Down through history you will find that Baptists have been rejected, persecuted, and even put to death concerning this subject. Many times it has taken place at the hands of other "Christian" denominations. Baptists, on the other hand, have always taught toleration of other opinions and ideas, as well as theologies. While we may tolerate them we do not sanction them as true. The Bible is our final rule of faith and practice. Whatever the bible teaches on a subject is what we want to teach. There may be a hundred opinions among men as to what constitutes proper baptism but there is only one opinion that counts; God's opinion. Baptism has been a dividing line for many. It should be, as we will see through our study of God's word. It is an important study because we want to please God in all that we do. God has placed a pattern before us to follow and to teach.

It is interesting to note that Baptists are the only churches that, when teaching on baptism, begin with John the Baptist. There is no difference between the baptism administered by John and the baptism administered by our Lord and his disciples. We will cover this subject in more detail when we come to the area of baptism and authority. Every major denomination has a name that distinguishes it from others and that name portrays an important emphasis of its teachings. Methodists were so named because of their strict adherence to methods, or manners, of living. Presbyterians we so named because of their manner of rule within their church structure. Baptists have been called by many names, but because of their strict adherence and teaching on baptism and their claim to a succession back to John the Baptist, they have been so named. Let's look first at the proper subject for baptism.

### The Proper Subject For Baptism

Who can be or should be baptized? In Acts chapter two and verse forty-one and forty-two we find it was those who "gladly received his word were baptized;" What word was it they received? Who were these people who received it? Our Lesson Text, along with many other passages of scripture, gives us more insight into the proper or scriptural subjects for baptism and the answers to those questions. Philip was a deacon of the early church in Jerusalem. When he saw the Eunuch riding along in a chariot, reading the scriptures, he asked him if he understood what he was reading. The man told him no. Philip then began to preach Jesus unto him. He preached the gospel or good news. He showed him that Jesus was the promised Messiah who had come to this earth, died for our sins, and rose again from the dead after the third day. He then must have taught him about the personal ministry of Christ, His actual coming and calling out disciples, and about baptism. This is clear from the portion of our text which says "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" He knew there was a need to be baptized. Philip knew there was a prerequisite to an individual being baptized so he asked a question of the Eunuch. He asked him if he believed. If you were to search through the entire New Testament you will only find believers who are baptized. The proper subject for baptism is one who gives evidence or testimony of a personal faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and as their personal Savior.

This is exactly what God commanded His church to do in the Great Commission. We can find this commission in; Matthew 28:19 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" Mark 16:15-16 "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21 and in Acts 1:7-8. In these passages we find the proper pattern God has laid out for us. We are to preach the gospel and then baptize those who hear it and make a public profession of their faith in the gospel. The scriptural order is to believe and then be baptized. What was the word those folks in Acts 2:41-42 received? It was the gospel Peter preached to them about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. He told them that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah God had promised. He told them that this same Jesus whom they had crucified, God had now made both Lord and Christ. Unless a person believes this, baptism will be of no value to them. Who were



these people? They were people who heard, understood, and believed. This excludes baptizing babies or anyone who does not, or cannot profess a personal belief in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The proper subject for baptism is one who has been born again or saved. The proper subject is someone who stands justified, or righteous, before God. Baptism performed upon any one else would make that baptism null and void.

## The Proper Design Of Baptism

The proper design of baptism deals with the motive or that, which prompts, urges, or causes one to be baptized. J.R. Graves wrote that: "Christian baptism is a specific act to be administered by a specific body to persons professing specific qualifications for the profession of specific truths." We have just looked briefly at the "persons professing specific qualifications." We now will consider the "profession of specific truths." There are many denominations, which make baptism a sacrament. They baptize in order to wash away sin; to unite one to Christ; to regenerate; or to remit sins. Baptists believe no such thing. Baptists do not believe the word of God teaches that baptism is a means of grace. We believe it has nothing to do with the means of our salvation. It is, very simply put, a picture of the gospel we have already believed. It is a picture of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It signifies, or pictures that we have died with Christ to our old life of sin and have been raised to walk in newness of life. We do not believe the Bible teaches that the waters of baptism wash our sins away. We believe that is done by the precious blood of the Lamb of God. Baptism is our act of obedience to the command of God. In I Peter 3:21 We read: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:" Some will try to use this verse to teach baptism washes away sin. In fact, this verse shows that baptism is symbolic, and is a public profession of what has already taken place in our hearts toward God. It is what has taken place in our hearts and our willingness to make it public that gives answer of a good conscience toward God. Baptism is a symbolic picture of the resurrection of Christ and our own spiritual renewal. "Jesus was figuratively buried and raised in baptism that we who follow him are planted in the likeness of his death and also raised in the likeness of his resurrection."

Another reason we should be baptized, and why people were baptized in the New Testament, is to be added to a church. This is an additional design of baptism. In the Bible you will find no one added to the church who was not saved or unbaptized. Going back to Acts chapter two and verses forty-one and forty-two, we can see the biblical order. They were saved, baptized, and then added to the church. Afterwards we find teaching, fellowship, and then the Lord's supper. This is God's order and should be followed.

## The Proper Method Of Baptism

There are many churches today who sprinkle or pour water upon the head for baptism. Others simply dip their fingers into a glass of water or font and sprinkle it or wipe it on the head. Baptists have always immersed or dipped the entire individual into a pool, stream, river, or body of water. The actual word from our English Bible, "baptize," is a transliterated word. That simply means it is a Greek word that the translators Anglicized. The Greek word is "baptizo." In every study of the Greek language all scholars admit that "baptizo" means to dip, immerse, or sink into water. The reason John the Baptist baptized at Aenon was because there was "much water there." Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch went down into the water. Baptism cannot be to sprinkle or pour. Look at Matthew 3:6 "And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." A believer cannot be poured or sprinkled into the Jordan river. On the other hand, a believer can be immersed or dipped in the Jordan. To baptize any other way than described in the Bible is to render God's directives as worthless and invalid. To baptize by any other method than immersion would be to ruin the symbolism of our baptism. Baptism is a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. When one dies we do not sprinkle them with water but bury them within the ground. With sprinkling there is no picture of rising from the dead at all.

Sprinkling or pouring as a means of baptism came about because the design of baptism was ruined some time in the third century. Some began to teach that baptism was necessary to salvation. They began to teach it washed away sin. They began to teach that since it was a ceremony (and not personal faith in the blood of Christ) that washed away man's sins, then we should baptize infants to wash away their sin. It further evolved because objections were raised concerning the dipping, or immersing of babies into the water. Soon pouring became okay, then sprinkling, until finally a little water on the finger, which was wiped upon a child's head. Once error sets in there seems to be no limit to which it can reach. Even today we have some heretical groups teaching that the living

can be baptized for the dead in order to help them gain entrance into God's presence. We need to learn early on that God means what He says and says what He means. Take God at His word, believe and obey it.

## The Proper Administrator Of Baptism

We now come to the final area concerning the scriptural teaching about baptism. God defines the proper subject, the proper design, the proper method, He also defines the proper authority. When it came time for Christ to be baptized he walked sixty miles to be baptized by the proper authority; John the Baptist. In reading John 1:6 We find "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." The proper authority we will find within the New Testament, after John the Baptist, will be the church the Lord Jesus Christ established during His personal ministry on Earth. We will learn in a later lesson about what makes a church. We will learn that a church is an assembly of called out, baptized, believers. Christ called out and assembled baptized believers immediately after His own baptism. He commissioned them to preach and to baptize almost immediately. As He left for heaven after His resurrection He gave the commission to preach the gospel, to teach, and to baptize to His church. It is a true New Testament Baptist church that has the legal authority to baptize. Since an entire church cannot physically baptize, the church authorizes a representative to baptize on her behalf. The authority does not rest in an individual, but in the local church.

We seem to have no difficulty in understanding this when it comes to other institutions and their authority. The government of the United States of America is the only legal authority by which a citizen of another country may become a citizen of the United States. Our government has authorized certain members of it's judicial force to declare someone a citizen of the U.S.A., or to reject them. I may know exactly what is required. I could give you the proper tests and oath. If I am not an official recognized by our government, the actions I may take will not be acceptable and rejected legally. The sincerity of my heart or of the heart of the recipient will not matter. It will not make that person a legal citizen of the United States of America. The same is true with baptism. The official baptizing may be saved and sincere. The individual being baptized may be saved and sincere. Unless the authority is scriptural the act of baptism is null and void. Unless a person begins with the baptism of John, as Jesus did, the baptism is not scriptural. The desire of our heart should be to please and obey God in all that we do. There is no better way to begin than with submitting to scriptural baptism immediately after we have been born again by the grace of God.

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## Study Questions

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1. When Baptists begin to teach about baptism they usually begin with whom?
2. What is the first qualification of someone who wishes to be baptized?
3. What did Philip ask the Ethiopian Eunuch before he would baptize him?
4. Can you find one verse that teaches or even implies an infant should be baptized?
5. Why should we be baptized?
6. Does baptism wash away our sins?
7. Can we be a member of a Baptist church without being baptized?
8. What are some of the methods used by churches today to baptize?
9. What is the only method we find in the New Testament?
10. What Greek word means "to immerse or to dip?"
11. What made Aenon a good place to baptize? (See John 3:23)
12. Do you think it is okay to sprinkle for baptism?
13. Who baptized John the Baptist?
14. Who Baptized Jesus?
15. Who Baptized the Apostle Paul?

16. Who has the authority to baptize?

17. Do you think as long as you are sincere that God will accept any baptism?

# Lesson Four

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## ***What About the Bible***

**Lesson Text:** II Timothy 3:15-17

**Lesson Objective:** To understand the importance of the Bible for our daily lives. To understand which Bible we should use, how God wrote it, and how it was preserved in its purity until today. To show the Bible to be the perfect and inspired Word of God.

**Introduction:** Have you ever thought much about the Bible we use today? You may have asked some of the same questions that many others have asked. How was it written? When and by whom was it written? How do we know it is really God's perfect word? These and many other questions have been asked for thousands of years. As one writer put it; "There is no document, ancient or modern, that shows such unity and diversity as the Bible. This book was written over a period of 1,600 years by more than 40 separate, human authors writing about the ultimate issues of life. Yet there is not a single contradiction." Man should have complete trust in a book that is filled with exacting prophecies that have always come true. We should have no problem being convinced by a Bible whose archaeology has been proved time and time again to be precise. Even the historical events recorded within Scripture are validated through other sources. Though there have always been people who have doubted the perfection or even the existence of God's word, it has only been in the last 100 or 200 years that there has been such extreme doubt in people's minds. Probably the main reason more doubt has come into our generation is because of the proliferation of hundreds of versions of the Bible. In the English language there was only one Bible that was prominently used; the King James Version, for hundreds of years. With the decline of our society's grasp of the English language, and with the rise of our brand of English, people began to have a hard time understanding some of the words used in the King James Version. While some may have been sincere in their desire to help the average person gain a better understanding of the Bible, the Devil was hard at work. He has managed to bring doubt about the veracity of certain words, verses, and whole passages of Scripture. This has led many to doubt and even reject the reliability of God's word. This lesson is designed to educate and to encourage you in your use and full faith of God's wonderful word. If I couldn't be sure about all of God's word I would have difficulty preaching or teaching any of it with substantial passion and assurance. Once you have studied this lesson I hope you will have the same love, excitement, and confidence in the word of God that men and women down through the ages have enjoyed. Now, let's answer some of those questions.

### What Were The Original Languages?

The Bible wasn't originally written in English. It helps if we understand something of the languages used during the time of the writing of the Bible. The Old Testament was written in the Hebrew language. This is not the same language the modern Israelite speaks today. They speak Yiddish. The original Hebrew language is now what scholars call a dead language. It is not spoken except by some orthodox Jewish Rabbis and few others. God allowed this language to die to preserve the exactness of the meaning of the words. Languages change over the centuries and word meanings change or lose some of their impact. Because the Hebrew language died as a spoken language it was preserved in its pure written form.

The New Testament was written in the Greek language with some Arabic. The Greek, which was used to write the Bible, is a vernacular that is not used in Greece today. God did not give His word to man and then leave it alone. He preserved it, protected it, and advanced it through out the world. Because this language died as a spoken language it was protected from cultural changes and has been preserved in all of its beauty for us today. Because it must be translated into the English language for us to understand we lose some of the exactness and elegance with which it was written. While we will not attempt to teach you any Hebrew or Greek we will often refer to both of these languages to help us gain a greater comprehension of the meaning of the words and the truths God wants us to enjoy. It is not required to understand or study either the Greek or Hebrew languages. God has made sure we have His preserved and perfect word in the English language today by giving us the King James translation. Our use of the original languages is to help clarify and enlarge upon what we already know to be true.

## What Is Inspiration?

Our Lesson Text explains how we received God's words. The verse tells us God gave them to us by inspiration. Our English dictionary states this word means to "breath in, to stimulate to mental activity, to arouse in someone." From the Greek language we understand this word to mean "in breathed." Men supernaturally inspired wrote the Bible as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. This means the Bible was given word by word and free from all error. The Holy Spirit moved upon the writers of the Bible so as to influence their very choice of words. David was the King of Israel and the writer of a majority of the Psalms. When he spoke about his writings he said in II Samuel 23:2; "The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue." God moved upon him to write what he wrote. Some people want to hear the very voice of God to authenticate the message of Jesus Christ. Peter wrote something very interesting about this in II Peter 1:16-21. He was telling those to whom he wrote that he was not following some "cunningly devised fables." He had been with Jesus Christ and had even heard the voice of God at the Baptism of Christ and at the mount of transfiguration along with others. Though he heard this he told his readers that they had a "more sure word of prophecy." What was that more sure word? It was and is the Bible. This passage in Peter tells us that these men did not write or speak of their own interpretation, but spoke and wrote as they were moved, or "borne along," by the Holy Spirit. Benjamin Warfield wrote; "The Bible is the Word of God in such a sense that its words, though written by men and bearing indelibly impressed upon them the marks of their human origin, were written, nevertheless, under such an influence of the Holy Ghost as to be also the words of God, the adequate expression of His mind and will."

This means the Bible is more than just a book of history, poetry, or of personal letters. This makes the Bible a revelation From God to man. The Bible is full of history and historical events. The pages of the Bible are abundant with beautiful poetry, and a major portion of the New Testament is written as letters to various churches and individuals. Each and every word ("all scripture") is inspired by God. Every word and truth presented is relevant to all people, in all cultures, in all ages. What hope could we possibly find in a book filled with man's ideas, opinions, and even errors. Our hope and confidence rests in a book that is truly God's perfect revelation from God, about God, to man. Not one word came from the will of man, but by the will of God.

## From Hebrew And Greek Into English

What has happened in the last 200 years concerning the authority of the Bible is sad. I mentioned in our Introduction that the Devil has a scheme to deprive men of the truth. This is not new, it originated in the garden of Eden. Satan has always wanted men to challenge the authority and reality of God's word. In Genesis 3:1 Satan disputed what God said and twisted what God said. After he found out that Eve actually knew what God really said he suggested it to be untrue. If he can not get us with misinformation he wants us to doubt the reality of the information. This is what he has tried to accomplish with the hundreds of versions of the Bible on the market today. It is sad to say that many Christians are ignorant of his devices in these attempts and continue to aid his objective.

We use only the King James translation of the Bible. Many will ask why when it's language seems antiquated and hard to understand. We use the King James version of the Bible because of one reason. It is the pure, undefiled, inerrant word of God. It is the only Bible in the English language that comes from the unpolluted Greek manuscripts called the "Received Text" or "Textus Receptus." All other versions and translations (including the New King James Version) come from a different source of manuscripts which are polluted and corrupt. If you follow the history of these two manuscripts you will find them to be the product of two religious systems or philosophies. One places the Word of God above all else. The other places human tradition, logic, and reasoning on equal ground with the Bible. The one stream has produced such variance in renderings that it is impossible to read the same verse in one Bible and follow along in another and know where you are. The true stream has led to no such confusion and one Bible, the King James 1611 translation. Two of the men who were most prominent in giving substantial credit to the polluted stream of manuscripts, Westcott and Hort, called the "Received Text" vile and villainous.

Within the first hundred years after the death of the apostles the Bible was under attack. A historian provides us with information regarding this fact. "Wherefore also Marcion and his followers have betaken themselves to mutilating the scriptures, not acknowledging some books at all; and curtailing the gospel according to Luke; and the epistles of Paul they assert that these alone are authentic, which they have themselves shortened." It is this very method of human logic that has led to a series of manuscripts that have been asserted as the most reliable by

theologians who never accepted the virgin birth of Christ or the actual accounts of the miracles of Christ. Constantine chose a heretics Bible (Origen's, who taught that Christ was a created being, re-written by Eusebius) to be copied and used. These copies found their way into the Vatican library and were later used to produce Bibles such as: The New American Standard, The Living Bible, The Revised Version, and every other translation except the King James translation. The scholars who gave us the King James translation rejected these manuscripts.

I happen to have many of the various translations in my library. None of which are used to study God's Word except the King James translation. In one such Bible, the American Standard Version, I find a most curious note made by the translators. In John 9:38, we find a blind man being asked if he believes on the Son of God. He replies "Lord I believe, and he worshipped him." In the footnote of this passage the translators reveal the fact that they do not believe in the deity of Christ. In their notation they say "The Greek word denotes an act of reverence, whether paid to a creature (as here) or to the Creator." They just called Christ a creature or created being and not the Creator. Another difference in readings makes their doctrinal positions clear. In II Timothy 3:16, our Lesson Text, the Revised Version reads "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable." To me this implies that part of the Bible may not be inspired. That follows along with the goal of the father of all lies. It also aided many Catholic writers who felt, and wrote, that Protestants had now been robbed of their stronghold of Bible inspiration by a correct rendering. There are other such contradictions of plain biblical teachings elsewhere. Now when you hear some one say "this is the best version" beware! My suggestion is to stick with the King James Bible. It is our pure and unperverted Word of God in the English language. When some one attempts to direct you to another version remember the plot of the Devil.

## The Central Message Of The Bible

The central message of the Bible is about the redemption of man. The Bible reveals God, His character and His attributes. While we may come to the conclusion of God's existence from other sources we can not learn of his righteousness and all of His attributes except by Divine revelation from the Word of God. The absolutes of right and wrong according to God are revealed to us from His Word. All of these things and more are revealed. The most important revelation is that man is a sinner after having fallen from his created state. God, though, did not leave man to fend for himself. God has provided a way of salvation in the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Man's redemption is the primary message of the Bible. The Bible explains why man must be redeemed, how man is redeemed, the cost of redemption, and who does the redeeming. Christ is at the center of every book. Christ himself said, John 5:39 "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." It is not the Bible that gives life, but the Christ we discover in and through the Bible. We need this revelation because man's reasoning and logic is flawed. We do not have the same thought process as God. God, by His wonderful grace, has communicated to us how we can be saved, how we can have assurance of this salvation, and how we can live with hope looking forward to an eternal home with Him.

## How Does This Affect Me?

This should give us assurance in the message of the Gospel. God, who cannot lie promises us eternal life by and through His Son Jesus Christ. If we have an imperfect Bible then our faith will be imperfect. A corrupt word will lead to a corrupt faith. This truth does more than just give us assurance. Because we have the inspired, infallible and inerrant Word of God we must recognize the authority of God's Word. This book has the power to command and to require submission and obedience to the teachings we find within it's pages. We are not talking about obedience to a book, but to the God of the book. Within the Bible we learn of God and what is essential to acceptable worship of God. It is in the Bible that we find the absolute standards of moral right and wrong. We learn how we can be restored to a place of relationship and fellowship with God. We learn about where we are going and what will be the final end of this earth. We learn about the primary goals that we should make ours in every aspect of our lives.

Without an absolute and final authority our lives, goals, and directives are merely speculative. Without an absolute and final authority any church could dictate its opinions over those of others. In this church we believe the Bible to be the final rule of faith and practice. It is here that we will find common ground. It is within the pages of the Bible we will find our doctrine, our standards of righteousness, the rebuke and admonition we often need, the means by which we can achieve maturity, and how we can be equipped for the service we desire to give to God. Without an

inspired Bible we can pick and chose what we want to believe, as many do. With an inspired Bible we must submit ourselves to the truths revealed because they come directly from God.

This book we call the Bible "is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction... that it has truth without any mixture of error for its matter... it is the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creed, and opinions shall be tried." It is a book worthy of our attention, daily reading, and helpful if we enter into a systematic study of its contents. It is God's revelation of all things most necessary to us. We have need for both chart and compass to guide us in moral and spiritual matters. Political and social changes challenge our every move. In the Bible we have a book for all ages, one which shall stand for eternity. Jesus promised those who followed Him: "If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed: and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." It is the unspiritual man who does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, who seems them as foolishness. It is up to you to read, to study, and to apply the Word of God to your life. It is up to you to be in a church where the Bible is questioned for truth and not about whether it contains truth. You have a priceless possession for which men and women have given their lives over the centuries. Surely we can give some time each day for study and meditation with the Word of God.

### Study Questions

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- 1.How many human authors were involved in the writing of the Bible?
- 2.The period over which the Bible was written lasted about how long?
- 3.Does the Bible contain any errors or contradictions?
- 4.What were the original languages of the Bible?
- 5.What difference does it make that these are now considered to be dead languages?
- 6.What does inspiration mean?
- 7.Though the personalities of each of these men were used, can we consider the Bible to be an expression of God's mind and will?
- 8.How much of God's word is perfect and inspired?
- 9.Which English translation is the preserved word of God today?
- 10.What is wrong with all other English translations?
- 11.When do you think God's Word first came under attack as being unreliable or untrue?
- 12.What is the Central message of the Bible?
- 13.Can we just pick and chose what we want to believe in the Bible?
- 14.What do you think is our responsibility towards the Bible?
- 15.What authority does the Bible hold over our lives and conduct?
- 16.What is the final rule of faith and practice for a Baptist church?
- 17.The Bible is an old book with old ideas, is it really relevant for us today?
- 18.What is the most important thing you have learned in this lesson?

# Lesson Five

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## ***What About The Church?***

**Lesson Text:** Ephesians 3:21

**Lesson Objective:** To help us understand the origin, nature, purpose, and function of the church. We also want to enlarge our scope of understanding concerning the role and responsibilities of you as a church member.

**Introduction:** We could easily spend much more time on this subject than we will because of the range of topics that could be included. You are encouraged to read, study, and examine the Scriptures yourself regarding the New Testament Church.

The word "*ecclesia*" occurs in the Bible 117 times, and one of these times (Acts 19:39) it shows that the word applies to ANY "*called-out assembly*." The thing is to find a called-out assembly that resembles as much as possible the Jew-Gentile body of Christians described in the book of Acts, and whose ministry is determined and defined in its final form in Acts 20. The progressive nature of Acts moves from Jews and Jewish proselytes (ch.2) to a group of Gentile believers called "Christians" (ch.11). These are our forefathers.

The word "church" itself can have as many as FIVE applications in the Bible:

- *Israel* (Acts 7:38)
- *Pagan assemblies* (Acts 19:39)
- *A glorified church* (Eph.5:27)
- *A local assembly of Christians* (Rev. 1-3). This is by far the most common usage (Rom. 16:1, 4, 5, 16; Acts 15:3, 4, 22, 41; 19:32, 39, 41; I Cor. 4:17; 6:4; 7:17; 11:16; 14:4, 5, 12, 19, 23, 28, 33, etc.).
- *The body of Christ* on earth (Eph. 1:22, 23).

The Bible teaches both the "church" and "churches". "Church" referring to all the saved, who have been born again through faith in Christ, regardless of their particular persuasion. "Churches" referring to the local assemblies of believers bound together to fulfill the Great Commission given by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some also make a difference between the family of God, the kingdom of God, and the church of God. The family of God is made up of all born again believers from Adam until this present time. The family of God includes all the saved in heaven and on Earth. The kingdom of God is made up of all believers on the earth at any given time. The churches of God are made up of saved people who have been scripturally baptized by a proper administrator and joined to a local, visible body.

### **When Did It All Start?**

The first use of the word "church" in the New Testament is found in Matthew 16:18, which states: "*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" Christ calls it His church. This verse in Matthew does not teach Peter was the foundation of the church as the Roman Catholics would have us to believe. Instead, it teaches that Peter (little pebble) should understand that the rock (huge strata) upon which Christ's church would be built was Jesus Christ and none other. He is distinguishing it from any other. It originated with Him, He organized it, and He is building it. Some teach from the Scriptures that the church began sometime during the personal ministry of Jesus Christ. Others believe the church began at Pentecost.



## The Pattern Of A New Testament Church

The pattern of a New Testament Church is to be found in the Bible. As stated in our prior lesson, "the Bible is our final rule of faith and practice." It is within the Bible we will discover the church's government, purpose, plan, and directives. Tradition and history must always be balanced with the Word of God not vice versus. I may use history to support or expand upon a church doctrine or policy, but the case must stand or fall upon its existence in the Word of God.

The Bible teaches that each local church is to be autonomous, independent, and indigenous. That simply means the church is to be self-governing, separate from all other bodies and organizations, and local. The government of a Baptist church is to be democratic under the direction of its only head, Jesus Christ. The local church is to determine its own course of action apart from any outside interference of other churches, associations, councils, fellowships, presbyteries, preachers, or civil authorities. The Lord's church recognizes no higher authority than their Head, Jesus Christ. This frees the church to follow the Lord's direction in selecting their own officers, exercising their own discipline, and adopting their own courses of action. This also allows for cooperation with other true New Testament churches in carrying out the demands of the gospel, without relinquishing their independence.

Looking through the New Testament we can find the early church met on the first day of the week. This is not a Christian Sabbath as some might say. It is the celebration of the rising of our Lord from grave and securing our salvation. Sunday is the day set aside for the work of the ministry not the work in the yard. Sunday is the day set aside for the honor, worship, and praise of God. It is on the first day of the week that we are to bring our tithes and offerings unto the Lord. We are to come and worship God in Spirit and in truth not in ritual and formalism.

The finances of the church could be an entire lesson alone but we will only take a minute to give the biblical principles involved. God's plan for financing the ministry of the local church is through the giving of tithes and offerings. When we do not give into the Lord's storehouse we are literally robbing God of what is rightfully His. Giving is as much a part of our worship as is singing, preaching, or praising the Lord. A.W. Pink once said, "The Christian should tithe for the very same reason he keeps all the other commandments of God... Not because he must do so, but because he desires to do so." Under the New Testament directives the members of the local church have the same obligation to support the ministers of the word as did the Old Testament saints to support those who ministered in the Temple. 1 Corinthians 9:13-14 *"Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."*

## The Officers Of The Church

There are only two offices in the church that are recognized within the New Testament, pastors and deacons. The pastor may be called a bishop, an elder, an overseer, or shepherd of the flock. This office is designated as the overseer of the church of God. He is the one, which has the responsibility to teach and preach the word of God and to equip the saints of God to do the work of the ministry. The pastor and deacon, or deacons, are to be chosen, or appointed, by the church in a democratic method and may be removed from that office in the same manner by a majority vote of the church. The pastor is charged with the spiritual oversight of the church while the deacons are charged with the physical oversight that would restrict the pastor or elders from prayer and ministry of the word.

Not all preachers are destined to be pastors any more than all servants of God are destined to become deacons. The desire to fill the office of pastor comes from the leading and calling of the Lord and is confirmed by a call from a local church to that position. The qualifications of a pastor or elder are scattered throughout the New Testament. There are two major portions of Scripture which deal with specific qualifications; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; and Titus 1:6-9. Rather than go into each of these we encourage you to take the time to read these passages faithfully. It is advantageous for you to become familiar with these qualifications in the likely event that you as a member of one of the Lord's churches will find it necessary to be a part of the process of choosing a pastor.

The office of deacon seems to have risen over a dispute concerning the distribution of material resources as seen in Acts chapter 6. Rather than requiring the Apostles to remove themselves from prayer and ministry of the word they asked the church to seek out men among themselves to fill these rolls. It was the church that decided who should

be appointed to these positions based upon spiritual and scriptural qualifications. We find these qualifications listed in I Timothy 3:8-13. Remember also that the first "deacons" were not chosen until they were needed. The church at Jerusalem existed for quite awhile before the selection of deacons. The need arose, they were chosen. It's that simple. It is important that all members become acquainted with the qualifications of both elders and deacons that we might fulfill our role as responsible and faithful members of God's church in which we serve.

## The Purpose Of A New Testament Church

The Lord began and built His church because He had a purpose in mind. There is a design and direction for the church. He has entrusted the church with the responsibility of preaching the gospel to a lost and dying world. He has called upon us to teach and to baptize those who believe and repent. This gives us our primary goal as a New Testament Baptist church. Though it is found throughout the New Testament Matthew 28:18-20 gives us our commission. *"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."* These lessons we are now doing are a process we have chosen to aid us in fulfilling our responsibilities to the Lord and to you.

As well as the primary goal of evangelizing the lost and then baptizing those who respond to the gospel, we are to teach them to observe all things. The goal of every church is not to entertain or to provide a social place to gather. It is to instruct in and with the Word of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. This involves caring for and feeding the flock of God. It involves teaching the whole counsel of God not just bits and pieces or those that seem to best suit our purposes or attract the greatest amount of interests. While the oversight of such a great task is given to the pastor it is not his to do alone. He is to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry.

An important fact to remember is that we are talking about the purpose or mission of the church. Who is the church? If you are saved, baptized, and have been added to this, or any, particular Baptist church, the responsibility is yours. Your mission is obedience to the commands of God and those commands are to go preaching, baptizing, and then to teach the all things. The blessing I can share with you is you are not a lone individual in this effort but are to work as a corporate body and members in particular. We should be doing this together. We each can be a witness to family, friends, and even to strangers. As a single body we vote to baptize through our representative. Through our prayers and attendance we can learn from and encourage the preaching of the Word.

## What About It's Membership?

The first and foremost qualification for membership in one of the Lord's churches is to be born again. Only those who are baptized can be church members and only those who give proof of regeneration and conversion are qualified candidates for baptism. That gives us both the first and second qualifications for church membership. We might easily add a third by dealing with the willingness of an individual to submit to the authority of the local church to which she or he are requesting membership. This is necessary to keep the unity of peace within the local body of Christ. Each member had the privilege and responsibility to vote in matters of business. If their vote happens to be in the minority there is the need to submit to the decision of the majority. There is no right to stir dissension or be contentious when there is no violation of the Word of God. Every member of the Lord's churches must be aware they are accountable to the Lord and His church in matters of doctrine, practice and the covenant into which they enter. If you have not yet received a copy of the church covenant you should do so and be aware that upon reception into your particular local body this covenant is binding upon both parties.

## The Ordinances of The Church

In this lesson we have covered a variety of topics which could be a lesson to themselves. The same is true of this portion covering the ordinances. In a previous lesson we have already discussed at great length the ordinance of baptism. The only other ordinance recognized by true New Testament Baptists is the Lord's Supper. While we hold each as important in their doctrine and practice we believe neither has any saving merit attached to them. It is our responsibility to "contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). We are to maintain the truth and application of both. We believe both are symbols of spiritual truths. The Lord's supper was instituted by the Lord

and is to be observed until He returns to this Earth. The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of the shedding of His blood and His death as our substitute.

This is strictly a church ordinance to be observed by the members of a local church who are in good standing. This is a restricted communion, not only to those who alone are members of a particular body, but also to those who are in good standing with that body. The elements of the Lord's supper are unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. Among Baptists there are differences as to the use of fermented grape juice or pure grape juice. Arguments are strong on both sides. We believe in using pure grape juice but accept that both are products of the fruit of the vine and create no division with those who hold an opposite view.

Each church is responsible to maintain and contend for the faith. We are instructed what to do and how to do it, but we are given liberty as to the timing. The Lord said "as oft" as you do it, do it in remembrance of me. Some churches may observe the Lord's Supper weekly, some monthly, some quarterly, some yearly, and others at their discretion. We observe the Lord's Supper on a quarterly basis. Prepare yourself to learn much more on this subject as you enjoy your relationship and membership in the pillar and ground of truth, the Lord's church.

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### Study Questions

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1. What truth does Ephesians 3:21 reveal to you?
2. What are the five applications of the word church?
3. What is the biblical position relating to "church" and "churches"?
4. Is there a difference between the family of God, the Kingdom of God, and the Church of God?
5. In the Greek language the word we translate church comes from?
6. What does this word mean?
7. Baptists believe the church was started by whom?
8. They also hold that the church was started when?
9. When do others teach the church began?
10. Was Peter the first Pope?
11. Give a biblical definition of what a church is.
12. What official office or officers were placed in the church first?
13. Who was the first Pastor?
14. Who is the head of every Scriptural New Testament church?
15. What form of government should a Baptist church have?
16. When is the church to meet and worship?
17. How many church officers are recognized in the New Testament?
18. What are those offices?
19. What are the ordinances of the church?
20. What is your responsibility as a church member?

# Lesson Six

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## ***What About Prayer?***

**Lesson Text:** Philippians 4:6-8; I Thessalonians 5:17

**Lesson Objective:** To help you understand what prayer is and how important it is to your Christian life.

**Introduction:** If you are a new Christian or if you have never studied the subject of prayer before, the discussions in this lesson are of the utmost importance to you. If you are a new member, or this is your first discipleship class our hope is that you will be encouraged and enlightened concerning the subject matter under consideration.

Prayer has been, is now, and always will be an effective weapon of the saint's spiritual armor. It is a refuge for the troubled and a vehicle of our faith. Prayer is the breath of the regenerate soul. It was the first breath you breathed when you professed repentance and faith in God. In Psalms 42:1, David wrote "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." Prayer is the communion of our heart and soul with God. This "hart" or deer longs after water. In the same manner we, like David, are to long after God. Prayer is not a list of wishes we bring to God for Him to fulfill. It is a spiritual exercise of our faith whereby we draw closer to our Almighty God. As we look at the subject of prayer be mindful of how the Spirit of God is speaking to your heart. Listen carefully as the Word of God is revealed to your spirit.

### **Our Line of Communication**

As already mentioned, prayer is the first thing that comes forth from a regenerate heart. Our first prayer is the cry of a sinner to the Lord for salvation. This is exactly what the publican did in beating upon his chest and crying out "God be merciful to me a sinner." The first thing to note is that prayer is communication to God. The first prayer man must utter is one of repentance and faith. That prayer should be directed to none other than God and God alone.

Prayer is never to be uttered to other men, dead or alive. The Bible never teaches us to address anyone in prayer except God. We are not to pray to idols nor any departed saints of God. It is an affront to God and His honor if we offer our prayers to any one other than Him. It is only God who can hear and answer the prayers of His people. Once an individual is saved, the line of communication is open between them and their God.

Jesus Christ has opened this line of communication to us. He is our Mediator. No preacher, priest, man or woman, is our "go between." There is no other way of approach to God. John 14:6, states that "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." This is true in salvation as well as after salvation in our prayer life. Christ is our way of acceptance as well as our way of access with God. He is our Great High Priest that is passed into the heavens.

### **Consistent Communication**

Someone once said, "Seven days without prayer makes one weak." When we limit our time of prayer we limit our time with God. When we limit our time with God we limit our strength. God has given us a directive to "Pray without ceasing." There is to ever be a continual turning of our hearts to God. Wherever, whenever, and whatever we are doing we need to stay in communication with God. This does not imply that we are to constantly repeat a formal prayer as some do. Christ instructed His disciples not to use "vain repetitions" as the heathen do. This does not mean we are to avoid sleeping, eating, teaching, or preaching that we might be in continual prayer. We are to be inclined towards prayer at every opportunity. There is no particular time of day in which prayer is more appropriate than another. God is telling us we have permission to come to His mercy seat at any time, and at all times.

There will be times when you do not feel like praying. There will be times when you feel as if your prayers are not being heard. There will be times when coldness surrounds you in your times of prayer. Never abandon prayer. Weep, wait, and wrestle in prayer before your God. There are going to be many times when we must simply "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." To have a heart that is continual in its turning to God it must be a heart that is mindful of sinful interruptions. When we are conscience of these sins we must humble ourselves, and confess them before the Lord.

Quality communication is never a one sided affair. Prayer is not simply endless babbling of requests to God. Prayer is communication with God and communication is a two way street. We both speak and listen in communication. All too often we view prayer as entering the presence of God, making our requests, leaving, and then waiting for an answer. Do not forget to wait upon the Lord while in prayer. Wait for Him to speak to your heart. It may be that there is great delay in an answer. It may be needful for me to remain on my knees in prayer for a long period of time. It may also be true that I simply need to be in a consistent state of prayer throughout out the day, both speaking and listening to God. Consistent prayer shows that we recognize our infirmities and that we also believe in God's sufficiency. Prayer has a design that shows us God is ready and willing to hear us and desires to bless us. If we are not consistent in our prayer life we may find ourselves consistently faltering in our Christian walk. A lack of prayer displays an attitude of self-sufficiency. A self sufficient Christian will not be consistent in their prayer life.

### Asking In The Name Of Jesus

We hear most individuals close their prayers by saying "in the name of Christ, Amen," "in Christ's name, Amen," or "in Jesus name, Amen." Prayer is coming to God in the power and authority of Jesus Christ His Son with our petitions. God does not answer affirmatively merely because we close our prayers this way. It is recognition of the access and the authority by which we come. It is a reminder that we come as sinners pleading Christ's righteousness as our own. It is a statement of fact that Christ is living in us, He is directing us, and our prayers are as such His. Christ has commanded us to love one another. Because of this we can go to God, in faith, by the authority of Christ's command, and ask for the ability and spirit to love our brethren. This is finding a command or promise from the Scriptures and making it our prayer. This glorifies the Father through His Son. This is praying in the will of God.

In James 4:3, it is written "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." This is praying contrary to God's will. If a child were to ask his or her parent for something that would be harmful or detrimental to their well being the parent would normally deny the request. We have an omniscient and all loving God who desires to give us all things that will be beneficial to us. Our job is to find out what things are within His will. We find this out by abiding in Christ and having Christ's words abide in us. To pray in the name of Christ is to pray according to His will and His word.

### The Expressions Of A Believing Heart

Prayer is essentially petitioning God with our needs or those of another. Prayer is part of our worship we offer to God. There are other components that should be present in our prayer; adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication. Adoration is praising God. Confession is recognizing sin, agreement with God over that sin and repenting of it. Thanksgiving is giving thanks to God for what he has done for us, what He is doing for us, and what he will do for us. Supplication is asking God for the need of others. A believer cannot help but praise God, confess to God, thank God, and seek the benefit of those whom he loves.

Though we have already spoken of praying without ceasing, it will be to our greatest benefit if we set a specific time each day to pray. In Psalm 63:1, David said "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;" If we examine David's life we will find that he, along with many others, had specific times through out the day that he spent in prayer and meditation. The expressions of a believing heart are ones of gratitude, appreciation, anticipation, and concern. Prayer is the natural expression of a believing heart. Don't be shy about entering into the presence of God. Respectful yes, but come boldly unto the throne when you are in need. God wants us to ask that He might bless.

## Hindrances To Prayer

Whether you are young or old in your spiritual life you must never forget the reality that there are hindrances to prayer. We can be hindered from prayer by a lax or lukewarm condition to the things of God. If we become cold or indifferent in our spiritual walk, one of the first things that will suffer will be our prayer life. We can easily become too busy. We lose contact with our quiet time. In today's modern societies we seem to find little time to simply sit down, read God's word, stay in quiet meditation, and then pray. If you find yourself too busy to pray your priorities have a wrong emphasis. Another hindrance may be a disorganized life. Some people may over organize themselves and allow their prayer life to become too mechanical while others are so disorganized they have no appointed time set aside for prayer.

It is important that you select an appropriate time and place for your quiet time with the Lord. You can be hindered by constant interruptions. This does not mean you cannot pray while you are busy, but there is a definite need for a time where you can be alone with God, uninterrupted. The pressures of the world that surround you can hinder you in your quiet time with the Lord. We often schedule vacations to get away from it all, to get relief from the pressures that encompass us. Schedule a time to get away from it all and be with God.

Walking in the flesh is a definite hindrance to our prayers. Remember the scripture from James? "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." Our prayers must be guided by a desire for God's glory, not the fulfillment of our own desires. If we are walking in the light as He is in the light we will not desire to fulfill our desires over His. Another hindrance is asking with a heart full of doubt. In Hebrews 11:6, we find that "without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Or when we look at James 1:6-7, where it says; "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord." Spurgeon once said, "Faith obtains promises, unbelief goes empty-handed." Faith sees the invisible and holds on to what is intangible. Faith rests its confidence upon a God that cannot lie. There is one caution that must be made; remember our confidence is in God and not in our prayers. An individual may have great faith in their salvation that they base upon their being baptized as a baby. Their faith, no matter how great, is misplaced. Our faith must be in God guided by His word that abides in us.

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## Study Questions

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- 1.Name the seventh item listed as part of the Christian's armor in Ephesians 6:11-18.
  - 2.What is the first thing to come out of a newly regenerated heart?
  - 3.To whom should we pray?
  - 4.Would it ever be proper to pray to anything or anyone else?
  - 5.The Scriptures give us information about a Mediator between God and us. Please tell us who is this Mediator, and from what verse you got your answer.
  - 6.How often should we pray?
  - 7.Are there certain prayers we should repeat as often as we can?
  - 8.Give a brief definition of prayer.
  - 9.Why do most Christians end their prayers with "In Jesus name, Amen?"
  - 10.Before we pray is it important to try and ascertain God's will in a matter?
  - 11.Does God want us to pray for the salvation of others?
  - 12.According to Hebrews 4:14-16, can we enter into God's presence boldly?
  - 13.Give at least four hindrances to prayer.
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# Lesson Seven

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## ***What About Bible Study?***

**Lesson Text:** II Timothy 2:15; Proverbs 2:1-5

**Lesson Objective:** To help you understand the importance of Bible study and to provide you with the necessary tools to make your study of the Bible more profitable.

**Introduction:** In Proverbs 2:1-5, you find that wisdom and knowledge are promised to those who; Receive God's word, Retain God's word, Respect God's word, Yield to God's word, Make request of God's word, Require God's word, Research God's word, and then Retrace God's word. David learned early on that God's word is something to be hidden in the heart for preservation against sin. David knew his strength would come from God through His wonderful word. Both David and Jeremiah treated God's word as food for the soul.

As Christians we cannot survive without a steady diet of God's word. When we are young Christians we are to desire the sincere milk of the word of God (I Peter 2:2) that we may be able to grow by it. As we grow older, or mature, in the Lord we are to feed upon the meat of God's word, the deeper things of the Lord. We are to grow upon the first principals we learn as Christians. God has provided us with a means by which we can learn and grow. We have already learned about the local church God has provided for our benefit. We can serve, worship, and learn in the body God places us within. While we need the order and organization of the assembly we also need to understand we can learn and study for ourselves. We should be like those noble Bereans who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

Within this lesson you are going to be provided with some tools to help you learn and study from God's word. You are going to learn how to dig for the hidden treasures within the pages of God's eternal truth. As you proceed through this lesson you need to remember that study plans are not a substitution for the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit that will guide us into all truth, for He is the Spirit of truth. It is God who reveals truth to the spiritually discerned. It is God who reveals truth through the study of His word. One last quick point before we begin a look at Bible study methods. Allow the Bible to speak for itself and lay aside your preconceived opinions and ideas. Approach this book with the ultimate in reverence and with a willingness to obey what God reveals.

### The Inductive Method

This method can be used to study a paragraph or portion of a book of the Bible but may be used to it's fullest in the study of an entire book. Whatever the portion of interests it is preferable to read the book, or portion, through several times before beginning a serious study. Once it has been read through jot down the main divisions, as you believe them to be and then after rereading assign sub-points to these main points. In the study of an entire book it is best to use the paragraphs as your main unit of study. Once the outline has been established begin your detailed study using your outline to look at each main point and it's sub-points. Learn to ask questions using Who? What? When? Where? Why? And How? You can ask why the people mentioned are there. What is their connection to the main character or characters. Note the geographical locations and time elements, they are included for a reason. As much as is possible, place yourself at the scene and look, feel, and hear as much as you can. Keep the context of the portion of scripture intact. Compare scripture with scripture.

In this method we are not attempting to interpret, apply, or devotionalize, that will come later in other methods. This method is to outline the basic facts you find within your portion of study or book. The inductive method is one of the most detailed methods of study and is impossible to give a detailed example in this lesson. Once you have made your outline you can begin a further investigation by asking a variety of questions concerning each main heading and it's sub-points. You can chart your findings and suggest topics, people, places, doctrines, or words to trace throughout your outline.

## The Devotional Method

This particular method involves a spirit of study more than a technique of study. As one writer put it; "It is the spirit of eagerness which seeks the mind of God; it is the spirit of humility which listens readily to the voice of God; it is the spirit of adventure which pursues earnestly the will of God; it is the spirit of adoration which rests in the presence of God." As much as we should desire to have this type of spirit we also need organization and order to help us avoid reaching an incorrect hypothesis, or unproved theories. This method involves the application of God's word to our personal life that we might be victorious and present to others a more effective witness. It is taking our text verse of II Timothy 2:15 to heart. The purpose of this method is not to spend so much time on intensive investigation, but on how we might improve our spiritual life by discovering the claims, instructions, and promises of God's word upon the believer. We can study words, verses, paragraphs, chapters, books, and characters using this method. In each of the methods presented you need to learn how to ask questions.

In the study of words we want to emphasize the spiritual message they convey more than the technical means by which they are employed. We might ask how this word is used in the Bible? What definition may be gleaned by means of its use in various Biblical contexts? What did it mean to those who used it? What does it reveal of God, man, sin, etc.? How can I relate it to the strengthening of my own spiritual life? If we were to take wisdom as a word for study we might ask the following questions; what is the source of wisdom? What is the basis of its communication or imparting? And what is the purpose of its conferral?

In the study of verses we want to be sure we examine the divisions of the verses involved. The divisions of verses are man made for ease in finding portions of scripture. Many times verses embody incomplete thoughts and sentences. This is not the case all the time but you need to examine the context in which you find your verse to be examined. It may be helpful to first outline the paragraph or chapter in which your verse is located. There are many people who have fallen prey to false doctrines by failing to look at what comes before and after a verse. Each verse may demand a different approach but the following questions may be a helpful start. Consider the verbs in a given verse; note their tense, voice, mood, message, subject, and object. Ask who authored the passage and how it fits into the overall message or how it contributes to it. Record your findings and keep a notebook for future use. If possible memorize the verse you have selected. As you meditate upon it during the day or evening you may find details come to light that you have never seen before. Personalize what you discover where it is applicable.

## The Analytical Method

This method is an analysis, or detailed study, of a book in order to ascertain its message in all its distinct parts. With this method you seek to study paragraph by paragraph with determination to discover the principal sentences and to note the grouping around them or subordinate sentences and clauses. The aim is to discover the main theme or principal teaching. If this is not done someone can often be distracted by a subordinate clause and gain an inaccurate impression as to the prominent subject or main theme.

Use the paragraph as your main unit of study. Rewrite the text by placing the main statements on the left side of a paper while indenting all subordinate clauses and phrases. This will help you to further analyze the portion of scripture under observation. Remember to employ Who? What? Where? When? Why? and How? Once you have found the main statements and subordinate clauses you can move on to establish an outline. Once the analysis and outline have been completed you can move on to making observations of the text. Be curious, don't worry about your abilities or procedures at this point. Your goal is to study a book in detail to understand all of the parts, not just the message in general.

## The Biographical Method

With this method you will find a good concordance to be most helpful. There is a concordance located in the back pages of your Bible, but most of these are incomplete in their listings of all words found with the pages of the Bible. It would be a great addition to anyone's personal library to purchase an unabridged concordance to aid you in your studies.



Chose a character for your study. Find all of the passages that refer to the character selected and jot down the significant contribution of each. You can do this by going through a single book, and finding out what that book reveals about the character, or follow them throughout the entire Bible. Once you have found your passages and made notes about what they reveal, organize your material into an outline of your own choosing. You may choose to limit your study to a single book or portion of scripture to discover something about an individuals character or qualities in a given situation. It also may help to first divide an individuals life by some major climatic points which can serve as dividing lines. Moses' life, for instance, could easily be divided into three main divisions. He spent forty years in Egypt, forty years in the wilderness, and forty years as deliverer of Israel. Joseph may be studied by events rather than times. We could divide his life into three parts; His early life and rejection, his servitude and imprisonment, and then his exaltation and reconciliation with his family. The benefits from a study of this type are plentiful. Remember that your sufficiency does not lie in the mastery of the mechanics of Bible study. Apart from Christ we can do nothing. The real teacher is the Holy Spirit who takes the truth from God's word and reveals it to us. These methods are not the only type that can be employed and we must bear in mind that no method is to be relied upon apart from the Spirit of God. Our suggestion is for you to make a sound investment in a good K.J.V. study Bible, an unabridged concordance, and a complete Webster's Dictionary. With these three tools you will be ready to begin a journey of a lifetime.

### Study Questions

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1. Why is it important for you to learn how to study the Bible for yourself?
2. Why do you think the Bible is mentioned as spiritual food?
3. Along with the methods you can use, what is the most essential element of Bible study with which you can not do without?
4. What are the six most important questions you can employ in your studies?
5. Are all methods after the same goal?
6. If so what goal is that? If not why not?

# Lesson Eight

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## ***What About The Future?***

*Lesson Text:* John 14:1-4

*Lesson Objective:* To help give you a glimpse of the Biblical doctrine of the second coming of Christ; the future of the saved, the unsaved, and what the Bible speaks of as the "new Heaven and new Earth."

*Introduction:* In I Corinthians 15:19, we find the statement that "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." We do indeed have hope in this life in Christ but this life is not all there is. We do have an eternal future. For the saved that future is with God in heaven. For the lost the future is an awful one without God in hell. Within the Bible we can learn of our personal future. Within the Bible we can also learn of the future of mankind as a whole. This is where the Christian can derive great hope which will act as an "anchor of the soul" (Hebrews 6:19). That anchor is Christ and His coming again for His elect. As we progress through this lesson be aware of the fact that this is a brief overview of Biblical Eschatology. Eschatology is defined as the study of the end times, or the doctrine of the last or final things. It is a lengthy study of the prophecies of the Bible that have been fulfilled, are being fulfilled, and are yet to be fulfilled. We will focus on only a portion of the future prophecies what will happen to the human race and this earth upon which we now live.

### **The Promise Of A Second Coming!**

In preparing His disciples for His crucifixion and death, Christ anticipated their despondency. He had previously spoken to them about His death, how Peter would deny Him, that one of them was a traitor, and that Satan was at work against them all. From our text we can see His compassion for them when He said "let not your heart be troubled:" The word troubled, from the Greek language, means to be agitated. Much like a washing machine agitates the water. Christ knew these events He spoke and His death would shake up their faith and their hearts. His encouragement came from the facts of the future. He was going to prepare a place for them and then come back for them. This is a promise of hope for all the saved.

After the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ He appeared to over 500 brethren at one time, He ministered to them for 40 days. He spoke to them, commissioned His church, and left them with great hope. His disciples wanted to know if He would "at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1:6). This has reference to the Millennium, or 1,000 year reign which we will speak about later. He answered their question, and while the disciples were watching; "He was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight" Acts 1:9. Just after this we find Acts 1:11, which says that angels stood by and then spoke to them and said "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Look further at some additional verses concerning Christ's Second Coming. Hebrews 9:28, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." In Matthew chapter twenty-four the disciples wanted to know of the signs of His coming and of the end of the world (Matthew 24:3). Christ then went on to tell them many things as in verse 30, "and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." Today men still have an interest in knowing when Christ will return. We can know something of the signs of His coming but as Christ taught in Matthew 24:36, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." We know He is returning so we are to heed His words and "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." Matthew 24:42. This is our encouragement to be faithful servants, hopeful servants, and watchful servants of our Lord.

In one of the greatest chapters dealing with the gospel, our resurrection, and Christ second coming, Paul, in I Corinthians 15:51-52 wrote "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a

moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. Doesn't this give you an exciting hope? Doesn't this cause your heart to beat just a little faster knowing that Christ can come at any moment and we would be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye? The scriptures leave no room for doubt that Christ will return again. As we find in I Thessalonians 4:16, "for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first." This is a day of change and gives us a hope with which we can gain comfort and give comfort.

## Understanding The Terms

In this brief overview we want to help you understand some of the terms you will encounter in Christian teaching and preaching before we proceed. Time and space will not allow us to go into the details necessary to understand each in its entirety. You may often hear, or have heard, of the "Rapture." The word rapture means "an act of transporting or fact of becoming transported." While this word is not found in the Bible it is a term used concerning the transporting of the saints, by Christ, to be with Him in the air. It is the "catching up" (I Thessalonians 4:17), or seizing of His saints still left upon the earth at the appointed time. This rapture of the saints precedes an event known as the tribulation that in turn precedes the Millennial reign of Christ.

The Bible separates the times of the end into three distinct periods. The church age, in which we are now living; the seven-year tribulation, or Daniel's seventieth week; and the millennial kingdom, or 1,000 year reign of Christ. The tribulation period is known as Daniel's seventieth week because of the prophecies in the book of Daniel, but is sometimes called the time of "Jacob's trouble" taken from Jeremiah 30:7. This is not a normal time of tribulation. The Bible calls it the "Great Tribulation" (Matthew 24:21). The tribulation period is seven years in length. This time period completes the times of the Gentiles or the Church age. Within this time period we find the reign of the beast, the false prophet, and the man of sin. During this time God will pour out His wrath upon those who have taken the sign of the beast upon them. The man of sin is also known as the anti-Christ who will make a covenant with the nation of Israel. After a period of three and one-half years of mock peace, the man of sin will reveal himself and demand worldwide worship. He will do so by breaking the covenant with Israel and setting up an image of himself within the temple. Those who oppose him will be persecuted and killed, or forced to flee for their lives. The tribulation period will be terminated by the obvious appearing of Christ to the Earth for all to see. This coming will precede a gathering of nations against Jerusalem, and when the conflict is at its height Christ will suddenly appear, defeat the beast and the false prophet with their armies, and deliver Israel.

Immediately after the age, or period, known as the tribulation, we find the millennial age. This is a 1,000 year period in which Christ will bind Satan and remove his influence upon the earth. Revelations 20:2-3 states that "he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season." Christ will return to earth and rule with a rod of iron from Jerusalem. Christ will have complete and absolute authority to govern. Peace will be absolute, joy will be a distinctive mark, all needs will be met, perfect justice will be administered, knowledge will be unparalleled, sickness and death will be removed, there will be no oppression, economic prosperity will be abundant, and God's presence will be manifest and recognized. At the end of this 1,000 year reign Satan will be "loosed for a season." He will gather together a large portion of the earth's inhabitants, by deception, in order to lead a final revolt against the theocracy of God. One last great battle takes place, God is victorious, and Satan vanquished and sent into everlasting punishment.

## Back To The Rapture

There is a twofold order to Christ return to the Earth. In the first order Christ's coming will be secret and imminent; Revelation 16:15, "Behold, I come as a thief." This is His coming for His saints. In the second order Christ's coming will be public and visible to all; Revelation 1:7, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." This is His coming with His saints. These two events are separated by a seven year period known as the "Tribulation." How does a thief come? He comes silently, suddenly, softly, he comes while no one is watching. He comes to take the

treasure. The Lord will indeed come and take away His bride, the jewel of all jewels. He will come as a thief, but He will come to take only what is rightfully His. His coming will be as a thief, but He will not be a thief.

In Matthew chapter twenty-five we can see this two-fold coming. In the first part the Lord comes as a Bridegroom, in the second He comes as a King. In the first part He comes to meet virgins, in the second He comes to meet nations. In the first part He comes to a marriage chamber, in the second He come to a judgment throne. In the first part He comes to be married, in the second He comes to execute judgment. In the first part He comes at night, while in the second He comes in the morning hour. This chapter will help enlighten us as to the timing and events of this two-fold coming of Christ. While there is minimal argument concerning the fact of His coming and the fact of a 1,000 year reign, there is argument among many Christians concerning the timing of His second coming. A careful study of related scripture will demonstrate that an interval of time between the translation, or rapture, of the saints and the coming of Christ to establish the Millennial kingdom is absolutely necessary. According to II Corinthians 5:10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." All Christians will appear before a judgment seat of Christ. This is commonly called the "bema" seat of Christ that is taken from the Greek word used in this passage. This is not a judgment to determine our eternal abode, or punishment of sin. That type of judgment will take place at the "Great White Throne" (Revelation 20:11) and is reserved as a judgment seat for the lost, or those who were not found to have their names written in the book of life. The Great White Throne judgment belongs to the end of the 1,000 year reign of Christ. In conjunction with I Corinthians 3:13-15, We find that the "Bema" seat is a place where Christians will receive rewards of gold, silver, or precious stone. This is what Christ spoke of in Revelation 22:12 when He stated "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

Additional evidence that there must be an interval of time between this two-fold coming is found in Revelation 19:6-8 where the "wife" of the Lamb is declared to be arrayed "in fine linen, bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." This involves the marriage of the bride to the Lamb. The bride is the church, while the bridegroom is Jesus Christ. This marriage of the Lamb takes place in heaven apart from the events on Earth during the seven-year period known as the "tribulation." The world will be no more aware of His coming for His bride than when He ascended in the clouds of heaven. In Luke 12:36 we read: "And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." Notice the words "return from the wedding?" The wedding takes place immediately after the rapture of God's elect. You can't return from something that hasn't yet happened if the rapture takes place after the time of tribulation.

## A Brief Summary

Don't worry if some of this seems a bit confusing. What you need to know and understand is that Christ is coming again. He is coming for you if you are born again. We also have assurance that those who have died in Christ will come with Him. We will be reunited with the loved ones we have lost. We have confidence from the Bible of a time of reward or loss of reward to every child of God. We must seek to work according to the commands of God so that our work will be gold, silver, and precious stone; not wood, hay, and stubble. The fires of God's judgment will test them all. We also can be sure of Christ's absolute rule upon this earth for 1,000 years after a terrible time of tribulation. Once all of this is completed we have an additional promise which should bring hope and comfort to all that believe in Christ. After the final judgment this old heaven and earth will be destroyed that it might be made new again. In Revelation 21:1, John records that he saw "a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." Upon this new earth will come the city of God and in this eternal abode there will be no more death, no more sorrows, no more crying, no more night, and no more sin, for God will be with us. In the end God wins!

## Study Questions

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- 1.What was the encouragement Christ gave to His disciples prior to His death and his going away?
- 2.When Jesus Departed who spoke to those who watched Him leave?
- 3.What did they say about "this same Jesus?"
- 4.Can we know the day and hour of Christ's return?
- 5.Who does know the day and hour?
- 6.From Matthew 24:42 what are we to do concerning His coming again?
- 7.What does the word rapture mean?
- 8.What is the teaching of the rapture?
- 9.When will the rapture take place?
- 10.What time period follows the rapture?
- 11.Name at least one event that takes place during the tribulation?
- 12.What happens at the very beginning of the 1,000 year reign of Christ?
- 13.At the conclusion of the 1,000 reign Satan will be loosed. Why do you suppose men would still join with him in a revolt against God?
- 14.What event takes place in heaven while the tribulation is taking place upon earth?
- 15.What is the "Bema" seat of Christ?
- 16.Who is the bride of the Lamb?
- 17.Look at I Peter 3:10-11 and tell what happens to this heaven and earth?