



Weekly Bible Studies

Deeper Christian Life Ministry

2002 Empowered to Serve 2002

A Compilation of Study Outlines on Bible Doctrine

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” – John 5:39.

PREFACE TO THE STUDY SERIES ON BIBLE DOCTRINE

With gratitude to God and sincere prayer that it may be a blessing to the diligent student, we present this booklet on Bible Doctrine to the Church. It is a compilation of various outlines specifically prepared to deal with the broad spectrum of the teachings of the Bible.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” – II Timothy 3:16,17. It is the intention of the Church this year to empower men for service. Understanding of Bible Doctrine is crucial to this. *“And when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing with them in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks” – Acts 19:9,10.* *“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” – II Timothy 2:2.*

Bible Doctrine is the pillar of successful Christian life and ministry. It is essential to dig into the whole truth and plant yourself therein. In this series of Bible Studies this year, we shall take time to re-examine our doctrinal pillars. Take each study seriously by attending it and paying attention. Also, develop a prayerful and dependent spirit, so that the Lord may convey His truth to you. Furthermore, do your homework: study the scriptures at home. This booklet together with a Bible and concordance will help you to study more and gain more. Persuaded, balanced, victorious and steadfast Christian living and Equipment for ministry require personal diligence. Give it all it takes. Moreover, be a doer of the Word. Regulate your life by what you understand from the Scriptures. That way, you will approve yourself before God and man. You will not fall at the mercy of false prophets. Moreover, apart from getting to heaven eventually, by God's grace, you will thereby be instrumental to the conversion and establishment of many others.

May the Lord enrich you as you patiently follow these studies through.

Eindhoven, 08 January 2002.

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Your spiritual welfare is our concern. If you need more assistance, please contact us at:
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GOSPEL LANDMARKS

This section summarises the 22 doctrines we believe and teach. The number has not been established by the Deeper Christian Life Ministry, but by a thorough study of the Word.

God's infallible WORD teaches and we believe:

1. That the Holy Bible, consisting of 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament, is the inspired Word of God. We take the Bible as final authority in all matters concerning Christian conduct and work. *II Timothy 3:16,17; Proverbs 30:5,6; Revelation 22:18,19.*
2. That the Godhead consists of three separate, distinct and recognizable personalities and qualities, perfectly united in one. The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are different Persons in the Godhead, not merely three names for one Person. *Matthew 3:16,17; II Corinthians 13:14; Matthew 28:19,20.*
3. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God. The crucifixion, death, burial and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. *Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25; Romans 1:4; I Corinthians 15:3,4.*
4. The total depravity, sinfulness and guilt of all men since the Fall, rendering them subject to God's wrath and condemnation. *Psalms 51:5; Job 14:4; Romans 3:23; 5:12-17; Mark 7:21-23; Ephesians 2:1.*
5. That Repentance is a complete turning away from all sin and its deceitful pleasures, and that it is required of every sinner before he can truly and effectively believe in Jesus with saving faith. *Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 55:7; Ezekiel 18:21-23; Mark 1:15; Luke 24:46,47; Acts 2:38; 3:19,21; II Corinthians 7:10; Heb. 6:1-3.*
6. That Restitution is making amends for wrongs done against our fellowmen, restoring stolen things to their rightful owners, paying debts, giving back where one has defrauded, making confessions to the offended and apologising to those slandered, so as to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man. *Gen. 20:1-8,14-18; Exodus 22:1-7; Leviticus 6:1-17; Num. 5:6-8; II Samuel 12:1-6; Proverbs 6:31; Ezekiel 33:14-16; Matthew 5:23,24; Luke 19:8,9; Acts 23:1-5; 24:16; James 4:17-5:6.*
7. That Justification (or Regeneration) is the act of God's grace whereby one receives forgiveness and remission of sins, and is counted righteous before God, through faith in the atoning blood of Jesus, standing before God as though he had never sinned. *Psalms 32:1,2; Isaiah 1:18; Micah 7:29; John 3:3-8; Acts 13:38,39; Romans 3:24-30; 4:6-16; 5:1,2; II Corinthians 5:17-21; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8,9; Titus 3:5; I Peter 1:23.*
8. That Water Baptism is essential to our obedience after reconciliation with God. Water Baptism is one immersion (not three), "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," as Jesus commanded. *Matthew 28:19; 3:13-17; Mark 16:15; Acts 2:38,39; 19:1-6; Romans 6:4,5.*
9. That the Lord's Supper was constituted by Jesus Christ so that all believers (all members of the family of God) might partake thereof regularly, to "shew the Lord's death till He come." The emblems used are "unleavened bread" and the juice of the "fruit of the vine". Anyone who eats and drinks unworthily brings "damnation", punishment and chastisement upon himself. *Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:17-20; I Corinthians 11:23-30.*
10. That Entire Sanctification is a definite act of God's grace, subsequent to the New Birth, by which the believer's heart is purified and made holy. It cannot be attained progressively by works, struggle or suppression, but it is obtained by faith in the sanctifying blood of Jesus Christ. Holiness of life and purity of heart are central to Christian living. *Luke 1:74,75; John 17:15-17; I Thessalonians 4:3,7,8; 5:22-24; Ephesians 5:25-27; Heb. 2:11; 10:10,14; 13:11; Titus 2:11-14; I John 1:7; Heb. 12:14; I Peter 1:14-16.*
11. That the Baptism in the Holy Ghost is the endowment with power from on high upon the sanctified believer. It is the "promise of the Father" and when one receives this "gift of the

Holy Ghost”, it is accompanied by the initial evidence of speaking a language unlearned previously, referred to as speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance. *Matthew 3:11; Acts 1:8; Luke 3:16; 24:49; John 1:20-33; 7:37-39; 14:16,17,26; 15:26; 16:12-15; Acts 1:5-8; Mark 16:17; Acts 2:1-18; 10:44-46; 19:1-6.*

We do not teach or instruct people on how to speak in tongues: the Holy Spirit gives the utterance. We also stress the necessity of Purity before Power.

12. That Redemption from the curse of the law, Healing of sickness and disease as well as continued Health are provided for all people through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. *Exodus 15:26; Deut. 7:15; Psalm 103:1-5; Proverbs 4:20-22; Isaiah 53:4,5; Matthew 8:16,17; I Peter 2:24; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 13:16; John 15:12-14; 10:10; Acts 10:38; James 5:14-16; I John 3:8; III John 2; Galatians 3:13,14.*
13. That Personal Evangelism is a God-given and God-ordained ministry for every believer. Jesus commanded, and God requires every believer to be a compassionate and faithful soul-winner, bringing others to Christ. *Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-49; John 17:18; Acts 1:8; 8:1-4; Psalm 126:5,6; Proverbs 11:30; Daniel 12:3; Ezekiel 13:17-21.*
14. That Marriage is binding for life. Monogamy is the uniform teaching of the Bible. Polygamy is contrary to the New Testament dispensation. No one has a right to divorce and remarry while the first companion lives. When a person becomes converted, necessary restitution, on this line, must be done without delay, if he has married wrongly. *Gen. 2:24; Deut. 7:1-4; Jos. 23:11-13; II Corinthians 6:14-18; Proverbs 31:10-31; Mal. 2:14,15; Romans 7:2,3; Ephesians 5:31-33; Matthew 5:31,32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; John 4:15-19; Gen. 20:3,7.*
15. That the Rapture (commonly referred to as the first phase or stage of the SECOND COMING OF CHRIST) is the catching away from the earth of all living saints and all who died in the Lord. The Rapture will take place before the Great Tribulation, and it can happen any time from now. “In a twinkling of an eye,” without a moment’s warning, “the trumpet shall sound.” “...and the dead in Christ shall rise first. then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” *John 14:1-3; Luke 21:34-36; I Corinthians 15:51-58; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:4-9; II Thessalonians 2:5-7; Philippians 3:11,20,21; I John 3:1-3.*
16. That the Resurrection of the dead is taught in the Bible as clearly as the immortality of the soul. Every individual who has ever lived will be resurrected, some to honour and glory, and others to everlasting shame and contempt. *Job 19:25-27; Psalm 71:20; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2; John 5:28,29; I Corinthians 15:12-57; I Thessalonians 4:13-16; Heb. 6:1,2; Philippians 3:8-11; Revelation 20:4,6,12,13.*
17. That the Great Tribulation will occur after the rapture, and will be a time of terrible suffering on earth. It is also referred to as the time of Jacob’s trouble. *Matthew 24:21,22,29; Revelation 9:16; Mark 13:19; II Thessalonians 2:3-12; Revelation 13.* During this time, the Antichrist will take possession of this world for a reign of terror. He will not be a system or organization, but a person - a supernatural, diabolical being, in the form of a man who will blaspheme and proclaim himself to be God. *Daniel 6:23-25; II Thessalonians 2:7-12; Revelation 13:1-10.*
The Marriage Supper of the Lamb will take place above while the Tribulation continues on earth. *Revelation 19:1-10.*
18. That the Second Coming of Christ will just be as literal as His going away, and He is coming to execute judgment upon the ungodly. He will also, then, set up His kingdom and reign on this present earth for a thousand years. *Zech. 14:3,4; Matthew 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 13:24-37; II Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2:8; Jude 14,15.*
19. That Christ’s Millennial Reign is the 1,000 years’ literal reign of Jesus on earth, which will be ushered in by the coming of Jesus back to earth with ten thousands of His saints. At this time He will judge the nations that dwell upon the face of the earth. *Jude 14,15; II Thessalonians 1:7-10.* During this time the devil will be bound. *Revelation 20:2,3.* It will be

- a reign of peace and blessing. *Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25; Hosea 2:18; Zech. 14:9-20; Isaiah 2:2-4.*
20. That the Great White Throne Judgment is when God finally judges all (the living and the dead, small and great) who have ever lived on the face of the earth, according to their works. This is after the Millennium. At this time the final Judgment known as the Great White Throne Judgment, will be held. All those from all ages, who have not yet been judged (believers' judgment, as sinners', was accomplished by Christ on the Cross -*John 5:24; 3:17-19*) will stand before God at this time. The devil and his angels are judged at this time also, and sent to the lake of fire for ever. *Daniel 12:2,3; Matthew 10:15; 11:21-24; 12:41,42; John 5:28,29; Romans 2:15,16; 14:12; II Peter 2:9; Jude 6; I Corinthians 6:1-4; Acts 10:42; Revelation 20:11-15.*
 21. That the New Heaven and the New Earth "wherein dwelleth righteousness" will be made by God, and the redeemed shall dwell with God for ever. This present earth which has been polluted by sin will pass away after the Great White Throne Judgment *Psalms 102:25,26; Isaiah 51:6; 65:17; Matthew 5:18; 24: 35; II Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1.* No unclean thing shall be there. We shall know each other, our knowledge having been perfected. There will be no more curse upon anything. There will be no more night: the glory of the Lord will be the light thereof. *Isaiah 66:22; II Peter 3:12,13; I Corinthians 13:12; I John 3:2,3; Revelation 21:1-7; 22:1-5.*
 22. That Hell-fire is a place of everlasting punishment where sinners (all who do not have their names in the book of life) will suffer torments for ever and ever. It was prepared for the devil and his angels (*Matthew 25:41*), but God has decreed that the wicked and those who forget Him and reject Christ, will also be cast there, because of their sin and neglect of His salvation. *Psalms 9:17; Matthew 25:46; Luke 12: 4,5; 16:19-31; Matthew 5:22,30; Mark 9:43-47; Revelation 14:10,11; 20:10,12-15.*

THE ESSENCE OF BIBLE DOCTRINE

II Timothy 3:16,17

It is a great privilege to have the Bible - God's own Word - as our heritage. Therein lies our strength and understanding as a Church. As we begin with these regular studies of the Word, we should prepare our hearts to receive the best from God and practise real Christianity (Luke 11:27,28).

THE PLACE OF THE BIBLE II Timothy 3:16.

The Bible is God's revelation to man (Romans 15:4), and it is the centre of all divine-human relationship and cooperation (Psalm 89:34). "*Every scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" - II Timothy 3:16,17. Bible doctrine is Bible teaching. The Greek word *didaskalia* means doctrine, learning, teaching; it is the embodiment of divine instruction, the information to be communicated. Bible doctrine is thus the systematic exposition of the revelation of God as we can find it in scripture (Isaiah 8:20; Deuteronomy 6:1-9). Bible doctrine is never a consensus of human ideas or a harmonisation of human opinions; it is not property or product of any church or organisation; it is rather God's instruction to man and His rule for our conduct (John 7:16-18; Romans 16:17,18; I Timothy 1:3,4).

THE ESSENCE OF THE DOCTRINE II Timothy 3:17.

The tendency in many circles today is to replace the Word of God by the opinions of men. Some are even afraid of the word "doctrine". They claim that it is doctrine that divides the church. But any union that does not have the teaching of the wholesome truth as its centre is false and sentimental. God still exalts His Word today (Psalm 138:2). There are a number of reasons why we must uphold

a balanced and complete Bible Doctrine:

1. God commands and commends it (Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Matthew 28:19,20; 5:19; Acts 17:10,11; 20:27-31; I Timothy 3:15,16).
2. Ignorance is costly. When we forget God's Word, He rejects us and our so-called converts (or more correctly, proselytes) that we have gathered around us (Hosea 4:6; Revelation 2:20-23).
3. Knowledge of the truth brings freedom from sin and satan (John 8:30-32; Psalm 19:7-11).
4. Our level of fellowship with God is proportional to our understanding of His Word (Genesis 18:17-33; Exodus 34:5-11; Nehemiah 8:5-13).
5. Backsliding and compromise will be minimized in the Church when members are thoroughly grounded in the doctrine of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16).
6. False doctrine cannot have root where the truth of the gospel is diligently expounded (Titus 1:9-14; II Timothy 4:1-5).
7. There will be purity and power where God's Word is properly understood and practised (John 15:3; Acts 2:41-43; Ephesians 5:25-27; I Peter 1:22).
8. We will know satanic and demonic wiles and triumph over them through sound teaching (Acts 8:9-13; 19:18,19).
9. Bible Doctrine is the basis of faith. Where God's Word is known, there will be scriptural, dynamic, working faith (Romans 10:17).
10. Understanding of God's Word brings confidence in life and ministry (Acts 4:19,20; 26:22-29; II Timothy 1:8-12; II Peter 1:16-21; I John 1:1-3).
11. There will be multiplicity of disciples and competent labourers where the Word of God is faithfully taught (II Timothy 2:2,15; Acts 2:42-47; 19:9-12, 18-20).
12. Stable homes, healthy and happy lives will result when God's Word is known and obeyed (Genesis 18:17-19; Deuteronomy 4:29; 6:24,25; 7:12-15; Psalm 119:265; 128:1-4).

CONDITIONS FOR A FRUITFUL STUDY

Matthew 13:1-23

Having seen the important role that the Bible plays in the Church, and the centrality of Bible doctrine, it is essential for us to consider diligently how we can profit maximally from the Word of God. We shall consider some hindrances to spiritual understanding, and necessary conditions for a fruitful study.

HINDRANCES TO SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING

Matthew 13:4-7,19-22; Micah 4:12.

God is willing to unfold His knowledge to us (Isaiah 32:3,4), yet there are heart conditions that will prevent us from understanding Him. Such conditions of heart are:

1. A hardened, stony heart which repels the Word before it is able to take root (Matt. 13:14,15; Mark 8:17; Zech. 7:12).
2. A careless, impious, impenitent heart that ridicules the Word and its Source (Matt. 13:19; Job. 21:13-15).
3. A rash, impatient heart that cannot settle down for thoughtful meditation and diligent consideration. Rather, it is emotional, restless and flippant (Matt. 13:20,21; John 8:43).
4. A busy heart: a heart that is full of carnal activity and overcharged with the cares of this world, such that the Word is easily choked (Matt. 13:22; Luke 21:34).

5. An unbelieving heart. Such a heart doubts and scoffs every Word of God. It does not honour God by simply trusting His infallibility (Deuteronomy 32:20; Matt. 13:58; II Peter 3:3-5).
6. A proud, conceited heart that is full of self esteem. It cannot bow low under the doctrine to be taught at the feet of the Lord (Luke 18:9-15; John 9:39-41).
7. A disobedient, stubborn heart which hears the Word, but laughs it to scorn (Psalm 50:16,17; Jeremiah 6:10).
8. An evil, itching heart that departs from the truth and seeks after false doctrine (Hebrews 3:12; II Timothy 4:3,4).

If we want to receive from the Lord, we have to pray and break any of these tendencies that may be present in us, and become “good soil” where the Word will germinate and bring forth fruit.

CONDITIONS TO UNDERSTAND BIBLE DOCTRINE Matthew 13:8,23.

Before the Word can become fruitful in us, we must take the time both to hear and understand it. That means our hearts must be disposed to the Word. The following conditions are necessary for a fruitful study of the Word of God.

1. We must first be *weaned* (Isaiah 28:9-11). To understand divine knowledge demands that we throw away carnality and “receive with meekness the engrafted Word” (I Corinthians 3:1-3; I Peter 2:1-3; James 1:21). We must be weaned from personal ideas, human opinions, fleshly conception, and reach out for what God wants to offer (Ezekiel 33:31,32; John 6:60, 66-69).
2. There must be an ardent desire for the truth. Our hearts must be “set” to know the truth. We must be ready to pay the price, even when the Word of truth humbles us and deflates our pride and false security (Daniel 10:12; Acts 17:10,11; Psalm 119:97,103).
3. There must be genuine love for God - to hear Him, receive the whole counsel from Him and obey Him (Psalm 42:1,2; 119:97).
4. We must depend on the Holy Ghost, and not on our own minds. We can only understand the Word when the Holy Spirit breathes upon it and opens our hearts (Acts 16:14; John 14:26; Psalm 119:18).
5. There must be diligence in study. A person who cannot sit down for an hour beside the Bible will only fill his heart with the dung of other people. No believer can excel and be really “mighty in the scriptures” who will not prayerfully tunnel through the Word (Ezekiel 33:7; John 5:39; Acts 6:2-4; 18:24-27; II Timothy 2:15).
6. We need prayerful meditation. It is not sufficient to read and study, but we must also meditate and really pray those things into our souls (Psalm 119:14-16, 25-27, 33-38, 43, 97-104; Joshua 1:8; Colossians 3:16; I Timothy 4:13-16).
7. There ought to be practical obedience. We may never understand what we learn from the scriptures except we practically carry them out (I Sam 15:22; Matthew 7:24,25; John 13:17; 15:4-10; James 1:22-25).

INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE DOCTRINES

II Timothy 2:15; 3:15-17

As members of a Bible Church, we must know the doctrine. A legacy has been preserved for us in the eternal Word, and it is our responsibility to diligently study it. We shall devote considerable time this year to the study of the major doctrines which we believe and teach. Everyone of us is challenged to give himself to this rewarding exercise (Acts 17:10-12).

THE PRIORITY OF DOCTRINE II Timothy 3:16.

Doctrine to the Church is like what a foundation is to the building. It is the article of faith on which a believer's faith is anchored. A building with a weak foundation is likely to collapse under intense, unfavourable weather and environmental conditions. On the other hand, a building with a solid foundation will weather through storms (Matthew 7:24-27). The believer's steadfastness and stability in the Lord are dependent on a firm grasp of the truth revealed in the Bible (Ephesians 4:13,14). Lack of knowledge leads to backsliding and destruction (Hosea 4:6). In a world of error and deceit engineered by satan and his hosts (John 8:44), a believer needs to be well grounded in the truth in order to frontally attack every lie of satan, if he is to remain in the faith (Matthew 4:3,4).

JESUS AND BIBLE DOCTRINE John 5:39.

Jesus preached and healed. But He also taught. In fact, that was a key expression of His compassion on ignorant, suffering folk (Mark 6:34). He taught people with the authority of God (Matthew 7:28,29). He gave priority to the truth and warned His disciples against false doctrine (Matthew 16:5-12). He read the Word and backed His ministry up with it (Luke 4:16-22). Many times, He referred people to the Scriptures as the baseline for God's mind. To Him, Bible doctrine was indispensable to true godliness (Matthew 5:17-19; 19:3-6; 22:29; 23:1-3). Moreover, He commanded His disciples to teach men to observe all things that He had commanded them (Matthew 28:18-20).

DOCTRINE AND THE EARLY CHURCH Acts 2:42.

The early believers understood perfectly the need to be grounded in Bible doctrine. They took Christ's commandment in Matthew 28:18-20 literally and seriously, and they pursued it diligently. The young as well as the old engaged in spiritual activities that built up their Christian character and convictions. They studied the doctrines, prayed and celebrated the Lord's supper (Acts 2:41-47). It should be observed that the study of the doctrines took a prominent place in their ministry. These Spirit-directed programmes of the Church led to the rapid growth and expansion of the Early Church. It also brought boldness and steadfastness (Daniel 11:32; Acts 4:19,20), to the extent that the whole Jerusalem was filled with Christ's doctrine (Acts 5:28).

Apostle Paul understood the centrality of Bible doctrines to Christian maturity; hence he counselled the Ephesian believers that spiritual gifts were endowed them in order to teach doctrines that would bring about Christian perfection (Ephesians 4:11-14). In fact, the foundation of the Church in Ephesus was Bible teaching (Acts 19:9,20; Revelation 2:1-3). Paul's counsel to Timothy was: "*Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee*" - I Timothy 4:16. And to Titus concerning the qualities of an elder, he said, "*Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers*" - Titus 1:9. Our salvation and steadfastness hang upon the doctrine. The Church rises or falls with the quality of the doctrine and the sincerity with which it is upheld (I Peter 3:15; II Timothy 2:15; Colossians 3:16; John 5:39; Deuteronomy 4:4-9).

The doctrines of the Church are not mere dogmas or opinions of men; they are inspired by God (II Timothy 3:15,16; II Peter 1:16-21). These teachings range from *Repentance* and *Restitution* through *Evangelism* and *Marriage* to *New Heaven* and *Hell*. They explicitly reveal eternal treasures which a Christian cannot do without. The reason and hope of our most holy faith are embedded in the doctrines (I Peter 3:15).

PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH DOCTRINE II Timothy 3:16,17.

We are in perilous times (II Timothy 3:1-5), and to be able to hold our heads above the waters, we must earnestly contend for the faith. Believers are on the battlefield, and need the violence of intelligent faith in order to defeat satan and his forces and make heaven eventually (Matthew 11:12).

Our chief weapon of warfare is the truth which makes us free from the lies of the enemy and guarantees us true liberty (John 8:32). We must dig deeper in the Word in order to counteract the lies of the devil.

The mission of the Church is to lighten the world (Matthew 5:16), and we can only achieve this when we understand foundational biblical truth (Matthew 28:19,20). A Church that is ignorant cannot teach the world, just as the blind cannot successfully lead the blind. The responsibility is laid upon every believer in this Church to take the Bible seriously. The Early Church stood and fulfilled their mission, because they knew the Word of God and the God behind the Word. They were able to make and establish new converts, confront the errors of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and endure the persecution of their opposers.

The time has come to accomplish Christ's mission to the world, but the battle for the truth can only be fought valiantly by enlightened believers. This is the beginning of the year, and it is the right time to arise and lay hold of the Word of God, which is our major weapon in the battle of faith (Ephesians 6:14-17).

THE HOLY BIBLE

II Peter 1:16-21

God's Word teaches that the Holy Bible, consisting of 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament, is the inspired Word of God. We take the Bible as final authority in all matters concerning Christian conduct and work (II Timothy 3:16,17; Proverbs 30:5,6; Revelation 22:18,19).

FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE

The Holy Bible is the inspired Word of God, and it is the only source of knowledge of the Almighty God to all mankind. It is the contact point between finite man and the infinite God, and its purpose is to give mankind a revelation of God (II Timothy 3:15-17). The Bible is severally referred to as the *Holy Scriptures* (Romans 1:2; II Timothy 3:15), the *Oracles of God* (Romans 3:2; Hebrews 5:12), the *Book of the Lord* (Isaiah 34:16), the *Book of the law* (Jos. 1:8), the *Word of God* (Mark 7:13), the *Word of Christ* (Colossians 3:16), and the *Word of Life* (Philippians 2:16). It comprises two parts: the Old and the New Testaments. It has 66 books, 39 of which are in the Old, while 27 are in the New Testament. The Bible was originally written in Hebrew and Greek. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Aramaic, and the New in Greek. There were over 40 authors drawn from disparate generations spanning a period of over 1800 years, used by God to write the Bible. And even though their occupation, education and social classes were divergent, their theme was the same as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost (II Peter 1:20). The inspiration of the authors can be attested to by some peculiar characteristics of the Bible, which are not found in any other book written by man. Such characteristics include its wonderful unity despite the fact that the authors lived at different ages, its versatility as it meets the needs of all people irrespective of race and language (Matthew 4:4), its superiority to other books, its influence on individuals and nations, its preservation over the centuries, its fulfilled prophecies (Isaiah 7:14; Ezekiel 36:19; II Chronicles 7:19), and its perfection (Psalm 19:7; James 1:25).

The pre-eminence of the Bible makes it indispensable to all men today (Isaiah 40:8; Psalm 119:89). While other books have limited influence on individuals because they are products of finite minds, the Bible has solution to every problem today. No man's education is complete if he is ignorant of the provisions of the Bible. No Christian can live successfully without an adequate grasp of the Bible, and no Christian minister is really qualified for the ministry of the Church of Christ without a

thorough knowledge of the Bible (II Timothy 2:15). Without a ready knowledge of the Bible, the Christian worker cannot be effective.

The central theme of the Bible is CHRIST and HIS WORK OF REDEMPTION (John 20:31; Luke 24:25-27; Revelation 1:1). To fully understand the Bible and rightly interpret its message, we must first be converted to Christ and receive Him as Saviour. Those who do not know, or who have wrong conceptions about Christ, cannot appropriately discern the message of the Bible, because the carnal mind cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God (I Corinthians 2:14).

THE MINISTRY OF THE BIBLE

The Bible reveals God to man, shows him his need of God and the way to Him. It also teaches him, having known God, how to walk with Him and eventually get to heaven. The Bible therefore has a ministry to both sinners and saints. It brings conviction of sin to the sinner, which leads to repentance to God and faith in Christ Jesus (Acts 8:35; 20:20,21). It has numerous functions to the saint. One, it cleanses him and makes him perfect (Psalm 119:9,11; Ephesians 5:26; John 15:3). Two, it is his mirror to reveal the condition of his heart, with the aim to keep him on the narrow way (James 1:23; Hebrews 4:12; Jeremiah 17:9,10; Psalm 19:12). Three, it serves as light to his feet (Psalm 119:105,130). Four, it is his soul's food (Deuteronomy 8:3; John 21:17; Psalm 19:10; Matthew 4:4). Five, it is medicine to his body and soul (Proverbs 4:20-22; Psalm 107:20; Matthew 8:8). Six, it is his spiritual weapon (Ephesians 6:17; Matthew 1:1-11; Jeremiah 23:29). Seven, it refreshes and enriches him (Isaiah 55:10; Psalm 19:7-10). And eight, it creates life and faith in him (I Peter 1:23; Rom 10:17).

PROFITING FROM THE BIBLE

There are some hindrances we need to remove in order to maximally profit from the study of the Bible, such as a hardened heart (Matthew 13:3-6,18-21), double mindedness (James 1:8; Mark 4:15-17), pride (Deuteronomy 8:11-14; Psalm 101:5; Proverbs 18:12) carnality (I Corinthians 3:1-5) and unbelief (Matthew 13:58). Then we need some diligent effort to dig deep and discover the treasures of the Bible and to know Christ more and more (Colossians 2:3; John 5:39). In the first place, there must be earnest love for the truth (Psalm 119:40,47,54,72,103). Secondly, we need supreme love for God (Matthew 22:37; Deuteronomy 30:6; Psalm 73:25). Thirdly, an intense desire to know more of God is essential (Psalm 42:1,2; 63:1). Fourthly, there must be willingness to study (Matthew 13:44-46; 12:42). Fifthly, we need to depend entirely on divine teaching, and be ready to practise what we learn (Psalm 119:60,101,106; James 1:22-25; Ezra 7:10). Sixthly, there must be a fixed purpose to know the **whole** truth and cultivate a mind that will not be diverted by man or the flesh (Psalm 119:63; 57:7; 108:1; Romans 13:14; Matthew 26:41). Lastly, a life of prayer and a commitment to the whole truth are indispensable.

Every believer in the Church can enjoy the provisions of the Bible. But we must be ready to study it with all seriousness, readiness of mind, and with the intention to believe and obey (Acts 17:10-12).

THE GODHEAD

I John 5:7

God's Word teaches that the Godhead consists of three separate, distinct and recognisable personalities and qualities, perfectly united in one. The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are different Persons in the Godhead, not merely three names for one Person (Matthew 3:16,17; II Corinthians 13:14.. Matthew 28:19,20).

THE MYSTERY OF THE GODHEAD

The Godhead is a great mystery which is clearly beyond the finite mind of the unsaved, natural man (I Corinthians 2:14). The believer accepts the gospel truth of the Trinity by faith, recognising that God remains the eternal repository of all mysteries (Deut 29:29). He believes that with respect to His being or essence, God is one, and with respect to His personality, God is three. The essence must not be divided or the persons confused. In spite of the great mystery surrounding it, the doctrine of the Godhead has always proved to be eminently rich in spiritual and practical values. And to those willing, the Lord Jesus promises the advent of a blissful reign of the Godhead (John 14:23; Revelation 3:20).

The Godhead consists of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The Bible clearly teaches that each member of the Godhead is God – separate, distinct and recognisable personalities perfectly united in one. The Father is called God (I Corinthians 8:6; Psalm 89:26; I Chronicles 29: 10; Mat 6:9). The Son Jesus Christ is also called God (Isaiah 9:6,7; John 20:28), and the Holy Ghost is called God as well (Acts 5:3,4; I Corinthians 3:16,17; 6:19,20; Hebrews 3:7-9; 10:15,16; Jeremiah 31:31-34). From the foregoing passages it is clear the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are three Persons – co-eternal, co-existent and co-equal in power and divine attributes, that make each God. The word “GOD” in Genesis 1: 1 means *Elohim*, which is the plural Hebrew word for *The Strong One* -*El*. *Elohim* appears more than 2, 700 times in the Old Testament, and this plurality is seen in “*Let us make man in OUR image, after OUR likeness.*” “*The LORD said...let US go down, and there confound their language*” – Genesis 1:26; 3:22; 11:6,7; John 14:23; Psalm 2:3. The Godhead is also referred to as *The Holy Trinity* (Romans 1:20).

THE UNITY OF THE GODHEAD

The unity of the Godhead is scripturally evidenced in the execution of all divine plans and purposes. At creation, a significant fact about the Godhead emerged with the usage of the plural noun, “us” (Genesis 1:26). Elementarily, this implies the involvement of more than one Person in the creation of man. The same word continues to recur, first after the fall of man (Genesis 3:22), and just before He confounded man’s language (Genesis 11:7). The testimony of scriptures on the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ reveals the perfect unity of the Godhead. It was God’s anointing and power of the Holy Ghost that enabled Him to fulfil His ministry (Acts 10:38).

The complementary functions of the Trinity are referred to in almost all of the New Testament (Matthew 3:16,17; 28:19; Mark 1:10; John 16:7-15; 6:37,44; Romans 8:16; I Thessalonians 5:23; Ephesians 5:25; I Peter 1:2; I Corinthians 12:4-7; Acts 10:38). The three personalities in the Godhead acted together at the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. God sent His only begotten Son, and anointed Him with the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:26,35). At the baptism of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came bodily upon Him, while the Father made a public proclamation from heaven that Jesus was His Son (Matthew 3:16,17). At the onset of His ministry, Jesus affirmed the companionship of the Father and the Holy Ghost. It was by their combined working that He could fulfil His preaching ministry, healing the sick and delivering the captives (Luke 4: 18).

THE SAINT AND THE TRINITY

The divine-human relationship also confirms the God in three Persons perfecting the relationship of man with the Triune God (Ephesians 2:18). The salvation of man is a joint work of the Holy Trinity (John 3:16; 6:44; 3:6-8). Water Baptism involves the Trinity together (Mat 28:19,20). Our prayer also involves the Trinity. We direct our prayers to the Father (Luke 11 :2; 22:42; 23:34,46; John 17:1,5,24-26; James 1:5), through the Son (John 14:13,14; 15:16). And it is the Holy Spirit Who makes our prayers potent and effectual (Romans 8:26). Sanctification is by the Trinity (John 17:14-17; I Thessalonians 5:23; Acts 26:18; Hebrews 13:12; Romans 15:16). The Baptism in the Spirit has to do with the three Persons (Luke 24:49; John 14:15-18; Acts 2:38,39;

15:8). Even ministerial gifts are administered to the believer at three levels corresponding to the three Persons in the Holy Trinity (I Corinthians 12:4-6). It is only the perfect work of the Godhead that keeps the believer in grace from day to day (II Corinthians 13:14).

Having then the Godhead as our support, we need not fear any evil, for underneath us are the everlasting arms. We should rather be bold as a lion, while we abide in the righteousness of the Lord, and quit ourselves like men (Deuteronomy 33:27; Ephesians 6:10).

THE NATURE AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Exodus 34:5-9; John 17:3.

It is a very great revelation to have the Bible. It is greater still to have the Gift of God's Son. And greatest of all is that the Holy Spirit does reveal God to man. The deepest knowledge on earth is that of the Most Holy God. Herein can man boast - that he knows God (Jeremiah 9:23,24). The nature and attributes of God can be appreciated only as we surrender our lives to Him and come sincerely to Him by faith. He will understand the knowledge of the Most Holy, who is weaned from carnality, and reaches forth for the whole truth that God reveals (Isaiah 28:9,10).

THE INCOMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

On the one hand, there are attributes of God which are peculiar to Him. These are not shared by man: they are divine. They are called *incommunicable*, *absolute*, or *immanent* attributes. One, *God is a Spirit* (John 4:24; Acts 17:24; II Corinthians 3:12). That means He is not flesh and blood - He does not have a corruptible (terrestrial, earthly, mortal, perishable) body like man. Yet He is a Person, for He has an incorruptible (celestial, heavenly, immortal, imperishable) body (I Corinthians 15:40). He was neither made nor born. He is not subject to the limitations and temptations of men (James 1:13). Two, *God is eternal*: He has neither beginning nor end of days (Psalm 90:2; Isaiah 57:15; Deuteronomy 32:40; 33:27; Psalm 135:13; 145:13; I Timothy 1:17; Revelation 1:8). Three, *God is infinite* (Jeremiah 23:24; Acts 17:27,28; Psalm 139:7-13). He is not subject to the limitation of space: *He is omnipresent*. There is nowhere man can hide that God cannot find him out. And four, *God is immutable*. God is constant - He does not change. Kingdoms rise and fall, but God remains the same. He neither increases nor decreases (Hebrews 1:11,12; James 1:17; Num. 23:19; Mal. 3:6; Psalm 33:11; Proverbs 19:21; Isaiah 14:24; 46:9,10). All these attributes are not shared with man.

THE COMMUNICABLE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

On the other hand, there are many other attributes of God, which are communicable to man; that is, these attributes are given in a measure to the (regenerate) man. They are called *communicable*, *relative*, or *transitive* attributes. One, *God is powerful*. In fact He is omnipotent - He can do *all* things (Genesis 18:13,14; Jeremiah 32:17,27; Matthew 19:26; Luke 1:34-37). But God also endows man with power even to do miracles (Matthew 17:20; Mark 9:23; John 14:12). Two, *God has knowledge*. He is in fact omniscient - He knows all things (Acts 15:18; John 21:17; Hebrews 4:13). But He has endowed man also with ability to know Him and even have the gift of the word of knowledge - to be able to see, though in a limited scope, through the eyes of the Holy Spirit (II Peter 3:18; I Corinthians 12:8). Three, *God is holy*. He is glorious in holiness: as to the measure of abundance of His holiness, there is none as holy as the Lord (Exodus 15:11; I Samuel 2:2; Isaiah 6:1-4; Psalm 22:3). But He has also endowed man with His holiness. In fact He commands everyone of His children to be holy. It is wondrous that this distinguishing attribute of God can be shared by mortal men! (Matthew 5:48; Romans 1:7; I Thessalonians 5:27; I Peter 1:15,16). Four, *God is just*. There is neither partiality nor injustice with God. He is perfect in judgment and uncompromising in standard (Genesis 18:25; Deuteronomy 32:4; Acts 10:34,35; Rom 2:11). He

expects the same quality from His own children (Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 16:19; I Tim 5:21; James 3:17). Five, *God is good*. He rains His blessing on man, He is patient with the sinner, and He is kind to the saint. These all He does without looking for reward or recompense (Romans 2:4; John 3:16). He expects us also to be good to men irrespective of their attitude towards us (Galatians 5:22; Matthew 5:43-48). Six, *God is truthful*. There is neither lying nor duplicity with God. He is transparently honest (Num. 23:19; Tit. 1:2). This also is a communicable attribute, for God even commands us to abstain from lying, and rather speak the truth from our hearts (Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:9). And seven, *God is wise*. In fact He is the Only Wise God (Dan 2:20; Rom 11:33; I Timothy 1:17). And in His mercy, He shares the same with men. We can receive the gift of the word of wisdom for ministry. And when we even lack wisdom in particular situations, we are encouraged to pray for it, and the Lord shall answer, for every good gift comes from Him (I Corinthians 12:8; James 1:5,17).

Knowing these great attributes of God, and having access to so many of them, what then should our attitude be? One, we must worship or reverence Him. Two, we should develop faith in Him, which will move us to obedience. And three, we should give ourselves to prayer and supplication, knowing that in whatever area we may lack, God is more than sufficient for all our need (I Peter 2:17; Revelation 22:9; Genesis 15:1-6; Exodus 34:5-9).

THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF JESUS

Isaiah 7:14

God's Word teaches the virgin birth of Jesus, the only begotten Son of God. It equally teaches the crucifixion, death, burial and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25; Romans 1:4; I Corinthians 15:3,4).

The doctrine of the "virgin birth" teaches that Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, was miraculously conceived by the Virgin Mary. The virgin birth is an essential doctrinal truth which must be upheld for its fact and significance. Disputing this cardinal doctrine is by implication denying Christ's deity and His distinctive nature as the only sinless man, conceived without adamic depravity. It was this distinctive spotlessness that disqualifies every other man from satisfying God's demand at Calvary. Jesus became the spotless Lamb of God found in fashion as a man.

THE FULFILLED PROPHECY Isaiah 7:14.

Prophetically, the virgin birth was foretold in the Old Testament, and it became literally fulfilled later in the New Testament (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; Mat 1:20-23). God was the first to unveil the virgin birth of Christ, when He referred to Him as "the seed of the woman" (Genesis 3:15). This was alluding to the fact that Christ would be conceived by a woman who had never known a man. The prophet Isaiah in his proclamation said, "**Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son . . .**" (Isaiah 7:14). The word *virgin* as used in this reference, has an obvious meaning, and can be nothing else but a woman who has not known a man. And according to the faithfulness of God, the prophecy came to pass after many years (of God's appointment). God will always keep His promise (Matthew 1:18-25; Psalm 89:34).

PROOFS OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH Matthew 1:20.

Luke in his gospel narrative recorded that the angel Gabriel was sent to a virgin, betrothed to a man, and the virgin's name was Mary (Luke 1:26,27). After the announcement, Mary herself plainly said, "**How shall these things be, seeing I know not a man?**" (Luke 1:34). Matthew in his gospel, narrated that Mary was espoused to Joseph, and that before they came together, she was found with a child *of the Holy Ghost* (Matthew 1:18). He further recorded that Joseph knew her not *till she had*

brought forth her firstborn Son, and he called his name Jesus. The Bible says that Joseph was a just man (Matthew 1:19). This means he was not a transgressor of God's law. If Mary as an espoused virgin had conceived through a strange man, it would then be right for Joseph to put her away (Deuteronomy 22:23,24; Matthew 19:9). But the angel of God who appeared to Joseph in a dream prevented him from putting her away, for what was conceived of her was of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 1:20). On the other hand, if Joseph had known Mary before Christ was conceived, or was responsible for the conception, it would be unlawful for him to even attempt to put her away (Mal. 2:14-16). The scriptures would not have qualified him to be a just man if he was transgressing God's commandment.

Furthermore, Jesus sometimes referred to people as His mother, brothers and sisters, but He never referred to any mortal man as His father, not even Joseph (Matthew 12:46-50; 22:41-46; John 8:54-58). He always referred to God as His Father, and this is another proof of His virgin birth. Moreover, the Holy Ghost wrote through Apostle Paul, that in the fulness of time, God sent His Son, made of a woman. This was still pointing to the fact that Jesus was born of a virgin (Galatians 4:4).

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH Isaiah 7:14.

The virgin birth of Jesus was a unique sign from God. The prophet Isaiah was very clear and definite about it (Isaiah 7:14). It distinguished Him from any other man, and marked Him as the only true Messiah. God bears witness to His approved ministers in various ways. Some of the signs that were recorded concerning Christ and His ministry were also recorded concerning a few other messengers of God. The virgin birth, however, is probably the most unique and unprecedented sign. A voice from the cloud witnessed to the ministry of Christ. But that was not as unique as the virgin birth, for Moses' ministry was also attested to by a voice (Num. 12:5-8; Matthew 17:5). An angel announced the conception of Christ; but we also know the births of Samson and John the Baptist were equally announced by angels (Judges 13:2-5; Luke 1:11-15,26-33). Moses, Samson and John the Baptist, were all God's messengers, but they all had earthly fathers. They were all descendants of Adam's fallen race. The virgin birth is therefore a unique sign from the Lord, conferred on Christ, and He alone. No other living soul has ever been, or will ever be conceived of a virgin.

The challenge is for us to come near in reverence and worship. It is in our believing the Word of God in its totality that we shall be established (Isaiah 7:9).

TOTAL DEPRAVITY, SINFULNESS AND GUILT OF ALL MEN Romans 3:23

God's Word teaches the total depravity, sinfulness and guilt of all men since the Fall, rendering them subject to God's wrath and condemnation (Psalm 51:5; Job 14:4; Romans 3:23; 5:12-17; Mark 7:21-23; Ephesians 2:1).

Man was created in the image of God, and he was righteous and holy. Man was the crown of God's creation (Genesis 1:26,27; Psalm 8:5-8; Genesis 1:31). Through voluntary disobedience and transgression, man fell into the depths of sin (Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-6; Romans 5:17,19; Psalm 51:1-5). The consequence of this is that every human being is born in sin and utterly void of the holiness of God. Every man is naturally inclined to evil (Psalm 51:1-5; Romans 3:10-18,23; Romans 7:14-21; John 3:18,36; Romans 5:12-17; Job 14:4; Isaiah 48:8). The total depravity, sinfulness and guilt of all men since the fall, renders all sinners subject to God's wrath and condemnation (Psalm 7:11; 9:17).

DESCRIPTION OF THE SINNER

The Bible describes the fallen nature of man with various terms. Jesus Christ referred to sinners outside the Kingdom of God as swine and dogs. *“Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you”* (Matthew 7:6; Mark 7:25-28). He also referred to them as goats (Matthew 25:33). The apostle Paul warned the Philippian Church to beware of evil workers - dogs (Philippians 3:2). Also in the epistle to the Romans, he referred to the fallen nature of man, saying, *“There is none that is righteous, no, not one . . . they are all together become unprofitable . . . their throat is an open sepulchre . . . whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness . . . for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God”* - Romans 3:10-18,23. Jesus and John the Baptist described the nature of men as vipers (Matthew 3:7; 12:34). The unregenerate man is variously characterised by a reprobate mind, being filled with all unrighteousness - immorality, covetousness, full of envy, murder, etc (Romans 1:28-32; Mark 7:21-23). They are treacherous, transgressors, workers of iniquity; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity, their imagination is only evil continually (Isaiah 48:8; 59:5-8; Genesis 6:5). They are cunning and crafty, full of wickedness, blind, foolish, with darkened understanding, children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3; 4:14). The Bible says that the whole head of man is sick, his heart devises wicked imaginations, and has come far short of the glory of God. All men have become enslaved to sin, and because sin dwells in the natural man, man is conceived in sin, born in sin, grows up in sin; by nature and habit, he is a sinner. The natural man cannot resist sin (Isaiah 64:6,7).

CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

The entire nature of man mentally, physically, morally and spiritually, has been affected by sin. The testimony of the scriptures is that the image of God in man has been seriously marred by this great fall. As a result of the fall, man became corrupted by sin and consequently separated from the perfect, pure and holy God. This separation is the root cause and beginning of sorrow, shame, fear heartaches and manifold problems we face. Man became a transgressor of God's law and consequently a debtor (Romans 1:32; 6:23; Ezekiel 18:4; Hebrews 9:27). All these have brought man under the wrath and condemnation of God, *for the soul that sinneth, it shall die*. There is nothing we can do by ourselves to commend us to a righteous God. There is nothing the natural man (fallen away from grace) can offer to appease God for man to escape the righteous judgment of God. The consequences of the fall of man is that man became totally depraved, and the immediate effect was his separation from the holy God, and a curse came on Adam and his descendants (Genesis 3:1-6,14-19,23,24; Romans 5:12; 8:22). God's judgment also came upon all men (Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 6:23). The human race has rebelled against God and broken His law.

REDEMPTION THROUGH CHRIST

But the love of God constrained Him to plan for man's redemption through the shedding of the Blood of Jesus (Hebrews 9:22). Jesus became God's Provision or Substitute for us (Genesis 22:7,8,14; 3:15; John 3:16). He became the Lamb of God (John 1:29; Matthew 1:21). By the perfect sacrifice of His blood, man can be freed from the consequences of the fall and the curse of the broken law (I Corinthians 5:7; Exodus 12:13; Galatians 3:13). He also obtains complete removal from the guilt and condemnation of sin, with full redemption (Isaiah 53:4-8; Acts 8:32-35; I Peter 1:18-21; 2:24). The atonement is the reconciliation of sinful, fallen man to God made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The vicarious death of Jesus Christ is the substitution of Christ's suffering for the punishment of all sinners in the world.

What then should be man's response? It is threefold. One appreciation is needed; we should praise and worship Him for this great redemption (Gal 1:3-5). Two, repentance and faith are demanded of the sinner, that he should rise up from the dust of sin get hold on God in believing prayer for deliverance from sin (Acts 17:30; 20:20,21; Isaiah 55:6,7). And three, all that have tasted of the gift

of eternal life should resolutely determine to keep faithful to the Lord, so that they would not crucify Him afresh (Hebrews 6:4-6; 12:15-17).

THE FALL OF MAN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Genesis 2:7-25; 3:1-24

The subject of sin is of great importance in every religion. In fact, most religious rites are direct consequences of sin. The Christian faith came because of sin. The Bible is the book of sin. The Gospel is the message of sin. Christian ministry is predominantly because of sin. Hell is a consequence of sin. Sin is the transgression of God's law. It is the sum total of all unrighteousness. Deliverance from sin is the great object of God's redemptive plan. It is therefore necessary for every believer to understand the subject of sin and God's provision for its remedy.

We can only appreciate the subject of redemption if we understand the impact sin has made in the life of man. A right understanding of the fall of man will give us insight into God's redemption plan and programme. We will then be able to rightly place the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Moreover, every sinner will then have a basis to exercise intelligent faith in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ for his personal salvation.

THE ORIGINAL STATE OF MAN Genesis 2:7-25

From the account in our text, the following facts characterised man in his original state:

1. He possessed divine life – “a living soul” (Gen. 2:7).
2. He was innocent – he had no knowledge or feeling of evil or sin; he knew no shame.
3. He was simple and satisfied. He lived in a garden (Gen. 2:8-10). There is no better garden than that which God planted. Eden means “delight” or “pleasure.” There is no better life than that which is in the centre of God's will. The best place to which man can attain is the very place of God's appointment for him.
4. He had divine favour (Gen. 2:8-10). God distinguished Adam and Eve. He planted a garden for them and gave them the best accommodation He designed.
5. He was industrious (Gen. 2:15). Even in the state of innocence, man was not made to be idle. God provided Adam a fitting occupation.
6. He had dominion. God gave Adam dominion over all that He had made.
7. There was law and order (Gen. 2:16,17). God constrained man's behaviour and choices by a commandment. God commanded Adam and Eve because of His creative right on them. The Maker should rule over the made. And His commandments are not grievous. It is the glory of man to be governed by God – not his will appetite, lust, flesh, ego, satan, etc.
8. God provided a fitting companion for Adam (Gen. 2:2:18,21-25). The state of innocence was not a state of aloneness.

This was the pleasant setting which man enjoyed. On top of this, he had unbroken fellowship with God. The presence of God was real. He could see God because he still retained the glory.

THE TRANSGRESSION AND THE FALL Genesis 3:1-13.

Man did not enjoy the blessed state for long; he fell. For proper understanding, we shall look step by step at the process that led to this fall:

1. There was a commandment, an object of transgression, and a tempter (I John 3:4).
2. Though in the state of innocence, man was still liable to temptation, just like the saint is, and like Jesus was (Matthew 4:2,3; I Chronicles 21:1; II Corinthians 2:11; I Thessalonians 3:5).
3. The tempter was the devil. His role has not changed since then. He uses whatever is available. In this case, he used the serpent. As for the vocal ability of the serpent, there

should be no doubt of its possibility. Moreover, Eve did not find it strange to talk to the serpent, any more than Balaam found it strange to talk to an ass. The devil is still the chief tempter of mankind today. He is the “old serpent” (Revelation 12:9; 20:2; II Corinthians 11:3; I Peter 5:8). The serpent was certainly subtle, yet it took the devil to make it speak so rationally and convincingly. Satan still disguises himself today.

4. The nature of the temptation was first to present God’s commandment as grievous, and to awaken the woman’s feelings to the same. Then, he attacked the Word or commandment of God. He instilled distrust in her mind. He lied to the woman. He preached another gospel to her. He appealed to her lust, pride, and curiosity (II Corinthians 11:13-15; Galatians 1:6-8; Isaiah 8:20; I John 2:15-17).
5. The underlying problem of the woman was her lust (Gen. 3:6; 13:10-13; 25:29-33; Jos. 7:21; I Kings 11:1-4; James 1:12,13). The woman saw, in the first place, that the tree was good for food. She was not hungry, for God had provided sufficient for their feeding. She only lusted after “something new,” just like many people desire “another gospel” today (Galatians 1:6). Secondly, she saw that the fruit was pleasant to the eyes. There were many other beautiful trees in the garden. Man always finds especially the forbidden fruit pleasant. That is the reason for adultery – the forbidden woman, fornication – the forbidden experience, theft – the forbidden property, etc. And thirdly, she saw that the fruit was desired to make one wise. They already had sufficient wisdom to know God and keep His commandments. Yet, she lusted after “hidden” wisdom, just like people seek after curious things and experiences today outside the plain, simple, saving gospel.
6. The woman voluntarily took the fruit and ate. She introduced the sin to her husband. She did not fall alone. Sin is contagious (James 1:13-15; Proverbs 30:33).
7. There was an immediate, dramatic effect of their action (Job 31:33; Proverbs 28:13). Their eyes were opened “to know,” but they became ashamed of what they saw. They tried to cover themselves. They felt the pangs of guilt and moved away from the presence of God. Fear came; transparency disappeared. They began to make excuses. Innocence was lost; the glory had departed. Even before judgement came, they knew within themselves that something had gone wrong. They had sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Those who argue against the Genesis story of the Fall should compare their experience with this, if there is no striking similarity. Every sinner runs away from God and from the reach of His Truth.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL Genesis 3:14-24.

Before judgement was pronounced on man, the rule of conscience had already taken effect. Sin is a spiritual transaction. The effects are always immediate in the spiritual realm. The following consequences followed the fall of man:

1. The curse came. The serpent was cursed, the woman was cursed, the man also was cursed, and the ground was cursed. Sin never profits anyone, no matter what the excuses may be.
2. Shame came. Clothing became mandatory. Innocence was lost. There was no freedom before God anymore. Sin is the greatest barrier between man and God.
3. Man was ejected from God’s place of appointment and excluded from the pleasure of His presence. Fellowship with God was lost. Paradise was lost too. Every sinner is a loser.
4. Sin entered the world. Mankind was corrupted. The fountain was already fouled, and consequently, the flow became unclean (Gen. 6:5,11,12; Romans 3:23; 5:12-14; Job. 14:4; 15:14-16). Sin ruins.
5. The devil became the ruler and god of this world. Man’s dominion was taken away. Satan took control of man, for of whom a man is overcome, of him is he brought into bondage (II Peter 2:19).
6. Mortality entered the world (Romans 5:21). “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.”

7. The judgement of eternal damnation took effect on man. Hell became the destiny of every sinful soul (Ezekiel 18:4; Psalm 9:17). The pleasures of sin will never compensate the pains thereof.

The effect of the fall is seen everywhere today. Sin has become universal, and it is man's greatest problem. Its consequences are evident in every phase of human existence. The fundamental root of every problem faced by man is sin. Sin ranges from juvenile delinquency to adult irresponsibility, from fornication to adultery, from political oppression to criminal murder, from small-scale pilfering to large-scale robbery, from individual cheating to national exploitation. These things are deeply rooted in man's sinful nature. Tougher laws, more prisons, public education, social improvement and all the various methods devised by man to combat crime may bring some relief but they can never and will never bring permanent, workable solution. Man ignores the great problem of sin to his peril. Apart from the sin we inherited from Adam, we commit actual sins of our own – stealing, fornication, adultery, idolatry, effeminacy, homosexuality, witchcraft, drunkenness, violence, murders, etc. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 5:19-21; James 4:1; Matthew 15:19,20). We have to answer for every one of these sins. The wages of sin is eternal punishment in hell fire and separation from God.

CHRIST – MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

John 1:29-34

In our previous study, we saw the fall of man and its consequences. The greatest consequence of a life of sin is eternal damnation. God is holy; He is eternally opposed to sin. As God cannot have fellowship with the sinner on earth, so is the sinner eternally banned from His presence in heaven. It is therefore of necessity that a solution must be found for the problem of sin. From the very onset of man's fall, sacrifice for sin commenced. God clothed Adam and Eve with clothes of skin, indicating the need to shed blood before sin could be covered (Gen. 3:21). Cain's offering was rejected for lack of blood, while Abel's was accepted because blood was shed (Gen. 4:3-5). A sacrifice would be strange if it had no blood content (Gen. 22:7,8,12-14).

The blood of the lamb was the token of God's covenant with and redemption of Israel (Exodus 12:3-13). The entire Old Testament redemption scheme was based on blood (Exodus 29:38-46; Leviticus 4:32-35; 5:5,6). The New Testament is also based on blood – the blood of Jesus (Matthew 26:26-28; Heb. 9:22). Man is never able to reform himself sufficiently to merit God's acceptance; we cannot be saved by human effort. Pardon must come from God, and it is conditioned faith in the appointed sacrifice – blood (Leviticus 17:11; Heb. 9:22).

HUMAN REMEDY TO THE SIN PROBLEM

Since the fall, man has always invented methods to cover his sin or explain it away. These methods include self-righteousness, hiding, excuse making (Gen. 3:7-13), denial (Gen. 4:8,9), covering scheme (Exodus 2:11-15; II Samuel 11:1-17, 27), idol worship (Acts 14:8-13; Jeremiah 44:15-19), etc. Moreover, there are many man-made ways through which many people hope to reach God. These include:

1. **Commandment keeping** (Rom. 3:28; Galatians 2:16; 3:21; James 2:10,11). God's commandments are good and they are for keeping. However, the mere keeping of the commandments has no power to save. The law is our schoolmaster to point us to Christ. The law shows us our transgressions, condemns us as guilty and worthy of punishment but directs to Christ who only can save from the power and penalty of sin.
2. **Moral living** (Psalm 51:5; Job 14:4; Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:10-23; John 1:45-50; Acts 10:1-44). The moral living of today will not compensate for the sins of yesterday as well as the

inherited nature of sin. All self-righteousness and morality are like filthy rags when examined under God's microscope. Moral living has never and will never save anybody.

3. **Religious observances** (I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3-7; Luke 5:30-33; I Corinthians 1:11-17; John 3:1-8; 4:19-26; Acts 10:1-10; 16:16-20). Many try to rigidly keep some religious codes of conduct with the hope that God will be pleased. Confirmation, water baptism, eating the Lord's Supper, doing the work of the "kingdom", Sabbath keeping, refraining from certain kinds of food, regular praying and fasting, praying five times a day, going on a pilgrimage to holy land, going to places of worship barefooted, bathing with "holy water", church membership, etc. These are all dead works of religion. They can never save any man from sin.
4. **Good works** (I Corinthians 13:3; Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:37; I John 5:2; Luke 16:15). Good works are only good when God declares them to be so. What is good in the sight of man may be very evil in the sight of God (Luke 16:15). Many so-called "good" works are done to silence the conscience, to soothe the pain of guilt, to bury our wrongdoing and to justify oneself before God. God is not fooled by such "good" works.
5. **Heredity** (Ezekiel 18:4; John 8:39-44; Leviticus 5:1-17). Being born into a Christian home, having Christian parents and good religious upbringing does not make a person acceptable to God. God has no grand children. Every man will bear his iniquity. You are personally accountable to God.

From the case of David and Bathsheba in Psalm 51:1-12, we note the following about the sinner's proper disposition to God and to his sin:

1. Every attempt of David to cover his sin did not prosper; it only led him deeper into sin (Proverbs 28:13). This is a wrong disposition.
2. David eventually pleaded for mercy when his sin was discovered. To plead for mercy indicates the need for propitiation – the turning away of God's wrath from the sinner.
3. He asked for the removal of his sins from God's sight and divine washing. That points to the need for expiation. Sin has a polluting influence on the sinner. Expiation is the divine act of covering sin and cleansing the sinner's heart for a renewed walk with God.
4. He made a specific confession – "this evil." Sin must be viewed as evil. The attitude in genuine confession is that of sincerity. God desires the truth in the inward part. He requires a broken spirit and a contrite heart. Confession of sin must be honest and specific.
5. He prayed for purging with hyssop, typifying the need for blood. Confession of sin is mandatory. But David knew that confession alone could not save him; he needed cleansing by blood (Exodus 12:22; Leviticus 14:4-6, 49-53; Num. 19:1-9; 16-21; Heb. 9:18-20).

David felt the guilt; that is why he asked for forgiveness. Sin is primarily against God. So, it is only He who has the power to forgive sin. And guilt is the right feeling for sin, just like pain or inconvenience is felt in sickness. As the sick seek the physician, so should every sinner seek God for cleansing and justification. As David could not cleanse himself but asked God for cleansing and a renewed spirit, so should every sinner look to God for salvation and purity today (Isaiah 45:22).

ATONEMENT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Atonement (literally "at-one-ment") means to cover sin in order that man may appear before God. The atonement of the Old Testament was performed on the "Day of Atonement" (Leviticus 16:1-34; 23:26-32). Although there were many sacrifices and offerings for the atonement of sins, the offering of the Day of Atonement represented the highest and most comprehensive atonement that was possible under the Old Testament. There are four major elements in the Old Testament atonement – the Substitute, the Sin-bearer, the Sacrifice and the Suppliant. The Old Testament substitute had a double function: to take the place of the condemned sinner and to be offered as sacrifice to procure remission of sin. God would forgive sin based on the execution of His justice on

the substitute, otherwise, the sinner must perish (Leviticus 17:11; Heb. 9:22). The carcass of the substitute must be burnt wholly outside the camp to effect the release of the sinner (Leviticus 16:8,9,15,16,25,27; 23:27). The sin-bearer, or the scapegoat, was designated to carry the sins of the people away. The sins of the whole nation must be confessed on this scapegoat. Afterwards, the scapegoat was sent into the wilderness, bearing the sins of the people (Leviticus 16:7-10, 20-22; Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 53:5,6,12). The high priest was the suppliant. He served as mediator between Israel and God. Israel needed a mediator who would present the blood of the atonement before God to receive forgiveness for the people at the most holy place (Leviticus 16:7-9, 15,16, 20-22; 10:17; Exodus 30:10; 28:29,30).

The Old Testament scheme, elaborate as it was, was not perfect. It was a temporary solution – a type of the New Testament atonement based on better promises. It was imposed on them till the time of reformation. It was a shadow. In Christ, we have the reality (Heb. 9:7-10; 10:1-9; Galatians 2:15,16; Rom. 3:19,20; 8:1-4).

CHRIST: THE PERFECT SACRIFICE FOR SIN

The Old Testament foreshadowed God's ultimate solution to the sin problem. In Christ, we have the fulfilment. The story of the fall of man did not end hopelessly: God gave the promise that the seed of the woman would bruise the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15). That was the very first messianic prophecy. Jesus fulfilled it in detail. All elements of the Old Testament atonement are perfectly fulfilled in Christ. He is our Substitute (Gen. 22:7-14; Matthew 20:28; John 10:11; Rom. 5:6-8; I Pet. 3:18). He offered His life in our place, tasted death for us and gave His life a ransom for us. He equally performed the function of the Sacrifice. He shed His blood on the cross to reconcile us to God. He is our propitiation. He offered one sacrifice for sin forever, thereby having no need of repetition as in the Levitical sacrifices (I Pet. 1:18-21; Acts 20:28; John 19:30; Heb. 13:11,12,20,21; I John 2:1,2; Heb. 10:11,12). Christ is also our Sin-bearer (Heb. 9:27,28). Just like the scapegoat in the Old Testament, our sins were laid on Jesus. He has been made a curse and sin for us and manifested to take away our sins (II Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 53:5,6,12; John 1:29; Galatians 3:13; I Pet. 2:24; I John 3:5). Lastly, Jesus is our Suppliant. He is the true Mediator between God and man (I Timothy 2:5; Heb. 12:24). Unlike the Old Testament high priest, who had to offer for himself and for the sins of others, Jesus is the sinless, perfect Mediator (Heb. 9:7,11,12,15). Jesus entered not into an earthly tabernacle, but into heaven itself to obtain eternal redemption for us. He went with His own blood into the very presence of God to make supplication for us (Heb. 10:19-22; 9:24-26; 8:6; 7:22-28).

Christ is the perfect Sacrifice for sin. There is no other name or solution whereby we must be saved. As many guilty souls as look sincerely unto Him shall obtain pardon and cleansing from sin (Acts 4:13; Rom. 10:10-13). Are you one of them? Then look to Jesus and live (John 3:14-16).

REPENTANCE

Acts 17:30

God's Word teaches that repentance is a complete turning away from all sin and its deceitful pleasures, and that this repentance is required from the sinner before he can truly and effectively believe in Jesus with saving faith (Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 55:7; Ezekiel 18:21-23; Mark 1:15; Luke 24:46,47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 20:20,21; II Corinthians 7:10; Hebrews 6:1-3).

The entrance into redemption through Christ is by faith. But faith can only be manifested alongside genuine repentance. God demands repentance from all sinners to avail them of the provision of

redemption made in Jesus Christ (Isaiah 53:5-7; Matthew 20:28; 26:28; John 3:14,15; I Corinthians 5:7; John 1:12; 3:28,36).

THE MEANING OF REPENTANCE

Repentance is a conscious turning away from evil, disobedience, sin or idolatry. It is turning away from Satan unto the living God (Jonah 3:8-10; Proverbs 28:13; Acts 26:18). Repentance consists in a change of attitude towards sin. It is the deep inward experience which makes the sinner turn from sin to God. It causes an abhorrence or hatred for sin. The need for repentance is the heartache of a deeply compassionate God (II Peter 3:9). Repentance is different from worldly sorrow or *remorse*, which is merely an expression of sorrow over an embarrassing outcome of sin (II Corinthians 7:10; I Samuel 15:30). As the sinner hears the true Gospel, the Holy Spirit convicts him of his sins. This produces a deep, godly sorrow for his sins. He consequently acknowledges those sins before God, confesses and forsakes them. That is repentance (Acts 2:37; 16:29,30). Repentance opens the way to the exercise of faith on the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, causes the heart to desire a change, the inward man to pray, and the tongue to confess the Lordship of Jesus. It secures pardon and cleansing from the Lord (Proverbs 28:13; Ezekiel 18:21,22; 33:14-16; I John 1:9).

THE PREACHING OF REPENTANCE

Repentance is the central theme of the Gospel. The doctrine of repentance is fundamental to the propagation of the Gospel. It is a foundation stone in the cardinal doctrines of the New Testament Church. John the Baptist, forerunner of Christ, specialised on repentance (Mark 1:15; Luke 3:3-14). Repentance was also the key note of Christ's preaching (Matthew 9:13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32; Acts 3:18,19,26; 11:18). At the beginning of His ministry, the Lord preached repentance (Matthew 4:17). Before He left for heaven, He emphasised it again (Luke 24:45-47). And while He was already in heaven, He admonished the backslidden Church to repent (Revelation 2:4,5; 3:4). Repentance was as well as the sum and substance of the apostolic evangelistic message. The twelve made it central in their preaching (Acts 2:37,38; 3:19). Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, made repentance the core of his message (Acts 17:30; 20:20,21). Repentance must therefore be preached to all men in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 24:47). Sinners and backsliders must be made to know that no one is excluded from the challenge of the Gospel to repent, for it is only through it that the manifold blessings of the atonement could be claimed (Acts 3:19).

THE FRUIT OF REPENTANCE

True repentance is coupled with saving faith in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21). Faith is a response to grace. Repentance does not stem from works, rather, repentance produces works of faith (II Timothy 1:9; Romans 3:27,28; 4:1-8; Ephesians 2:8; James 2:14-26; Ephesians 2:9,10; Titus 3:5-8). True repentance disdains sin (II Corinthians 7:10,11; Psalm 38:18; 51:17; II Samuel 12:13). No sinner or backslider can be said to have genuinely repented, who still condones sin. Another practical, mandatory side of true repentance is restitution. This is an act of correcting all past wrongs, where scriptural, so as to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men. God expects the repentant sinner or backslider to correct every wrong committed against fellowmen (Ezekiel 33:14-16; Acts 24:16).

Repentance opens the way and makes us receive the grace of God. It provides pardon and remission of sins (Isaiah 55:7; Luke 24:47). It is through repentance that the sinner receives justification and acceptance (John 1:12,13; Galatians 3:8; 2:16; Romans 8:1; 5:1,2). Above all, there is joy both in heaven and on earth, when a sinner repents (Luke 15:7,10,11-24; Psalm 51:12; Acts 8:8).

RESTITUTION

Acts 24:16

God's Word teaches that restitution is making amends for wrongs done against our fellowmen, restoring stolen things to their rightful owners, paying just debts, giving back where one has defrauded, making confessions to the offended and apologising to those slandered, so as to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man - Genesis 20:1-8; Exodus 22:1-7; Leviticus 6:1-7; Num. 5:6-8; II Samuel 12:1-6; Proverbs 6:31; Ezekiel 33:14-16; Matthew 5:23,24; Luke 19:8,9; Acts 23:1-5; 24:16.

In our last study we saw the need for genuine repentance. Repentance is the gateway to true saving faith, which is the key to our salvation. One practical side of true repentance is restitution. It is the act of making right our wrongs to fellow men. Repentance is towards God, while restitution is towards men. When a man confesses his sins, he receives forgiveness from God (Proverbs 28:13; I John 1:9). Yet there is a moral responsibility we have towards our neighbour, for many of the sins we commit actually affect other people adversely. In such cases God requires that amendment be made to the injured or wronged person as an evidence of genuine repentance. This promotes a right relationship with fellowmen. We need to bear such fruit to signify to all that we have become new creatures indeed (Luke 3:8-14; Romans 8:1,2; Acts 24:16; II Corinthians 5:17).

THE ANCIENT LANDMARK

The Bible doctrine on restitution spans virtually all the dispensations of God's dealing with men. The revelation of God's will and Word before the Mosaic laws demands that we make restitutions (Romans 1:19,20). The doctrine is thus not abolished with the law. Also, restitution is part of the moral law. Most sins committed by men are against God as well as against man. Therefore, repentance toward God for the children of Israel, included restoration of all properties gained by fraud, lying or pretence (Exodus 21:18,19,22,26-36; 22:1-15; Leviticus 6:2-7; Num. 5:6-8). Rulers in Israel also reflected and embraced this teaching on restitution (II Samuel 16:5-8 cf. 19:16-23; Proverbs 6:30,31; I Kings 20:34; II Kings 8:1-6). The prophets in Israel as well preached, explained and emphasised the need to make restitution by every backslidden Israelite who was returning to God (Ezekiel 33:14-16).

THE MESSIANIC EMPHASIS

Jesus emphasised the doctrine of restitution. *"Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled."* (Matthew 18:15-17; Luke 17:3-5; 19:8-10). In the Words of Jesus, restitution even comes before whatever sacrifice we may bring before the Lord (Matthew 5:23,24). The encounter of Zacchæus with the Lord is a clear example. Zacchæus wanted nothing to stand between himself and the salvation experience - not even his wealth, especially the part that was acquired in a wrong way. Though the people murmured that Jesus was gone to be a sinner's guest, Jesus pronounced that salvation had come to Zacchæus' house, being a son of Abraham, now especially by faith. Zacchæus was prepared to settle his past life, not only with God, but with men (Luke 19:1-10). The salvation experience constraints a person to return all possessions that rightfully belong to another.

THE APOSTOLIC PATTERN

The apostles in the Early Church also practised and taught restitution. In fact the whole Church of God lived by this teaching (Matthew 28:19,20; John 14:26; Acts 2:42; 16:4,5; Philemon 7-21). The rules of righteous living are just as high (or even higher) under the dispensation of grace as in the Old Testament. Restitution is as much part of the Gospel as conversion or water baptism. It is not an act of self-righteousness. We should make right wrong matters of money such as theft, dishonest gains unpaid bills, etc. We must also confess lies, slanderous reports, unjust criticisms, hatred, malice, and those words and deeds wherein another has been harmed or hurt, whether he knows it or

not. It is better to allow Jesus to plead for us before men here on earth, than that we be confronted with them in eternity (I Timothy 5:24).

OUR REQUIRED PRACTICE

Making restitution can be likened to a spiritual warfare in which we need God's help and wisdom to undertake (Ephesians 6:10-12,16). Some restitutions are delicate; these are restitutions that may implicate or bring injuries or harm to others that may be unsaved, or that may require us to settle issues with individuals or organizations that may affect others in an adverse way. They also include cases in which we do not have clear leading from God's Word as to what steps to take. For such cases, we need fervent prayers, wisdom and counselling from Spirit-filled preachers of God's Word who believe and teach the whole counsel of God (Proverbs 11:14; 15:22; 24:6).

God demands that restitution be made. A far reaching benefit in God's plan as regarding restitution is that an undeniable testimony is directed to people who otherwise might never seriously hear the story of the Gospel. A religion that compels a man to pay just debts, restore stolen articles and uncover crimes, demands confidence from the people of the world. When restitutions are made, and past wrongs are settled, the peace of God floods the believer's heart. There is a confidence toward God in prayer, and the believer makes progress in the Christian life as the sense of guilt is removed (Romans 8:1,2).

REDEMPTION AND ITS ASSOCIATED BENEFITS

Sin has grave time and eternal consequences (Proverbs 8:36). It incurs the anger or displeasure of God (Psalm 7:11). It enslaves man to satan and the flesh (John 8:34-36; I John 3:8), and brings separation or enmity between man and God (Jos. 7:12; Isaiah 59:2; Rom. 1:24,28). It equally leads to spiritual death, which becomes eternal if one goes unsaved to the grave (Ezekiel 18:4; Rom. 5:12; 6:23). It brings as well guilt, condemnation and judgement (Proverbs 11:21; Rom. 2:8,9; Revelation 20:12-15). And it takes God's glory away from man, making his spirit stale, soiled and sterile. Redemption is therefore a necessary requirement if man would ever have fellowship with God.

The subject of redemption is very crucial in our relationship to God. It connotes the lost and corrupted nature of man that has to be salvaged. It expresses the slavery aspect of our sinfulness. Adam sold mankind to the devil. The lost man is addicted to sin and enslaved to satan. He must be bought back by One who has the legal power to redeem. Fallen man is in bondage and consequently needs freedom. Christ came precisely for this reason to set man free (John 8:32-36). Man is "sold under sin" and sin has dominion over him (Romans 7:14; 6:9-14,22) and his daily cry is "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). Only Christ can truly set free from the captivity of sin (Romans 7:23; John 8:32-36; I John 3:8). Christ came to secure our release. He came to redeem us from sin and His precious blood was the price that He paid to buy us back from the slave market of sin. Through His redemption, we are made free from the bondage and dominion of sin and set at liberty to serve God as free people who walk no more after the flesh but who walk in the Spirit.

SCRIPTURAL DESCRIPTION OF REDEMPTION

Ruth 2:20; 3:9-13; 4:1-14; Jeremiah 32:7-16; Leviticus 25:25-28,47-49; Mark 10:45; Matthew 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18,19; Revelation 5:9; 14:3,4; Titus 2:14; Galatians 4:4,5.

Redemption is the deliverance from the power of an alien dominion through the payment of a stipulated ransom and the enjoyment of the resulting freedom. It is a metaphor used in both Old and New Testaments to describe God's merciful and costly action on sinful man's behalf. At the heart of redemption is the payment of a price (a ransom) (Ruth 2:20; 3:9-13; 4:1-14; Jeremiah

32:7-16; Leviticus 25:25-28,47-49; Mark 10:45; Matthew 20:28; 1 Peter 1:18,19). From the original Hebrew and Greek words used for redemption, “buying in the market” or “buying out of the market place” is implied. Thus, redemption, as pertaining to salvation from sin, is divine purchase from the slave market of sin. Man is a slave of sin (John 8:33,34) and is particularly said to be “sold under sin” (Rom. 7:14; I Corinthians 12:2; Eph. 2:2,3). This has the meaning of addiction to sin, bondage to sin, dominion by sin (cf. I Kings 21:20,25). There is therefore the necessity of deliverance from this bondage of sin. The process of this deliverance is spoken of as one of redemption – buying us back from the slavery of sin, from the power of an alien dominion (sin) so that sin shall no longer have dominion over us (Romans 6:9-14,22). Redemption thus connotes an exchange – the exchange of a ransom for the subject (Exodus 13:13; Leviticus 27:13,15,19,20,31).

Some outstanding examples of redemption are recorded especially in the Old Testament:

1. Israel was redeemed out of Egypt (Exodus 6:5,6; 15:3,13; Psalm 74:2; 77:14,15; 78:42,43; 106:10; 130:7,8; Deuteronomy 14:2; Isaiah 63:4,16; 43:1,3,14-16; 51:10,11; 48:20; Jeremiah 31:11). This is the grand illustration of redemption at its best. God redeemed Israel from Egypt by delivering them from the tyrannous bondage of Pharaoh and placing them in a new land and this was through God’s mighty hand and power.
2. The firstborn were redeemed by the payment of a ransom (Exodus 13:2,12,13; 21:8; 34:19,20; Leviticus 25:47-49; 27:27; Numbers 3:12,13,41,45-51; 18:15). The payment of the ransom released them from the religious obligation imposed on them at the time of the Exodus. They were thus restored to their families and absolved of the divine claim upon them.
3. Kinsman redemption of property and life (Leviticus 25:23-28,47-49; Ruth 4:4-14; Num. 5:8; I Kings 16:11).
4. A lost estate could be redeemed by a kinsman (Leviticus 25:25). The kinsman was also to take vengeance for a slain relative (Numbers 35:12; Deuteronomy 19:6,12; Joshua 20:3-9).

SIGNIFICANT REQUIREMENTS OF THE REDEEMER

Ruth 2:20; 3:9-13; 4:1-14; Num. 5:8; Jeremiah 32:7-16; Leviticus 25:25-28; Galatians 4:4,5; I Peter 1:18,19; Mark 10:45; Eph. 1:7; Acts 20:28; John 10:11,15,17,18; Rom. 8:3; 1:3,4; Philippians 2:7,8; John 1:14; Heb. 2:14-18; 9:12,15; 10:4-10.

In the regulations governing who can be a redeemer especially in the Old Testament, the following qualities or characteristics are basic and Christ perfectly fulfilled them all:

1. The redeemer must be a near kinsman (Ruth 2:20; 3:9-13; 4:1-14; Num. 5:8; Jeremiah 32:7,8). In order to fulfil this, Christ took upon Himself the form of a man, born of a woman, made under the law that He might redeem them that are under the law (Galatians 4:4,5; Rom. 8:3; 1:3,4; Philippians 2:7,8; John 1:14). By becoming a human being, Christ established His identity with mankind and therefore established His right to act as our redeemer (Heb. 2:14-18).
2. The redeemer must be able to redeem (Ruth 4:1-5; Leviticus 25:25-28). The redeemer must have the wherewithal to make good the debt. He must have the resources to pay the ransom. The price of our redemption has been paid. Christ gave His life a ransom for us (Mark 10:45). His blood was the precious price paid (Acts 20:28; I Peter 1:18,19; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:12,15; Revelation 5:9,10; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; Matthew 26:28).
3. The redeemer must be willing to redeem (Ruth 4:6-11; Jeremiah 32:7-9). The first kinsman, in the case of Ruth, was able to redeem but not willing to redeem before Boaz came into the picture of redeeming Elimelech’s estate (Ruth 4:1-13). Christ was not only able to redeem, He was also willing to redeem us (Hebrews 10:4-10; John 10:11,15,17,18).

4. Witnesses are required to confirm the redemption (Ruth 4:1-13; Jeremiah 32:7-16). The law required two or three witnesses to confirm a transaction and allowed any other number above this minimum (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6,7; 19:15; Matthew 18:16; 26:60; II Corinthians 13:1; I Timothy 5:19; Heb. 10:28). Ten men witnessed the redemption of Elimelech's estate by Boaz (Ruth 4:1-13). There were twelve witnesses who confirmed the death, burial, resurrection of Christ our Redeemer and this process of redemption (Acts 1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:32; 10:39,41).
5. Documentation of the redemption is essential (Jeremiah 32:7-16). A legal document containing the relevant details of the redemptive transaction attests to the fact of the redemption (Jeremiah 32:7-16; Isaiah 8:2). In case of any future misunderstanding, this legal document will be proof that the redemption did take place. The New Testament is our legal document confirming the redemption in Christ.

SPIRITUAL BENEFITS TO THE REDEEMED

Redemption has a far-reaching consequence on the beneficiary. The New Testament redemption through the blood of Jesus brings the believer into a new relationship with God. The following benefits accrue to everyone who believes in Christ:

1. **Remission** (Matthew 26:28; Acts 10:42,43; 13:38,39). Remission means to send off or send away, to separate the sin from the sinner. It is forgiveness following the execution of penalty (Leviticus 4:35; Heb. 9:22). Forgiveness is on the basis of Christ's atoning sacrifice (I John 1:6-9; 2:2). Where there is remission for sin, the sinner can go in peace without any adverse eternal consequence.
2. **Reconciliation** (Rom. 5:10,11; 11:15; II Corinthians 5:18-20; Eph. 2:13,16; Colossians 1:20,21). The sinful world has always been in enmity with God. Christ's sacrifice provided the ground whereby a sinner could be brought back into fellowship with God. Thus, every redeemed soul is restored into friendship with God.
3. **Regeneration** (Titus 3:5; John 3:3-8). The sinner is dead in sins and trespasses. Regeneration is the supernatural, re-creative work of the Spirit of God in the sinner's heart, whereby he is endowed with spiritual life and a renewed disposition to God and His word. To regenerate is to be beget again (John 1:13; 3:3-8), to create (Eph 2:10), to make a new creature (II Corinthians 5:17), to make a new man (Eph. 4:24), to quicken or give life to (Eph. 2:1,5), or to bring forth (James 1:18). Regeneration is purely God's work. It is the imputation of divine life, which makes us able to enter God's Kingdom. Man is passive in this experience. It is the Spirit of God that effects this spiritual resurrection, making man responsive to the Word of God and the call to salvation.
4. **Justification** (Rom. 3:24,28-30; 4:5; 5:1; II Corinthians 5:21). The atoning blood of Jesus justifies the believer. To justify is to declare righteous. The justified sinner stands before God as if he never sinned. Justification is a divine reckoning. It is a legal act, which effects no moral change.
5. **Translation** (Colossians 1:12,13; Acts 26:18; Eph. 5:5). Our redemption is followed by translation from Satan's kingdom and power into the Kingdom of God. The redeemed soul should no longer remain under the yoke or bondage of the enemy; he should occupy his rightful position with the saints. He was once darkness, but now, he is light (Matthew 5:14-16).
6. **Adoption** (Galatians 4:4-7; 3:25-29; Eph. 2:19). Being redeemed, we come into a new relationship with God – that of Father and son. The Spirit of God comes into us, and we cry, "Abba, Father." Just like every child has access to the father in the natural, so also does the redeemed have access with boldness into the presence of God (Heb. 4:16; 10:19-22).
7. **Exaltation** (Eph. 2:4-7,10; I Pet. 2:9,10; Revelation 1:5,6). The redeemed occupies an exalted position in heaven – far above principalities and powers. He becomes God's workmanship. As an ambassador of God, he engages in the ministry of reconciliation. He is made a priest and a king unto God.

The redeemed position has untold benefits. God is still calling all who are outside His redemptive plan. The door of grace is still open, and all who sincerely come shall enter and find security (Revelation 3:20).

JUSTIFICATION

Romans 5:1,2

God's Word teaches that Justification (or Regeneration) is the act of God's grace whereby one receives forgiveness and remission of sins, and is counted righteous before God, through faith in the atoning blood of Jesus, standing before God as though he had never sinned (Psalm 32:1,2; Isaiah 1:18; Micah 7:19; John 3:3-8; Acts 13:38,39; Romans 3:24-30; 4:6-16; 5:1,2; II Corinthians 5:17-21; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8,9; Titus 3:5; I Peter 1:23.

Justification is God's act through which a sinner receives forgiveness and remission of sins, and is counted righteous before God on the merit of the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. Having thus been cleared of every guilt of sin, the regenerated soul stands before God as if he had never sinned (Psalm 32:1,2; Isaiah 1:18; Micah 7:19; Acts 13:38).

THE CONSEQUENCE OF SIN

Sin separates man from God. Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. Though they were still physically in the garden before judgment came, they were spiritually dead, being separated from God (Genesis 2:16,17; 3:1-3,6-10). *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die"* - Ezekiel 18:4. The separation that sin brings between man and God is not only in time, but also in eternity, if there is no repentance (Luke 13:24-27; Revelation 20:11-15; 21:8,27).

THE POVERTY OF THE SINNER

Man is helpless when it comes to atonement for sin: he is incapable of providing a solution to his problem of sin or change his eternal destiny (Psalm 49:6-9; Jeremiah 13:23). The nature of sin is not such that man could handle on his own or by the merit of his good works (Ephesians 2:8,9). God's standard is high; man lacks both the capacity and the purity demanded to meet it. Just as circumcision cannot justify the Jew, nor water baptism the Gentile, even so can Church membership or "confirmation" not suffice to justify any man (Galatians 2:15,16; Titus 3:3-5). The sinner must be "born-again" (John 3:3).

REDEMPTION THROUGH CHRIST'S SACRIFICE

The sinner is saved on the basis of Christ's atoning death on the Cross of Calvary. Jesus is "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world" - John 1:29. Christ became our sin bearer, God's Provision and man's Advocate and Propitiation for sin (Romans 3:24,25; Acts 4:12; I John 2:2). By Christ's finished work of grace, a sufficient and permanent solution was provided for the problem of sin to ensure man's reconciliation with God (Isaiah 44:22,23; 53:5,6,10; Romans 5:6-10; 8:3,4; Hebrews 9:11-14). We are redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus (Ephesians 1:7; Col 1:12-14).

JUSTIFICATION THROUGH FAITH

Although Christ's atonement on the Cross guarantees universal provision of salvation for all mankind, it can only be received on a personal basis through saving faith. The sinner who seeks salvation must take the necessary step of faith in the blood of Jesus. When the sinner hears the word of salvation, he must allow it to mix with faith in him, and then he must personally respond to that

faith, putting it to work by resting on what Jesus has already done (Hebrews 4:2; Romans 10:6-13; Ephesians 2:8,9; Acts 16:29-34).

EVIDENCE OF GRACE

Having been saved through faith in the Lord Jesus, the redeemed has evidence in his new life to show for his justification (II Corinthians 5:17). The saved person is to be a follower of God, to walk like Jesus in love (Ephesians 5:1,2). Before he was justified, the sinner had works of the flesh as catalogued in Galatians 5:19-21. But as a new creature, the fruit of the Spirit is manifest in him (Galatians 5:22,23). In lifestyle, speech, conduct and disposition, the redeemed is more like Christ, having been quickened by the Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:17-24; I John 2:6).

REDEMPTION AND VICTORIOUS LIVING

Romans 6:1-23; 7:7-24; 8:1-4

The commandments of God frequently come in collision with the lifestyle of man. Many times, a man finds himself doing what he knows is not right. He agrees with the text of the law, but contradicts the law in practice. Such an individual is under the bondage of sin. The redemption we have in Christ provides a total solution to the problem of sin. Forgiveness and cleansing from sin is not the end of Christ's sacrifice; there is also exaltation unto holy living. Conversion to Christ sets us free from the dominion of sin. Having been saved by grace, we are expected to walk in newness of life.

THE TYRANNY OF SIN Romans 7:7-24.

Sin is a power that brings the sinner under dominion. The power of sin is not realised until man wakes up to the demands of the law (Rom. 7:7-11). While the soul is still in darkness (i.e. without the law), man's depravity is not very evident to him. But when the light of the law shines on his conscience, the ugliness of his heart overpowers his soul. Some proud, ignorant sinners boast in their self-righteousness, because they do not know the depravity of their soul. They are wilfully ignorant of the commandments of God. Sin is an active, domineering principle in every sinner, whether he is awakened to its reality or not (Rom. 7:7,9; Judges 17:7). Sin is a killer. It perverts the commandments of God and works death through them (Rom. 7:9-13). Sin enslaves man. Indwelling sin controls the sinner and makes him act contrary to his desire to do good. The will may be positive, but the flesh is ruled by the power of sin. Therefore, the sinner persists in the undesirable evil, rather than the desirable good. His religion is struggle and frustration (Rom. 7:14-24). The law of God emphasises the desires of the Spirit, while sin accentuates the lusts of the flesh. As the two are contrary, the sinner, awakened to the demands of the law, despairs of his depraved state, and is condemned by the law.

VICTORY AT THE CROSS Romans 6:1-11; 8:1-4.

The cry of the awakened sinner is, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" The answer of God is the Cross of Jesus Christ. The Cross came because of sin, and not merely to make man religious. Therefore, the Cross must offer complete solution or cure for sin. At the Cross, the sinner receives deliverance from the rule and practice of sin. But more than that, he also receives provision for the destruction of the reign or inward principle of sin.

From our text, the following points are noteworthy.

1. Awakening is the first step towards victory. Man can only run for refuge when he sees danger. The law of God must first expose our inward depravity before we can truly appreciate Christ's liberating sacrifice (Psalm 19:7,8; Rom. 7:7; Gal. 3:19,24; I Tim. 1:8-11).

2. Regeneration delivers us from the dominion of sin and death. It is the law of the Spirit, which quickens the penitent and sets him free from the strength of sin. He begins to walk in the Spirit, and does not fulfil the desires of the flesh (Rom. 8:1-4; Gal. 5:16).
3. The Cross of Christ is the antidote against sin. Through His Cross, the power of sin was broken. Similarly, he who identifies with the Cross subjects his sinful nature to crucifixion. The domineering power of sin is thus destroyed, that the true believer may be able to live in the newness of life (Rom. 6:2-4,6,11; Gal. 2:20; 5:24; 6:14; Col. 3:3).
4. The victorious believer embraces the Cross. He identifies with its crucifying power and counts himself indeed as dead to sin. He lives in the reality and faith that he is saved from sin and thus freed from sin (Rom. 6:11; Gal. 2:20,21).

EXALTATION TO HOLINESS Romans 6:1-4,11-18.

A change occurs when the sinner visits Calvary. The power of the Cross destroys sin in the heart. He is born again – of the Spirit, of God. By that same act, he is exalted to holiness of life. He is NOT expected to continue in sin (Rom. 6:1-3,14; I John 3:6-10), but to “go and sin no more” (John 8:11; I John 2:1). He is a new creature (II Corinthians 5:17). He is expected to refrain from his old ways and consciously follow the new way (Eph. 4:17; 5:8). That implies that continual holiness is not automatic. The believer can only be victorious as he actively co-operates with God by abiding in Christ and making judicious use of the means of grace (John 8:30-32; 15:1-5; II Peter 1:5-10; I John 2:6). Otherwise, he will be defeated by sin again (II Peter 2:20-22).

Our text gives us six steps to living a victorious Christian life:

1. Count yourself dead to sin (Rom. 6:11). This is the faith you need for victory. This faith in the accomplished work of Christ is the bedrock of successful Christian living (Rom. 1:16,17; I John 4:4; 5:4,5).
2. Do not allow sin to possess and dominate you. Do not surrender your body or members as instrument to sin (Rom. 6:13). Resist temptations and flee from sin. You should refuse to yield yourself to the desires of the flesh (Pro. 1:10; Gen. 39:10-12; John 5:14; I Corinthians 6:18; Eph. 4:22; I Thes. 5:22).
3. Actively and prayerfully submit yourself to God. Yield your members to God consciously as instruments to righteousness (Rom. 6:13). Continual holiness demands that we put on the new man and surrender to God (Eph. 4:23,24; Pro. 23:26; Rom. 12:1,2).
4. Live in the consciousness of victory through grace (Rom. 6:14). The law does not give power for holiness, but grace does. Do not live in the old covenant or compare yourself with Old Testament people: we have a better covenant based on better promises (Rom. 8:3,4; Titus 2:11,12; Heb. 8:6,7). Let your faith rest solidly on this covenant.
5. Do not abuse the grace of God, but rather use it (Rom. 6:15,16). Grace will not force your will to obey God; it will only enable you. You still need to exercise your will and choice to serve God, now that you have the power to do so. You should not receive the grace of God in vain or turn it to lasciviousness (II Corinthians 6:1; Gal. 5:13; 2:21; Jude 4).
6. Obey the apostolic doctrine from the heart (Rom. 6:17,18). The Word of God is the seed of God. As long as you remain in obedience to God's Word, you will remain in union with Him. Consequently, there is victory over sin (John 8:30-32; I John 2:14,24,28; 3:9).

Redemption in Christ is the great theme and running text of the entire Bible. It is the grand design of the entire Christian theology. This chief cornerstone is central to our earthly fellowship with God, and it conditions our admittance into the eternal habitations. He that fails at the Cross runs at a loss: he will fail everywhere else. Make sure that this, your anchor, holds and rests solidly on Christ the Rock. This is the beginning of any meaningful Christian pilgrimage.

WATER BAPTISM

Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:35-39

God's Word teaches that Water Baptism is essential to our obedience after reconciliation with God. Water Baptism is one immersion (not three), "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost", as Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:19; 3:13-17; Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38; 8:38,39; 19:1-6; Romans 6:4,5).

Water Baptism is one of the two ordinances in the New Testament. The second is the Lord's Supper. Water Baptism is compulsory for every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16). It symbolises, to the believer, identification with, and partaking of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3,4). When we submit to water baptism, it is an acknowledgment of Christ in a public way. Therefore it is a ceremony that witnesses to all that one has put on Christ (Galatians 3:27). It is the commandment of Christ which everyone who loves Him must keep (John 14:15). Our obedience to the Gospel is not complete without Water Baptism.

BEFORE WATER BAPTISM Acts 8:35-37

Matt. 3:5-8; Luke 3:10-14; Acts 2:41; 19:4,5,18,19; 16:30-33

Genuine repentance of sins, and the exercise of the saving faith in Christ, are prerequisite to water baptism (Acts 20:20,21). Repentance has evident fruits which include confession of sin, the amendment of our past evil deeds, and a sincere determination not to go back into them any more (Proverbs 28:13; Ezekiel 33:15,16). As we believe then on the name of Christ, our sins are forgiven, and our names are written in the Book of Life (I John 1:9; Luke 10:20). It is only then that we are eligible for Water Baptism. Definitely, a baby who is not conscious of right or wrong cannot possibly repent of sin and maintain any saving faith towards Christ; hence infant Baptism is essentially unscriptural. Furthermore, it is not Water Baptism that saves us, as some people erroneously teach. Without a good conscience, an observance of this ordinance avails nothing (I Peter 3:21).

DURING WATER BAPTISM Acts 8:38,39

Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:5,10; John 3:23; Matt. 18:19,20

In the first place, it is essential that the he who will baptise another be born again. It is unfortunate when the "minister" himself is a sinner (Matthew 15:14; 23:16; Luke 6:39). Secondly Water Baptism is by **immersion**, *not by sprinkling or pouring water or making a cross on the forehead by water*. The meaning of the word itself is very clear. "Baptism" is not an original English word; in fact the Greek word, *baptiso*, was not translated at all, it was only anglicised. To baptise is the same as to "dip", "soak", "drench", "immerse", etc. That is why "much water" is necessary, and it was possible for the candidates to come "out of the water". Thirdly, it is only **one** immersion, *not three!* Jesus died only once. And lastly, it must be done "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). Some people teach that it must be done in the name of Jesus only. But this is not scriptural. We must follow the format specified by the Lord Himself, which the apostles did not change (I Corinthians 15:3; Galatians 1:6-9).

AFTER WATER BAPTISM Acts 8:38,39

Acts 16:32-34; Romans 6:3-13; Galatians 3:26,27; Colossians 2:10-12

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life." After we are baptised, we should walk in newness of life. The old life thereby buried must not be revived again.

Our faith in Christ has been publicly declared and confirmed. There are witnesses, not only on the earth, but also in heaven. In fact, the devil knows that he has lost us once we are baptised unto Christ. Therefore we must remain in subjection to Christ.

Every convert is enjoined to yield to this important ordinance. Pastors must do their best to encourage their flock to attach great importance to this practice (Acts 20:28). Apostle Peter encouraged his hearers to “repent and be baptised every one of you...” As we surrender ourselves to the ordinance, the blessings of obedience will surely follow us (Isaiah 1:19; John 13:17).

THE LORD’S SUPPER

I Corinthians 11:23-32

God’s Word teaches that the Lord’s Supper was instituted by Jesus Christ so that all believers (all members of the family of God) might partake thereof regularly, to “shew the Lord’s death till He come”. The emblems used are “unleavened bread” and the juice of “fruit of the vine.” Anyone who eats and drinks unworthily, brings “damnation”, punishment and chastisement upon himself – Matthew 26:29; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-30.

In setting the worship service in the tabernacle, Moses was enjoined to do according to the pattern revealed unto him by God (Exodus 25:9,40; 26:30; Numbers 8:4). This is a command we ought to obey as we consider the doctrine and practice of The Lord’s Supper.

THE SCRIPTURAL MEANING OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

The institution of the Lord’s Supper is clearly shown in the gospels (Matthew 26:17 -30; Luke 22: 1,7-20). Paul amplified the doctrine in I Corinthians 11:20-30. In Luke we see the links between the feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread and the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:15-20). In fact the earlier was a type of the latter; the Old Testament *type* is fulfilled by the New Testament *antitype* (Exodus 12:1-28,40-51). Just as Jesus’ sacrificial death on the Cross has replaced the Levitical sacrifice, even so has the Lord’s Supper replaced the Passover as an ordinance. Some Churches refer to this ordinance as a sacrament (Latin *sacramentum*), meaning “Holy Ordinance” (I Corinthians 11:2). Theologians call it the “Eucharist” (meaning “giving of thanks”). Still others call it “The Lord’s Table” or “The Holy Communion” (I Corinthians 10: 16). Those who participate in eating the Lord’s Supper are called “Communicants”.

THE OLD TESTAMENT SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ORDINANCE

We can draw valuable lesson from the study as we look at the parallel between the Lord’s Supper and the (Old Testament) Passover. Passover means to spare (Exodus 12:13,27). Israel was in bondage in Egypt (Exodus 2:11). They cried unto the Lord for deliverance (Exodus 3:7-10). Pharaoh would not set them free until God plagued Egypt heavily (Exodus 3:19,20). The Passover was instituted on the night of the last plague when God killed all the firstborn of Egypt and “passed over” the Jews. The feast of the Unleavened Bread was joined with the Passover, and thereafter both came to be referred to as the Passover (Deuteronomy 16:1-8). Sanctified elders and the priests handled the emblems (the blood of pure lamb and unleavened bread). The lamb was to be roasted and not eaten raw. No bone thereof must be broken (Exodus 12:46; John 1:29; 19:36). This typified Christ. The defiled, the uncircumcised strangers and the Gentiles did not participate in this feast (Exodus 12:43-49). A qualified Jew who refused to eat of the Passover, would be cut off from Israel (Numbers 9: 13). Those who by ceremonial uncleanness missed the Passover were given a second chance in the second month (Numbers 9:9-11; II Chronicles 30:1-27). There was thorough preparation before the Passover. There was personal cleansing, corporate cleansing, provision of the emblems and preparation of the place of the

ordinance. History tells us that any trace of leaven (impurity) was removed from the location of the Passover. The HALLEL, i.e. Psalms 113-118, was sung (Matthew 26:30), and the story of Exodus 12:1-14 recounted, bringing into remembrance the deliverance from Egypt. Prayers were also offered. It was a holy convocation, which brought joy and renewal of strength to God's people (II Chronicles 30:25,26; 31:1-19).

THE NEW TESTAMENT PRACTICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

By the time Jesus came, this holy ordinance, as other Old Testament ceremonies, had been commercialised (John 2:13-17). Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion, signifying the end of the Old Testament era (Luke 22:1-20). Jesus is our Paschal Lamb or Passover (I Corinthians 5:7). He has delivered us from bondage, sin, sickness and Satan. There are a number of things we need to note in this New Testament practice. One, communicants are believers, not the unsaved. Two, even these believers should make sure they are living right. There should be personal examination. Malice, unforgiveness, etc. must be settled before going to the Lord's Table (I Corinthians 11:27-32; Matthew 5:23,24). Three, the Lord's Supper is not the common love feast or wedding reception food (I Corinthians 11:20-22). Four, we must discern the Lord's Body (I Corinthians 11:29). This implies we recognise that the emblems REPRESENT or SYMBOLISE the Lord's broken body and His blood that was shed. They are only symbolic, not material. This calls for solemnity. Five, the purpose is to "shew forth the Lord's death till He come." As often as we take it, we call to remembrance His love and passion on the Cross, and we look forward to the Rapture and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Matthew 26:17-30; Luke 22:7-13; I Corinthians 11:26; Revelation 19:7-9). Lastly, every believer must ensure he is in a right state of life to take the Holy Communion. On the one hand, partaking thereof "unworthily" attracts divine judgement (I Corinthians 11:30). And on the other hand, if you always feel disqualified to partake of it, you are not likely to be qualified for the Rapture and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-18).

ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION

Hebrews 12:14

God's Word teaches that Entire Sanctification is a definite act of God's grace, subsequent to the New Birth, by which the believer's heart is purified and made holy. It cannot be attained progressively by works, struggle or suppression, but it is obtained by faith in the sanctifying blood of Jesus Christ. Holiness of life and purity of heart are central to Christian living (Luke 1:74,75; John 17:15-17; 1 Thessalonians 4:3,7,8; 5:22-24; Ephesians 5:25-27; Hebrews 2:11; 10:10,14; 13:11,12; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 1:7; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 1:14-16).

The doctrine of entire sanctification is central in the mind of the Godhead. The doctrine is at the hub or nucleus of Christian teaching. What then is the meaning of the word, Sanctification? Sanctification is an English word which means: to make sacred or holy; to set apart for a holy or a religious use; to make free from sin; to cleanse from moral corruption and pollution. It is the act of God's grace by which the affections of men are purified or separated from sin and the world and exalted to supreme love to God. It is to purify in order to prepare for divine service and for partaking of holy things; to free from the power of sin; to be set free from the power of cancelled sin. It is a gracious work of the Holy Spirit, not of works, not of growth, not of death, not of purgatory. God has the ability to destroy sin. Sanctification is an operation of the Spirit of God on those who are already in Christ. They who are effectually called and regenerated having a new heart and a new spirit created in them need to be further sanctified through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, His Word and His Spirit.

SCRIPTURAL VIEW OF SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification is an instantaneous experience given to a believer to enable him cleave to God without the tendency to want to go astray or away from the Lord. You do not grow INTO sanctification, but you can grow IN sanctification. Again, sanctification is not brought about by death. To assume that is to say that death is no longer our last enemy to be destroyed (I Corinthians 15:26). Neither are we cleansed from the original stain (the nature we brought into the world) through Water Baptism. It is also not of works, but it is the work of God, divinely wrought by the Holy Spirit. "Holiness", "Perfection" and "Sanctification" are the definitive terms used interchangeably. Holiness means entire freedom from sin; wholeness, spiritual health, moral integrity and purity. As our bodily health means the absence of sickness, so also does holiness mean the absence of sin (Luke 1:74,75; Psalm 29:2; 93:5; 1 Pet. 1:16; Hebrews 12:14). "Perfection" means that which is not lacking in that which it ought to have. The perfection which God requires and accomplishes in those who earnestly ask in faith is the purifying of our hearts; loving every believer as Christ loves us and loving our neighbours as ourselves. Nothing less than this is desirable and nothing more is required (Colossians 1:28). Entire sanctification is described as "clean heart" or "pure heart" (Psalm 24:3-4; Matthew 5:8). The Bible teaches that all of God's children can be like Jesus in separation from the world, in purity and in love. A blameless life is a life in which God sees nothing to condemn. We may not be blameless to our contemporaries, but we can be blameless before God. When God examines a sanctified heart, He finds all that he possesses to be in harmony with Himself. His heart is a throne on which God reigns without a rival; an empire wherein He exercises unchecked, undisputed dominion and authority.

CONDITIONS FOR SANCTIFICATION

How does the earnest seeker get sanctified? On the one hand, there must be a definite separation and withdrawal from all sins and appearance of evil (I Thessalonians 5:22; II Corinthians 6:17); from immorality and all unclean things (II Timothy 2:21). And on the other hand, there must be ENTIRE Consecration. This is giving ourselves unto God in a vivid manner; first, we give ALL we are to God. Here we no longer lay any claim on ourselves (Luke 9:60; Romans 12:1-2). Second, we give our body unto the glory of God, not for any selfish motive or purpose in view, but with the consideration and knowledge that we are bought by the precious blood of Jesus. Third, we give OURSELVES FOR SERVICE (John 13:12-17). We should not stress our being priests and kings unto God but as being servants. Here Jesus shows how to consecrate and dedicate ourselves for service. Washing the feet was the work of a slave. So, we must learn to do the meanest job in the midst of believers and not waiting for compliments. Fourth, we must die to self. "*Verily, verily I say unto you, except a corn of wheat fall into ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit*" (John 12:24-26). Consecration is coming before God with our past, present, future, personality, possession, wisdom, talent, intellect, money, influence, position in the family and in the church and dedicating all to God. Having been so separated and dedicated unto God, God will then be ready to do His part and give us a definite experience which is Entire Sanctification. This is the operation of God, a definite act of God's grace in believers' hearts (Hebrews 2:11; 13:12,13).

ENTRANCE INTO SANCTIFICATION

God has provided His Word, His Blood, His Faith, His Spirit and Himself as free gift for sanctification (John 15:3; Hebrews 13:12,13; Acts 26:18; I Thessalonians 2:23). It is God's perfect will that we be sanctified (I Thessalonians 4:3-8; I John 5:14,15). This holiness does something in our hearts that will make us live right. We must desire it and pray fervently in faith for it (Mark 11:24). The experience can be kept by abiding in Christ, watching and praying (John 15:4; Mark 13:32-35). We should not grieve the Holy Spirit, relapse into bitterness or harshness of spirit, unprofitable conversation, unkind criticism, evil speaking, faultfinding, self indulgence, prejudice,

impatience, indolence, negligence, self management or showing interest in objects of temptation (Ephesians 4:30,31; 5:3,4).

HOLY GHOST BAPTISM

Acts 1:8

God's Word teaches that the Baptism in the Holy Ghost is the enduement of power from on high upon the sanctified believer. It is the promise of the Father and when one receives this gift of the Holy Ghost, it is accompanied by the initial evidence of speaking a language unlearned previously, referred to as "speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance" (Matthew 3:11; Acts 1:8; Luke 3:16; 24:49; John 1:30-33; 7:37-39; 14:16,17,26; 15:26; 16:12-15; Acts 1:5-8; Mark 16:17; Acts 2:1-18; 10:44-46; 19:1-6). We do not teach or instruct people how to speak in tongues: the Holy Spirit gives utterance. We also stress the necessity of Purity before Power. The gifts of the Spirit are for today (I Corinthians 12:1-31; 14:1-40).

The baptism in the Holy Ghost is central to the New Testament dispensation. This experience is crucial to the fulfilment of the life and ministry of both the individual believer and the corporate body. The Early Church emphasized the necessity of being filled with the Holy Ghost (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:38; 4:31; 9:17; 10:38, 44; 19:2,6; Eph 5:18).

THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is not a mere impersonal force. He is not a mere power that we can get hold of and use. He is not a mere influence that we feel. He is a Person Who seeks to get hold of us and use us. The Holy Spirit is a Divine Personality Whom we must honour, worship, fellowship with and listen to. He is called the *Holy Ghost*, the *Holy Spirit*, the *Spirit of the Living God*, the *Spirit of Christ*, the *Spirit of Holiness*, the *Spirit of Life*, the *Spirit of wisdom*, the *Spirit of your Father*, the *Comforter*, the *Eternal Spirit* (Matthew 28:19; II Corinthians 13:14; Luke 11:13; Hebrews 9:14; I Corinthians 3:16; II Corinthians 3:3; I Peter 1:11; 4:14; Romans 1:4; 8:2; Matthew 10:20). The Holy Ghost is eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient and holy. He is Inspirer of the Holy Scriptures, the general Overseer of the militant Church, the great Teacher, Comforter, Helper and Guide of all saints. He is the character Builder of all members of Christ's Body (Hebrews 9:14; Psalm 139:7-10; Acts 10:38; Matthew 12:28; Luke 11:20-22; I Corinthians 2:10,11; John 14:17-26; II Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 5:22,23). He is the third Person of the holy Trinity (I Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:3-6; Matthew 28:19).

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

There are many things the Holy Spirit does in, for, and through the believer, the Church, and in the world. One, He searches all hearts (John 16:8-11; I Corinthians 2:10,11). Two, He convicts of sin (John 16:7-11). Three, He regenerates (Titus 3:5). Four, He bears witness with us (Romans 8:14-16). Five, He adopts into God's family (Romans 8:15). Six, He helps and gives victory in temptation (Romans 8:2,26,27). Seven, He aids us in prayer (Romans 8:26,27; Zech. 12:10). Eight, He fills believers with joy, peace and boldness (Acts 13:49-52). Nine, He sanctifies (Romans 1:4; 5:5). Ten, He quickens and heals our body (Romans 8:11). Eleven, He comforts, counsels and commands (Isaiah 11:1,2). Twelve, He intercedes for the saints (Romans 8:26,27). Thirteen, He illuminates and inspires (II Peter 1:21). Fourteen, He searches and reveals the deep things of God (I Corinthians 2:9-12). Fifteen, He teaches (John 14:26). Sixteen, He guides into all truth (John 16:13). Seventeen, He creates (Psalm 104:30). Eighteen, He empowers (Acts 1:8). Nineteen, He directs the Gospel work (Acts 8:26-29; 16:6-10). And twenty, He confirms the Gospel (Hebrews 2:3,4).

BIBLICAL BASIS FOR HOLY GHOST BAPTISM

The baptism in the Holy Ghost is the endowment of power from on High upon the sanctified believer. It is the promise of the Father and when one receives this gift, it is accompanied by the initial evidence of speaking a language unlearned previously, referred to as “speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance” (Matthew 3:11; Acts 1:8; John 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:30-33; 7:37). This language is not humanly, but divinely taught (Acts 2:4). Jesus Christ the great Teacher preached it and promised it (John 7:37-39; Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4-8).

The Baptism with the Holy Ghost is not the new birth, salvation, conversion or regeneration (John 7:37-39; 14:17; 17:6-9,14-16 Luke 10:19-24; 24:49). It is not the sanctification experience (John 17:9; 17:21-23, and Acts 2:1-4). Jesus prayed for the sanctification of His disciples and yet commanded them to wait for the endowment of power - the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. Moreover, sanctification is for purity whereas the Baptism with the Holy Spirit is for power. It is also not illumination, joy, feeling, liberty and victory in prayer, self-denial or zeal (Luke 24:27,31-32,44-45; Acts 8:8,14-17; Matthew 19:27; 16:17).

RECEPTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit is promised to all flesh, and those who meet God’s condition will receive God’s abundance (Isaiah 44:3; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Joel 2:28,29; John 7:37-39). Very few of Old Testament saints had the bulk of the Spirit upon them for some special tasks the Lord gave them to do. But there were prophecies of a better time when the Holy Spirit would be poured on God’s people in an overflowing measure (Isaiah 44:3; Joel 2:28,29). Inasmuch as prophecies concerning Christ’s incarnation, birth, life, dominion, rejection, suffering, meekness, death and resurrection have been fulfilled, so also must all prophecies concerning the outpouring of the Holy Spirit be fulfilled (Num. 23:19). There are steps we need to take to be baptized in the Holy Ghost. One, we must strongly desire or thirst for the experience (Isaiah 44:3; John 7:37,39). Two, we must first receive “a new heart” or be sanctified (Ezekiel 36:26,27). Three, there must be faith to receive (Galatians 3:2,14; Mark 11:22,24). And four, we must pray sincerely and earnestly for the experience (Luke 11:13).

“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” - Acts 2:39.

REDEMPTION, HEALING AND HEALTH **Exodus 15:26**

God’s Word teaches that Redemption from the curse of the law, healing of sickness and disease as well as continued health are provided for all people through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ (Exodus 15:26; Deuteronomy 7:15; Psalm 103:1-5; Proverbs 4:20-22; Isaiah 53:4-5; Matthew 8:16,17; I Peter 2:24; Matthew 10:7,8; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 13:16; John 14:12-14; 10:10; Acts 10:38; James 5:14-16; John 5:14-16; III John 2; Galatians 3:13,14).

“... I am the Lord that healeth thee.” That remains positive: God healed yesterday, He heals today, and He will continue to heal, for He is unchanging (Mal. 3:6; Hebrews 13:8). As a New Testament believer, you should rest assured that healing is God’s will for you. Jesus already paid for your healing on the Cross of Calvary (Isaiah 53:3-5; I Peter 2:24).

SOURCES OF SICKNESSES AND DISEASES

How does sickness come? Most often infirmities come as a result of disobeying God (Genesis 20:1-18; I Chronicles 10:13), through satan, the very source of sickness and affliction (Job 2:6-7; Matthew 4:23,24; John 10:10; 8:44; 5:14; Acts 10:38), backsliding (Exodus 10:10; II Chronicles

16:12-14; Matthew 12:43-45), misuse of the tongue (Num. 21:4-6; 11:1-3; 12:1-10), covetousness, or using God's gift for money (II Kings 5:20-27), rebellion (Psalm 107:17-20; Deuteronomy 32:39-41), or by breaking God's law of nature. The Bible reveals that evil spirits assist satan to afflict man. They possess, oppress, torment, obsess and cause dumbness and deafness (Matthew 9:32,33; Mark 9:25-27), blindness (Matthew 12:22), grievous vexation and torments (Matthew 15:22), lunacy (Matthew 4:24; Luke 9:38-42) and suicide (Matthew 17:15). They gain entrance through sin, consulting with familiar spirits, palm reading, magic, witchcraft, fortune telling, not guarding the mind or refusal to resist the devil. As long as you have any property from the devil, he will stay around you. Renounce and destroy the works of the devil so as to be totally free (I Peter 1:1,13; 5:8,9; Acts 19:18,19).

DIVINE HEALING AND OUR REDEMPTION

Redemption is a release or liberation from captivity or death by paying a price called a ransom. It simply connotes buying back unto freedom someone in servitude, slavery or captivity. The fall of man brought all human race under sin, Satan and condemnation as a result of man's disobedience to God. Man lost his purity and favour with God in the fall, and consequently, all men became sinners and captives to sin, Satan and sickness (Romans 5:12). God then undertook the redemption of man by sending His only begotten Son to die in man's place. He being capable of redeeming man met the demands of the law and became the legal substitute by paying the redemptive price for those who are condemned to death because of breaking the law. This is absolute protection from eternal punishment through the blood of the perfect and spotless substitute (Exodus 12:13; John 3:16; Ephesians 1:7; Romans 3:24; Revelation 5:9; Romans 8:3; Isaiah 53:4-8; I Corinthians 6:20; 7:23; Matthew 26:28; I Peter 1:18-21; Genesis 3:16-24). No sinner can be acquitted except he accepts Christ as his Redeemer (Acts 4:12).

But man's redemption is not limited to removal of guilt; it includes freedom from all consequences of the broken law, which are sickness, disease and satanic oppression. Healing of sickness and disease as well as continued health is thus provided for all men through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Jesus not only bore our sins, He also bore our sickness and diseases. He became our sickness-bearer in exactly the same way He became our sin-bearer. Christ was scourged and striped for our healing; nailed to the cross for our sin (John 3:14; 12:22-23; Isaiah 53:4,5; Matthew 8:16,17; Psalm 103:2,4). The Holy Spirit concluded by saying, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law"; sickness - pestilence, fever, cancer, ulcer, boils, as well as nameless sicknesses found in people's lives today and other infirmities recorded or not recorded in scriptures (Deuteronomy 28:15-29,58-61; Galatians 3:13; Deuteronomy 7:12-15). Christ has been manifest to destroy the works of the devil (I John 3:8; Acts 10:38; Hebrews 13:8). In the Old Testament, there was a divine plan by God healed all those who were in covenant relationship with Him. The promise to keep the Israelites from diseases by which the Egyptians were afflicted was made at the instance of the healing covenant Israel had with God. God is still in the business of healing today where the conditions of the covenant are met.

As a child of God, divine healing and health is yours (Matthew 15:26-28; Ephesians 2:12-21). Sickness in whatever form is from the devil. God calls it captivity (Job 42:10), Jesus calls it bondage (Luke 13:12,16) and the Holy Spirit calls it oppression (Acts 10:38). The victory of Jesus is our victory. He did nothing for Himself. He conquered sin, Satan, disease and sickness on our behalf. He shares His victory with all who will repent and believe on His Name. He bore our infirmities, sicknesses and diseases so that we could claim full release and deliverance.

REQUIREMENTS FOR HEALING AND HEALTH

The Bible sets forth some conditions to fulfil in order to enjoy the benefits and blessings of our relationship with God. What does God demand from you? One, be genuinely converted (Psalm

103:2-5; Matthew 13:15). Two, obey God and His Word (Exodus 15:26; 23:25,26; Proverbs 4:20-22). Three, abide in Him (Psalm 91:1-7; John 15:1-7). Four, make peace with fellowmen (Mark 11:22-26; James 5:14-16; Genesis 20:14,17). Five, serve God in holiness (Colossians 2:6,7; Exodus 23:25,26). Six, pray the prayer of faith (Matthew 7:7,8; James 5:13; I Peter 2:24; II Peter 1:3,4; Hebrews 13:8). God heals those who are under the healing covenant by His Word (Psalm 107:20), through His mercy (Matthew 20:20-24), by His power (Matthew 28:18; Luke 5:17), by His Spirit (Acts 10:38; Isaiah 61:1,2), in His name (Acts 3:6; Mark 16:17,18), and by His will (John 5:30; I John 5:14,15; III John 2).

Believe God's promise for your healing, fulfil the conditions, lay hold on God through prayer, and then, according to your faith, it shall be done unto you (I John 3:22).

PERSONAL EVANGELISM

Mark 16:15

God's Word teaches that Personal Evangelism is a God-given and God-ordained ministry for every believer. Jesus commanded and God requires every believer to be a compassionate and fruitful soul-winner, bringing others to Christ (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-49; John 17:18; Acts 1:8; 1-4; Psalm 126:5,6; Proverbs 11:30; Daniel 12:3; Ezekiel 3:17-21).

Personal Evangelism is a God given ministry for every believer. The Greek word *evangelion* (Gospel) actually means "Good News". It is good news from a loving God to a lost world that through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, there is salvation (John 3:16,17). Personal Evangelism is the person to person sharing of this good news of salvation with the aim of soul-winning, that is, leading the sinner to repent and turn wholly to God through Jesus Christ, the Saviour (John 1:40-42; Acts 8:26-37). Jesus commanded, and God requires every believer to be a compassionate and fruitful soul-winner (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). Although mass evangelism is good and necessary, it cannot replace of personal evangelism. Illustrating the efficacy and superiority of personal evangelism, one godly man said, "If you had hundred empty bottles before you, and threw a pail of water over them, some would get a little in them, but most would fall outside. If you wish to fill the bottles, the best way is to take each bottle separately and put a vessel full of water to each bottle's mouth." Another man of God said, "The world is never going to be brought to Christ wholesale, but one by one. Men are not born collectively, they do not die collectively, they do not accept or reject Christ collectively."

THE ESSENCE OF PERSONAL EVANGELISM

Personal Evangelism is essential and mandatory because (a) Jesus commanded it (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19-20); (b) God is happy at its result (Luke 15:10); (c) Jesus did it (John 4:21-30; Matthew 4:19); (d) The Father started it (Genesis 3:9); (e) Jesus prayed for the believers' sanctification to make personal evangelism effective (John 17:17); (f) The Holy Spirit is given for it (Acts 1:8); (g) Jesus willed it (Matthew 4:19); (h) It is the heart desire of God (Ezekiel 33:11; 2 Peter 3:9); (i) Jesus' earthly ministry illustrates it (Luke 19:10); (j) The early church practised it (Acts 8:30-37; Mark 16:20; Acts 8:4); (k) It is mark of true wisdom (Proverbs 11:30); (l) Every genuine believer is equipped for it (John 1:37-45; 4:28,29); (m) It is the primary purpose for our salvation (John 15:16; 20:21); (n) There is great reward for those who carry it out (Daniel 12:3); (o) The harvest is plenteous, but labourers are few (Matthew 9:36,37; John 4:35-38); (p) Life is short while eternity is endless (John 9:4; I Corinthians 7:29-31); (q) Souls are precious to God (Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:36,37; Psalm 49:6-9); (r) Hell is the end of all who die sin (Mark 9:43-48; Psalm 9:17; Revelation 20:10-15); (s) Powers of darkness and cults are growing (II Timothy 3:13; I Timothy 4:1); (t) Neglect hinders prayers and progress (Proverbs 21:13; 24:11-12); (u) It can be

done without much money - no loud speakers and microphones are needed, No permission from the government, church or school for the use of their premises (Acts 8:4); (v) Lastly, there are tremendous possibilities in personal evangelism when pursued vigorously and scripturally. It produces most abundant results through the law of spiritual multiplication. For instance, if a church of 100 dedicated and witnessing members will share the gospel with the unsaved, and each member with effective follow-up will within a period of four months disciple a new convert till he becomes a soul-winner. If each convert were in turn to win one person to Christ, for example, spending four months helping him to grow in faith, and then each of them in turn were to win another soul, there be in one year four hundred Christians. If they spend four months with the new converts and if each of the four hundred believers wins another, they would be eight hundred. Continuing in that schedule, the membership of the church would be over three million in five years. Precisely, if there were only one Christian in the world and he worked a year, and won a friend to Christ, and if these two continued each year to win another, and if every man they led into the kingdom of God continued to win another then, in thirty years, everyone in the world would be won for Christ.

REQUIREMENTS OF A SOUL-WINNER

To be involved in personal evangelism, personal experience of conversion is indispensable (II Timothy 2:6-7, 19-21; II Corinthians 5:17). The soul-winner must also be living a holy life. (II Timothy 2:4; Isaiah 52:11). Second, the true soul-winner must have a strong, unshakable conviction (John 9:4; I Corinthians 9:16; Acts 26:22-27; 21:8-14). He must therefore see himself as an ambassador of Christ (II Corinthians 5:19,20) and must thus devote his time, talents, strength and money to the furtherance of the Gospel. The world will never see Christ again until He comes back again in judgement, except as it sees Him in us. There should therefore be a strong conviction about God, the Bible, Salvation, Christ's death, resurrection and His Second Coming. Third, the soul-winner must accept that the responsibility of preaching the gospel is not optional but a debt (Romans 1:14; Proverbs 24:11,12; Ezekiel 33:6; I Corinthians 9:16). Fourth, there is need for a deep, burning Christ-like compassion (Matthew 9:36; Romans 9:1-3; 10:1). This is the basis for sacrifices made, effectual fervent prayers offered, tears shed and hardship endured for the souls of men to be won in the Lord (Jeremiah 9:11). Fifth, there must be quite a lot of secret praying because there is no substitute for expectant, secret waiting upon God for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, for wisdom, for strength and power courage, hope, faith and for a glowing burning passion to see souls turned away from sin to righteousness and to God (Acts 4:31; Psalm 2:8). Sixth, he must be skilful in the use of the Word which is the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17; II Timothy 2:15). He must also have a definite message and recognize first that the Gospel is a fact and so it must be told convincingly, and that it is a joyful fact, therefore, it must be told cheerfully; and that it is an entrusted fact, therefore, it should be told faithfully. The soul-winner must preach the gospel with earnestness, love, simplicity, tact and wisdom (I Corinthians 9:20-23; II Timothy 2:24-26). He must not give in to discouragement.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOULWINNING

Opportunities for personal evangelism abound daily on the streets, hospitals, train stations, bus stops, inside the bus or taxi or train, prisons, homes of neighbours, schools, markets, etc. The soul-winner does not wait for a perfect opportunity (Eccl. 11:4,6; II Timothy 4:2), as every situation is an opportunity. An effective way of conducting personal evangelism is through friendship. This is the art of leading a soul to Christ by cultivating his friendship. Deeds of kindness, love, service and friendliness can be the bait that will get a sinner interested in the gospel message. The soul-winner must do things that will demonstrate that he cares for the person's earthly welfare as well as his eternal soul. Friendship evangelism is true Christ-like love in action. Jesus Christ our Lord did not count it ungodly to dine with sinners (Luke 15:1,2). Tracts, cassettes, good books, magazines and even letter writing could be employed for personal evangelism.

When do we start personal evangelism? Now! (John 4:35). We cannot be held guiltless if we neglect it (Ezekiel 3:18,19). There are millions of souls rushing towards a lost eternity. Believers must therefore throw aside their flimsy excuses as there is no trouble too great, no humiliation too deep, no suffering too severe, no labour too hard, no expense too much in saving souls. We must arise therefore, pray and do the work.

MARRIAGE

Hebrew 13:4

God's Word teaches that marriage is binding for life. Monogamy is the uniform teaching of the Bible. Polygamy is contrary to God's perfect will and institution. Also, under the New Testament dispensation, no one has a right to divorce and remarry while the first companion lives. When a person becomes converted, necessary restitution, on this line, must be done without delay if he has married wrongly (Genesis 2:24; Deuteronomy 7:1-4; Job 23:11-13; II Corinthians 6:14-18; Proverbs 30:10-31; Mal. 2:14; Romans 7:2,3; Ephesians 5:31-33; Matthew 5:31,32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; John 4:15-19; Genesis 20:3-7).

MARRIAGE: A DIVINE INSTITUTION

Marriage is a holy union, a living symbol, a precious relationship that needs tender self sacrificing care. It is God's idea and not a derivative of any culture. It is a gift from God to man and it has three basic aspects. One, the man leaves his parents, and in a public act, pledges himself to his wife. Two, the man and woman are joined together by taking responsibility for each other's welfare and by loving the partner above all others. And three, the two become one flesh in the intimacy and commitment to the wonderful union which is reserved for marriage. By so doing, marriage provides needed fellowship, comfort, companionship and partnership. With very few exceptions, most men and women are to marry. These few exceptions are to receive God's guidance; it should be no product of infantile decision, misguided imitation, faithless consecration or religious compulsion (Genesis 2:18-20 22-24; Matthew 19:3-9; Ephesians 5:31; I Corinthians 7:1,2,25-29,32).

SELECTION OF A MARRIAGE PARTNER

As marriage is God's institution and order, believers should depend on Him to lead them to the appropriate partner, rather than to resolve to worldly methods like 'sampling' or 'picking and choosing'. "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:18). God seems to be saying, "I am not going to allow the man to choose for himself" (Genesis 2:22). "And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto him". Also, God did not bring a girl, an immature person, or a teenager to the man, but a woman - intelligible, sensible and mature. He brought a perfect fit - two of a kind! God still leads His children to His will even today. He does this through His Word (Psalm 119:105,130; II Timothy 3:16,17), the inner voice of the Holy Spirit, prompting, directing, influencing or checking (John 10:4,5,27; Romans 8:14; Proverbs 20:27; I Samuel 9:15-21; 16:13; Joel 2:28,29; Acts 9:10-15). However, any revelation that is received must be diligently compared with the scripture. If any revelation, visions or dreams contradict the scripture in any way, such are to be rejected as false (Isaiah 8:19-20; Jeremiah 23:21-32; II Corinthians 11:13-15; Revelation 22:18-19). Moreover, once the will of God is known, believers are to seek and obtain their parents' consent before going on with any further plans (Genesis 24:15-29; 34:3-12; Exodus 22:16; Deuteronomy 7:3; I Samuel 18:20-21; I Corinthians 7:36-38).

IMPORTANT MILESTONES ON THE MARRIAGE JOURNEY

Before the wedding is conducted, some necessary procedures must be finalised. One, the parents' consent must be sought, as mentioned above. It is ungodly for any believer to elope with a woman

or man no matter the divergent and unyielding stance of their parents (Genesis 31:20-29). People in such a situation must pray and trust in the Lord who gave the revelation of His will, to finish the work, for “with God all things are possible” (Psalm 37:4; Philippians 4:6; Proverbs 21:1; Mark 10:27). Two, parents’ consent leads to a period of courtship to be determined by the church leadership, but preferably not longer than nine months. This affords the intending couple the opportunity to understand each other and plan for the future together. It is a time to be spent together not in secrecy but in the home of a Christian family where movement of people is not restricted. It is during courtship that the intending couple will discuss their expectations of each other (on finance, size of family anticipated, extended family relations, etc). Purity must be maintained before, during and after the courtship (I Thessalonians 4:3-7; 5:22). Undue familiarity and exchange of gifts at this stage are not acceptable. Three, payment of bride price or “dowry” shall be executed in line with the scriptures. It is an ungodly practice to borrow money or go into debt to impress the woman’s parents or invitees. It is also considered sinful for two people to live together without meeting the requisite obligations to their parents (Exodus 22:17; I Samuel 18:25-27; Hosea 3:2,3; I Corinthians 14:40; Romans 13:7-8). Four, the Christian wedding is preceded by filing in of notice at the Marriage Registry according to the prevailing law.

And five, The Church wedding takes place after the pastor has received proof from the local council. The church will not join (i) a couple in marriage where one of them had been previously married and is separated from his or her partner (Matthew 19:4-6), (ii) a lady who has not obtained the consent of her parents, (iii) a couple in an unequal yoke; that is, one of them is not born again (Deuteronomy 7:3; II Corinthians 6:14), (iv) a lady who is already pregnant. Therefore no believer will marry an unbeliever or a divorced person. Moreover, God’s word forbids marriage between relatives (Leviticus 18:6). Marrying relatives was prohibited by God for physical, social, and moral reasons. Children born to near relatives may experience serious health problems. When improper sexual relations begin, family life is destroyed. “For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled” (Leviticus 18:29). From the parables and actual marriages in the scripture, wedding times were moments of rejoicing and feasting (Jeremiah 16:8,9; 33:11; John 2:1-11; 3:29; Isaiah 62:5) and special garments were provided for the bridegroom, bride, and guests at the wedding (Matthew 22:12; Revelation 19:7,8). Yet, Christian practice must be guided by the uniform teaching of Christian living in the New Testament (I Corinthians 7:29-31; 6:12; 9,13; Romans 14:15; I John 2:6; 3:2-4). The believers therefore must shun every form of worldliness and worldly imitations in dressing and the in the manner of entertaining guests. Simplicity and modesty must characterize the wedding and God’s name glorified.

FOUNDATION FOR A STABLE HOME

The first step in creating a new union with one’s spouse is the dissolving of the old one – severance of relationship with one’s parents (Genesis 2:23,24; Ephesians 5:30,31). The man is to leave father and mother, which means departing, losing oneself, finding freedom from something. Many who have violated this scriptural principle have discovered to their surprise a hurt to their marital joy. Marriage is until death do us part and God did not make provision for divorce or re-marriage. Secondly, lack of spiritual, emotional and intellectual intimacy usually precedes a breakdown of physical intimacy. When couples fail to expose their secret thoughts to each other, they shut off the line of communication. The great secret of conjugal happiness is mutual love, kindness, tenderness, loveliness of character in the home. Thirdly, the wife should respect and obey the husband and the husband should love and care for the wife (Ephesians 5:22-31). “*Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord*”. Submission is not the erasure of the woman’s personality. It is neither subjugation nor an imposed obedience. Submission is a voluntary subordination. It is obedience motivated by love (Philippians 2:5-8). “*Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands...*” (I Peter 3:1-6). Such a life speaks loudly and clearly, and it is often the most effective

way to influence a family member. Christian wives should develop inner beauty rather than being overly concerned about their appearance. When the wife lives the Christian faith quietly and consistently in the home, her family will see Christ in her.

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it . . . so ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself” (Ephesians 5:25-28). Christ is the model of love. The husband can never love his wife too much, yet that love is inconsequential, compared to his love for the Lord. The husband’s love makes him to be considerate, understanding and is able to bear with his wife. The husband is also the head of the family. This headship has the idea of authority, and authority after the analogy of Christ’s Headship. In that sense, the husband is the spiritual head of the family and his wife goes along with his leadership. A wise and Christ-honouring husband will not take advantage of his role, and a wise and Christ-honouring wife will not try to undermine her husband’s leadership.

“Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself and the wife see that she reverence her husband” (Ephesians 5:33).

BIBLICAL CHILD TRAINING

Proverbs 22:6

Children are God’s gift to parents. They occupy a special place in God’s purpose to populate the world. Children are very precious in God’s sight, and He is greatly concerned about their welfare (Psalm 127:3-5). Child training is therefore a major responsibility in marriage. It is because God wants children to be raised in a family setting that He has coupled childbirth directly to marriage and not to a baby manufacturing company or cloning. It is the responsibility of parents to train up their children in the way they should go – not the way they want to go, or the way the world wants them to go. Child training is extremely important, because it determines the success and earthly joy of our children, and it can have a serious impact on their eternal destiny. God holds (Christian) parents responsible for the training of their children (I Samuel 3:13).

PURPOSE OF TRAINING Psalm 144:11,12; Luke 2:40,52.

Training goes beyond ensuring the physical welfare of children. It is a conscious and continuous act of exercising and developing the child towards a wholesome character. Training should therefore be aimed at the following:

- To give the child biblical instruction, insight and example, to the end that he may know, love and serve the Lord till eternity.
- To equip the child with the means to develop a noble character, and exercise him therein, so that he may become a dependable and responsible adult. He should not become a social misfit.
- To enrich him with knowledge, understanding and wisdom to enable him take wise decisions in life among contrasting and conflicting voices and examples.
- To prepare him for future independence in terms of occupation, finance and family life.

PITFALLS IN TRAINING I Samuel 3:13; Ephesians 6:1-4.

Many modern adults do not train their children at all. The result is a crop of delinquents and social misfits. But for those of us who are aware of the necessity to train our children, it is important to know some pitfalls in training. These include:

- **Ignorance.** This is a major problem for many Christian parents. They are ignorant of the child’s thinking, his needs, his environment, peer pressure, his anxieties, what he learns, and what he can do. This results in lack of communication, distrust, and evasiveness. The child

then prefers to ask questions from people outside and learn from them, rather than his parents. He then obtains a disguised and possibly wrong view of many crucial matters of life.

- **Indiscipline** or indulgence (I Kgs 1:5,6; Pro. 29:15). Some parents hardly correct their child. Right from babyhood, they feed his stubbornness, selfishness and greediness. The result is lack of direction, respect and moral values. He may develop relational problems in adulthood.
- **Inconsistency** (Mat. 12:25,26). Parents who uphold a rule today and relax it tomorrow, teach the child to disregard rules. Where there is inconsistency in standard, word, and action or between partners, the child takes advantage of the chaos, and manipulates his way through life.
- **Inconsideration** Selfishness, cruelty, neglect of care, etc, plague many children. What some parents cannot bear, they lay on their children. Rather than caring for their children, some parents lavish money on clothes, expensive cars, etc.

PATTERN IN TRAINING

The Bible provides us timely principles for the successful training of our children. Child training is work. It will not happen automatically, any more than an unmanned ship can arrive at its intended destination. Those who decide to have children must realise and accept their role as parents. Negligence in this brings them under the judgement of God. The following are guidelines for child training:

- There should be clear goals for the training (Psalm 144:11,12). This will serve as a reference point along the way. It also allows us to overcome discouragement as we keep the noble vision tenaciously before us. These goals should be coupled with the purpose mentioned above.
- Parents must set coherent and reasonable standards in the home, **and** adhere to them (Exodus 18:20; Pro. 1:8,9). It is the parent that determines what is right, and not the child or the environment. Make the child aware of what is right and what is wrong. He needs to know what is acceptable and the bounds of his freedom.
- It is important to keep an open communication channel with the child. Parents must work at building trust in the child and winning his confidence. This will allow him to speak out his mind, and give room for early correction.
- Create in the child a sense of self-worth, confidence and faith. It is important to appreciate him, affirm your love to him, and encourage him to attempt great things. Refrain from cutting comments. Motivate him to be his best in everything (Eph. 6:4).
- Fairness is essential. Whether we deal with one child or many, there should be uniform treatment. Good behaviour should be commended and encouraged, while wrongdoing should be proportionately punished and discouraged. The welfare of the child should be central (Pro. 13:24).
- Support the child in prayer (Job 1:1-5). Understand the need for God to build the child up, and take time to bring him regularly to the throne of grace. As you adult face spiritual warfare, so does the child. Therefore, he needs your intercession. Pray that the presence of the Lord will overshadow him, and that no evil will overcome him. Teach him to pray also. That will enable him to depend on God in the future.
- Lastly, complement the training with a convincing and supporting example. What we build in precept can be destroyed by a contradicting example, whereas, what we omit in teaching will be supplemented by a consistent, exemplary character. Actions speak louder than voice. Be trustworthy, faithful and consistent.

Child training is an awesome responsibility. Lack of training makes the child a failure and social misfit. Proper training gives the child a good foundation in life. As we approach this issue with faith and prayer, may the Lord enable us to raise our children for His glory in Jesus' name. Amen.

THE RAPTURE

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

God's Word teaches that the Rapture (commonly referred to as the first phase or stage of the SECOND COMING OF CHRIST) is the catching away from the earth, of all living saints and all who died in the Lord. The Rapture will take place before the Great Tribulation, and it can happen any time from now. "In a twinkling of an eye" - without a moment's warning, "the trumpet shall sound . . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (John 14:1-3; Luke 21:34-36; I Corinthians 15:51-58; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:4-9; II Thessalonians 2:5-7; Philippians 3:11,20,21; I John 3:1-3).

The Rapture is the greatest event of all ages that the Church is waiting for. It is the catching away of all true believers in Christ to meet the Lord in the air (I Thessalonians 4:16). Christ, at the end of His first advent, was in like manner taken up in the air to go and prepare a place for His own. The parting promise from God was that Jesus would return in like manner to receive His 'Bride' to be with Him forever (Acts 1:9-11; John 14:1-3).

DESCRIPTION OF THE RAPTURE

The *Rapture* is not the same as the *Second Coming of Christ*. It is rather the first phase of the Second Advent. At the Rapture, Christ will appear in the air, invisible to the inhabitants of the earth. He will come to resurrect all dead saints, who along with the living believers will put on immortality and shall be caught up to be with the Lord. It will happen "in the twinkling of an eye," before the great and terrible day of the Lord, when the wrath of God will be poured down from His cup of indignation without mixture at the *Great Tribulation* (I Corinthians 15:52). The Second Advent will not take place until after great tribulation. The time of the Rapture is unknown, even by the angels (Matthew 24:36; II Thessalonians 2:1-5). It will be heralded by the voice of the archangel and the blowing of trumpets signalling the end of the Church age (I Thessalonians 4:13-15).

The Rapture was a mystery, unknown to the Old Testament Saints and prophets. God had underlined this great event in two different ways in the Scripture to assure us of its certainty. First, it was illustrated in Enoch and Elijah, the two living saints who did not taste death, but were translated in a moment of time (Genesis 5:24; II Kings 2:11,12). Second, it was illustrated in Christ in the New Testament. He died, was buried and resurrected. While he talked with His disciples on Mount Olivet, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out their sight (Acts 1:9-11).

The Rapture marks the end of the Church Age, also referred to as the *Time of the Gentiles* (Luke 21:24). This truth was veiled to the Saints of old. However, "known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." In His mercy, He interrupted His programme for Israel with the Church Age. Christ the Messiah came for His people but they rejected Him (John 1:11), and God turned to the Gentiles to take a people for Himself. The Rapture will mark the end of this special period of grace. God will resume His programme with Israel immediately after the Rapture, thus ushering in the beginning of the seventieth week in Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27).

EVENTS SURROUNDING THE RAPTURE

It is very certain that Christ is coming back again for "He that shall come will come and will not tarry." He assured the Church of the certainty of His coming (John 14:1-3). Angels proclaimed it; apostles and saints throughout the ages preached it. The signs of His coming are daily being fulfilled.

Christ answering a pertinent question asked by his disciples on "...what shall be the sign of thy coming ...?" (Matthew 24:5-12,30-39), gave in details what would be happening on earth shortly before His coming (Matthew 24:1-12,30-39). Many false prophets and false Christs shall arise, deceiving many unsuspecting believers. There will be wars and rumours of war. There will be international wars, famines (global economic recession), pestilences, earthquakes in divers places. There will be persecution of Christ's followers and some cases of martyrdom. Backsliding from the faith will increase. More people will be given to pleasure and merry making than those who seek the Lord. The scripture also predicts the conditions, characterized by a system of denials that will be prevalent within the visible Church, shortly before Christ's return. There will be a denial of God (II Timothy 3:1-5), of Christ (I John 2:18; 4:3), of His return (II Peter 3:3,4), of the faith, of true Christian living (Jude 18) and of authority. These signs are being fulfilled before our very eyes.

READINESS FOR THE RAPTURE

To qualify to partake in the Rapture; one must be born again, living a holy life, walking daily in the light, working the works of God, watching daily, praying always with all prayer and maintaining these experiences at the time of the Rapture or at the time of death as the case may be (John 3:3; Hebrews 12:14; John 4:35-38; 9:1-4; I Thessalonians 4:16,17). Practically all the signs preceding the Second Advent of Christ are fulfilled, telling us that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is very close and the time of the Rapture is much closer. Sinning Church members will not be able to go at the Rapture, though saved before and baptized in water. Careless and compromising preachers will miss the Rapture too; it does not matter what Christian work they did in the past. All such people together with backsliders and sinners outside the Church will be left behind to face the Great Tribulation.

Knowing that these things shall be, that the Rapture will occur unannounced and very imminent, what manner of persons ought believers to be? Sinners are to make haste to repent and embrace Christ, as their Saviour. The saints of God are to watch and pray lest that day should come upon them unprepared (Matthew 24:42-44).

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

I Corinthians 15:50-55

God's Word teaches the resurrection of the dead as clearly as the immortality of the soul. Every individual who has ever lived will be resurrected, some to honour and glory, and others to shame and everlasting contempt (Job 19:25-27; Psalm 71:20; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2; John 5:28,29; I Corinthians 15:12-57; I Thessalonians 4:13-16; Hebrews 6:1,2; Philippians 3:8-11; Revelation 20:4,6,12,13).

The resurrection of the dead is a cardinal and an important doctrine of the Bible. All who die in this world will undergo physical resurrection before the Great White Throne Judgment. This doctrine shows that there will be a resurrection of the body, joined with the soul, to meet the LORD either in peace and joy or meet Him as a Judge in condemnation, eternal punishment and torment of hell fire.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR THE DOCTRINE

Jesus, the Prophet come from God, declared in John 5:25, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.*" The fact of the resurrection of the just and unjust runs through the teaching of Jesus Christ (John 6:40; Matthew 16:21; 22:23-32). Job spoke of his eyes and flesh seeing God after worms have destroyed his body (Job 19:25-27). Isaiah spoke of the earth casting out the dead (Isaiah 26:14-19). Daniel spoke of the awakening of many that sleep in the dust, some to everlasting

life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2). In like manner spoke David (Psalm 16:10; 17:15). Old and New Testament saints (Hebrews 11:35; Mat 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-18; Luke 24:1-49; John 19-21; Acts 17:18,32; I Peter 1:3; 3:21). Even Herod the wicked king and the generality of the people of his day believed in the resurrection of the dead (Mark 6:14-16).

THE SOUL AND THE RESURRECTION

In the intervening period between death (when the body and soul are separated) and the resurrection, one may ask, "Where is the soul?" The soul of a saint of God goes immediately to meet God in heaven. The repentant thief on the cross received forgiveness and assurance from Jesus: *"Today shall thou be with me in paradise"* (Luke 23:39-43). Righteous Lazarus died and was *"carried by angels into Abraham's bosom"*, where he was comforted (Luke 16:19-31). Stephen at death said, *"I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God"* ready to receive him (Acts 7:54-60). Paul was *"willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord"* (Philippians 1:21-23). Many other references of scripture confirm that the soul of the saint will rejoice in God's presence after death (II Corinthians 5:1-8; Ecclesiastes 12:1,7). But when a sinner dies, his soul proceeds to hell. In hell fire, he is conscious, he can see, he can feel and he can hear (Luke 16:19-31).

The form to be associated with the resurrected body of the just is exemplified by the glorified body that Jesus, the first fruit, had after his resurrection (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:11-20,24-31; I John 3:2). All resurrected bodies will be immortal (Daniel 12:2; Mark 9:42-48). The resurrected bodies of saints will possess different degrees of glory. *"There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead"* – (I Corinthians 15:39-54).

THE TIMING OF THE RESURRECTION

The timing for the resurrection to life of the just and resurrection to judgment of the unjust is well spelt out in the scriptures in accordance with the ordained programme of God. The resurrection of life (John 5:28-29), resurrection of the just (Luke 14:13-14), a better resurrection (Hebrews 11:35), or the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6) has four phases:

1. The resurrection of Christ, the first fruit (I Corinthians 15:3,4,12,20,23).
2. The resurrection of the Church-age saints at the Rapture (I Thessalonians 4:13-16).
3. The resurrection of the tribulation period saints (Revelation 20:3-5).
4. The resurrection of Old Testament saints at the second advent of Christ to the earth (Daniel 12:2; Isaiah 26:19).

All the saints of God that ever died shall rise in the first resurrection (Revelation 20:6). The second resurrection is still part of God's programme, but it deals with the unsaved dead. It is the resurrection to damnation (John 5:29). Partakers of this resurrection shall be punished with eternal torment in the lake of fire (Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:11-15). There is a difference of one thousand years between the first and second resurrections (Revelation 20:5-15).

But just as in the Early Church when Hymenæus and Philetus erred about the resurrection (II Timothy 2:17), there are many false teachings today also, such as *annihilation* and *purgatory*. Nevertheless, the doubt or error of man cannot alter God's timetable. Whether men repent and get saved or not, just as Jesus' resurrection did not depend of the faith of men, the dead shall surely rise (Acts 23:8; II Timothy 2:15-18; I Corinthians 15:12-23; Romans 3:3,4).

The challenge is for you as an individual to make sure you are ready for the first resurrection, so that the second death will have no power over you. To partake of the first resurrection, there must first be a spiritual resurrection here on earth. As a sinner dead in sins and trespasses, you must first be

made alive by the Spirit of life from above, and brought in the newness and holiness of life (I Thessalonians 4:14,16; II Corinthians 5:17-19; Hebrews 12:14).

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Matthew 24:15-22

God's Word teaches that the Great Tribulation will occur after the Rapture; it will be a time of terrible suffering on earth. It is also referred to as the time of "Jacob's trouble" (Matthew 24:21,22,29; Revelation 9:1-6; Mark 13:19; II Thessalonians 2:3-10; Revelation 13). During this time, the Antichrist will take possession of this world for a reign of terror. He will not be a system or organization but a person - a supernatural, diabolical being, in the form of a man who will blaspheme and proclaim himself to be God (Daniel 8:23-25; II Thessalonians 2:7-12; Revelation 13:1-10). The Marriage Supper of the Lamb will take place above while the tribulation continues on earth (Revelation 19:1-10).

The great tribulation is described as the "time of Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7-9) "... great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21); "...the day of the Lord" (Joel 1:15); "a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness" (Joel 2:1,2); "... wasteness and desolation" (Zephaniah 1:14-18); "... a time of trouble" (Daniel 12:1). The purpose of the great tribulation is to make Israel suffer so that they can be ready to cry to the Messiah (the Lord Jesus Christ Whom they at present reject) to come back to them. It is also to judge the unbelieving men and women of all ages (Zech. 12:10,11; 13:1-9; 14:12,13).

THE TIMING OF THE GREAT TRIBULATION

The Bible shows that the great tribulation will take off after the rapture of the Church, and will last for seven years. It will end at the Second Advent of Jesus Christ when He alights on Mount Olives (Zech. 14:4; Matthew 25:31; II Thessalonians 1:7-10; Jude 14,15; Acts 1:11). At this time He will settle on earth (Jerusalem) for a thousand-year reign called the *Millennium* (Revelation 20:4,6). This means that the great tribulation is between the Rapture and the Millennium. That is, it is during the 70th or last of Daniel's 70 weeks (Daniel 9:26,27; Matthew 24:15-31; II Thessalonians 2:3-8). It is after the Rapture because God will not like His children to suffer the great tribulation, its judgments and destructions. He saved Noah (a preacher of righteousness) and his family before destroying the world with flood (Genesis 6:8-10; 7:1-13,16-24; 8:15-22). He rescued Lot (who was vexed with the filthy conversation of Sodom) and his family before destroying Sodom and Gomorrah with fire (Genesis 19:10-29; II Peter 2:4-9). So God will take away His children from the earth before the great tribulation begins. The great tribulation reaches its peak of destructions, judgements, terrors, frightening wars and desolation from the middle of the 7 year duration and ends with Christ's Second Advent. This is when the Antichrist breaks his 7 year peace covenant with Israel and attacks Jerusalem (Matthew 24:15-22; Daniel 12:1; Jeremiah 30:6-9).

EVENTS AROUND THE GREAT TRIBULATION

The great tribulation is described as being full of woes, judgements, famines, bloody wars, explosions, plagues, terror, men calling for mountains to fall upon them, anguish, earthquakes, burning rocks falling from heaven upon the earth and scorching it, seas polluted, cattle and vegetation destroyed, millions dying from catastrophes, "as if a man flees from a lion and bear meet him ... he leans on the wall and the serpent bites him." Beasts and men will be in trouble; even mighty men will weep. "Neither their gold and silver (riches) will be able to deliver them." Whole cities and nations will be under great distress, perplexity, seas and waves roaring, hypertension, and confusion as the powers of the heavens are shaken by God (Amos 5:18,19;

Isaiah 2:19-21; 24:1-3,6,19; Mark 13:24; Joel 1:15; Luke 21:25,26; Matthew 24:11-26; Revelation 19:1-21). The great tribulation opens with the rapture of the church. Then comes the rise of the Antichrist (II Thessalonians 1:7,8). He will win nations, some by war while others concede authority to him (Daniel 7:8,24-25; Revelation 17:8-14). The “false prophet” popularizes him, making men to worship even his image. No one buys or sells without the mark or number (**6-6-6**) of the beast (Revelation 13:1-18; 14:9-11). While these go on, saints receive rewards in Heaven (Revelation 2:17,25-28; 3:12). There will be great apostasy, more of false religions and increase in the power of the devil who will be driven down to the earth (II Thessalonians 2:3-12; Revelation 12:10-12; 13:2,12-18). God’s planned judgements will fall on men in a divine sequence producing supernatural phenomena and demonic creatures unknown to man. These will come as Christ opens seven seals of a scroll on which they occur, then the blowing of 7 trumpets each a harbinger of more woes. 144,000 Jews will be sealed and raptured as well as countless tribulation saints from all over the world (Revelation 7:1-17). Saints in tribulation will be martyred (Revelation 6:9-11; 14:13; 20:4-6). A mighty angel appears with rainbow on his hand, a little book opened and swears that “there should be time no longer” (Revelation 10:1-11). After this the high point of catastrophes called “the great tribulation” begins for the remaining 3½ years (Revelation 11:1-19; Daniel 12:1-7; Jeremiah 30:6,7). Jerusalem falls to the Antichrist, and Israel is defeated (Matthew 24:15-22; Daniel 11:40-45). Israel runs for refuge in old Edom (Revelation 12:6,13-17; Isaiah 16:1-5). There will be more woes of the earth through the pouring out on it of the seven vials (Revelation 15:1-6; 16:21; 18:1-24). God’s two witnesses will appear, be killed and later resurrect (Revelation 11:1-12). The marriage supper of the Lamb takes place (Revelation 19:1-10), and saints prepare to return to earth with Christ (Jude 14,15; Revelation 19:11).

The scope of the tribulation will cover Israel, the Middle East and the whole earth. The powers at work will be (a) **The Antichrist** called Beast, king of the north, the Syrian, the Assyrian, the king of Babylon, the Extortioner, the man of sin, the little horn, the prince that shall come, a king of fierce countenance and understanding dark sayings, the spoiler, the son of perdition, and that wicked one empowered specially by satan (II Thessalonians 2:1-10; Daniel 7:8,24; 8:9,23; 9:26,27; 11:36-45; Revelation 13:1-18; 14:9-11; Isaiah 10:20-27; 30:18-33; Micah 5:3-15; Isaiah 14:4; 16:4; Daniel 7:11), (b) **The False Prophet** (Revelation 13:1-19; 14:9-11; 19:20), (c) **God’s powerful judgments** (Joel 1:15; 2:12; Amos 5:18; Rev 4:1 - 19:21), and (d) **The devil** (Revelation 12:7-17; 20:1,2; II Thessalonians 2:9).

THE SAINTS AND THE GREAT TRIBULATION

While terrors are unleashed on the earth, the saints will be (a) **receiving rewards** (I Corinthians 3:11-15; Luke 14:14; I Corinthians 9:24-27), (b) **Rejoicing and feasting** (Revelation 19:6-9), (c) **Worshipping God** with the angels (Revelation 7:9-17; 14:1-5; 4:5,7), and (d) **preparing for the second Advent** with Christ upon white horses (Jude 14,15; Revelation 19:11-14; Matthew 25:31). After the great tribulation, Jesus will come back to the earth to establish His millennial reign. Then Israel will repent and be saved (Zech. 14:1-8; Micah 1:3,4; Romans 11:25-27; Hebrews 8:8-12; Isaiah 66:7,8). When Jesus Christ comes, He will destroy the Antichrist and the false prophet, and cast them into the lake of fire, while destroying their armies at the battle of Armageddon (valley of Megiddo). Then an angel will bind the devil and cast him into the bottomless pit for a period of one thousand years (Ezekiel 38-39; Revelation 20:1-3; 19:11-21).

The most important question is this: ***Are you ready for the judgment day?*** “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” - Luke 21:36.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

Revelation 1:7

God's Word teaches that the Second Coming of Christ will be just as literal and visible as His going away, and He is coming to execute judgment upon the ungodly. He will also, then, set up His Kingdom and reign on this present earth for a thousand years (Zech. 14:3,4; Matthew 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 13:24-37; II Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2:8; Jude 14,15).

CERTAINTY OF CHRIST'S COMING

The Holy Spirit through the apostles confirmed that Christ shall appear "the second time" (Hebrews 9:28), and would then reward His faithful servants with crowns of glory, praise and honour and His adversaries with fiery indignation (I Peter 5:4; 1:7; Hebrews 10:27). James the apostle also encouraged believers: "Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth near." The angel of God confirmed that "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" (Acts 1:11).

The prophecy in Isaiah 9:6 that the government (of the whole world) would be on Christ's shoulder, is yet to be fulfilled. Also some prophecies in Isaiah 61 concerning Christ were only partially fulfilled at His first coming. Christ Himself confirmed in Luke 4:21 that "this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." The rest of the prophecies in that chapter would be fulfilled after His second advent.

The exactitude with which the old time prophecies concerning the first coming of Christ were fulfilled points to the infallibility of the Scriptures and to the certainty of those prophecies concerning His second advent. Prophecies on His virgin birth, details of His earthly life, His death and resurrection were all fulfilled to the letter, and so would those relating to His second coming. Apart from the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning Christ, other divine purposes which the second advent would fulfil include (i) the comfort of the church (John 14:1-3; 16:20-22); (ii) the restoration of Israel to her sovereignty as prophesied in the scripture (Isaiah 32:18; 33:20-24); (iii) the judgment of the earth (Revelation 20:11-15; John 5:22); (iv) the renovation of the earth (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22 Revelation 21:1-5); (v) the restoration of all things according to the desire of God (Romans 8:20-23; Jeremiah 12:4,11).

SIGNS OF HIS COMING

The scriptures abound with evidence that speaks of the certainty of Christ's second coming. Our Lord Jesus spoke of His return several times, once leading the disciples to enquire about the signs that would herald that certain event. A study of the scriptures indicates that certain prophecies concerning Christ, and some future programme of God are not yet fulfilled and would only be, after the second advent of Christ. However, all the signs preceding the Second Advent are being fulfilled daily. Going through the *Olivet Discourse* of Matthew 24 and 25, the following signs of His coming are clear. Jesus Himself said, there would be deception, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, anti-Semitism (Mark 13:9,13), offences, betrayals, hatred, false prophets, lawlessness and martyrdom (Matthew 24:4-13,24). He said the impact of the second coming would be as universal as when "the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth unto the west." It would make "all the tribes of the earth to mourn." They would be deep in spiritual lethargy and indifference as was the case in the time of Noah's flood (Matthew 24:27,30,37).

VICTORY AT HIS COMING

The greatest event that will precede the second coming of Christ is the Rapture, which lies in the valley between the mountains of Christ's first and second coming. It is a part of the mystery of the church which in the Old Testament age "was not made known unto the sons of men" as it was

revealed in the New Testament to “His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.” The Rapture is however different from the second coming. The two events are distinct and separated by seven years. The second coming refers to Christ’s coming to the earth to live as He did in the first coming, to be seen by every eye. In the Rapture, Christ would not come to the earth but stop in the air where the saints will meet him. So only believers shall see Him then. When Christ meets the saints in the air, He will take them to heaven where they would remain for the period of the Great Tribulation. It is during this seven-year period that the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:18,19), and the judgment of saints for reward shall take place in heaven (I Corinthians 3:12-15; II Corinthians 5:10). In the second coming, however, He will come to the earth to live and fulfil a definite part of God’s timetable for the earth and man. Christ shall then come with the saints raptured seven years earlier. Whereas the Rapture can take place any moment without warning, the second coming cannot happen until after both the Rapture and the Great Tribulation.

In His Second Coming, Christ will reign on the earth for one thousand years with the saints. Christened the *Millennial Reign*, Christ’s rule shall be characterized by unprecedented peace, prosperity and blessing on the earth (Isaiah 11:1-9). Satan, the author of heartache, strife and contention would for the duration of Christ’s Millennial Reign (Revelation 20:23). Satan and his cohorts will mobilise forces to fight Christ and to frustrate His coming again to establish the Millennial Reign, just in the same way he used Herod to stop Christ’s survival at His first coming. He was defeated and again he will be defeated. The battle against Christ and His host is called the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 19:11-21; 20:1-4). There will be a great and terrible slaughter of the armies of the Antichrist gathered from the nations of the earth through the efforts of the evil spirits sent out over the earth by Satan, the Antichrist and the false prophet (Revelation 17:13,14). This Satan’s last attempt to wrongfully take the Kingdom from Christ will fail.

The world and the church are called to prepare for this great event. The world is admonished to repent and come to Christ before the day of the Lord (John 3:1-8). The Church as a bride is called to be ready, holy, spotless, watchful, prayerful and busy preaching His word until He comes (Hebrews 12:14; I John 3:1-3; II Timothy 4:1,2; Ephesians 5:25-27).

“Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him” - (Revelation 1:7).

CHRIST’S MILLENNIAL REIGN

Isaiah 9:6,7

God’s Word teaches that Christ’s Millennial Reign is the 1000 years literal reign of Jesus on earth, which will be ushered in by the coming of Jesus back to earth with ten thousands of His saints. At this time He will judge the nations that dwell upon the face of the earth (Jude 14,15; II Thessalonians 1:7-10). During this time the devil will be bound (Revelation 20:2,3). It will be a reign of peace and blessing (Isaiah 11:6-9; Hosea 2:18; Zech. 14:9-20; Isaiah 2:2-4).

The word *millennium* is a compound derivative from Latin which simply translates into a thousand years. Thus, Christ’s millennial reign is a thousand years of the full manifestation of the glory of God. It is sequel to the *Great Tribulation* which is a period of intense suffering for all on earth.

According to God’s revealed timetable, the Church will suddenly be taken away by Christ (I Thessalonians 4:13-18) in a mysterious event known as the *Rapture*. Then will follow seven years of great suffering of sinners left behind (Matthew 24:21-22). At the end of this period, Jesus will come again with the Church to establish His government (Jude 14). The government of this world, at that time, will resist His coming. But the Lord will overcome at the battle of Armageddon

(Revelation 19:15-21). Satan will be bound and imprisoned for 1000 years (Revelation 20:1-3). The kingdom of this world will then become the kingdom of our God and His Christ (Revelation 11:15; Daniel 2:44).

ESSENCE OF THE MILLENNIAL REIGN

Christ's millennial reign will be a time when the purposes of God will be fully realised on earth, as a *theocracy* (government of the state under the firm control and direction of God) will be established. Christ, as the divine Representative of the Godhead will at this time, speak and act for God. He will be given a universal and glorious dominion, with absolute power to govern (Isaiah 9:6; Psalm 45:4; Isaiah 11:4; Psalm 72:4). It will be the responsibility of Christ at this age to announce God's will and law (Isaiah 2:3,4; 33:21,22; 42:4; Acts 3:22). The millennial reign will be a manifestation of the promise God gave David, that his throne would have no end. Christ, as David's Son after the flesh, will thus establish a glorious house and throne, over an equally glorious kingdom (II Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 72; Isaiah 11:10). Divine mercy, divine goodness and divine truth will be displayed through Christ even as the glory associated with His deity, omniscience, omnipotence and righteousness will be fully made manifest.

The Gentile world system (humanity without Christ) as it is at present organised under the direct influence of satan, will thus become an outmoded setup. In its stead comes Christ's millennial reign void of sin and all forms of unrighteousness. Satan, having been defeated and bound, will lack the power to induce people to sin (Revelation 20:1-6; Matthew 19:28; Ephesians 5:25-27).

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MILLENNIUM

What are the components of the millennium? **One**, the millennium shall witness an unprecedented era of national and individual peace. There will be a complete cessation of the scourge of wars, as the kingdoms of the world will be fused together under the reign of Christ. The ensuing peace will herald an era of economic boom and prosperity. The beauty of this age is that hitherto antagonistic and irreconcilable foes will henceforth co-habit as "sheep and lambs." **Two**, there will be joy unspeakable (Isaiah 9:3,4; Jeremiah 30:18,19). **Three**, there will be holiness (Ezekiel 43:7-12; Isaiah 1:26,27). **Four**, there will be glory (Isaiah 24:23; 60:1-9). **Five**, there will be comfort (Isaiah 12:1-2; Jeremiah 3:23-25). **Six**, justice will abound (Isaiah 9:7; 11:5; 42:1-4). **Seven**, there will be full knowledge (Isaiah 11:1-2,9; 41:19-20; 54:13; Habakkuk. 2:14). Additionally, the following benefits will also accrue to the inhabitants of the age. **One**, the original curse placed upon mankind at creation will be removed, resulting in abundant productivity to the earth (Isaiah 11:6-9; 35:9; 65:25). **Two**, sickness becomes a thing of the past (Isaiah 33:24; Jeremiah 30:17; Ezekiel 34:16). And **three**, healing will naturally be available to the deformed (Isaiah 29:17-19). Against the background of the above, there shall be preservation of life (Isaiah 41:8-14; 62:8,9; Jeremiah 32:27; Ezekiel 34:27; Joel 3:16-17; Amos 9:15; Zech. 14:10,11), and complete freedom from all forms of oppression that at present ravage mankind (Isaiah 14:3-6; 42:6,7; 49:8,9; Zech. 9:11,12).

PARTAKERS OF THE MILLENNIAL REIGN

Who are those expected to partake in Christ's millennial reign? **One**, the glorious Church (Ephesians 5:25-27). This will exclude the apostate church that is married to the world (Revelation 17:1-7). **Two**, the poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3). These are those who recognise and admit their state of spiritual poverty (life on earth without assurance of salvation) and are willing to turn away from sin and surrender to Christ. And **three**, the watchful, prayerful saints (Hebrews 9:28; Matthew 25:34).

Have you been washed in the Blood of the Lamb? Have you be made "king and priest unto God" through faith in His name (Revelation 1:5,6)? *"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" - I John 3:3.*

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

Revelation 20:11-15

God's Word teaches that the Great White Throne Judgment is when God finally judges all (the living and the dead, small and great) who have ever lived on the face of the earth, according to their works. This is after the Millennium. At this time the final judgment will be held. All those from all ages, who have not yet been judged (believers' judgment, as sinners, was accomplished by Christ on the cross - John 5:24; 3:17-19) will stand before God at this time. The devil and his angels are judged at this time also and sent to the lake of fire forever (Daniel 12:2,3; Matthew 10:15; 11:21-24; 12:41,42; John 5:28,29; Romans 2:5-9,12,16; 14:12; II Peter 2:9; Jude 6; I Corinthians 6:1-4; Acts 10:42; Revelation 20:11-15).

In this teaching on the events of the last days or eschatology, the Lord is graciously unveiling the curtain of eternity to reveal to humanity His programme for this present evil world. The doctrine of *The Great White Throne Judgment* opens our eyes to see a time to come when all wicked/ungodly people (the living and the dead, small and great who have neglected God's salvation) will face the final judgment of the Living God (Romans 14:12). We caution that the teaching must not be approached with doubtful disputations or viewed as fable or fiction but a fact. These are true sayings of God written for our learning and admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come (Romans 15:4; I Corinthians 10:11; Revelation 19:9).

CLARIFICATION ON THE JUDGMENT Revelation 20:11.

The Bible clearly presents the order of events preceding the Great White Throne Judgment and constantly enjoins, "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*" (Revelation 2:7). At the close of the millennium, the devil will be released from "the bottomless pit" (Revelation 20:3), and he will deceive thousands of people and gather them to fight against the King (Christ) and His saints. This is the battle of *Gog and Magog*. But at the end of the battle, when the rebellious have been killed and destroyed by the fire of His indignation which comes down from heaven, the devil will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7-10). After this, Great White Throne Judgment will be set. God will sit on a throne so white, magnificent and terrible that the whole earth and (atmospheric) heaven will tremble and flee from Him. All those who died unrepentant from the time of Adam till the time of this judgment will be resurrected (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28,29; Acts 24:15) This is called the *second resurrection*. And they will all stand before God to account for their deeds. This final judgment of sinners (the living and the dead, small and great) is known as the Great White Throne Judgment (Psalm 9:17; Daniel 7:9-10; Matthew 11:20-24; 10:15; John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:11-15). The Bible is replete with pointers to this great and notable day of the Lord (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 11:21-24; 12:41,42; Romans 2:15,16; II Peter 2:9; Jude 14,15; I John 4:17).

CANDIDATES FOR THE JUDGMENT Revelation 20:12,13.

The world is corrupt and polluted. Man is rebellious and disobedient against God. Right from the beginning, God sighed for the acts of man, "*for every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart has been evil continually*" (Genesis 6:5,6). But this will not continue forever. No! for "*He hath appointed A DAY in which He will judge the world righteousness*" (Acts 17:30,31). But everyone whose name is written in the *Book of Life* will escape the Great White Throne Judgment, since his judgment as a sinner was borne by Christ on the Cross (John 3:17-19,30; Romans 8:1; John 5:24). Besides, "*God has not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ*" (I Thessalonians 5:9). "*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire*

and brimstone, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8). That great congregation will consist of (i) all categories of sinners (dead or alive) from Adam to date. They will be judged for neglecting the salvation of God (Hebrews 2:3); (ii) all backsliders in all dispensations (Exodus 32:33); (iii) all who deny the deity of Jesus Christ (John 3:18,36). These are the sceptics, the atheists, idol worshippers and all people who neither depend on Christ’s atonement as the final sacrifice for sin nor accept His Lordship; (iv) all religious hypocrites who “...are like unto white sepulchres which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones and of all uncleanness” (Matthew 23:27).

COMPLETENESS OF THE JUDGMENT Revelation 20:14,15.

Death has been an invidious age-long enemy of God’s creation. It is Satan’s principal messenger of destruction and instrument of cruelty. At the Great White Throne Judgment, death will be stripped of its power, and cast into the lake of fire. Consequently, there shall be no more death (Revelation 20:14; I Corinthians 15:26). Hell, the temporal abode of the souls of the wicked, will likewise be emptied and cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14). This old earth which has been polluted with sin, defiled by Satan, demons and sinners shall be burnt up (II Peter 3:10). The heavens (atmospheric heavens or skies) which have similarly been polluted by Satan and wicked spirits shall be dissolved and “*the elements thereof shall melt with fervent heat*” (II Peter 3:7,10-12). God will judge (a) all unrighteous deeds of men (I John 5:17; Romans 11:28-32) - every unrighteous act, feeling or imagination that was not cleansed by the blood of the Lambs will be condemned at the Great White Throne Judgment; (b) the secret deeds of men (Matthew 10:26; Romans 2:16; Hebrews 4:13; II Chronicles 16:9) - every secret bribery, immorality, pornography, drunkenness, abortion, etc, will be revealed. “*And the books (of record) were opened, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works.*” There is a record in heaven for everything done under the sun, “*whether it be good or bad*” (I Corinthians 5:10^b); (c) the words of men (Matthew 12:36,37; 5:22; Ephesians 4:29,31; 5:4). “*Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.*” Every gossip, backbiting and slander against our neighbours, fellow believers or church leaders, will be judged. All foolish, unedifying, corrupt, graceless and abusive words against others will be accounted for at the Great White Throne Judgment. “*For by thy words thou shalt be justified and by thy words thou shalt be condemned*” (Matthew 12:37). God will judge every unrepentant sinner or backslider (Proverbs 11:21). God’s judgment will be fair, without partiality or respect of persons (Romans 2:2-12; Job 34:18-22). He will judge the small and the great, the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate, the highly respected and the most despised. “*For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible which regardeth not persons nor taketh rewards (bribe)*” (Deuteronomy 10:17). The righteous Judge of the universe will receive no bribe to pervert judgment on that great day. But “*in righteousness He doth judge and make war*” (Revelation 19:11). God is without partiality. “*WHOSOEVER was NOT found WRITTEN in the BOOK OF LIFE was cast into the lake of fire*” (Revelation 20:15).

The lake of fire is a place of indescribable suffering and punishment for all those who shall be condemned at the Great White Throne Judgment. The punishment of the wicked will be grievous, comfortless and endless in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. “*And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever and they have no rest day nor night*” (Revelation 14:11). ***Escape through Christ’s grace!***

THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH Revelation 21:1-27

God's Word teaches that the New Heaven and the New Earth "wherein dwelleth righteousness," will be made by God and the redeemed shall dwell with God forever. This present earth which has been polluted by sin will pass away after the "Great White Throne Judgement" (Psalm 102:25-26; Isaiah 51:6; 65:17; Matthew 5:18; 24:35; II Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1). No unclean thing will be there. We shall know one another, our knowledge having been perfected. There will be no more curse upon anything. There will be no more night; the glory of the Lord will be the light thereof (Isaiah 66:22; II Peter 3:12,13; I Corinthians 13:12; I John 3:2,3; Revelation 21:1-7; 22:1-5).

The present age in which we live is referred to in scriptures as the *last days* (Hebrews 1:1,2). This age is very significant in the plan of God as it ushers us into another important series of events often called *eschatology*. Also called the church age, our present age is marked by evil, the dominion of Satan, darkness, ungodliness, lust, murder, lying and all manner of sin (Ephesians 6:12; Galatians 1:4). The church is not left out. There is denial of God, Christ, faith, sound doctrine and Christian living (I Timothy 4:1-4; II Timothy 4:3,4; 3:1-8). The land is under a curse (Genesis 3:17); the devil and all his angles walk to and fro the whole earth. The atmospheric heavens are polluted by the activities of Satan. The believers today groan under the harsh and hard conditions of the earth. They look forward to a change - a new heaven and new earth wherein dwell righteousness and holiness. God has the ultimate plan to judge sinners. *"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into lake of fire."*

A PICTURE OF THE HOLY CITY Revelation 21:1-5,9-23.

With the final judgment of sinners, God's plan is to replace this polluted evil earth and atmospheric heavens with a new earth and a new heaven that will match His glory, holiness and righteousness (Revelation 21:1-8). *"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: the former shall not be remembered, nor come in to mind"* (Isaiah 65:17). This gives a good picture of what shall become of the present earth and heavens. All what we may call beautiful edifices and empires today will melt away in fervent heat because *"the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store; reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men"* (II Peter 3:7,10-14). The glories of men and all the so called "wonders" of the world shall not stand this fervent heat. Herein is wisdom: Believers should lay up their treasures in heaven, not on earth *"where moth and rust doth corrupt and where thieves break through and steal"* (Matthew 6:20).

This new creation is entirely free from any taint of sin, and therefore the consequences and effect of sin are absent. Here there is neither death, sorrow, pain, tears, nor separation from God (II Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:4). As God created the present heavens and earth, so will He create the new heavens and a new Jerusalem as its capital. This is the capital of the eternal state called the "Bride" because of its virgin beauty, unstained with sin. Here Christ and all the saints from all ages will reside forevermore. Indeed all things will be new. *"Behold, I make all things new."* This is the eternal destiny of the saints from all ages. This is the place Jesus spoke about. *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also"* (John 14:3). We shall appear with Him in glory and be like Him (Revelation 21:3; Colossians 3:4).

The Holy City, New Jerusalem, is a material city not a mystical one. Its beauty is beyond human description. About 15.000 miles in length and a breadth and height of about 15.000 miles, the streets are made of pure gold as clear as glass. With walls of jasper and its twelve foundations garnished with all manner of precious stones, it has twelve gates of twelve pearls. The entire city wall is pure gold, as clear as glass. This is a city without any temple. The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. *"The city has not need of sun, neither of moon to shine in it: the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."* The redeemed of all the earth shall bring their glory

and honour into the city. This is a city whose gates are never shut (Revelation 21:16-26). The pure river of water of life, clear as crystal proceeds out of the throne of God and the Lamb. The tree of life by the sides of this river bear twelve manner of fruits monthly. The fruits and leaves are for the healing of the nations. *“And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever”* (Revelation 22:1-5). Words are insufficient to describe this new creation.

SCREENING IN THE HOLY CITY Revelation 2:6-8,27.

The life of the redeemed in this eternal city will be glorious. It will be a life of fellowship (I Corinthians 13:12), rest (Revelation 14:13), full knowledge (I Corinthians 13:12), holiness (Revelation 21:27), joy (Revelation 21:4), service (Revelation 22:3), abundance (Revelation 21:6), glory (II Corinthians 4:17), and worship (Revelation 19:1; 7;9-12]).

“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars shall have part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8). There is punishment for the unrepentant and coward who would rather chose to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. They will suffer torment eternally in the lake of fire. We have only one life to live (Hebrews 9:27). Therefore the believer must remain faithful and steadfast in the Lord, the sinner must repent and be saved and the backslider must come back home and be restored. Negligence of this so great salvation will be unfortunate. We should not miss the glories of the New Heaven and the New Earth.

ENTRANCE INTO THE HOLY CITY Revelation 21:24-27.

In order to partake in this new inheritance, sinners must repent and believers must overcome. *“He that overcometh shall inherit all things and I will be his God and he shall be my son”* (Revelation 21:7). We must overcome the world (I John 5:4; 2:15-17) and Satan (Revelation 12:11). False prophets, sin and evil must not have dominion over us. We must flee from all appearance of evil (I Thessalonians 5:22; Romans 12:17-21). Whether they be persecutions or temptations, we must overcome to be part of this great inheritance (Revelation 2:10,26-28). The overcomer is one that is victorious and triumphant over all the works of the devil (Acts 19:16). The sinner must be thirsty for righteousness and salvation. *“I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of water of life freely.”* It will be too costly to miss this glorious experience. Sinners must repent today. Backsliders must return of the Saviour today! *“Let him that hath ear, hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. Behold I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from God: and I will write upon him my new name”* (Revelation 3:11,12).

THE DESTINY OF SINNERS

Luke 16:19-31

God’s Word teaches that hell fire is a place of everlasting punishment where sinners (all who do not have their names in the book of life) will suffer torments for ever and ever. It was prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41) but God has decreed that the wicked and those who forget Him and reject Christ will also be cast there because of their sin and neglect of His salvation (Psalm 9:17; Matthew 25:46; Luke 12:4,5; Matthew 5:22,30; Mark 9:43-47, Revelation 14:10,11; 20:10,12-15).

The fact and reality of hell is an important and recurring theme in the scriptures. It is vividly captured as a place of agonizing torment and everlasting punishment in unquenchable fire for the unconverted (Matthew 25:41; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:23,28). Owing to its frightful credentials, there are those who merely explain away hell as a biblical truth. Many have even drawn up the broken cisterns of erroneous assertion to rationalise their gross inadequacies. The Bible, however, unambiguously provides ample illuminations of hell, as the indisputable abode of sinners (Psalm 9:17; Proverbs 7:24-27; 9:13-18; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:22-28; Revelation 20:13-15; 21:8).

THE REALITY OF HELL Luke 16:19-24.

Hell is a fearsome “rest-place” for transgressors. And the Lord Jesus Christ spent considerable time lending weight to this reality. He told the city of Capernaum for instance, that it would be turned into hell because of its iniquities (Matthew 11:23). He warned repeatedly on the danger of hell and the need for His listeners to steer clear of it (Matthew 5:22,29,30; 10:28; 18:8,9; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 12:5). He offered vivid explanations of hell as a place of everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:41,46; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:22-28; Revelation 14:10,11). He revealed that sinners who died unsaved would have their lot in hell (Matthew 7:15-19; 13:40-42,50; 23:33; 25:41-46; Luke 16:23; Revelation 19:20; 20:14-15; 21:8).

The apostles also followed the same thematic explanations of hell as offered by the Lord (Romans 2:5-9; II Thessalonians 1:7-9; Hebrews 10:26,27; James 3:5,6; II Peter 2:4,9; 3:7; Jude 7,23; Matthew 3:7-10). The Church today cannot afford to assume a less specific position on the teaching of hell, without subverting the sacredness and completeness of scripture. The word “hell” is found about fifty-four times in the *King James* version of the Bible. Its translation in Hebrew, *Sheol*, occurs thirty-one times, while the Greek interpretations *Gehena*, *Hades*, and *Tartarus* occur twelve, ten times and once respectively. Its regular usage in scriptures, apart from the allusions drawn to it by the Lord and other bible characters, lend sufficient validity to its reality.

THE FINALITY OF HELL Luke 16:23-26.

When a sinner dies, his soul immediately proceeds to hell where, with full consciousness, he tastes the excruciating pain that hell offers. The story of poor Lazarus and the rich man, best exemplifies the eternal punishment awaiting the sinner (Luke 16:23,24). Hell is also a place where the memory of the damned comes alive. The rich man in Luke 16:23,24 remembered his riotous living while on earth as well as his five brothers yet unsaved. Apart from the acute discomfort of hell, the regret of an error of judgment while on earth on the part of the unsaved, presents an everlasting torment on its own.

The teaching of the doctrine of hell must scrupulously avoid erroneous and unscriptural views of false teachers. The concept of purgatory, representing a so-called intermediate state between death and appearance before God, has no biblical foundation. Neither is the notion of annihilation of the wicked correct. The future punishment of the wicked is eternal. The sinner receives an express translation, at his death, into hell, “*where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*” (Mark 9:44-48; Deuteronomy 32:22; Job 26:6; Isaiah 5:14; Amos 9:2; II Peter 2:4; II Thessalonians 1:7-9). The needless controversy over the reality of hell is not strange; the scriptures clearly allude to this: “*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*” (I Corinthians 2:14). Since God is holy, sin must be punished in the person of the sinner or in the person of the sinner’s Substitute - the Lord Jesus Christ.

No man believes in hell because he simply wants to. He believes in hell because he is compelled to. It is true that eternal punishment is not a pleasant subject for discussion, yet it is a fearful reality, an awful and tragic fate.

THE URGENCY OF ACTION Luke 16:27-31.

Action is necessary on the part of the sinner: he is challenged to humble himself, repent of sin, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the only way to avoid the agony of hell (Mark 1:14,15; Luke 13:1-5). On the part of the believer, he is expected to be involved in the salvation of souls. One, he should pray for the conversion of sinners (Romans 10:1). Two, he should enlist himself in the army of soul-winners (Acts 9:19,20). Three, he should pray for more labourers (Matthew 9:36-38). Four, he should give generously to the propagation of the gospel (I Corinthians 16:15). And five, he should be involved in training others for the work of evangelism (II Timothy 2:2).

This is a great challenge, and God demands that we give it all the seriousness that it demands (Acts 1:8; 8:4; Jude 23).