

was going to die, and at the same time He had told them He was going to rise the third day (Matt. 16:21). If they had entertained any doubts about whether Jesus was actually the Christ or not, they had an excellent way to test it most assuredly. They should have given Him the benefit of the doubt until the fourth or fifth day after His crucifixion. If He then was still in the tomb, they could have gone back to their homes assured that He had not been the Christ, for He had told them He would arise within three days' time. How unjust of them to have entertained such doubts before the prophecy had run its prescribed course!

D. Our Coming Deliverance Over Death Has Been Assured By Jesus' Resurrection From The Dead.

It was not possible for death to hold Jesus (Acts 2:24). Men of themselves did not overpower Jesus to put Him to death—they couldn't! He laid His life down of Himself, and He took it up again of Himself (John 10:17,18). When Jesus comes again, He will raise us from the grave (I Thess. 4:16). Had He not raised Himself from the dead, thus triumphing over death, He could not raise us in the last day. Our hope and faith in the resurrected life rest completely upon the fact that Jesus actually overcame death in His resurrection. I Pet. 1:3-5 is very emphatic upon this point:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

When Jesus appeared to the apostle John upon the Isle of Patmos years after they had walked together upon the earth, He introduced Himself in the following way:

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell hades (" - R.V.) and of death" (Rev. 1:18).

He was dead, but He is alive forevermore, and as a result of His having overcome death in His resurrection, He has the keys of hades and death, and when He comes the second time, He will use those keys. Those now in hades who have died, He will release with the resurrection, and those living, He will keep from dying. Why? Because He has the keys of (power or authority over) hades and death!

E. The First Day Of The Week Came Into Prominence Immediately Following The Resurrection.

Prior to Jesus' coming, the seventh day of the week (the sabbath) was one day that stood out above all days. What did the first day of the week mean at that time? The second? The third? The fourth? Etc.? Nothing. They had no special significance. But, with the passing of the law at the cross, the sabbath as a holy day was past. As we read in those documents from early Christianity, we are brought to consider the fact that for some reason, the first day of the week had come into prominence. At Troas, for instance, we see the brethren coming together upon the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7). When Paul wrote the Corinthian church, he ordered them to lay together their benevolent money upon the first day of the week when they

were assembled together in their public service (I Cor. 16:1,2).

In seeking for a suitable answer as to what might have given prominence to the first day of the week, there is one prominent fact—that was the day upon which Jesus had arisen from the dead (Mark 16:9). Early Christian writers stated why they held the first day of the week significant. Eusebius, the so-called father of church history, said that it was on account of Jesus' resurrection having taken place that day (Ecclesiastical History, Book 3, Chapter 27). Justin Martyr, a name very familiar to all students of early Christianity, wrote: "Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because Jesus Christ, our Saviour, on the same day rose from the dead" (Apology, Chapter 67).

In bringing this study upon the gospel to a close, I can think of no concluding thought better than that wonderful accumulation of choice thoughts relative to the gospel found in II Tim. 1:8-10).

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

The Significance of the Ascension

The forty days between the resurrection and the ascension were spent doing two things: (1) establishing the fact of His resurrection that His apostles might be confirmed in their belief that He was actually the Son of God (this was the purpose of His numerous appearances); and (2) further instructing them concerning the coming kingdom and what they were to do as apostles of it. These few days probably passed all too rapidly for the apostles, and the many recollections of them must have attended them throughout all the days of their lives. Though they did not get to see Jesus come out of the tomb on the morning of His resurrection, they did get to behold Him as He ascended to heaven from Bethany near the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem (Luke 24:50,51 and Acts 1:9,12).

Every important event in Jesus' life in some way related to His work of redeeming humanity. The ascension is no exception. A study of it will indeed prove rewarding.

I. In His Ascension, He Discarded His Robe Of Humanity.

A. In His Incarnation, He Took On The Body Of A Man.

John 1:14 says:

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

In referring to Jesus' earthly days, the Hebrew writer said:

"Who in the days of his flesh..." (Heb. 5:7).

B. At The Right Hand Of God Now, He Does Not Have That Fleshly Body.

When Jesus went to heaven, He went into the presence of God (Heb. 9:24). In this sense, He is spoken of as our "forerunner" (Heb. 6:20), for through His atoning work, someday we shall be permitted to be with Him there. Now, since Jesus is where we someday shall be--in the incorruptible presence of God--we know that he is not there in the physical body that He had while on earth. How do we know that? Simply because flesh and blood bodies cannot go there--they must be transformed into incorruptible bodies first. That is what Paul wrote concerning physical bodies and heaven:

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15:50-53).

C. Some Erroneously Teach That This Change In Jesus' Body Took Place At His Resurrection.

Some have concluded that because Jesus said to Mary Magdalene immediately following the resurrection not to touch Him, but to go tell His disciples that He had arisen from the dead that He already had a celestial body (John 20:17). But, this was not why He forbid her to touch Him at that time, for He later permitted people to touch Him (Matt. 28:9; Luke 24:39; John 20:27). Realizing the force of these three passages, some have even concocted the idea of an ascension to the Father after His first appearance to Mary (at which meeting He said, "Touch me not") and these times when He permitted them to touch Him. In other words, they say, He ascended to God and came back to earth again before He made His other appearances. Such a concoction is totally unnecessary as well as groundless.

Some have tried to argue that Jesus must have had a different body following His resurrection from the fact that He entered into rooms when the doors were locked (John 20:19,26). I see no reason to conclude that Jesus had a different body because of this. Such a feat on His part was no greater than His other miracles. If the Bible teaches that He did have His human body after the resurrection, we must conclude that His entrance through closed doors is to be listed with His other miraculous acts. The paragraph below gives positive Bible proof that He still had His physical body following the resurrection.

When Jesus entered the room where the apostles were fearfully gathered, they thought they had seen a spirit. Correcting their thoughts, Jesus said:

"Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have" (Luke 24:38,39).

Jesus could be handled. He had flesh and bones that could be felt. He said He was not just a spirit. Someone says, "He said 'flesh and bones'--'not flesh and blood,'" as if to try to argue from that that Jesus did not have a human body. How ridiculous! Jesus told them to feel Him--it was a "feel" test, and when they felt Him, they felt His flesh on the outside and the bones underneath. Just touch your body anywhere, and you can hardly touch it without being aware of the presence of the bone in the flesh. Of course, He had blood in His body. He ate in their very presence to convince them that He had arisen in the body from the grave (Luke 24:42,43). Could any kind of a body but a material body handle material food? If Jesus was not in His own material body when He ate in their presence to convince them that He was not a spirit, but one who inhabited a material body, then He was deceiving them by giving them the "eating" test. Yes, a flesh and blood body is essential for intaking and handling material food such as Jesus ate.

Since then He did have His material body during His forty days on earth, and since He could not enter the presence of God with it, it is evident that in the ascension His body was changed. Such could take place in but a moment, "in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:51,52). It all boils down to this: when He left heaven to come to earth, He laid aside His eternal form and took upon Himself the form of man, and when He left this earth to return to heaven, He laid aside His mortal form and returned to His original form with God.

II. His Ascension Related To His Priesthood.

A. The Old Testament High Priest Went Into The Holy Of Holies Once A Year To Make Atonement.

"The priests (the common priests) went always into the first tabernacle (the holy place), accomplishing the service of God. But into the second (the holy of holies) went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people" (Heb. 9:6,7).

Lev. 16 tells in detail concerning the annual day of atonement referred to above.

B. Jesus As Our High Priest In His Ascension Entered Into Heaven To Make Atonement For Our Sins.

Heb. 9:11,12 says:

"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

Now, into what sacred place did Jesus enter for us? Heb. 9:24 answers:

"Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

Then, heaven itself is the fulfillment of the holy of holies of the Old Testament tabernacle, and in order to enter heaven as our high priest to make atonement for our sins in the presence of God, it was necessary for Him to ascend

to God.

C. As Our High Priest, He Now Makes Intercession For Us At God's Right Hand.

Rom. 8:34 says:

"It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Heb. 7:25 states the same thing:

"He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

What is Jesus doing today? Among other things, He is making intercession for us at God's right hand. He there is touched by the feelings of our infirmities and temptations, and when we come to the throne of grace in His name for help, we receive both grace and mercy through Him (Heb. 4:15,16). This is the way that He is able to help us in the time of our temptations (Heb. 2:17,18).

Thus, His ascension related to His priestly work.

III. His Ascension Also Related To His Kingship.

A. For Long Years, God Had Been Prophesying Of His Coming Kingdom.

In the days of the fourth kingdom in Nebuchadnezzar's vision, which was the Roman empire or kingdom, God's kingdom was to be set up, and it was to be an everlasting kingdom:

"In the days of these kings (the kings of the fourth empire) shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44).

B. Jesus Was Promised The Throne Of That Everlasting Kingdom.

Isa. 9:6,7 prophesied:

"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever."

That this prophecy referred to Jesus, there can be no doubt. If there would be any doubt about it, Luke 1:31-33 would settle it:

"Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

C. Jesus Went To His Throne At God's Right Hand In His Ascension.

David occupied an earthly throne, but it is evident from a study of the Scriptures that Jesus' does not. In what sense,

then, can it be said, as it so often stated in the Bible, that Jesus is sitting upon the throne of David? Simply in this way: David ruled over all of God's people in Old Testament times, and Jesus rules over them in New Testament times. God's Old Testament people were an earthly kingdom (that's why David had an earthly throne), but God's New Testament people are not an earthly kingdom, but a spiritual kingdom (that is why Jesus' throne is not an earthly throne).

The Bible teaches that after Jesus suffered the humiliating death of the cross, God highly exalted Him with authority over everything in heaven, on earth, and under the earth (Phil. 2:8-11). His seat of authority is at the right hand of God from which He rules. Notice this fact as set forth in the following passage together with the completeness of authority granted to Jesus:

"Which he (God) wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body" (Eph. 1:20-23).

There Jesus reigns today with all authority in heaven and earth delivered to Him (Matt. 28:18). As such, He is the head of the church (Col. 1:18), being Himself the "one lord" referred to in Eph. 4:5.

Have you ever wondered why ten days elapsed between Jesus' ascension and the day of Pentecost? Have you ever wondered why God didn't send the Holy Spirit to the apostles immediately upon the ascension of Jesus? True, nothing seemed to be doing here on earth. Rather, the apostles were "tarrying" (Luke 24:49) and "waiting" (Acts 1:4). But, things were doing in heaven. It was not a lull period. What was taking place in heaven? The coronation of Jesus Christ as the king of God's kingdom! This was a glorious time in heaven, for now was salvation possible for fallen mankind, and no doubt the heavenly celebration of the Messiah's coronation was something that could not be done in a few hours. At least, God took ten days before dispatching the Holy Spirit to the earth. You might ask, "How do we know that those days were spend in the coronation of Jesus as king?" Simply this: the above passages quoted tell us that Jesus is now seated at God's right hand as king. This took place following the ascension and before the day of Pentecost when Peter preached that Jesus was king upon David's throne (Acts 2:29-33). Furthermore, Dan. 7:13,14 gives us a very clear prophetic picture of the ascension of Jesus on the clouds to God (spoken of as "the Ancient of Days") and of the coronation of Him as the One with authority over the everlasting kingdom. Notice that passage:

"I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven (the ascension), and came to the Ancient of days (God), and they (evidently angels) brought him (Christ) near before him (God). And there was given him (Christ) dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

What a wonderful picture of the kingdom over which

Jesus reigns, and it was upon His arrival in heaven following His ascension that this authority was officially delivered into His hands.

I believe that God and the angels crowned Jesus. I do not believe that His crowning is yet a future thing like so many religious songs seem to indicate. "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" is a very beautiful song, but I personally question whether all of it can be sung without necessary alterations, and when it is sung, it should be sung with the understanding that we are singing of that which took place at the climax of Jesus' ascension rather than something that is to take place in the future. With this setting in mind, the first stanza is very expressive: "All Hail the power of Jesus' name! Let angels prostrate fall! Bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all!" Thereafter in the song, I believe it should be altered to fit the fact that Jesus is already crowned. This can be done in the other stanzas by substituting the word "hail" for the author's word "crown". I would, therefore, advise that the next stanza be sung as follows: "Ye chosen seed of Israel's race, ye ransomed from the fall, hail Him who saves you by His grace and hail Him Lord of all!" The next stanza would then read: "Let every kindred, every tribe, on this terrestrial ball to Him all majesty ascribe and hail Him Lord of all!" And the last stanza would read: "O that with yonder sacred throng we at His feet may fall! We'll join the everlasting song and hail Him Lord of all!" In many other songs, I believe the same alteration should be made to get away from the denominational idea that the crowning of Jesus is a future thing and something that men do. In a sense, we may allow Jesus to become the king of our lives, but that is our accepting Jesus--not coronating Jesus. That God did--it is but left for us to accept Him whom God has crowned!

How we should thank God for the meaning of the ascension of Jesus! Yes, He was raised from the dead for our justification (Rom. 4:25), but that justification comes from the fact that He was raised from the dead that He might ascend with His blood to God the father. There was more to the ascension than most people realize and probably much more than any of us know. May the Lord bless these thoughts and meditations to our souls.

The Apostles of Christ

Jesus had many "disciples", but only a few "apostles". All the apostles were disciples, but not all disciples were apostles. The word "disciple" means "a learner", and it came to be one of the most common terms by which all of Jesus' followers were known. All followers of Jesus were and are His disciples, but only a certain number of followers were called to be apostles. Notice the distinction between the two terms in Luke 6:13:

"He called unto him his disciples (his followers); and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles."

The word "apostle" means "one sent with a commission". These men occupied a special relationship to Jesus and the establishment of Christianity that distinguished them from all other followers of Christ, both then and now.

The word "apostle" is applied to at least sixteen different persons in the Bible. They are: the original twelve, Matthias who succeeded Judas, Paul, the Lord's brother James (Gal. 1:19), Barnabas (Acts 14:14), and Jesus Himself (Heb. 3:1). Jesus was an apostle in that He was "sent" from God. James, the Lord's brother, was called an apostle possibly because he was so closely associated with the regular apostles and was such a recognized leader in early Christianity. Barnabas may have been referred to as an apostle for the same reason as James, though some suppose he was called an apostle because of having been "sent out" with Paul from Antioch. There might be grounds for the latter conclusion from the fact that where Phil. 2:5 calls Epaphroditus "your messenger", the Greek word translated "messenger" is "apostolos" (the word commonly translated "apostle"). Two unnamed brethren in II Cor. 8:23 are referred to as "the messengers of the churches", and the Greek word for "messengers" is "apostoloi". Therefore, Barnabas may have been called an "apostle" in the same sense as these latter cases cited.

There are some who think Matthias was not a genuine apostle, for Peter led in his selection during those days of waiting before the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:15-26). No matter how acceptable the argument may sound against Matthias's apostleship, I believe we are forced to the conclusion that God did recognize him as an apostle. On Pentecost, the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit. When Peter stood up to explain to the multitude what had happened, Acts 2:14 says:

"Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said..."

Notice that he stood up with "the eleven". That included Matthias. But, if he was not an apostle of Christ, it would have been so indicated by his not being baptized with the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, as late as Acts 6:2, we still read of "the twelve". Matthias was standing side-by-side with the apostles and served with them. No doubt, then, God must have been behind the appointment of Matthias to succeed Judas.

I. The Apostles During Jesus' Days On Earth.

A. His Relationships To Them.

Following His baptism and temptation period, Jesus appeared at Bethabara where John was baptizing. When John introduced Him as the Lamb of God, two of John's disciples (Andrew and probably John) followed after Jesus of their own accord (John 1:28-40). Andrew brought his brother Peter to Him (John 1:40-42). The next day, when Jesus would leave for Galilee, He called a man by the name of Phillip to follow Him (John 1:43,44). Phillip found Nathanael (thought to have been the same as Bartholomew) and brought him to Jesus (John 1:45-51). The next chapter opens telling of Jesus, His mother, and "his disciples" attending the wedding at Cana (John 2:1,2). As far as we know, these

"disciples" were Andrew, Peter, John, Philip, and Nathanael. They were not apostles as yet--just disciples or followers.

They were with Him when He went to Capernaum following the wedding (John 2:12). They were with Him at the next passover in Jerusalem (John 2:18-22). When He stayed in Judea for a period of ministry, they were with Him (John 3:22) and did the actual baptizing for Him (John 4:1,2).

After they returned to Galilee, the men returned to their homes and fishing near Capernaum while Jesus went to Nazareth. After His first rejection at Nazareth, He found them washing and mending their nets along the Sea of Galilee. It was here, and at this time, that He formally called four of them (Peter, Andrew, James, and John) to cease their business pursuits and launch forth with Him in the work of preaching and teaching. Mark 1:17,18 says:

"Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him."

We later read of Him calling Matthew (called "Levi" in Luke 5:27ff), who likewise dropped his business (tax-collecting) to follow Jesus (Matt. 9:9). Where and when He summoned the others from their occupations, we are not told.

These whom He would distinguish from the rest of His followers, He formally appointed near the middle of His ministry (Luke 6:12-17). From this time forward, they were known by the term "apostles" as well as "disciples"

B. His Preparation Of Them For Their Work.

Wherever He went, they were with Him. This was necessary, for they were to become His witnesses to others (Acts 1:8). They were to be convinced of His deity and confirmed in that belief many times through association with and observation of Him. At a time when many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more, He asked them what they were going to. Would they also depart? Their faith is expressed by Peter, when he said:

"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68,69).

Their message concerning Jesus was one of first-hand information. John wrote:

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life...declare we unto you" (1 John 1:1-3).

When forbidden to preach Jesus any longer, Peter and John answered:

"We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).

It was also necessary for Him to prepare them for their work by teaching them many things. They heard Him in the various places where He went teaching. They were present upon such occasions as the preaching of the sermon on the

mount. They were there when He preached His sermon in parables concerning the coming kingdom. In addition, He even interpreted some of His parables to them privately (Matt. 13).

As he entered His third and final year of ministry, He realized that He must segregate the apostles from the multitude to give them special teaching and training. There were things they needed to be taught lest their faith would fail when the time of His trial and crucifixion came. Even as it was, their faith received a severe testing. What would have happened had He not spent these six months with them? Furthermore, they needed to be taken from the lime-light of big crowds and great activity. There are numerous indications of earthly-mindedness upon their parts that must have been a great concern to Jesus. They needed privacy. They needed special attention. They needed to be apart by themselves so Jesus could talk to them personally. Self-seeking and arrogance characterized them instead of the spirit of humility that they should have had. Therefore, the first six months of Jesus' last year of ministry were very important, and they form one of the most interesting sections of study in the life of Christ. The book, "The Training of the Twelve," by A. B. Bruce contains a wealth of profitable reading along this line.

One of the hardest lessons to get across to them was that He must die. It was during this period that He broke the news to them. Peter rebuked Him when He first talked of it to them (Matt. 16:21,22). He and the other apostles shared the common Jewish idea that the Messiah would triumph over all. Thus, in their thinking, Jesus was merely expressing despondency over the turn of events whereas He was actually foretelling to them what must take place. Not grasping what He said about the crucifixion, it is no wonder they didn't grasp what He said about the resurrection (Mark 9:9,10).

We cannot take the space to comment upon His washing of their feet, the lesson from the cursed fig tree, and the blessing of the children. But, all of these and other well known incidents in the life of Jesus had a direct bearing upon His preparation of the apostles for their work. Space also fails us to go into detail concerning His great farewell message to them (recorded in three chapters of John--14, 15,16) and of His intercessory prayer for them the same night (John 17:6-19).

When the dark hour of the betrayal took place, all forsook Him (Matt. 26:56). That very night, Peter denied Him time and again, and it is probable that it was yet that night when Judas, who had betrayed Him, remorsefully hanged himself. Only John is mentioned as being close to the cross with the weeping women (John 19:25-27). Their lack of understanding was likely the determining factor for the apostles' actions at that time. But, when He had arisen from the dead, He spent forty days with them, demonstrating to them--His appointed witnessess--the reality of His resurrection and teaching them further concerning the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). Concerning His first meeting with them following the resurrection, Luke 24:44-48 records the following:

"He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things."

II. The Work Jesus Assigned Them To Do.

A. His Promise To Them.

The apostles were present when the rich young ruler failed to sell all his possessions and follow Jesus. This brought to Peter's mind that they had left all to follow Jesus. He asked Jesus what they would have as a result. Jesus answered:

"Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me (the apostles), in the regeneration (the gospel age) when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones (as authorities), judging the twelve tribes of Israel (the people of God)" (Matt. 19:28).

In the Christian dispensation, the apostles have been made Christ's inspired teachers. Their word is authoritative. We notice that the church continued in what they taught (Acts 2:42). When some doctrinal dispute arose, the matter was referred to them for settlement, such as the question of circumcising the Gentiles (Acts 15:1-31). When the apostles had given their judgment, their decree was delivered to the churches to abide by (Acts 16:4). Their all-important divine office actually made them a part of the foundation upon which the entire super-structure of Christianity rests (Eph. 2:19,20).

B. His Commission To Them.

In those pre-ascension days when Jesus was speaking to them concerning the coming kingdom, He outlined the work which they were to do. A complete picture of His instructions to them can be obtained only by consulting the several accounts of it:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:19,20); "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15,16); "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:46-48); "Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you... Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20:21,23); "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

This commissioned them as the personal witnesses and

representatives of Jesus to do all that He commanded them to do. Their ministry was to be to all the nations and to the end of time. (Their teaching was first orally done, but they still teach through their written records.) They were to begin in Jerusalem after the Holy Spirit came upon them. They were to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost world. Those who received them and believed in the Christ whom they preached were to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins. (Forgiveness of sins is only realized by complying with the terms of pardon laid down by these apostles.) Those baptized were then to be taught the whole counsel of Jesus as taught to the apostles by Him. He closed with a promise of His presence with them.

C. His Empowering Of Them.

Teaching the people all things that Jesus commanded them was both a big task from the standpoint of remembering each thing and an *important* task from the standpoint of the people knowing and doing the will of Christ. They were subject to forgetfulness if left unaided by Heaven. There were also some things that Jesus had not taught them because they were not in a state of spiritual comprehension of them. They were going to need supernatural help. This help, Jesus was going to send them in the coming of the Holy Spirit to them:

"The comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).

Following His ascension, they were to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came (Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4,5). On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came (Acts 2:1-4), and they commenced their apostolic labors. By the Holy Spirit, Jesus also empowered them to work miracles by which their preaching was confirmed unto the people as from God (Mark 16:17-20).

D. Their Victorious Beginning In Jerusalem.

How the apostles must have been thrilled upon many occasions as they witnessed their Master teaching vast throngs of people! But, public sentiment had turned against Jesus at the time of the crucifixion. What a small handful His followers were to whom He gave the great commission! What odds they were going to face! And in that commission, He had told them to start in Jerusalem! He probably could have picked many easier places, they probably thought, to begin. What success would they have? How would they begin? These things remained unanswered in the apostles' minds as they tarried and waited.

Then came the day of Pentecost. Jews from all over the Roman Empire had assembled in Jerusalem for the annual feast. The twelve were all gathered together "sitting" when, unexpected by them, things began to happen. They possibly had come together for another day of prayer when God dispatched the Holy Spirit from heaven to them. They spoke in other languages. The cloven tongues like fire sat upon them. Word of these unusual happenings began to spread. People came to see and hear. Every man heard these men speak in his own tongue the wonderful works of God (Acts 2:11). Some honestly wondered what it all

meant. Others of a lighter mind mocked the apostles, saying they were full of new wine. At this stage, the Spirit prompted Peter (to whom Jesus had personally promised the keys of the kingdom, Matt. 16:19) to rise and speak. He told them that what they were witnessing was what Joel (in their own Scriptures) had prophesied; that is, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. And following this explanation, while he had their attention, he proceeded to preach Jesus and the gospel. Spell-bound, convicted, humbled--it became unbearable when he told them that they had actually been guilty of crucifying the Messiah. In contrition, they burst out with a question as to what they must do. As quick as a flash, and in keeping with the great commission, Peter said:

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 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 2:38,39).

The results of his preaching and exhorting--a whole three thousand converts! And no doubt, many others went to their lodging places that day thinking. What a wonderful beginning! Everything, however, was not going to favor Christianity, as they soon found out. But, Christ was with them, and they knew it, and the fine start that Christianity had in Jerusalem, its city of inception, was such that there is still Christianity in the world today--even thousands of miles from the city of its beginning. The Bible book, "Acts of Apostles," is a thrilling story of their heroic preaching and God-blest results. And as congregations came into existence, apostolic letters were written to them, and thus we have the epistolary section of the New Testament. There was a need for written records of the life of Jesus, and the four gospel accounts came into existence. Finally, all the apostles were dead except John. He was on the prison island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. There on that bleak island, with land and sea as a stage and with the heavens as a screen, Christ unfolded in symbolic form the future "ups and downs" and the ultimate triumph of the church recorded by John for us in the book of Revelation.

What a grand group of men--not perfect, for they were human, but devoted to the Master who had called them and walked with them. They have no successors, for we have all things that pertain to life and godliness through the teachings that they have left. There are no qualifications given for any successors. They need none. Their work goes on just as Jesus had planned that it would. We believe on Him today "through their word" (John 17:20). We contend earnest for the faith delivered once for all through them. And when we have left this earth and soar to that upper and better city, as we walk up the incline to enter those great gates of pearl, we shall take note of the great wall of the city built upon the twelve foundations of precious stones, and notice what we shall see:

"And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Rev. 21:14).

Having been humbled and mistreated, they shall be exalted; having suffered, they shall reign. May we ever hold

them, through their writings, in our highest regard and respect as the Christ ordained that we should. Let us continue steadfastly "in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42).

The "Church-and-Kingdom" Question

When I was seventeen years of age, I was given a Bible school class of young people to teach. As I look back now, I realize I was not prepared to teach such a class, for there were so many important things in the Bible that were as yet foreign to my understanding. But, I was willing to learn and to serve, so I accepted and began my teaching work. One thing that I was determined to do as I accepted the class was to familiarize myself with the Bible so I would be in a position to answer the questions that might be asked me as the teacher. For years, I had observed the way that teachers had fumbled around with sincere questions asked--maybe giving no answer, maybe asking the other pupils in the class what they thought, maybe giving such a vague answer that I could see the class recognizing the inadequate preparation of the teacher. I knew young people would ask questions, and though I was young myself, I wanted to be able to give them Bible answers to as many of their questions as I could. Thus, I embarked first upon reading the New Testament through. Being heartily engaged in vocational work, I found it difficult to discipline my mind when I read the New Testament. During that time through the New Testament, I often found my mind wandering clear off the words that my eyes were reading onto other things. Naturally, I did not profit much from my reading. When I finished the New Testament, I realized I hadn't gotten too much from my reading. What was I going to do? Start back through it again or just give it up as a fruitless endeavor? That day, I made an important decision!

I said to myself, "The Bible is right. It is my fault that I didn't get more out of my reading. There is plenty in there, and I am going to discipline myself to go back and keep my mind on my reading until I learn what's in it." And so I started back through the New Testament. In just a matter of days, I heard a preacher on the radio make the statement that the church and the kingdom were two different things and, furthermore, that the kingdom of God was one thing and the kingdom of heaven something else. As I listened, I said to myself, "If that's true, I've learned something." I had heard Brother McMorrow bring out in his preaching that the church and the kingdom were one and the same thing. Now, what was right? I decided that as I went through the New Testament that second time, I would catalog all the references I came across in my reading that used the term "kingdom of God". I would

make another list of those passages that used "kingdom of heaven" and a third list of passages that used "church". My Bible reading took on new meaning as I "searched the Scriptures" to find out what was right. Before I tell you the results of that--my first real Bible study--let me tell you that when I finished going through my New Testament that second time, I was ready to begin all over again upon what the Bible taught about worldly amusements and worldly habits. I wanted that material to teach the young people who were at the right age for such teaching. By the time I got ready to start through the New Testament the fourth time, I had more than one subject to glean upon as I pursued my reading and searching. During those three years before I left home to preach the gospel, I had studied out many subjects like the above in my fourteen times through the New Testament. Since then, I have endeavored to work through my Old Testament studies likewise as well as keep up with New Testament studies. By such practice, I have learned that in order to discipline one's mind to what he is reading, he must be getting something out of his reading, and in order to get something out of his reading, he must be looking for something, studying some subject, working out some study project, or however you may want to state it.

Now for the results of my study on the kingdom question. I had a list of references on "kingdom of heaven", another on "kingdom of God", another on "church", and a miscellaneous list that included such expressions as "my kingdom", "kingdom of Christ and of God," "kingdom of God's dear Son," "kingdom" (unspecified), etc. Were all of these different kingdoms? Why had the radio preacher stopped with but two (kingdom of God and kingdom of heaven) when there could be others (following his line of reasoning)? What about those many passages where the word "kingdom" was used by itself? Which kingdom did those references belong to? Order came out of chaos when I noticed that "kingdom of heaven" was used only in the book of Matthew and that he used that expression where the other gospel accounts employed "kingdom of God". For instance, Matt. 13:31 says the "kingdom of heaven" is like unto a grain of mustard seed. In telling the same parable, Mark 4:30,31 says the "kingdom of God" is like a grain of mustard seed. The radio preacher's distinction between the two terms was found to be a false distinction, and I found nothing to confirm his distinction between the kingdom and the church, but everything to deny that such a distinction existed.

So much for the above study. We wish also to refer to the denominational position that the church is one thing and the kingdom another--that the church was established in the days of the apostles, but that the kingdom will not be established until Jesus comes. In our study, we shall be refuting this teaching as false.

We are having this study because it is so important to have a clear understanding of the question under consideration.

I believe that people's misunderstanding of this subject would clear up if they but realized that the Bible uses the term "kingdom" in two different ways. The two divisions of this study will treat those two ways.

I. The Kingdom On Earth Is The Church.

There is no doubt but what the church is God's kingdom upon the earth. The following points are given as substantial Scriptural proof of that fact.

A. Proof From What Jesus Said When Instituting the Lord's Supper.

When Jesus was instituting the Lord's supper, He said concerning the cup:

"I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God"
(Mark 14:25).

In the Lord's supper, we commune with Jesus. We have the Lord's supper "in the kingdom of God" today. Here the term "kingdom of God" unmistakably refers to the church. We are to observe the Lord's Supper until He comes (I Cor. 11:26). With Jesus with us in person, we won't have the supper by which to "remember" Him. How could Mark 14:25 be fulfilled except in the church?

B. Proof From The Time Of The Setting Up Of The Kingdom.

Jesus (Matt. 4:17), together with John (Matt. 3:1,2), was preaching the approach of the kingdom. He taught His disciples to pray that it would come (Matt. 6:10). He went onto say that that kingdom would come during the lifetime of the apostles:

"Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power"
(Mark 9:1).

The church was established during the lifetime of the apostles. What else came during their lifetime that could in anyway be the fulfillment of Mark 9:1? Upon the truthfulness of Jesus, the kingdom has already come!

Furthermore, as we showed in a former study, the kingdom was to be established during the days of the kings of the fourth element in Nebuchadnezzar's vision (Dan. 2:31-44--particularly verse 44). Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome were the historical fulfillment of those four elements. Then, the kingdom was to be set up in the days of the Roman kings. Jesus came when the Roman kings were ruling the world, and the church was set up in the days of those kings. What else that might answer to the kingdom was set up in those days?

If one takes the position that the church is the fulfillment of the kingdom prophecies of the Old Testament and of the kingdom preaching of John the Baptist, Jesus, the twelve (Matt. 10:5-7) and the seventy (Luke 10:9), then all of it makes sense, but if the establishment of the church was not the fulfillment of those prophecies, then confusion necessarily reigns!

C. Proof From The Fact That Jesus Is Now King.

Where there is a king, there must be a kingdom. The apostles preached that Jesus is now ruling upon the throne of David (Acts 2:29-33) and that God has made Him "Lord" (Acts 2:36), which means "ruler". Paul said that he preached Christ Jesus as "Lord" (II Cor. 4:5), and he taught that every word should be said and every deed

should be performed in obedience to Jesus (Col. 3:17). Jesus Himself claimed that all authority had been given to Him (Matt. 28:18), and Paul preached that He is the head of the church (Col. 1:18). The people in Thessalonica understood that Paul was preaching that Jesus was already a king (Acts 17:6,7)--not that He is to become a king at His second coming. In the study on the ascension, we pointed out that Jesus was coronated king upon His arrival in heaven (Dan. 7:13,14). He is a king today, and He has a kingdom as the succeeding points will show.

D. Proof From A Consideration Of The New Birth.

Gospel preachers have always preached the necessity of the new birth as outlined in John 3:3-6. It has been one of their sermons in that important field of "What a Sinner Must Do to be Saved!" They have shown that the terms of pardon as set forth in the great commission (Mark 16:15,16) are parallel with the new birth of John 3:5. They have shown that the various cases of conversion in the book of Acts are fulfillments of what Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:5. Now we know that compliance with the terms of pardon brings one into the church. What does the new birth bring one into? The "kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Then, the church is the kingdom referred to in John 3:5.

E. Proof From What Jesus Said In Matt. 16:18,19.

In one breath, Jesus said He was going to build His "church", and in the next breath, He promised Peter the keys to it under the term "kingdom":

"Upon this rock I will build my church. . . And I will give unto thee (Peter) the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:18,19).

Furthermore from the above passage, Peter was given the keys of the kingdom. When did he begin using those keys? On the day of Pentecost when he preached the gospel and the terms of salvation. When men conformed to those terms, what did they enter? The church (Acts 2:38, 41,47). Then, when Jesus promised Peter the keys of the "kingdom", He was talking about Peter admitting men to the "church".

F. Proof From What Paul Wrote In Col. 1:13.

In that verse, Paul wrote:

"(God) who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."

Notice that Paul was already in the kingdom. Notice that those to whom he wrote were also in the kingdom. To whom was he writing? To the church at Colosse! Then, those who were in the Colossian church were said to be in the kingdom. Why? Because the church is the kingdom of God upon the earth--they have Jesus as the king of their lives!

G. Proof From What John Wrote In Rev.1:9.

Writing to the people in the seven churches of Asia, the apostle John said of himself:

"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:9).

Notice that John spoke of himself as being in the king-

dom at that time, and his "also" indicates that those to whom he wrote were likewise brethren and companions in tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus.

In closing this section of study, we ask: Why should it be thought strange that the term "kingdom" is used with relation to the church? The church is called a "body" (Col. 1:18), for He is its head. It is called a "flock" (Acts 20:28), for He is the good shepherd who has laid down His life for the sheep. It is called by many other terms. Why should it be strange that it also be spoken of as a "kingdom" when Jesus Himself is the king over His people?

There are other considerations that could be given, but these must suffice, for we must give attention to the second sense in which the word "kingdom" is used in the Bible.

II. The Heavenly Kingdom.

A. The Bible Also Employs The Word "Kingdom" In A Future Sense And That Is Not Limited To Those In The Church On The Earth.

To those who were in the church, Peter's second epistle said to add the various virtues. In so doing, he said:

"For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1:11).

Notice the word "entrance". Notice that these words were written to those who were in the church. Doing this would bring them "into" something that they were evidently not in as yet. The reference is undoubtedly to entering heaven itself.

I Cor. 15:50 is another passage that used the word "kingdom" with reference to heaven:

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

He has been talking of the bodily change to take place at the resurrection on the part of those who will be raised to go to heaven. Then, in the above passage, he shows that a similar bodily change must take place on the part of those who will be living when Jesus comes. They must be changed, he says, because flesh and blood cannot inherit "the kingdom of God"--something that will be entered after this life is over.

This must be the sense in which Jesus used the word "kingdom" in Matt. 8:11:

"Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven."

They were never a part of the kingdom that Jesus promised to establish during the lifetime of the apostles. They had been dead for many centuries. But, they will be a part of that grand company that will gather in heaven--here spoken of as the "kingdom of heaven".

This must be the sense in which Paul used "kingdom" in Gal. 5:21 and I Cor. 6:9. In both cases, he was writing to people who were in the church, and he was warning them about living in wickedness, stating that if they did not live as they should, they would not inherit the kingdom of God.

When will men inherit that heavenly kingdom? In eternity. In judgment, when Jesus will sit upon His judgment throne, He will say to those saints of God on His right hand:

"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 25:34).

Notice that these who are told to inherit the kingdom are said in verse 46 to go into "life eternal" (heaven as contrasted with hell in that verse). A similar paralleling of "kingdom of God" with "life" is found in Mark 9:45 ("life") and Mark 9:47 ("kingdom of God"), both being again contrasts with hell in the context.

B. But, This Kingdom Will Be In Heaven--Not On Earth.

In speaking of that kingdom that was yet future, in one of the very last verses that we have from the pen of the apostle Paul, he wrote:

"The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom" (II Tim. 4:18).

Notice three things concerning this kingdom: (1) it was future from the last days of Paul; (2) Paul would be in it and (3) it will be a heavenly kingdom--not an earthly kingdom. Those sectarian teachers who teach that Jesus is coming to set up a kingdom teach that He is coming to set up His kingdom upon the earth. But, that is not the way the Bible says. That kingdom which the saints will enter when Jesus comes will not be one on this earth--it will be a heavenly kingdom.

To summarize: Daniel prophesied that God was going to set up His kingdom in the days of the Roman kings. John the Baptist, Jesus, the twelve, and the seventy in their preaching before the cross preached that that kingdom was at hand in their day. Jesus, who was to be the king over that kingdom, said it would come during the lifetime of the apostles, promising Peter the keys to it. He told Nicodemus that a person had to be born of water and the Spirit in order to enter it and upon one occasion used the term "church" interchangeably with it. On the day of Pentecost that kingdom was set up as the church over which Jesus today is reigning as head. The heavenly inheritance into which the saints will come when Jesus comes again is spoken of as inheriting the kingdom of heaven. In order to enter it, a Christian must faithfully serve the Christ-king here on the earth, adding the various Christian graces in order that he might be counted among the heirs. There are a number of related discussions that we could enter into, but the above summary is a Scriptural digest of the teaching set forth in the Bible.

In closing, there are several things wrong with the denominational teaching that there is no kingdom of God yet, but that Jesus will set it up right here on the earth when He returns. Those mistakes are: (1) it belittles the church (for which denominationalism has long been famous); (2) it makes void John the Baptist's and Jesus' teaching that the kingdom was "at hand" in their day; (3) it denies the truthfulness of Jesus' promise to His apostles that the kingdom would come in their day (Mark 9:1); (4) it teaches that Jesus is going to come to stay with His people upon

the earth whereas the Bible teaches that He is coming to take His people to be with Him (John 14:1-3 and I Thess. 4:16,17); (5) it denies that Jesus is now king ruling upon the throne of David; and (6) it teaches that He is coming to set up His kingdom upon the earth whereas the Scripture says He is coming to deliver up the kingdom to the God of heaven (I Cor. 15: 24) so that those who have been in His kingdom here on the earth may be a part of that great company who will inherit the kingdom which is above.

Yes, praise the Lord, we can be in the kingdom of God while yet upon earth and then be a part of that wonderful company in His upper and better kingdom in heaven throughout all eternity. Let all, therefore, seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness even before they do food and clothing (Matt. 6:33), and having found it, let them be faithful to their king (Jesus), adding to their faith the various Christian graces that they might be among that number who will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the saints of all times in that heavenly kingdom to which Paul looked with great anticipation as he neared the close of his faithful life (II Tim. 4:18).

The Law and the Gospel

We are to "rightly divide" or "handle aright" the Word of truth (II Tim. 2:15). Otherwise, we cannot be approved of God. So many people have Bibles, but understand so little about them.

Several years ago, when conducting a revival meeting, a preacher and I were calling on an elderly lady. He inquired as to whether she attended church services anywhere, and she told us she was no longer able to do so. He asked her if her eyes were strong enough for her to read much, and she answered that they were. He asked if she had a Bible, and she assured us that she did. He then asked if she read her Bible, and once more the answer was a "yes". When he asked if she understood the Bible, she said that she didn't, though she had been reading from it every day for years. He asked her if she would like for us to help her understand her Bible better, and she gratefully said that she would. In all my years of personal work, somehow I had never thought of using the above approach upon a person, but it was exactly the approach that Philip used upon the eunuch (Acts 8:30,31). I proceeded to show her the plan of God as it unfolded itself through the Old Testament and New Testament, showing that the Old Testament looked particularly to the coming of Christ, that Jesus was crucified, buried, and resurrected for our salvation, and that after His death, His testament went into force by which we can have that salvation appropriated to us individually. All the material that I handled seemed to be familiar to the woman, but even in its simplicity, it was a revelation to her that she

could grasp, but had never seen before. She represents vast multitudes of daily Bible readers who have not been taught the proper divisions of the Bible.

In this study, it is our intention to help people understand their Bibles better by providing a study upon the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ. One can certainly not be considered a mature Bible student who does not at once distinguish between the law and the gospel.

I. The Law Was In Effect For 1,500 Years Before Christ. The Gospel Is In Effect Now.

A. The Law.

As all Bible readers and students know, God gave the law at Mt. Sinai about fifteen hundred years before the coming of Christ. Because this great event was covered in detail in the study, "The Law Given at Sinai," we shall not discuss the *giving* of the law in this study. Rather, we shall consider the *duration* of the law.

The Bible teaches that the law remained in effect until the cross of Christ. This can be easily and clearly shown, as we shall plan to do below.

During the days of Jesus' ministry, the law of Moses was still in effect. He told a leper whom He had cleansed to offer the sacrifice that Moses commanded cleansed lepers to offer (Matt. 8:4). This He would not have done had that law not yet been in effect. God called Abraham and made special promises to him. Several hundred years later, God added the law of Moses. Gal. 3:19 tells us how long the law that was added was to be in force:

"It was added because of transgressions, TILL THE SEED SHOULD COME TO WHOM THE PROMISE WAS MADE."

Verse 16 of that same chapter points out Christ as the seed that was to come. Then, sometime after Jesus came, or connected with His earthly sojourn, the law was to be abrogated. Gal. 3:24,25 carries the discussion farther:

"The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, but after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."

The law was the schoolmaster. It was to bring us to Christ. Since the time of faith in Christ came, the law is no longer in effect. This is the gist of Paul's inspired reasoning.

As we shall see, the new covenant went into effect on the day of Pentecost fifty days after Jesus' resurrection. Heb. 10:9 shows that the first covenant was taken away sometime prior to the inauguration of the new:

"He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second."

They are not both in effect today. They never were both in effect at the same time. He took away the first covenant in order that He might establish the second or new covenant. To summarize: we have seen that the law was still in effect during the preaching and healing ministry of Jesus (Matt. 8:4); we have also seen that it

was to be taken away sometime before the day of Pentecost when the new went into effect. Now, when was the precise time and place where the law was abrogated? At the cross:

"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, NAILING IT TO HIS CROSS" (Col. 2:14).

Eph. 2:14-16 is another splendid passage showing that the law of Moses was abrogated in Jesus' death.

In spite of the fact that the Bible is so clear upon these things, there are some who still cling to the sabbath law and the clean-and-unclean-meats dietary laws of the law of Moses. Many others, who do not keep Saturday nor make a Mosaic distinction in meats, talk glibly about keeping the Ten Commandments. I think I have hardly conducted a revival meeting but what some good-intending person told me that she thought if people just kept the Ten Commandments, they wouldn't have too much to worry about. Yet, when asked to name the Ten Commandments, they usually can't get more than about five or six of them. (It looks like if those commandments were the way to heaven, those people would have them well memorized--especially since they are so brief--and be sure they are living up to them.) But, the truth of the matter is, the Ten Commandments were a part of the law of Moses, or if we might speak even a little more exactly, they were a brief elaboration upon the two basic ideas of the law--love for God and love for one's neighbor (Matt. 22:26-29). One who loved God would surely keep the first four commandments, and one who loved his neighbor as himself would surely keep the last six. But, to speak even more at length upon the Ten Commandments, they were but the abbreviation of the will of God for the Israelites of which the entire law was a complete elaboration.

To those who say the Ten Commandments will save an individual, let us point out this fact: if one can be saved by keeping the Ten Commandments, he can be saved without Christ, for there is no mention of Christ in them--not even a prediction of His coming. Incidentally, men had the Ten Commandments before Christ came. If they could have saved men why did God send Jesus? Furthermore, as Christians, Christ has given us a much higher and more complete law by which to live than is found in the Ten Commandments. For instance, love is not commanded in the Ten Commandments; neither is kindness; neither is prayer; neither are many, many other important matters of the Christian life. Furthermore, one could keep the Ten Commandments and yet get drunk, for the Ten Commandments say nothing against drunkenness; neither do they legislate against anger--you could get as angry as you wanted to just so long as you didn't murder a person (wouldn't that leave a lot of lee-way?); furthermore, there is no condemnation of either pride or hypocrisy in the Ten Commandments.

We are not belittling the Ten Commandments. We are just saying that they were a part of the law of Moses that was nailed to the cross. They, like the rest of the law of Moses, were for the Israelites who lived between

Moses' time and Jesus' time.

B. The Gospel.

As we have before pointed out, the central facts of the gospel are the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (I Cor. 15:1-4). Therefore, the gospel of Christ could not have been preached as a completed message before those events took place. It is noticeable that *after* Jesus came back from the dead, He commissioned His apostles to go forth preaching the gospel (Mark 16:15). Their preaching was to be worldwide (Matt. 28:19), and it was to begin in Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). They were to wait to begin until the Holy Spirit had come upon them (Luke 24:49), which came to pass on the day of Pentecost, ten days after Jesus' ascension.

This message is to be in effect until the end of the world when Jesus comes (Matt. 28:20). Instead of supposing that any message is all right, we are told to contend earnestly for that faith which was once for all time delivered to the saints by these inspired men (Jude 3). Christ's death was executed once never to be done again (Heb. 7:27 and Heb. 9:28). He entered into the heavenly tabernacle with His blood for our sins once never to be repeated (Heb. 9:12). In the same Biblical language, He delivered the message of salvation once never to be redone, improved upon, or recast (Jude 3). Instead of agreeing with one who would preach another message, we are to let him be accursed (Gal. 1:8, 9).

In view of the fact that the new testament is still in force, it is pathetic that so many people are calling the gospel out-of-date. It is too bad to hear people criticize gospel preaching as they do. It is disastrous that so many are substituting human ideas and human plans for it. And it is equally pathetic the way that many who profess to believe it are doing little about obeying it or telling it to others!

It should be said of every congregation as it was said of that very first congregation (the Jerusalem congregation):

"They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42).

We are still under the apostles' doctrine, and we shall be judged as disbelievers and disobedient by Jesus at His coming if we have not "kept the faith".

II. The Law Was For The Israelites. The Gospel Is For All People.

A. The Law.

There was only one nation of people present at Mt. Sinai when God gave the law (the Israelites). He did not tell them to go out and proclaim that message to the other peoples of the earth (though He did make provision for any to become a part of the old covenant if they wished to). In other words, nobody but an Israelite was ever commanded to keep the law of Moses in either the Old or New Testament. But, with the gospel, it is different.

B. The Gospel.

The prejudice of the Jews of the apostles' day kept

them from seeing that even their Old Testament Scriptures pointed to the universality of blessing under the coming Messiah. "All nations" were to be blest through Him, according to God's promise to Abraham (Gen. 22:18). "All nations" were to flow unto the house of God when it was established (Isa. 2:2). The succeeding verses (Isa. 2:3, 4) shows that these many people from all the nations would learn God's will and walk in it. But, the Jews, like many people today, saw in their Scriptures only those things that appealed to them.

Yes, the gospel is for all. The birth of Jesus was announced by the angel as that which would be good news for "all people" (Luke 2:10,11). The gospel is God's power to save *everyone* who believes--both the Jew and the Greek (Rom. 1:16). As a result of having destroyed the barrier existing between Jew and Gentile at the cross, Christ is making of the *two* one new man (Eph. 2:11-14). The Gentiles, we are told in the foregoing message, who were "afar off" before the death of the Christ are now made "nigh"--just like the Jews. As far as salvation is concerned, the gospel knows nothing of earth's distinctions. Gal. 3:28 says:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all ONE IN CHRIST JESUS."

What an unscriptural thing to say that those of another race or nation should not be evangelized! And what an unscriptural thing it is for those who agree all right that they should be evangelized, but who deny them fellowship in any of their own congregations! We are not advocating the inter-marriage of races, nor are we legislating what our nation or any other nation should do in governmental and social problems connected with the racial question, but we are saying that in the church, it is already settled what we should do as regards the matter of Christian fellowship. Every expression of Christian fellowship within a congregation should be accorded to Christians of another color or nationality as would be accorded to one of our own race or nationality. There is no respect of persons with God. To go into a small community, where there should be but one congregation from the standpoint of size, and there find two churches (one white and one colored) is unscriptural, and the apostle Paul who fought for the oneness of Jews and Gentiles in Christ (a difference as wide or wider in the apostles' day than the white and-black question in our day) would spare no rod in condemning such a practice today. What the apostles fought to win at the circumcision council at Jerusalem is wickedly forfeited by such a practice. If I were a colored person who had accepted Christ, and I moved into the northland where few colored people live, I would expect to be received into fellowship by any congregation that was following the Bible even though I was the only colored person among them. If I as a white man lived in a community of the south where the only group representing the church of the Lord Jesus was composed of colored people, I would place my fellowship with them and worship with them in harmony with the fact that Christians are actually "one in Christ Jesus" regardless of their racial, national,

social, and sex differences. This may not be according to present-day practices, but, brethren, it is Bible--nobody can deny it--and if it is Bible, it is out to be abided by if we truthfully take the Bible as our only rule of faith and practice!

III. The Gospel Saves. The Law Couldn't.

A. Evidence From The Book Of Romans.

Rom. 8:1 says that there is no condemnation before God of those who are in Christ, walking after the Spirit (new covenant people). Verses 3 and 4 read:

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us (new covenant people)."

What the law couldn't do, the gospel is able to do! Thank the Lord, then, for the gospel--the power of God unto salvation to all who believe (Rom. 1:16).

B. Evidence From The Book Of Hebrews.

Concerning the inability of the law and its sacrifices to take away sins, Heb. 10:1-4 says:

"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."

The law had only a shadow of good things to come. The law with its sacrifices can never make its adherents perfect or uncondemned before God. Instead of remitting sins, those continual sacrifices brought a remembrance again of their guilt. In contrast, notice the difference in the new covenant:

"This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and THEIR SINS AND THEIR INIQUITIES WILL I REMEMBER NO MORE" (Heb. 8:10-12).

The new covenant is a covenant of mercy. What the law could not do (remit sins), the gospel can.

C. Evidence From The Book Of Acts.

When Paul was on his first evangelistic tour, he preached to the Jews of Antioch of Pisidia the following concerning Jesus:

"Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38,39).

D. Evidence From The Book Of II Corinthians.

A careful study of the third chapter of II Corinthians would reveal the following facts: (1) the new testament is spoken of as the "spirit" that "gives life" while the old testament is spoken of as the "letter" that "kills" (Note--Paul is not using those terms to contrast literally doing what the Bible teaches from those who disregard doctrine but insist upon a heart-felt religion); (2) Paul said that that which was engraven in stones (the old covenant) was the "ministration of death"; and (3) he called the old covenant the "ministry of condemnation", but the new covenant the "ministration of righteousness".

There are many other significant contrasts between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ, but the three considered in this study should fulfill the wish to help people better understand their Bibles and be able to understand where these two covenants fit into the plan of God.

The Two Sides of Salvation

If a man falls into a well of shallow water and is unable to get out by himself, he may cry aloud so that a neighbor hears him and lowers a ladder into the well, but unless the victim himself climbs out by means of the ladder provided, he will not get out. What the victim could not do for himself, another did for him, but still there was an individual task he had to do to be saved through the help offered him--he had to use the ladder provided for him. Again, a man might be found in a starving condition. He has no bread in the house, and he is too poor to buy more and too weak to go get it if he had the money to buy it. So, a friend finding him in that condition brings him some food. But, unless the man partakes of the food provided for him, he will still starve to death. Just so, God has beheld man in his helpless plight and has provided salvation for him, but unless man partakes of the salvation God has provided, it will not save him.

I would like you to get the difference vividly in mind between "providing" salvation and "partaking" of salvation. There is a vast difference, and both are important and essential to any sinner's salvation. The Bible abundantly shows that man cannot provide himself with salvation--God alone can do this. But, the Bible also shows that man must partake of salvation personally and individually, or he has no salvation. Some of the errors into which men fall by not making this proper distinction will be dealt with a little later. But, now to a consideration of those two sides of salvation.

I. God Does The Providing.

A. What God Saw As He Looked Down Upon Man.

He saw that man who had started out in a state of innocence had gone into sin.

"All we like sheep have gone astray" (Isa. 53:6).

The modernists picture man as starting out as a vicious savage who has grown steadily better with the passing of time. But, there is an error or two here. It is true that civilization comes along and picks man up a practical savage and works a marked improvement upon him in most every known field of earthly and social progress. But, this is after thousands of years of sinning and isolation from God have left such men outcasts. Adam as he came from the hand of God and the human family as it began its course were far different from the uncivilized savage of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Rom. 1:21ff shows that men started with a knowledge of God, but have increasingly become worse instead of better. When Jesus came, He found men on the downward slide--not the upward grade.

When God looked down upon the human race, He saw a sinful and selfish world well described in Tit. 3:3:

"For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another."

Or as Col. 1:21 described the situation, men were alienated from God and enemies of God through wickedness. God's inspired picture of the Gentile world following the flood is drawn for us in Rom. 1:22-32--a most gruesome, but not exaggerated, picture:

"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

The Jews were always ready to pass judgment on the Gentiles, but Paul showed them in the second and third chapters of Romans (the chapters that immediately follow the extended quotation above concerning the Gentiles) that they had no right to say anything about the Gentiles, for they were guilty of the same things (Rom. 2:1). Paul could go right to their own Old Testament Scriptures and show that they were sinners also, and this he did beginning in Rom. 3:10:

"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:10-18).

I think we will admit that the above picture of the Jews is little better than the picture of the Gentiles in Rom. 1. Paul said:

"There is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God...Every mouth may be stopped (of boasting), and all the world (everybody) may become guilty (condemned) before God" (Rom. 3:23,19).

This was what met God's view. Yet, as we read the Bible, we can see that He saw something else too. The Psalmist raised this question:

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (Psa. 8:4).

What is he? He has been made in the image of God. God set him over the works of His creative hands. Like the coin that has lain in the gutter until covered with dirt and filth, yet with the government's E. Pluribus Unum still on it, man had gone astray and filth had besmirched him, yet he alone was made in the image of God; he alone was created for perpetual fellowship with God. There was something there of vast importance to the Creator, though the present condition itself was not encouraging. Some of humanity, if helped, would do right. There was a possibility that some could be converted from sin and again walk with God, but there were many important things that must be done before that day could become a reality.

B. God Was Minded To Save As Many As Could Be Saved.

The devil might have been able to turn the heart of man against God, but he could not succeed in getting God to keep His wrath against man if man would return to God. A great section of Scripture on this is Psa. 103:8-14:

"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."

He may be angry with the wicked everyday as they now live (Psa. 7:11), but He is willing to forgive them if they will turn from their evil ways. Jonah was so right when he said:

"I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil" (Jonah 4:2).

But, Jonah was so wrong in seeking to withhold that mercy from that Gentile city Nineveh. God took him to task about it in the closing verses of the book of Jonah:

"Thou has had pity on the gourd, for the which thou has not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" (Jonah 4:10,11).

Rom. 11 shows that God dealt with Israel because of unbelief, but if they would repent, He would accept them. He received the Gentiles who believed, but He warned them of a possibility of unbelief also, stating that He would not spare them if unbelieving any more than He had the Israelites.

Such love and concern for humanity was bound to exhibit itself in any way and in every way that was possible for the salvation of those who would be saved.

C. What God Has Done And Will Do For Our Salvation.

Time fails us to elaborate upon this all-important point. But, we can list a number of those things He does to save us. He devised a plan whereby He could be merciful to man and at the same time not unjust to the law of righteousness. He prepared the way throughout Old Testament times for the coming of Jesus. He then sent Jesus and delivered Him up for all of us. Jesus at Calvary paid the price of our redemption. Buried, He rose again for our justification. He called, trained, and commissioned the apostles to make known the good news of pardon and how each one could come into possession of it. He ascended to God with His blood, which God accepted as an atonement for our sins. He dispatched the Holy Spirit to inspire the apostles in their preaching and to convict the hearts of sinners. When men obey the gospel, He forgives their sin, grants them the presence and help of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and gives them the hope of everlasting life. He has placed elders in the church to shepherd and develop these converted lives. He has made each convert a brother or sister to all the other saints, who are to be a source of personal help to him in living for God. He has given access to Himself through prayer, and He chastens when one strays from the fold to bring him to repentance. He has given access to Himself through prayer, and He chastens when one strays from the fold to bring him to repentance. He has given us the assembly of the saints with the Lord's supper, fellowship, prayers, and teaching to maintain our spiritual life. And when Jesus comes back, He will complete everything that is yet to be done. Scripture passages setting forth the above matters almost defy listing, so many are they.

If everything about salvation was merely God's part, all would be saved, for what He has done for one person, He has done for all. Christ died for all (I Tim. 2:6); God loves all (John 3:16); the gospel of salvation has been sent to all (Mark 16:15); and the invitation to salvation is open to all (Rev. 22:17). But, in addition to God's part, there is each individual's part in his own salvation, and what God has called upon us to do individually is just as important to our personal salvation as what God has done for us all.

II. Man Does The Partaking.

A. Men Sometimes Confuse The Partaking With The

Providing.

When you teach the necessity of baptism in order to be saved, there will be those who will respond, "It is Christ that saves--not baptism." But, such people are failing to distinguish between providing salvation and partaking of salvation. Christ saves in the respect of providing salvation, but baptism is a part of man's partaking of or appropriating salvation. The Bible teaches that Christ saves (Acts 4:12), but it also teaches that baptism saves (I Pet. 3:21), and if anybody objects to the phraseology that "baptism saves", that is the very language of I Pet. 3:21. Baptism does not provide salvation (Christ does that), but it is a part of that which a man must personally do if he is to be saved. When I have heard people say, "Jesus saves--not baptism," I have thought of responding, "What would you think if I said, Jesus saves--not faith?" One might as well try to contrast Jesus and faith as Jesus and baptism.

B. Man's Fulfilling His God-Appointed Part Does Not Rule Out God's Grace.

Sometimes people talk as if a person has denied God's grace if he insists upon doing what the Bible says a man must do to be saved. But, obedience to the will of God does not set aside the grace of God. Let me illustrate. Israel's deliverance from Egypt was as much by the grace of God as our salvation--yet they had to follow the leading of God's leader Moses and to walk through the Red Sea. Again, God gave the Israelites the land of Canaan--yet they fought under the will of God for it. Again, God gave the city of Jericho to them--yet they had to march around it, have the trumpets blown, and shout before the walls came down, and then they had to go in and slay the people. Jesus gave parables of great feasts. Those invited did not provide the banquets, but they had to come and partake of them to derive the good and the joy from them. God gives us our daily bread, but that does not exclude man's work in order to obtain it. No, man's doing his part in no way vitiates God's part.

C. God Has A Will For All Responsible Beings, And None Will Be Saved Who Have Not Obeyed That Will.

We say that He has a will for all "responsible" beings. Infants, children still with immature consciences, and those who have not developed mentally are not called upon to render obedience to the gospel. People are to confess with their mouths what they believe in their hearts about Jesus, but such are unable to have faith in their hearts concerning Jesus. But, all who are responsible beings are called upon to render an obedience to God in order to be saved, and this cannot be successfully denied by anyone who will consider the following Scriptures. Jesus said:

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

In His closing words of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus demonstrated the security of those who were obedient to His teachings and the calamity sure to fall upon those who didn't. He said:

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine,

and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matt. 7:24-27).

Jesus having accomplished those things that qualified or perfected Him as a Savior, there was an obedience to Him the necessity of which is pointed out in Heb. 5:9:

"Being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."

Yes, Jesus is the Savior. The above verse states it. But, whom does He save? The obedient. Yes, there is an obedience that leads to salvation. II Thess. 1:7-9 shows that those who do not obey the gospel are to be punished—not rewarded with salvation:

"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the glory of his power."

We know that Jesus, in His mission to provide salvation, came to do the will of God (Heb. 10:7). Did He do it? Yes. Was it necessary for our salvation that He do it? Would there be any salvation offered today if Jesus had not fulfilled the will of God? Of course not. Jesus had to obey God's will in order to provide our salvation, but God has a will for us to obey too, and unless we obey His will, we cannot partake of salvation! No fact is more frankly taught in the Word of God.

D. Two Necessary Involvements In Partaking Of Salvation.

In order to partake of salvation, one must come to Christ or be in Christ. There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ (Rom. 8:1). When one is in Christ, he is a new creature (II Cor. 5:17). His sins have been washed away, and he is a new creature in Christ. Does faith alone bring one into Christ? No. Does repentance from sin mark the dividing line between the old life and the new life in Christ? No, but this is involved. Does confession of Christ bring one into a state of forgiveness? No. Many teach, however, faith in Christ, repentance from sin, and a public stand for Christ—then, they promise, them the forgiveness of sins. But, such is not the teaching of the Bible. After one has done all three of these, he is to be baptized, and that is the dividing line between the old life and the new life:

"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 newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

After one has thus accepted Christ, there is a second thing involved in his partaking of salvation, and that is, he must abide or remain in Christ faithfully. Heb. 3:14 says:

"We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the

beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end".

Jesus Himself said:

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me... If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:4,6).

Yes, there are two sides of salvation—God's side and our side. God provides the possibility of salvation for all, but not all will be saved, because not all partake of that salvation. If men are lost in eternity, it will not be God's fault, for He made it possible for every soul to be saved, but it will be their own fault for not partaking of the salvation that He provided. Furthermore, we can have this assurance that if we will do our part, there is no question about our salvation, for God will surely do His part. You obey the gospel plan of salvation, and you have no need to fear what you have done in the past. God will put your sin as far from Him as the east is from the west. But, if you obey not the gospel, a fearful eternity faces you. If you have accepted Christ, then abide faithfully in Him each day, walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh, and you can be sure that there is no condemnation upon you. But, if you do not so abide, then fear, for God will not save you in that condition.

Yes, God provides; we must partake. Have you partaken?

The Doctrine of Conversion

With the coming of the age of modernism has come a dismissing of certain words from people's religious vocabulary. The time was when the word "conversion" was commonly heard and when every preacher urged people to be "converted", but the time is upon us when the word "conversion" is seldom heard and when few indeed are the preachers who still preach to sinners to be "converted". Besides the fact of modernism entering in, it is possible that conversion is not commonly preached because it is not commonly practiced. We know that the pulpit should affect the pew, but too many times the pew controls and affects the pulpit. This should not be! And it won't be when the pulpits are filled with men who take their orders from God rather than men!

Were we to take a text for this message, we would select Acts 15:3:

"And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren."

There are several notable things in the above passage. Notice, they declared the "conversion" of the Gentiles.

Then, when people accept Christ, obey the gospel, or become Christians, they have been converted, for that is what the Gentiles had done. If a person is not a Christian; if he has not obeyed the gospel; if he has not accepted Christ as his Savior and Lord--he is not a convert to Christ. If he has, he is a convert and should not be ashamed of that fact. Notice also in that passage that those already in Christ rejoiced to learn of the conversion of others--even when they didn't know them personally and even when they were Gentiles. In this, they were like the angels of God who rejoice when a soul turns from the way of sin (Luke 15:10).

The Greek word translated "conversion" means to "turn". Biblically, "conversion" means to "turn" from sin to God through the Lord Jesus Christ. One cannot turn to something without turning from something. So, in conversion, one turns from the way he has been living, from the direction in which he has been traveling, from the master he has been serving, and from the destiny that had been awaiting him to a new master (Christ), to a new way (the Christian life), and to a new destiny (acceptance with God). "Conversion" is a good word, and it ought to be used. "Conversion" is a great and important doctrine, and it ought to be preached. "Conversion" is life's greatest privilege, and it ought to be the experience of every mature individual, and if God had His way, it would be!

Let us make a study of that subject in this study.

I. The Absolute Necessity Of Conversion.

A. Man Could Never Go To God's Heaven In His Unspiritual, Unregenerate State.

In speaking of heaven, Rev. 21:27 says:

"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Sin defiles, and sin abominates. Therefore, those who have lived in sin will not be permitted to enter heaven unless they are changed from sinners to saints. Furthermore, alien sinners do not have their names written in Christ's book of life, but only those who do will be permitted to enter heaven.

Matt. 5:8 makes this promise to the holy:

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

If one is not pure in heart and holy before God, he will never behold the glory of God in heaven, for Heb. 12:14 says:

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

Rom. 8 speaks of Christians as being "in the Spirit", but it speaks of sinners as being "in the flesh" or being "carnal" ("carnal" and "flesh" come from the same word in the Greek.) Now, notice from Rom. 8 what God says of those who live after the flesh:

"They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh (not the things of God); but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be

carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:5-8).

Notice that Eph. 2:1 pictures the alien sinner as "dead in trespasses and sins". Rom. 5:6 pictures the alien sinner as "without strength". Rom. 5:10 pictures him as an "enemy" of God. And Eph. 2:12 pictures him as "having no hope, and without God in the world."

B. This Is Why The Bible Demands Conversion.

When the apostles disputed among themselves as to which one was going to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, they were talking as unspiritual men, and Jesus rebuked them for it. He must have shocked them greatly when He plainly said to them:

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3).

"Which will be the greatest in the kingdom?" Jesus told them they wouldn't even be in the kingdom if they were not converted from their selfish, unspiritual attitude. Yes, conversion is absolutely necessary!

When Peter preached to the Jews, he said:

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19).

Notice that it is a commandment from God to be converted. It is not left up to the whim and fancy of man whether he will be converted or not. If he expects to please God, have his sins forgiven, and be saved, he must be converted. No verse could possibly make it plainer. Sinners resisting the call of the gospel ought to realize that there will be no sins forgiven unless they are converted to Christ. Preachers and personal workers ought to impress this fact so thoroughly that men and women cannot escape it.

Jas. 5:19,20 is another passage that shows that conversion saves a sinner's soul from death:

"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

Having seen that conversion is absolutely essential, let us consider

II. How Conversion Is Brought About.

A. The Pentecostal View.

All Pentecostal groups say much about conversion, but they do not give the Bible view of that subject. They are right in teaching that man in his unregenerate state is away from God. They are right in teaching that conversion is absolutely necessary. They are right in teaching that conversion brings a revolutionary change in an individual. But, they are not right in their teaching of how conversion is brought about.

All who use the altar call and have sinners come to "pray through", as they speak of it, have similar ideas of

how conversion takes place. And, yet, I am firm to say, their idea of conversion is not that which is taught in the Book of God.

When I was a student in school toward the beginning of my preaching days, there was a Pentecostal-type of meeting in progress in that southern city (a section of the country known for altar-call religion). One of the students in school was known for his argumentativeness, though he was not well enough read as yet to fight all the battles he could start. He let it be known that he was going to attend that meeting that night with the intention of tackling the evangelist after the service about the work of the Holy Spirit. Realizing that he might not be able to uphold his side of the discussion, I felt constrained, being a little older in the Lord's work than he was, to go with him just in case he needed help. And he needed help before the night was over, and I was glad I had gone along (and so was he). I would like to tell you about the discussion and how it turned out, but that would take too long, and that is not the purpose of bringing this up. The purpose is to tell you of the sermon we heard. The evangelist preached a sermon that was a clear presentation of the altar-type of conversion. He said he could call his sermon either "Pardon and Purity" or "Salvation and Sanctification". He pointed out that man is both lost in sin and depraved in his nature, and that only the Holy Ghost can do anything for him. He pointed out that sinners should come to the altar convicted of their sins and there pray for pardon or salvation. Thus, sinners are urged to come and pray and pray until they feel that the burden has been lifted from their hearts. When they get a sweet feeling of peace and joy in their hearts, then they are told that "they've got it", that "they have gotten through". The evangelist went on to say that such a person was pardoned of his sins, was saved, but that he still had a wicked heart that needed to be purified. In other words, he said, he needed to have a second work performed upon him--sanctification. He went on to say that those who had gotten saved at the altar should expect God to call them again in their hearts, and that when He did, they should come back to the altar for more prayer--this time to pray for a clean heart, for sanctification, for the Holy Ghost. This, he said, would destroy the old Adamic nature of sin inborn within man.

This is a sample of some Pentecostals' teaching on conversion. Yet, I fear not to say the Bible knows nothing of an altar-call, "praying through," etc. Furthermore, the Bible teaches that salvation and sanctification are not matters accomplished at separate times, but that both result from conversion. When a person is converted, his sins are blotted out (Acts 3:19), and when he is thus in Christ, he is a new creature as a result of it (II Cor. 5:17), old things having passed away, and all things having become new. Baptism, when preceded by those necessary things taught in the Bible, is for the remission of sins (Acts 22:16), and as soon as one is baptized, he begins to walk in the newness of life (Rom. 6:4). In other words, the Bible shows that conversion results in two things with reference to the present subject: (1) the forgiveness of sins, and (2) the sanctification of the individual.

Years ago, I talked to an elderly Christian man who has since passed into the next world. I was in his town conducting an evangelistic meeting. He told me of his boyhood experiences in religion. He said that all of His people were of the altar-type of religion. Early in life, he was urged to go to the altar during a revival meeting. He went up night after night for the rest of the meeting (two weeks), but he never experienced the change of heart that he was supposed to and others were claiming to receive. Night after night, he prayed, but to no avail. They told him there was something in his life he was not surrendering, but he said he knew better. The meeting closed, and he was cast upon the sea of anxiety concerning his condition before God. After the meeting ended, because of his sincerity and his desire to be right with God, he would slip out into the dark of the night, and upon his knees would pray to God to save him. Sometime later, they were to have another meeting. He welcomed this, hoping this time to get "through". The first night of the meeting, he went forward for prayer. Nightly throughout the meeting, he did this, and when the meeting ended, he said he was on the very verge of going infidel, for he could not understand why God would not hear his prayers and save him. He came to wonder maybe if religion was all made up by man.

Not too much time passed by until a man by the name of Simpson Ely came to his town to conduct a "protracted meeting", as they were commonly called in those days. He decided to go hear Mr. Ely preach. From the very start, Mr. Ely's messages made sense as he expounded into his hearers the Word of God. From the New Testament, he showed what was involved in a sinner's salvation and how one could be saved from his sins. Billy Smith read his Bible, and he found the way of salvation clearly set forth therein. In humble submission to the Christ in whom he believed, he surrendered himself to an obedience to the gospel, and for the long years of his life thereafter, he never questioned the validity of his conversion. In his latter years as he related his story to me, he said that his failure to "pray through" in his earlier years was due to two things: (1) there was nothing actually to receive at the altar, according to the Bible, and (2) he was not of a highly emotional nature as was the rest of his family--a trait necessary to be made to think one had received something from God through the altar.

I remember hearing of another case that helps set forth the Pentecostal view of conversion. A man was a rough-and-tough sort of character. He drank; he gambled; he fought; he chased women. In fact, there was hardly a wicked thing he didn't do. He was anything but a church-going man. One Sunday afternoon, he was walking along the railroad track on his way to meet his old buddies who were going to spend the afternoon together playing cards and gambling in an old box car. As he was walking along, he said the Holy Ghost, out of a clear blue sky, slapped him down right there along the railroad track and there knocked the love of drink out of him, knocked the love the women out of him, and knocked the cards and the cursing and all sin right out of him. The man said he hadn't been to church services for years and that he had had no intention of changing prior to the experience above narrated. His testi-

mony would be accepted in any Pentecostal testimony meeting as a true conversion from heaven.

Sudden seizures of the individual while milking a cow, shocking corn fodder, or stacking hay are reported to be the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven to convert them. Such as the foregoing are a part of Pentecostal-type of religion throughout our land today. But, their view of conversion is, as Billy Smith and others have found from a study of the Bible, is not the Bible view of conversion.

B. The Bible View.

The book of Acts is the book of conversions in the Bible. It shows how the apostles preached and what the Holy Spirit did to bring men and women to Christ. Behind the history in that book is the great commission of Christ that also bears upon the question of conversion, as well as Jesus' other preparatory teaching for this subject. Men may tell their experiences and trust their human feelings as proof of salvation, but let us rely upon the Word of God for its sure, unvarying testimony concerning salvation.

As far back as Psa. 19:7, we have this testimony to the fact that it is the Word of God that He uses to convert people:

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."

Later in the same book, David further stated:

"I will teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee" (Psa. 51:13).

Christianity is a religion of faith, but how does that faith come?

"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

The Word that is preached and received into the heart is spoken of as the word of salvation (Acts 13:26). The words of Jesus are both spirit and life (John 6:63). The Word of God is powerful (Heb. 4:12) and is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). Properly received and followed, it is able to save our souls (Jas. 1:21,22). Cornelius was instructed to do as follows:

"Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:13,14).

Whenever people minimize the importance of the Word of God in the matter of conversion and salvation, you can be sure they are not speaking as the Oracles of God speak. God has given mankind His message. He has equipped us with eyes and ears with which to see and hear, and He has given us hearts with which to think upon that message. Of course, we must use our eyes, ears, and hearts, or we shall never be converted. Matt. 13:15 shows this:

"This people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted (as a result of their seeing, hearing, and understanding), and I should heal them."

Thus, the first thing in the great commission is preaching.

Though the human heart is wicked through sin, yet some are honest enough to admit it, tired of sin enough to be hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and noble enough to believe when the truth of God is presented. Thus, Paul was sent out as a preacher for the following purposes:

"Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me" (Acts 28:17,18).

When the gospel comes with its picture of man's sinfulness and lostness, the heart is smitten with a feeling of guilt before God. When the gospel goes on to show how God loved men so much that He gave up Jesus to die in their place, a realization of the goodness and mercy of God takes hold of one. Then, when this Friend Above calls sinners to repent and turn from the way of sin, a decision has to be made. Will he continue to live the rest of his life to the flesh and its desires, or will he yield to God? The devil is ever present to magnify the responsibilities and duties of the Christian life and to over-emphasize the difficulty of getting along without the sins in which he has been living. If the sinner permits these thoughts to rule him, there will be no conversion to Christ even though he knows what he ought to do. On the other hand, if he appreciates what God has and is doing for him; if he realizes how he has been breaking the will of God in his life; and if he looks ahead and sees where sin will lead him in life and land him in eternity, he will be having those truths of the gospel working in his heart in such a way that he will find his outlook changing, his desires turning, and his will yielding to the will of God. When he then makes full surrender to Christ, confesses Him before men, and is immersed in water in the likeness of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, as Christ has commanded (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-5), he will be truly and Scripturally converted to Christ, and saints and angels can rejoice over his conversion of the Gentiles (Acts 15:3).

Man's outlook and desires must be changed. These are changed through faith (many Scriptures). His will must be changed. This is changed through repentance (many Scriptures) and is sealed by confessing Christ (II Tim. 2:19). His state of guilt must be changed before God. This is changed through baptism (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16).

This conversion--this change--brings one into Christ (Gal. 3:27), initiates him into a new life (Rom. 6:4), makes him a new creature (II Cor. 5:17), and launches him forth into a higher life of seeking the things which are above, where Christ is (Col. 3:1), and causes him to confess with the converted Saul of Tarsus:

"I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Not all who read these lines and study these Bible

verses may be converted as of now. Do not suppose that human goodness will be sufficient to carry you through. Jesus said you must be born again (John 3:6). If you chance to be one who has never been converted in harmony with the Bible teaching, can you not this day see your need of it? Can you not see there is something higher and better to live for? Can you not find it in your heart to desire to be a Christian? Why not, then, yield yourself to the Christ who died for you in whom you can believe without a bit of hesitancy as to its rightness? Having turned from your sins, name the name of Christ as a seal of your intentions to walk in Heaven's way instead of the world's and be baptized for the remission of your sins. Christ will move into your life in the person of the Holy Spirit, who will help you live the Christian life. If to the Lord you then remain faithful throughout the remaining years of your life as proof of your conversion, love for God, and sincerity of purpose to be saved, you will die in the full hope of seeing the Lord on the other side of the grave, where you will live and reign with Him throughout all eternity. May God help you to make that decision--life's greatest decision!

The Divine Importance of Baptism

One doesn't have to listen to his radio on Sunday very long until he hears some preacher belittling the importance of baptism--something that no apostle or Bible writer ever did! A man in my home town told my father, "I've been sprinkled, poured, and immersed, and there's nothing to any of them. I've baptized with the Holy Ghost--that's the thing that counts." Such a belittling way to speak of water baptism! If one teaches the necessity of baptism, even though it is exactly what the Bible teaches, he will be charged with "water salvation". It is odd that these teachers (?) don't charge Naaman the leper with having had a "water cleansing" from his leprosy when he was told by the prophet of God to go dip in the Jordan River seven times (II Kings 5). Naaman reacted to the prophet's orders at the first about like people today God's commandment of baptism, but I notice he was not cured of his leprosy until he obeyed the prophet's orders.

This brings me to observe that baptism is both mistaught and ridiculed about as much as any subject in the field of Christianity. It is mistaught as regards the form, the purpose, and who is a fit subject for it--plus a few other matters connected with it by lesser-sized groups.

It is not the purpose of this study to consider everything there is to be considered upon this subject. To do so would more than exhaust the space we have. However, it is our intention to pursue this one aspect of the subject--

the importance of baptism as set forth in the Bible. Bear this in mind; anybody not grasping the importance of baptism is bound to be off in some way--another concerning this subject. Therefore, if we can show from the Scriptures the divine importance of baptism, much has been accomplished.

I. The Importance Of Baptism Is Seen From The Great Commission.

A. From The Fact That It Is Even In The Great Commission.

We all know that the great commission was a very important announcement. From it has come our entire New Testament from the book of Acts onward. Had Jesus not said in the commission, "Preach," there would have been no preaching. Had there been no preaching, there would have been no converts. Had there been no converts, there would have been no congregations. Had there been no congregations, there would have been no one to whom to send the epistles of Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, etc. So, the importance of the great commission is evident.

B. Only Important Matters Got Into The Commission--Baptism Is Included In the Commission.

We can be sure that only important matters got into the commission. Can you relegate any of the items in the great commission to the class of the insignificant? Did you ever stop to think of how few items are actually contained in the great commission? Going, preaching, baptizing those who believe and repent, and teaching those converted. These are the commandments to the apostles. Few, aren't they? But, did you notice that baptism is one of them? Let us stop and think just a minute upon this fact: prayer isn't mentioned in the great commission; love isn't; kindness isn't; giving isn't; forgiving others isn't; the Lord's supper isn't; and many other important elements in Christianity are not specifically listed in the great commission. But, baptism is specifically named in it. Why, then, should people say these other matters (prayer, love, forgiveness, etc.) are necessary, but baptism isn't?

C. The Great Commission Connects Salvation With Baptism.

The importance of baptism is seen from the great commission in another way also. Did you know there is only one thing in all the Bible that is to be done into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit? That is baptism:

"Baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19).

There is not another thing in all the book of God so given. Anything connected with the name of the Godhead surely must be important!

Let us look at the great commission again. Mark 16:16 tells us the purpose of baptism:

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Notice that "he" is at the beginning of the statement

and "shall be saved" is at the end of the statement. Who is the "he" that "shall be saved"? He that believeth and is baptized! We preach that a sinner must believe, repent, confess Christ, and be baptized in order to be saved from his past sins. Mark 16:16 gives us the first and the last elements (which we believe included the other in-between matters). Many teach a different order. They say, "Salvation comes immediately after faith, and that such a saved person should go ahead and be baptized. One Sunday night, a Texas lady present commented upon my sermon on baptism that they (she referred to her denominational associates) say that salvation comes solely as a result of faith. I asked, "Well, what do you do about baptism?" "Of course, every saved person ought to go ahead and get baptized," she answered. I asked her if their order was faith, salvation, baptism. She said that it was. I said, "Our understanding has the order faith, baptism, salvation. Now, let's look at the Bible and see which order is found there." We turned to Mark 16:16 where we read that he that (1) believeth and (2) is baptized shall (3) be saved--the exact order held by churches of Christ, but not by many people.

Yes, the importance of baptism is seen from the great commission.

II. The Importance Of Baptism Is Seen From The Conversions In The Book Of Acts.

A. Baptism Is Mentioned In Connection With Every Case of Conversion Narrated In The Book Of Acts.

How many cases of conversion are narrated in Acts? Nine: the people on Pentecost (Acts 2:41), the Samaritans (Acts 8:12), the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:36-39), Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:6-18; and 22:10-16), Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:1-48), Lydia and her household (Acts 16:14,15), the jailor of Philippi and his household (Acts 16:30-33), the Corinthians (Acts 18:8), and twelve men of Ephesus (Acts 19:2-5). By reading the above references, you will see that baptism was a part of every conversion in God's book of conversion. To the people on Pentecost, Peter commanded:

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

Acts 2:41 tells of their response to his preaching:

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized."

Concerning Philip's preaching in Samaria, Acts 8:12 says of the Samaritans:

"When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."

Here is what is said of the Ethiopian eunuch:

"As they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water: what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to

stand still and they went down both into the water both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him" (Acts 8:36-38).

Saul of Tarsus, having asked the Lord what he should do was told to go into the city where it would be told him what to do. God sent Ananias to the waiting, penitent Saul, who coming said:

"Why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

Though Peter, a Jew taking the gospel to the first Gentile, was certain to be called onto the carpet for his action, he did the following with reference to the Gentile Cornelius and his household:

"He commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48).

Acts 16:14,15 says of Lydia and her household:

"A certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there."

Notice what Acts 16:32,33 says concerning that jailor of Philippi:

"And they (Paul and Silas) spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway."

Notice this simple verse concerning the conversion of the Corinthians:

"Many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8).

Having taught the Ephesian men the difference between John's baptism (by which they had been incorrectly baptized by Apollos) and the baptism commanded by Christ, Acts 19:5 says:

"When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."

So, if a person is going to take the Bible as his guide, he will be baptized as a part of his conversion, for every case of conversion recorded in the book of Acts includes baptism. This fact cannot be truthfully denied and, therefore, carries much weight with those who would be guided by the Word of God.

B. Notice Also That Conversions In Acts Were Not Counted Complete Until Baptism Had Taken Place.

Did you notice from the above that baptism was always the last thing mentioned that the people did in their conversions? Furthermore, did you notice that the preacher did not leave until the baptism had taken place? Why was this? Because baptism was a part of each conversion--the concluding act!

C. These Conversion Accounts Also Bear Some Significant Statements.

Acts 2:38 shows that remission of sins and the coming of the Holy Spirit into one's life were promised to those who would do two things: (1) repent, and (2) be baptized. Notice that verse:

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ (1) for the remission of sins, and (2) ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Is it essential to have the Holy Spirit? Yes, according to Rom. 8:9. When does the Holy Spirit come into one's life? Before or after baptism? After baptism! Then, if it is necessary to have the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit does not come into one's life until he has been baptized, then baptism is essential! Isn't it?

Notice the significant statements contained in Acts 2:40,41:

"With many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls."

Notice two things in the above: (1) they were told to "save" themselves. Whatever they were to do had to do with salvation. What did they do? They were baptized! Therefore, baptism and salvation are connected in the Bible. (2) Were they added to fellowship of the God's people before or after baptism? After baptism. They were not added until they were baptized!

Acts 8:38,39 shows that the eunuch rejoiced--but when? Did he rejoice before or after he was baptized? After his baptism--not before! Before his baptism, he was still in his sins. After baptism, he was a new creature in Christ Jesus!

A fourth passage in these conversions to which we call your attention is Acts 22:16. The words of that verse were directed to Saul of Tarsus, who was already a believer in Christ, who was already submitted to Christ in repentance, and who had been waiting in fasting until he received further instructions from the Lord. But, he was still in his sins until he was baptized. Do you ask for proof? Read Acts 22:16:

"Why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

Here is a clear-cut passage that those who pervert the Bible teaching of baptism admittedly have much trouble with. And well they might, for it so clearly teaches that baptism and the washing away of sins are inseparably connected in the Bible.

Yes, the importance of baptism is seen in the conversions in the book of Acts.

III. The Importance Of Baptism Is Seen From What It Symbolizes.

A. *Baptism Pictures Those Events That Actually Save Us.*

Paul outlined the central facts of the gospel as the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (I Cor. 15:1-4). Without those, there would be no hope for any of us. One of the finest sections in the Bible on the meaning of

baptism is to be found in Rom. 6. The death, burial, and resurrection are all three referred to in discussing the matter of baptism in Rom. 6:3,4. When a sinner closes his eyes, as he goes under the water, he appears as a lifeless form--a picture of death. As Jesus was buried, so is he in the watery grave. As Jesus emerged from the tomb in His resurrection, even so is the convert raised out of the water as in a resurrection. Later in the chapter, this is also referred to. Rom. 6:17 says:

"Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you."

It can be readily shown that the apostle is referring to their baptism. First of all, that is the subject he has been discussing. Also, the doctrine delivered to them was the gospel, the central facts of which are the death, burial, and resurrection. Now, that verse (Rom. 6:17) says they had been obedient to that form of the doctrine. What would be the form of the doctrine to which they could have been obedient? Baptism! Shall we then say that that which symbolizes those important facts of the gospel is unimportant? Of course, not.

B. *Baptism Pictures The Change Taking Place In The One Being Baptized.*

Conversion is to bring an end to the old life and the beginning of the new life in Christ. Anybody recognizing the truth of this statement just stated should not eliminate the matter of baptism when it comes to the subject of conversion. In baptism, (properly preceded by faith, repentance, and confession), one meets his real death to sin and arises from its waters to walk in the newness of life. Listen to Rom. 6:4:

"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 newness of life."

What Scripture could be plainer than the above one? Is it important that a sinner die to sin? Is it important that one walk in the newness of life? Well, it is baptism that pictures the end of the old man and the beginning of the new man which is taking place simultaneously.

IV. The Importance Of Baptism Is Seen From The Fact That We Get Into Christ By Being Baptized.

A. *Salvation Is In Christ--Not Out Of Him.*

I know no statement that ought to be more universally accepted than this; namely, salvation is to be found in Christ--not out of Him. Of the many Scriptures that we could cite on this subject, notice the following ones:

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1).

Who is not condemned? The one who is "in Christ Jesus" and who is "walking after the Spirit". Notice another passage:

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17).

Who is a new creature? Who has the old things of sin

passed away? To whom are all things new? To the man who is "in Christ".

The truth is preached by preachers from one end of this land to the other. It is emphasized in sermons; it is mentioned at the invitation service; it is embodied in tracts; it is urged in personal work. I say, by all who believe that Christ is the Savior, the fact that salvation is found "in Christ" instead of out of Him is preached and emphasized. But, if I were out in the world of sin and had become convinced from the Bible that I needed to be "in Christ", I would logically want to know how I could get into Christ. The pity of it is that those who state the necessity of being in Christ may not actually tell from the Bible how one can get into Him. But, the Bible is equally clear upon this point. It shows that men are *baptized* into Christ. You may say, "I don't like the sound of that. That emphasizes baptism too much." Well, simply because the religious world has minimized baptism is why we are having this study to show that baptism is divinely important. If the Bible teaches that a sinner must be "in Christ" in order to be saved, we shall believe it, and if the same Bible teaches that one is baptized into Christ, then we shall believe that also. Won't we? You may ask, "Where does the Bible teach that people are baptized into Christ?" In at least two different places. Listen to Rom. 6:3:

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?"

Notice what Paul wrote--"baptized into Jesus Christ". How had Paul gotten into Christ? By being baptized into Him. How had the Roman Christians gotten into Christ? By being baptized into Him. That is what Rom. 6:3 says. How must we get into Christ? By being baptized into Him!

But, listen to another passage:

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

How had the Galatians gotten into Christ? They had been baptized into Him. What was the result of their having been baptized into Christ? They had put on Christ! How can people today who have never been Scripturally baptized rightfully say they are "in Christ"? How can they say they have put on Christ? Isn't a preacher guilty of preaching another "gospel" when he doesn't teach that sinners are to be baptized into Christ? Of course!

Surely, you can see--maybe as never before--that the religious world is minimizing the importance of Biblical baptism. In so many cases, it is not only being minimized, but it is actually being mistaught, which is serious too. Did you know that the position held by churches of Christ upon the subject of baptism is right according to the Greek language (the language in which the New Testament was originally written)? Did you know that their position is right according to encyclopedias and church history when it comes to stating what the original form of baptism was? Did you know that their position is in harmony with what those who have written extensive commentaries have written? Did you know that their position is according to what the Reformers (Luther, Calvin, and Wesley) taught. They all affirmed these truths now neglected by the de-

nominal groups that have sprung from them.

I believe that people minimize baptism for the same reason they minimize the Lord's Supper. For the Christian, the Lord's supper is a communion in the blood of Christ (I Cor. 10:16), and for the sinner coming to Christ, baptism brings him into contact with the blood of Christ, for he is baptized into the death of Christ:

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Rom. 6:3).

If I had never been baptized Scripturally, I can truthfully say that I would feel fully obligated to after reading a message like this in which important Bible verses have pointed out its necessity. If I had been misled upon this important subject, I would turn away from those teachers who had mistaught me and stand with those people who have upheld this great Bible doctrine through the years. I would become obedient to the form of doctrine delivered unto me. Will you not, then, at this time make that decision and act upon it without further delay?

The New Life a Product of Conversion

Gal. 3:27 says that as many of us as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ--automatically so. In other words, when we came into Christ, we automatically put on Christ--just as much as when one gets into his coat, he has automatically "put on" his coat. When one thus puts on Christ, a new life is bound to result. In conversion, the entire person is remade from the inside out, and that is bound to show up in a new life. Jesus said:

"A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things" (Matt. 12:35).

In conversion, the heart is remade. It is made into a good heart. The man himself becomes a good man. The result? *He bringeth forth good things!* That is our very proposition in this study; namely, that the Christian life is an automatic result of conversion. That is why a conversion is necessary before one can live a Christian life. Furthermore, that is why one who is truly converted enters immediately upon a life of fruit-bearing for God.

We are sorry to say that far too many today know little or nothing about the new life in Christ. To them, a public acceptance of Christ is becoming identified with some church in the community or merely doing the right thing. After their public acceptance, little or nothing follows by way of a marked change of life and all-out service for

Christ. In this connection, many preachers have failed. They have taught the *order* of faith, repentance, confession, and baptism, but they have not really taught what each of these *means* and what is *involved* in faith, in repentance, in confession, and in baptism. Consequently, people today--oh so many--do not know what it means to live by faith...do not know what it means to repent...do not understand the significance of confession...do not understand what it means to be baptized and as a result do not walk in the newness of life.

I have stated many times in sermons that if a person would come to be baptized, but would indicate that he had not genuinely repented and that he did not intend to walk in newness of life after his baptism, I wouldn't baptize him even if he asked to be baptized. I have seen people startled by this statement, looking as if a preacher is duty-bound to baptize anybody who asks to be baptized regardless of whether the person is prepared to be baptized or not. Incidentally, when the eunuch wanted to know if he could be baptized, what did Philip tell him?

"If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest"
(Acts 8:37).

Suppose the eunuch had indicated that he did not believe with all his heart. Would Philip have baptized him? Of course not. Why wouldn't he? Because he was not authorized to baptize people who didn't believe. Furthermore, he knew that it would do no good to baptize a man who was not automatically ushered into a new walk with God by his baptism! That is why I would not baptize a man whom I knew to be impenitent. He has no business being baptized! He is no more ready to be baptized than a helpless baby who can't repent. And if he has no business being baptized, then God help me and all others who intend to please God to see that we have no business baptizing such! A little sensible reasoning would put an end to people's hollering about baptizing a few dear people who have come to realize they never were baptized Scripturally. Some adults have no more been Scripturally baptized than infants! And where that sad condition exists, shame on the preacher who denies Scriptural baptism to an adult who needs it and is now prepared for it!

In the points of the study that follow, we shall be taking the various elements of conversion (man's part in conversion) and showing how each one leads to and produces the new life in Christ for the one who has been converted.

I. Faith Leads To A New Life.

A. People Out Of Christ Know Nothing Of Living By Faith.

Christians live for a world that cannot be seen with the naked eye. They are busy laying up treasures in heaven where Christ is, but where they have never been. They are not so much concerned about the things of this life. But, the man of the world is very much a part of this world. He is not merely *in* it (as a Christian is); he is truly a part of it (which a Christian is not--John 17:14-16). Therefore, we can expect the man of the world to be earthly-minded, to think as a man of the world thinks, to look at things as a man of the world does, and to value all things from an

earthly standpoint. Therefore, he is consumed in his heart and efforts for earth's necessities, earth's possessions, and earth's pleasures.

Furthermore, his lack of faith is seen in the fact that he tries to solve his own problems independent of God. He has his own ideas of morality--what is right and wrong. He is not convinced, possibly, that there is any life to come, but if there is, he says, "I think I will make it through all right, for I am a good moral man." Thus, he trusts his own morality to save him.

Let us look at him again. If bills pile up and cares come (and they surely do to us all), the man of the world is torn with worry, fretting, and fear. He lacks the calmness that belongs to those in Christ who believe that God will take care of His own.

B. In Contrast, The Christian Life Is A Life Of Faith.

Listen to these clear passages which show that the Christian life is a life of faith:

*"Now the just shall live by faith" (Heb. 10:38);
"We walk by faith, not by sight" (II Cor. 5:7); "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20).*

A person cannot be saved without believing in God (Heb. 11:6), without believing in Jesus Christ as God's Son (John 8:24), without believing in the truth delivered through inspired men (II Thess. 2:12), and without believing in the goodness of God to reward those who seek Him (Heb. 11:6). Neither can a person live the Christian life without faith, for it is a life of faith. Peter failed in his walking on the water when his faith failed, and the same thing happens to us in Christian living when our faith fails. The disciples failed to cast out a demon one time when their faith failed, and we lose our victory in Christian living when our faith fails. This faith is bound to mark the Christian's life as different, and when people cannot notice a difference between your life and that of a person of the world, we have a right to question your faith as much as Paul questioned the baptism of the twelve men of Ephesus when they said they knew nothing of the Holy Spirit.

In contrast to the earthly-mindedness of the man of the world, the Christian's heavenly-mindedness is reflected in Col. 3:1-3:

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek these things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Again, in contrast to the worldly man who trusts his own wisdom to work out everything, the Christian because of his faith depends upon the Lord. This is why he prays to God. Realizing that he cannot bear his burdens alone, he accepts the invitation of I Pet. 5:7 and finds it sweet to trust in Jesus:

"Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you."

The world may laugh at the faith of the Christian, saying, "He prays about everything. He thinks God hears

him." But, the Christian is assured of definite answers to prayer, and he continues both to pray and to thank God for the answers to prayer. Whether it be in the matter of finances, health, or any other need, he has learned that his sufficiency is of Christ whom he accepted in his conversion, and he knows the good Lord has not failed him. Verses such as Matt. 6:33; Phil. 4:19; Heb. 13:5; Rom. 8:28; and many others are well known to him. He can sing with all the meaning that words can carry: "I'm so glad I learned to trust Thee, Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend; And I know that Thou art with me, Wilt be with me to the end. Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him! How I've proved Him o'er and o'er! Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus, Oh for grace to trust Him more."

The Christian realizes that he is no match for the devil and his temptations. He knows that the "arm of flesh" will fail him; he dares not trust his own. Instead, therefore, of trusting his own strength, he prays for grace in the time of need (Heb. 4:15,16). He prays for divine deliverance (Matt. 6:13). He puts on the armor that God has provided for him (Eph. 6:10,11). This again makes him a man of prayer--something that the faithless man of the world sees no sense in, but something that has always characterized men of God!

Furthermore, the Christian realizes that his faith is in Christ as his Savior. He does not believe that he is good enough in his own right to deserve salvation. He is a believer in mercy because he is a believer in God's Savior from sin. He is like the humble publican who prayed for mercy (Luke 18:11-14) while the man of the world who sees no need for Christ is like the proud Pharisee. His faith, then, in the matter of salvation causes him to live for Christ in whom he believes. It causes him to shun the evil and to choose the good. It causes him to confess his sins to God and to pray to God for forgiveness. It causes him to be faithful to the Lord in the breaking of bread and the drinking of the cup that he might commune with the blood and body of Christ that his faith teaches him he must not miss.

II. Repentance Leads To A New Life.

A. Pre-Conversion Conduct.

Surely, no Christian can be happy about many of the things that he used to do while in the world. Though it did not appear to us at that time as such, we can now see the truth of Tit. 3:3:

"For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another."

Being fleshly-minded, we busied ourselves seeking the things of the flesh (Rom. 8:5). Not all commit the same sins, but lying, stealing, cheating for gain, cursing, drinking, fighting, quarreling, smoking, gambling, adultery, dishonesty, and many other such things all too often enter into people's conduct before their conversions. The apostle John recognized the following concerning the unconverted world:

"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19).

B. Repentance Brings A Mighty Change Into One's Life.

Recognizing the great difference in the way a Christian lives and the way a sinner lives, John wrote:

"He that doeth righteousness is righteous...He that committeth sin is of the devil...In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil" (1 John 3:7,8,10).

The difference between the way a Christian lives and the way he lived before conversion is noticed in 1 Pet. 1:14-16:

"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (conduct); because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

They who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections (Gal. 5:24). They now seek to keep themselves unspotted from the world (Jas. 1:27). This, according to Jas. 1:27, is essential to having a pure religion before God.

A person who repents must *repent* of his sins. Why do I say this? Simply because people claim to have repented, yet continue to do the things which they did before they supposedly repented. To repent of something wrong means to quit doing it. If one continues in his sin, he has not repented of that sin! People may be looked upon by some people as church members who drink, live a fast night life, dance, smoke, pull shady or downright crooked business deals, tell dirty stories, attend the degrading theatres, and watch about everything that is shown on television, but that doesn't mean that God looks upon them as saints. How can He? They aren't sanctified from sin and to God! Yes, if one has repented of his life of sin, it thrusts him forth into a new life--the life of holiness. Let us notice some key verses from Rom. 6:

"Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? 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 newness of life...Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin...Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you...Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (verses 1-4,6,11-14,18).

III. Confession Of Christ Leads To A New Life.

A. Before Conversion, One Failed To Recognize Jesus As Christ And Lord.

All belong to God by right of creation, but before conversion, that ownership is not recognized. Jesus Christ was God's Son, but before conversion, if one accepted that

fact, he said and did nothing about it. As Lord of heaven and earth, Jesus has a rightful claim upon the life of every individual, but before conversion, men do not recognize that claim upon them.

B. In The Confession, One Declares Himself Publicly For Christ.

Nicodemus went out to Jesus "by night" (John 3:2). The fact that he came by night might have been a mere circumstance, but two later references made to that fact (John 7:50 and John 19:39) possibly point to the fact that it was not merely circumstantial. Nicodemus seemed to be convinced as to who Jesus was, but he lacked the boldness to declare himself openly in behalf of Jesus. This seems fully confirmed by John 7:48 where his colleagues knew nothing about him or any of the other rulers believing on Jesus. We do not know whether Nicodemus accepted Jesus after the gospel began to be preached. He may have, for even among the leaders of the Jews, there were many who became obedient to the faith. But, one thing we do know: if he became a Christian, he had to come out into the open for Jesus, for Jesus has no secret disciples! The plan of salvation has included confession in the primary part of obedience and letting one's light shine before men after lining up with Jesus, which eliminate any possibility of secret discipleship. Whoever would be ashamed of Jesus and refuse to confess Him before men is bound to be excluded from the realm of the saints (Mark 8:38 and Matt. 10:32,33).

There are many spiritual values that accrue to the individual from making this confession before men in addition to the fact that it is one of those things that leads to salvation (Rom. 10:9,10). It is a solemn public committal to the will of Christ before witnesses (I Tim. 6:12) to which he may ever look thereafter as indication of his having pledged allegiance to the will of Christ. There will be times when he will need the force of this public committal. As a result, he can thereafter say for sure:

"It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20); "For to me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21).

Having named the name of Christ, he is naturally called upon to depart from all iniquity (II Tim. 2:19). What would be the force of this injunction if in the naming of Jesus' name, he had not pledged himself to a life of holiness? Furthermore, this initial step of courage will test one's love for Jesus (whether he seeks the praise of God more than the praise of man) and will also embolden one for the weightier matters of the Christian life to follow in which he is bound to fail if he does not have the courage of conviction strengthened.

Confession, then, leads to a new life in the same way that pledging allegiance to the flag by him who is becoming a citizen of our nation is bound to procure a faithful citizenship thereafter.

IV. Baptism Leads To A New Life.

A. The World In General Has Overlooked The Importance Of Baptism.

Baptism is not to be exalted above what is written, but that would be hard to do, for much has been written in the Bible about it in very important connections. One possibly could exalt baptism above that which is written by treating it ceremonially; that is, saying that great blessings come from being baptized regardless of whether a person had love and faith in his heart or not, or whether he had repented and confessed Christ in preparation for it. So many in the religious world have stripped baptism of any connection with salvation and have put it as a part of the new life rather than that which leads to the new life.

B. How Baptism Leads To A New Life.

One cannot have the peace of God until he is forgiven of his old life of sin, for peace follows pardon. But, according to the Scriptures, one must be baptized before pardon comes (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; and others). Furthermore, one cannot live the new life until he has come into new life. This, according to the Scriptures, is brought about by Scriptural baptism (Rom. 6:3,4). As we pointed out in our last study, the very form of baptism pictures the death and burial of one's old man of sin and the resurrection of one's spirit into the new life in Christ. As a result of this, he is thus divorced from the old life of sin and is thereby reminded that he is no longer to live in sin (Rom. 6:1,2). Furthermore, the blood of Christ (which is applied in baptism--Heb. 10:22) not only purges us from our old way of life, but sanctifies us to the service of God (Heb. 9:14).

Needless to say, much could be written upon each of the above points, but surely sufficient has been included to show that each element of what man must do to be saved has been included in the plan of salvation by God not only for a test of our obedience with reference to salvation, but to fit us to living the new life in Christ which has been involved in our acceptance of Christ.

Continuing Steadfastly

Religious teachers, except modernists, are in agreement that it is necessary to accept Christ in order to be saved. They may not all agree exactly in their teaching as to what one does in order to accept Christ, but they do agree as to the necessity of such a decision and step. As we launch forth into this study, we cannot refrain from saying we would that they not only taught the Scriptural requirements for accepting Christ, but also that they taught the absolute necessity for continuing steadfastly after conversion. But, some don't.

Did you know that the first thing affirmed of the first converts in the present dispensation was their faithfulness?

"And they continued steadfastly..." (Acts 2:42).

Have you not observed how frequently throughout the epistles addressed to Christian people the exhortation to continued faithfulness is sounded? A sample of such exhortations:

"Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord..." (1 Cor. 15:58).

Is it not noteworthy that one of the last promises in the Bible is given to those who live the overcoming life following their acceptance of Christ?

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Rev. 21:7).

In these days when many accept Christ, but do not continue in Him year in and year out, we are led to inquire of them as follows: Why turn to Christ if you do not intend to continue with Him? Will accepting Him without continuing with Him get you any farther toward the goal of salvation than traveling the first mile of a long trip and then quitting would get you to a trip's destination? Why become a Christian in the first place if it is not your desire and intention to remain one? Would a person marry in all sincerity if he intended to quit the one he was marrying in just a matter of time?

In view of both Scripture and common sense, it seems ridiculous that anyone would teach it is necessary to become a Christian and then turn around and teach it is not necessary to remain one. Yet, some are teaching it, and we might add, many are acting that way. With so many acting the role just described, they need to cry out to their teachers like the drunk infidel did to Bob Ingersol in the midst of one of his lectures: "Make it strong, Bob; a lot of us are counting on you." If the many "has-beens" have any chance, it surely would have to be on the basis of "once saved always saved"!

I remember a revival meeting we were having a number of years ago in Indiana. The man doing the preaching during the meeting and I were calling upon a woman who was a zealous advocate of "once saved always saved". We reasoned with her from the Scriptures upon the matter for an hour or more before we took our leave. She contended that she knew she was saved and that there was no possibility that she could ever be lost, and though we gave her straight Bible teaching upon it, we got about as far as an ant trying to eat a hole through pavement. After we left, the brother said to me, "I have never been so glad to get out of a place in my life. That woman tried to flirt with me every time she could get my eye." Is it any wonder she couldn't get her husband to go to a religious service anywhere? She might act that way believing about salvation as she did, but accepting God's truth upon the subject that one has to walk in the pathway of faithfulness after conversion would have dealt with her soul in such a way that she would have repented of her fleshly ways if there was any honesty or conscientiousness about her.

There is much to be said upon this subject. What we propose bringing out in this present study will be brought out under two headings: (1) "Once saved always saved" is unscriptural; and (2) "Once saved always saved" is ridiculous. Let us look at them in the above order.

I. "Once Saved Always Saved" Is Unscriptural.

A. Heb. 10:28-30 Shows It Is Unscriptural.

Concerning the people under the Old Testament who did not abide by the law they were under, verse 28 says:

"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses."

They were dealt with for their unfaithfulness. Adulterers, murderers, sabbath-breakers, unruly children, idolaters and many others were to be stoned with stones for their unfaithfulness to their covenant-law. Verse 29 speaks concerning people in this dispensation who are unfaithful to Christ after having accepted him:

"Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of Grace."

To be punished? Yes! How? In a sorer way than those unfaithful in Old Testament days! Verse 30 quotes two passages from the Old Testament to show that God will take vengeance even upon His people when they turn from Him:

"For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people."

No one can read or study this passage and get anything else out of it but the fact that God will punish His children today who become disobedient just as readily as He did His children of Israel in Old Testament times--only He will give them a "sorer punishment", which, of course, will be punishment in hell.

B. Heb. 10:38,39 Shows It To Be Unscriptural.

God has certainly willed that all His children (the "just" or "justified") continue to live the life of faith, but not all so continue. Both of these truths are borne out in verse 38:

"The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

Then, a person *can* draw back instead of continue! And if he does, God is not pleased with him! Now notice verse 39 with reference to what those receive who continue in faith and what those receive who don't:

"We are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe unto the saving of the soul."

Those who continue in the way of faith will receive the salvation of their souls, according to the above verse, and those who draw back instead of continuing in faithfulness do so "unto perdition". "Perdition" means "perishing". Here is a contrast in this verse: the faithful receive salvation; the unfaithful perish. How could language be clearer?

C. II Pet. 2:20 Shows It To Be Unscriptural.

Here is a passage that advocates of "once saved always saved" have tried their best to explain away. They have to if their theory is to stand! They have piled up effort upon effort trying to do so, for they cannot let it stand. You will see why when you read it:

"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning."

False teachers try to say this isn't talking about somebody who has become a Christian. But, it surely is. The epistle was written to Christian people as is evident from the very first verse of the book and many other such statements throughout the book. It is talking to Christian people who have escaped the pollutions of the world through knowing Christ. False teachers try to say that if these had been God's children, He wouldn't call them "hogs" and "dogs" as He does in the verses that follow the above verse. Oh? But, why wouldn't He? If He did, He did, whether we would have it that way or not! People once cleansed from sin who return to it are likened by *God's Word* to a washed sow returning to her wallowing in the mire and to a dog going back to feed on what he formerly rejected. It's Bible whether we would have it that way or not. Are we going to bend the Bible to fit our likes, or are we going to bend and change our ideas to fit the Bible? On this question, many need to change their ideas and take what the Bible says. It says that one is in a worse condition after starting with Christ and then quitting Him than the man who has never known the way of righteousness. False teachers have no explanation for that statement in the verse under consideration. If one was lost before becoming a Christian, how could he be worse off through his backsliding if he still had his salvation (something he didn't have before becoming a Christian)? But, if one is lost through backsliding, then he is back in his lost condition, and his case is worse off than before inasmuch as he has once tried and failed--a solid strike against him ever coming back and really sticking for God, for when men do not succeed the first time, they seldom ever try again, and if they do try again, it is hard for them to have the faith they need to succeed.

D. John 15:4,6 Shows It To Be Unscriptural.

In John 15, Jesus pictured Himself as a vine and His disciples as branches. In verse 4, we have this instruction:

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

Is it necessary for a branch to abide in the vine in order to bear fruit? Of course. The branch depends upon the vine to provide the food for it from the earth. How else could a branch produce fruit? In like manner, Jesus said that no disciple could bear fruit without abiding in Him. The verse itself opened, as you noticed, with the words: "Abide in me." When Jesus said, "Abide in me," it showed what He *desired* concerning us. When He spoke the words contained in verse 6, He told what would *become* of the disciple who did not abide in Him:

"If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

Does this sound like salvation? Or do "cast into the fire" and "they are burned" sound like condemnation?

I believe that we have seen from the foregoing passages (many more could be given) that the teaching of "once saved always saved" is an unscriptural doctrine. Jesus expects His followers to be true to Him. Yes, He *demand*s that they "abide in Him" as definitely as He does the sinner to accept Him! If the sinner cannot be saved without accepting Christ, neither can the Christian be saved without continuing steadfastly!

II. "Once Saved Always Saved" Is Ridiculous.

A. Such A Doctrine Promotes Unfaithfulness.

Recently, I taught a young man upon the very subject of this study. He was of the belief that one did not have to be faithful to Christ after conversion in order to be saved. He claimed to be saved, yet he did not even attend religious services. Why didn't he? He didn't have to, according to his belief. I asked him, "If you believed you had to be faithful in carrying out the commandments of the Bible in order to be saved, would you assume a more responsible attitude toward Christ's commandments than you do now?" Reluctantly, he admitted that he would, I then showed him from the Scriptures that Christ *demand*s faithfulness in order to be saved. I told Him that Christ wanted a faithful church, a holy church, a working church, a growing church. In the face of the Scriptures given him, he admitted, "I can see where the position you are setting forth would cause those who believed it to be faithful." I said, "Well, isn't that the kind of a church the Lord wants? Doesn't He want a people who leave sin alone? Doesn't He want a church that will get out and work for Him? Doesn't He want a growing church?" The answer was (and is) obvious. "Then," I said, "Christ gave the church the kind of teaching that would make it what He wanted it to be! Teaching "once saved always saved" will not produce the kind of church that Christ wants. But, teaching that one must be steadfast after conversion will! Wouldn't it be ridiculous for Jesus to want a faithful, holy, working, growing church and then give it a doctrine like "once saved always saved" that would promote unfaithfulness, ungodliness in people, and indifference to Christian service? I have read and heard a number of times that the religious body best known for teaching "once saved always saved" actually has a larger representation of persons in penal institutions than any other religious body. Well, that is understandable! The doctrine is ridiculous!

B. Such A Doctrine Would Fill Heaven With People Who Do Not Love God, Who Do Not Have A Living Faith In Jesus Christ, And Who Do Not Serve Him.

The above statement is evident. More will accept Christ than will live for Him till death. At least one out of every two (possibly much higher even) of those who one-time accepted Christ have drifted from Him. Most of them die in that very backslidden condition. Those who have drifted from Christ have not loved Him enough to obey Him when He commands them how to live; they have not had a living faith in Him, or they would have lived the life of faith; they have not cared enough about Him even to serve Him. Instead, they have shamed Him with their inconsistent and sinful lives. They have walked in their own stubborn ways. They have done as they have pleased. Now, if

everyone who has one-time accepted Christ is going to be in heaven, heaven is going to be filled with people who have not loved Christ enough to live for Him, who have not believed Him enough to do as He said. Do you mean to tell me that God is preparing heaven for spiritual fellowship throughout eternity with such people who are *unspiritual*? Such an unthinkable, outlandish teaching! To what folly it brings all the work of God! I don't believe a word of it. It isn't Bible. It's ridiculous!

C. Such A Doctrine Would Actually Destroy The Right Of Human Choice After Conversion.

I have always believed as I studied the Bible that man had the power of choice. God tells him what to do, but He doesn't force him to do it. He tells him what not to do, but He doesn't keep him from doing it. God wants all men to be saved, but He doesn't force anybody into becoming a Christian. He wants them to, but if they desire not to be, then they don't have to be Christians. Of course, they will be judged in the end for their disobedience to the will of God. When people become Christians, of course, they want to go to heaven; they want to do the will of God; they want to be Christians; they want to live apart from the sin of the world; they want to be in fellowship with God's people; they mind the spiritual things of life. Bear in mind, they do the above through choice--God does not force them to become Christians. Now, with the passing of time, what can happen? The person can lose his love for God; he can get so he doesn't care for worship services; spiritual things are boring to him; sin is alluring; he would rather be with worldly people than with Christian people; he isn't interested in heaven any more; he doesn't care about God. Now, here is what I want to know: does that man still have the power of choice? or has the fact that he was one-time converted destroyed that trait peculiar to mankind? Friends, man still has the power of choice. He became a Christian because he chose to, and the grace of God would have given him salvation--not because he deserved it, but because Jesus Christ purchased it for those who would love Him enough and believe Him enough to choose to be saved. Now that he has allowed sin to change his choice from God to sin, from spiritual things to worldly things, he still has the power of choice. Christ doesn't force a man to abide in Him. If He did, all would abide in Him. But, He has said even to His people that a man must reap what he has sown; he must accept what he has chosen; he must remain true and not grow weary in sowing to the Spirit if he will ever reap eternal life (Gal. 6:7-9). I say that this teaching of "once saved always saved" actually destroys man's power of choice after conversion, and surely such a teaching is thereby judged ridiculous!

D. Such A Doctrine Would Make The Promises Of God To The Overcomers Apply To Those Who Don't Overcome.

Many promises are made to God's obedient children. In the Book of Revelation, for instance, there are a good many such promises made to the faithful, and those promises relate to salvation. But, "once saved always saved" would make those promises apply to people who don't overcome when they are promises to an altogether different group of people--the overcomers. Let us notice. Rev. 2:7 says that Christ will give to eat of the tree of life in the midst

of God's paradise "to him that overcometh", but "once saved always saved" says that He will give them to eat of that tree whether they overcome or not. Again, Rev. 2:11 says that "he that overcometh" shall not be hurt of the second death (hell). But, "once saved always saved" says they won't go to hell even if they don't overcome. What does that do to Christ's promise? It is no promise at all, according to that. Rev. 2:17 says Christ will give to eat of the hidden manna as well as the white stone "to him that overcometh". But, "once saved always saved" promises the hidden manna and the stone to people whether they are overcomers or not. They are promising something that Jesus didn't. Rev. 2:26-28; Rev. 3:5; Rev. 3:12; Rev. 3:21; and Rev. 21:7 all contain other promises to those who overcome. They are not made to those who do not overcome. I say that any doctrine that makes God's promises to the overcomers apply to those who do not overcome is guilty of giving people a ridiculous doctrine! And I believe you can see it.

What shall we say, then, in conclusion? Simply that God commands and demands faithfulness of His people. No one will be saved who does not come to Christ for salvation, and no one will have that salvation unless he abides in Christ. The Scriptures are very clear upon this subject, and only by twisting certain clear passages and disregarding the passages dealt with in this study can people believe and teach to the contrary. I can't understand why preachers will try to get people to be faithful in their religious life and then turn around and teach them a doctrine that will promote unfaithfulness. I know that my Lord has not done it. May God help every Christian reading and studying these lines to believe in the absolute necessity of faithfulness enough to be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. And may every alien sinner reading these lines not get interested in being baptized unless he is willing to abide in Christ until death afterwards.

The Shepherds of the Flock

In our last study, we discussed the necessity of continuing steadfastly following baptism. That such faithfulness is necessary cannot be questioned. The Scriptures are very clear concerning it. In bringing about such faithfulness, we know that the individual himself is charged with the responsibility of seeing that he continues in faithfulness. To each one of us, the Bible would say:

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

This does not mean that each one is to make up his own plan of salvation, but to busy himself carrying out the requirements that God has laid upon the Christian for salvation. But, in addition to each convert bearing the