

TEMPLE BUILDERS MINISTRIES

“Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it and I will be glorified, saith the LORD” Haggai 1:8

FOUNDATION FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

TEXT : “THEREFORE LEAVING the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.” Hebrews 6:1-2

THE FOUNDATION FOR THE TEMPLE

- Jesus Christ is the rock. The foundation upon which every Christian or human temple must be built [1 Corinthians 3:11]. The basis and origin of the faith and hope of all Christians is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God [Matthew 16:14-19], the saviour of the world [John 3:16], He died as an atonement of the sins of humanity, was buried and resurrected from the dead as a proof that our sins have been paid in full, and that eternal life and all He taught and said is true [1 Corinthians 15:1-5, 1 John 2:2].
- The Bible, the Scriptures or the Word of God as we have it today is divided into two sections. The first section, the Old Testament contains thirty-nine books. The second section New Testament contains twenty-seven books.
- The Old Testament described briefly the creation of the world, of Adam the first man and his wife Eve, how they disobeyed God and handed over creation to Satan, then Abraham the man chosen by God to be the father of a special people, through whom God purposed to provide redemption for the entire human race.
- Central to God’s special purpose for Israel was His promise, sealed by His covenant, that He would send them a deliverer with the God- given task of redeeming mankind from all the consequences of his rebellion and restoring him to God’s favour. The Hebrew title of the deliverer was Messiah – which means literally “anointed one”.
- We as believers are described by God as His temple or building, individually and collectively [1 Corinthians 3:9-10, Ephesians 2:22]. The foundation of any building would determine the size and sets a limit to the weight and height. The foundation is crucial.
- Both the Old and New Testament agree that Jesus Christ Himself is the true foundation for the Christian life [Isaiah 28:16, 1 Peter 2:6, 1 Corinthians 3:11].

FOUR FACTS ABOUT BUILDING THE HUMAN TEMPLE

1. Keeping God's Word is a supreme feature that distinguishes a disciple of Christ from the world [John 14:23].
2. Keeping God's Word is the supreme test of the disciple's love (Proof) and the supreme cause of God's favour towards the disciple.
3. Christ manifests Himself to the disciple through God's Word as it is kept and obeyed [John 14:21].
4. The Father and the Son come into the life of the disciple in a distinct experience and establish their enduring home with him through God's Word.

EFFECTS OF GOD'S WORD

- God's seed is the incorruptible Word of God [1 John 3:9]. Our response to God's Word determines its effect in our lives
- For God's Word to be effective, we must lay aside filthiness and perverse delight in the impure (licentiousness). It closes the mind to the saving power of God's Word [James 1:21]. Naughtiness, bad behaviour, refusing to accept correction hinders the fruitfulness of God's Word in our lives.
- But meekness, patience and openness of mind and desire to be corrected so as not to be in the wrong equates to the reverential fear of God and respect. This would lead to blessing and fruitfulness from God through His word [Psalm 25:8-9, 12, 14].
- God's Word defined as the sword the Holy Spirit wields exposes our thought [Hebrews 4:12]. Our reaction or response is what produces the effect or fruit. It divides, judges and gives light [Matthew 10:34-35, Revelation 1:16].
- God's Word produces faith. It produces hearing; interest, attention and sincere desire to receive. This initiates a process in the soul for faith to enter the spirit of man [The seat of faith], then to mature faith which comes through study and meditation that produces spiritual strength.
- The Word of God the Bible means –that which is written. The Word of God cannot be broken [John 10:34-36].
- God's Word reveals God's welfare plan for man, man's purposes, nature, consequences for sin, and God's prescription or provision for deliverance.
- God's Word contains divine authority, inspired and originated by God [2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20. It is pure [Psalm 12:6], eternal [Matthew 24:35], it is the truth [Psalm 119:160, John 17:17]

THE NEW BIRTH [THE BEGINNING]

- Every seed determines the fruit. The life of God coming into the soul of man through the Word of God by the Holy Spirit is the new birth or regeneration. The Word of God is the seed. [1 Peter 1:23]. Being born-again gives the believer the ability to live

a victorious life, the power to become God's son/daughter -in terms of maturity [John 1:12], and the ability to see the kingdom of God [John 3:3]

- The Word of God is the only source of spiritual nourishment. We are to keep it pure. Keep the milk of the word free from contamination [1 Peter 2:1-2]. We grow or develop into maturity by using the Word [Hebrews 5:12-14].
- Hence God's Word produces faith and the new birth. It also provides spiritual nourishment.
- The Word of God produces **HEALTH OR PHYSICAL WELL-BEING** [Proverbs 4:20-22, Psalm 107:17-20]. For this to happen we must not hold back or limit God [Psalm 78:41]. We should not doubt, we are to be firmly rooted with our two eyes on Jesus [James 1:6-8]
- The Word of God produces **MENTAL ILLUMINATION** [Psalm 119:130]. We are able to judge and discern for our lives. The Word corrects and help us redirect our way to God's approved path [2 Timothy 3:16, Hebrews 4:12]
- **VICTORY OVER SIN** [Psalm 119:11]. Why hide the Word? So that through the Word sin is rooted out by application. The Word has keeping power [Psalm 17:4]. What we do must bring glory to God [Colossians 3:17, 1 Corinthians 10:31, 1 Thessalonians 4: 3-4, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17]. We have victory through the Word [1 John 2:14]. We overcome by the blood of Jesus and the Word of God [Revelation 12:11]. The blood; the token and seal of victory. The Word; we know through the Word of God what the blood of Jesus did. Testifying; of the victory that God's Word reveals in the blood. We make our victory real and effectual in our personal experience.
- **CLEANSING AND SANCTIFICATION** [Ephesians 5:25-27]. The Word produces in its application cleansing. The Word is described as water for cleansing [John 15:3] and also the blood [1 John 1:7]. Christ came by water and the blood [1 John 5:6]. We are to claim and appropriate the water and the blood for our cleansing.
- Sanctification from "Saint"-Holy and "Ification"- process. The process of making holy. It is God's provision for making believers holy thereby uniting us with the Holy God. It is the measure of which we appropriate and apply God's Word that we experience true scriptural sanctification [Romans 12:1-3, 2 Peter 1:3-4]. The central purpose of the incarnation of Jesus, sacrificial death and resurrection which lead to Him receiving and giving the Church the Holy Spirit is to sanctify to make us holy which makes indwelling of Christ possible[The purpose of God creating man].
- **REVELATORY EFFECT OF THE WORD** [James 1:23-25]. God's Word is like a mirror. The Word of God reveals our true inward spiritual nature which man's wisdom cannot reveal.
- When we use natural mirror we react to anything untoward that the mirror may reveal. We must seek God immediately for anything the Word of God exposes in our character or life. This happens by receiving the Word of God with meekness and being doers of the Word. By acting quickly we receive the benefits of God's mirror [Psalm 103:3]. It is important to act when we are convicted.

- **AS A JUDGE;** God’s Word acts as a judge because it helps us discern what is right or wrong. It is the source of light on any issue of life.
- Jesus Christ is human and divine, as the living Word of God that became flesh declares that the Word would always be the judge [John 12:47-48].
- Jesus is the judge [John 5:22-23, 26-27].
- God recognises and look on those who honour His Word [Isaiah 66:2]
- The Word of God is going to be the basis for all judgement [Matthew 5:18, 24:35, Revelation 20:11, 13]
- God said “For if we would judge ourselves we would not be judged” [1 Corinthians 11:31]. We judge ourselves by looking into God’s Word. Because Jesus was condemned in our place we are no more under condemnation [Romans 8:1].

BASIC DOCTRINES

1 REPENT AND BELIEVE [HEBREWS 6:1-2]

Basic doctrines spans the entire gamut of the Christian experience, from sinners repentance to eternity, including resurrection from the dead and final judgement

REPENTANCE

- Repentance means to change one’s mind. When used to translate a Greek verb “metanoein” in the New Testament it means “to change one’s mind”. A decision is made.
- Hence repentance is not an emotion but a firm inward decision.
- In the Old Covenant, repentance was to turn, turn again or return; this connotes external show or turning in action.
- Added together it means inward change resulting in an outward turning around to a new direction
- The prodigal son’s action depicts this kind of repentance [Luke 15:11-32]
- True repentance starts with inward change of mind or thought backed up with outward demonstration or action.
- Every human being is unregenerate or spiritually inactive without Christ. Our life and life styles are against God and compatible with the nature of Satan, that of rebellion without regard for God moving away from God daily.
- Another Greek word “metamelein” translates as remorse and anguish which is different from true scriptural repentance. The example of this type of repentance can be seen in the life of Judas who betrayed Jesus Christ [Matthew 27:3-4, 2 Corinthians 7:9-10].

- Judas repented himself but did not change his mind. He experience anguish but never truly repented. Judas' action represents an individual whose door of repentance has been shut.
- True faith starts with the call to repent as a prerequisite necessary for change. Before God show up there must be true repentance. The prayer of repentance is a prayer of faith without which God cannot hear a sinner. Only faith connects with God. First call is to repent [Luke 24:46-47].
- The apostles' call was first to repent before anything else can be done. Then baptism and remission of sins. This is the necessary step before any interaction can take place between God and man [Acts 2:37-38]. All men must repent [Acts 17:30].
- Dead works are activities that are not based on faith but on religion. Dead works are Old Covenant requirements of penance and religious rites that have passed away with the Old Covenant and were never based on faith. They are anything we trust in outside of God as activities required to be done to receive from God [Isaiah 64:6].
- Repentance starts from God through God's grace to man. Without the convicting power of the Holy Spirit man cannot repent. Only by God's Spirit [John 6:44].
- A true believer must have repentance as foundation of his/her Christian walk. We must be quick to repent when we have wronged God or man.
- Any religious work not based on true repentance leads to eternal damnation [Luke 13:3].
- After we come to Christ and our spiritual DNA is changed through the new birth we become conscious of the holiness of God. This makes quick repentance possible and interaction with the Holy Spirit profitable.

2. FAITH TOWARDS GOD [HEBREWS 11:1]

- There are two distinguishing features of faith. First is that faith always originates directly from God's Word. Second is that faith is related to God's Word.
- **FAITH:** Defined as conviction, persuasion, grounds or confidence concerning things not seen. It has its base in the heart as the confidence or a reality of a now in the present that is so real that it can be described as a substance. A condition of knowledge in the heart producing in us an assurance of its existence.
- **HOPE:** Distinguished from faith as an expectation directed at the future. Hope is mind based as a mental attitude of expectancy concerning the future. It is the helmet covering the mind and an anchor of the soul [1 Thessalonians 5:8, Hebrews 6:19]
- Faith produces a definite change in those who profess it. Change always is a product the heart. The root of repentance, change and faith is in the heart. Believing into and knowledge proceeds from the heart [Romans 10:10].
- With the mind we may believe UNTO righteousness but not INTO righteousness.

- Believing unto is abstract and may lead into action, but believing into is that which produces change or transformation of habits, character and life.
- Faith therefore produces change that is definite and foundational that would affect our general disposition. It brings us into everlasting life [John 6:47]. The everlasting life is what we have, not what we would have but what has been received
- Believing into brings you into righteousness, the life of God, victory, power and God's omnipotence as opposed to the former life of the exact opposite.
- Faith is a possession. That possession is Jesus Christ. Faith is an assurance not a hope. Hope is what you don't have but you hope to have in the future [Romans 8:24].

BASED SOLELY ON THE WORD OF GOD

- Faith deals with eternal invisible truths that are not seen. Not physical things or senses but eternal invisible truths.
- **FAITH** reveals truths of God, it is invisible, eternal, unchanging and makes us spiritual. Faith makes God's truths from God's word more real than what the senses can see or reveal.
- **CARNAL MIND** believes what it sees or believes because it sees. The carnal mind operates only with its physical senses, observes objects of the physical world, focuses on the material temporal world and is changeable.
- **THE SPIRITUALLY MINDED** believes before seeing. This means it believes first before seeing [Psalm 27:13].
- Scriptural faith consists in acting like Abraham in a successive manner [Romans 4:20-22].
 1. Abraham accepted God's promise as being true from the moment it was uttered.
 2. Abraham refused to accept the testimony of his senses as long as it did not agree with the statement of God.
 3. Because Abraham held fast to what God promised, his physical experience and testimony of his senses were brought into line with the statement of God
- Hence we experience the reality of what we believe. Faith consists of hearing, believing and acting upon the truth.
- Pilate asked; "What is truth"? [John 18:38]. Jesus presents the truth as God's Word [John 17:17]
- Christian Science [which is false] consists of man's dependence on human power, will power or power of the mind of man. Scriptural faith is God centred. It abases all that is human and magnifies only God's truths and power. Christian Science is not word based [e.g. Jehovah's witness]
- Scriptural faith is centred on God [2 Corinthians 4:7, John 3:7 and Ephesians 2:8-9].
- Presumption is arrogance clothed in some form of spirituality. Faith trusts in God working things out based on what God said.

KEY POINTS

- Accepting the testimony of the Word of God as against the testimony of our senses, dreams and visions is the major key to walking in faith [Jeremiah 23:28]
- Faith originates and acknowledges God's Word. Faith is in the heart [Ephesians 2:8].
- Spiritual minds apprehend faith that produces results. It calls things that do not exist as if they did [Romans 4:17]
- Faith is based on God's testimonies or promises.
- Faith agrees with the testimony of the senses only if it agrees with the Word of God.
- Faith is the only communication link between God and man.

EXPRESSED BY CONFESSION

- The basic principle of scriptural faith is to believe first and confess through the mouth. Our mouth must speak only what we believe.
- When the heart is full then it overflows through the mouth [Matthew 12:34].
- Faith that keeps quiet is not faith [2 Corinthians 4:13].
- Spiritual faith is in the spirit or heart.
- Scriptural faith is a condition of the heart not the mind. It is present and in the present not future.
- It produces positive change in our behaviour and experience.
- It is based solely on God's Word and accepts the testimony of the senses only when it agrees with the testimony of God's Word.
- Expressed by confession with the mouth.

UNIQUE FEATURES OF FAITH

- Whatever is done that is not of faith or based on our faith is sinful [Romans 14:23]. God expects our mouth to confess only what it believes. Praying, singing, charity work and attending Church services must be done from a heart that is settled and convinced of its faith in God. Anything not of faith is not acceptable to God if not preceded by true repentance.
- To live by faith is to consider God's Word and the whole Word of God's instructions. Living by faith is obedience [Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38].
- Faith works with humility. Because God is faith, faith responds to the humble that acknowledges their limitation and recognises man's role in dealing with God.
- When man plays his part through faith and obedience, God is bound by His Word to those who recognises God's role and man's role [Isaiah 60:22, Jeremiah 1:12, Ezekiel 36:36, 1 Thessalonians 5:24].
- To live by faith is obedience.
- Faith is the channel by which God's omnipotence becomes available to man. In essence, the limit of what faith can receive is the limit of what God can do.

- Faith believes in what God can do as what God can do using man [Joshua 10:12-14].
- All the Word of God in the Bible is the basis of our faith [2 Corinthians 1:20, Romans 8:32].
- All God's promises are available free to each person that receives them through faith in Christ' death and resurrection.
- God's promises are not dispensational and should never be judged as such. The Holy Spirit was given to interpret. He alone interprets the bible and provides help needed to appropriate God's promises.

STEPS TO TAKE

- Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to God's promises that apply to the situation for your needs
- Look for and fulfil God's condition for the fulfilment of God's promises to come [Psalm 37:5, Isaiah 56:4-7, 1John 3:22].
- Expect positively the outworking in your experience
- The type of faith that overcomes is the faith based on fulfilling God's condition so that God can fulfil His [1 John 5:4, 2 Peter 1:3-4]
- We are to commit to a definite single act of trusting continuing attitude [Psalm 37:5]

FAITH FOR SALVATION [THE GOSPEL MESSAGE]

TEXT: Romans 4:24-25, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

- Christ Jesus was delivered by God the Father to the punishment of death on account of our sins.
- Christ was buried.
- God raised Him from the dead on the third day.
- Righteousness is received from God through believing these facts.
- God calls all mankind to the only salvation available to them, provided by the creator Himself [John 6:37, John 7:37, John 14:6, Matthew 11:28].
- We must know these basic facts contained in the bible.
- Jesus calls [Revelation 3:20].
- For salvation of anyone four things must happen as an outcome of personal conviction of any individual. 1) Personally call upon the name of Christ as Lord [Romans 10:13], 2) Come to Christ [John 6:37], 3) Receive Christ [John 1:12], 4) Drink of the waters of life through God's Word which only Jesus can give [John 7:37].

FAITH AND WORKS

- Faith is not based on works, but works are the outcome of faith.
- What we believe is not based on what we do, but what we do is the outcome of what we believe.
- We must believe that all that needs to be done by Jesus was done. It is completely complete and finished [John 19:30].
- We can't earn salvation.
- We must stop working to obtain salvation [Romans 4:4-5]. The New Covenant work is to believe Jesus Christ [John 6:29].
- Beware of self-righteousness [Romans 9:31-32, Romans 10:3]. Israel pursued righteousness not by faith. They sought to establish their own righteousness despite the promise of the New Covenant [See Ezekiel 36:23-27]
- Works righteousness leads to boasting [Ephesians 2:8-9. Boasting would not be possible in the New Covenant. It is all by grace.
- There are four positive facts about the way salvation works; 1) Washing-That is cleansing from sin. 2) It is regeneration-That is we are born again and become children of God. 3) It is renewing-That is we become new creatures, new species in Christ. 4) It is of the Holy Spirit-That is it is the work of God's own Spirit.
- Crucial to this teaching is that faith comes first before works. We receive salvation from God alone without works, but after receiving our salvation by faith we work it out actively in our lives by our works [Philippians 2:12].

LIVING FAITH VS DEAD FAITH

TEXT: James 2:14-26, 2 Corinthians 4:13.

- There is the Spirit of faith which expresses the behaviour and action of the body. The Spirit connects with God and brings down the life of God.
- The believer thinks acts and speaks in an entirely new way.
- Faith is measured by obedience and submission like Abraham [Romans 4:1-22].
- Faith is what we do because of who we believe.
- Faith is obeying God's will so that we may become God's will.
- Faith is made perfect through works. [James 2:22]. True faith would always result or lead to actions like the faith of Rahab in her story [Joshua Chapters 2 and 6].

LAW AND GRACE

- The Law means the entire law given through Moses [John 1:17].
- The law was a complete set of rules, regulations and doctrines covering every facet of life, living and relationship between God and man and between man and his neighbour [Deuteronomy 4:1-2].

- Before the law was given sin was not imputed. Sin was imputed when law was imputed [Romans 5:13-14].
- Sin entered into the human race when the first man Adam transgressed God's commandment [Genesis 3:1-3, Genesis Chapter 3].
- Any who comes under the law must keep all the law [James 2:10-11].
- The law cannot be divided up for selective obedience. It is complete and must be obeyed to the letter, and applied to everyone. It was the only means to righteousness. Disobedience brings the curses stipulated [Galatians 3:10].
- Nowhere in the Bible is there any suggestion that Gentiles [None Jews] were expected to observe any of the law except a few who voluntarily chose to associate with Israel thereby placing themselves under religious obligation which God imposed on Israel.
- Three main points are these. 1) The law was given once for all, as a single complete system through Moses; nothing could ever be taken from it or added to it. 2) The law must always be observed in its entirety as a single complete system; to break one point of the law is to break the whole law. 3) As a matter of human history, this system of law was never ordained by God for Gentiles, but only for Israel.

CHRISTIANS NOT UNDER THE LAW

- The righteousness of the Christian believer does not depend on observing any part of the law [Romans 6:14].
- A believer cannot be under the law but under grace. Neither can he be under both law and grace. To escape the law and its consequences one must come under grace [1 Corinthians 15:56, Romans 7:5-6].
- The believer's righteousness is no longer derived from the keeping of the law, either wholly or in part, but solely from faith in Christ [Romans 10:4, Colossians 2:13-14].
- Through the Christ' atoning death on the cross, the law of commandment has been abolished [Ephesians 2:14-15].
- Apostle Paul described the relationship of the Christian believer to the law; the law is not made for the righteous man but for the unsaved [1 Timothy 1:8-10].
- God's true believing sons are led by the God's Spirit [Romans 8:14, Galatians 5:18], such people are not under the law.
- Two types of means to the end; the law represents a map [Old Covenant way], whilst the Holy Spirit as the guide [New Covenant way].

THE PURPOSE OF THE LAW

- To reveal sin [Romans 3:19-20]. The law was given to make men conscious of that they are sinners, and as such subject to judgement of God upon their sin. The law brings sin out in the open [Romans 7:7-13].
- To prove man's inability to save himself or become righteous by their own effort. That righteousness is a gift that is only obtainable by grace through the mercy of God [Romans 7:18-23].
- That Israel failed to submit to God and God's way of righteousness but tried to establish their own righteousness, a desire to be independent of God's grace and mercy [Romans 10:3].
- To foretell and foreshadow the Saviour who was to come through whom alone it would be possible for man to receive salvation and righteousness [Deuteronomy 18:18-19, Acts 3:22-26].
- John the Baptist introduced Jesus [John 1:29].
- The law was given as a school master [Galatians 3:22-24].
- To preserve Israel and to separate them as nation raised and chosen for God's special purposes [Galatians 3:23. Numbers 23:9].
- Jesus Christ perfectly fulfilled the law by His own spotless righteousness and by His faultless consistent observance of every ordinance [Matthew 5:17-18, Galatians 4:4-5].
- Christ is the end of the law whilst atoning for our sins [1 Peter 2:22, 24, Romans 10:4].

TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS

- The righteous requirement of the law has been fulfilled in Spirit-led Christians [Romans 8:3-4].
- Jesus described the law [Matthew 22:35-40]. The law given by the hand of Moses was merely a detailed application of the outworking of the two great commands- love for God and love for our neighbour.
- The purpose of the commandment is love [1 Timothy 1:5-7, Galatians 5:14].
- The law of love is the perfect law of liberty [James 1:25, 2:12]. Observance of the law of love is the end of the gift of the Holy Spirit. The law we could not keep until the Holy Spirit was given.
- It is a royal law because anyone who lives according to this law lives like a king, above the law [James 2:8].
- The end of both the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is the same, love. The means to the end of love in the two separate dispensation of Old or New Covenants is what constitutes the difference.
- Under the Old Covenant of law, the means used to the end is an external system of commandments and ordinances imposed upon man from without; under New

Covenant of grace the means used is a miraculous and continuing operation of the Holy Spirit within the believer's heart.

- In the Law of Moses, the law failed to achieve the end of love not because the law was wrong in itself, but because of inherent weakness and sinfulness of man's fleshy nature [Romans 7:12, 14, 22-23].
- This problem was what the New Covenant was instituted by God and ratified with the blood of Jesus Christ to solve [Ezekiel 36:26], and the effect would be obedience to the royal law [Jeremiah 31:31-33].
- Under grace the Spirit of God changes man's fleshy nature and replaces it with a new nature, one capable of receiving and manifesting God's love.
- The law depends upon man's own ability and works from without; grace depends upon the miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit and works from within.
- This love of God poured out in the human heart by God's Spirit produces, in its perfection the ninefold fruit of the Spirit. This is also known as the divine nature [Galatians 5:22-23].

NEW COVENANT PATTERN OF OBEDIENCE

- True love of God is definite and practical. Throughout the Bible the supreme test of man's love for God can be expressed in one word: obedience [Jeremiah 7:23, John 14:15, 21, 23-24]. The Holy Spirit was given to help man. God's ultimate plan is to live in man and live his life for him, in his spirit, soul and body. The Holy Spirit makes this possible.

3 THE DOCTRINES OF BAPTISM

NEW TESTAMENT BAPTISMS

TEXTS: Acts 1:5, Matthew 28:19.

- Without going into semantics, the root meaning of baptism from the Greek Word baptizo is to dip into fluid or to immerse in fluid. In this sense to baptize is to cause to be immersed or dipped.
- From our main text Hebrews 6:1-2, the complete doctrine of the Christian faith spoke of "the doctrines of baptisms". Following this conclusion through the pages of the New Testament we discover that there are actually four distinct types of baptism referred to at different times.
- Setting them in chronological order as revealed in the New Testament; first, the baptism preached and practised by John the Baptist - a baptism in water – is directly connected with the message and experience of repentance [Mark 1:4].
- Second, there is a type of baptism which is not precisely described by any one word in the New Testament, but which we may call "the baptism of suffering" as it was referred to by Jesus as a baptism He must be baptised to [Luke 12:50]. Jesus warned the two sons of Zebedee of this baptism [Mark 10:38]. Jesus was referring to the

surrender of His whole being, spirit, soul and body according to the will of His father to pay by His vicariously suffering the price for the sins of humanity.

- The third type of baptism revealed in the New Testament is the Christian baptism in water, a direct commandment of Jesus to His disciples [Matthew 28:19]. The primary feature which thus distinguishes Christian baptism from the baptism of John the Baptist is that Christian baptism is to be carried out in the full name and authority of the triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This was not so with John’s baptism.
- The fourth type of baptism revealed in the New Testament is the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Jesus, when instructing His disciples carefully distinguished it from water baptism [Acts 1:5]. Jesus also revealed the basic purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit which is a supernatural endowment with power of God from on high to be witnesses for Christ [Acts 1:8].
- Of the four types of baptism which have been listed above, there is one –the baptism of suffering – which belongs to a more advanced level of spiritual experience than the rest and therefore does not come within the scope of this series of studies which is deliberately limited to the basic doctrines and experience of the Christian faith. For this reason we shall say nothing more about this baptism of suffering.
- The doctrine of baptisms in the order they were unfolded in the New Testament are; 1) the baptism of John the Baptist, 2) Christian baptism in water, 3) the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

JOHN’S BAPTISM COMPARED TO THE CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

- Paul encountered a group of people who called themselves “disciples” at Ephesus where he taught them the difference between the baptism of John and the Christian baptism [Acts 19:1-5]. John’s baptism was no longer accepted as being equivalent to, or a substitute for, Christian baptism.

JOHN’S BAPTISM – REPENTANCE AND CONFESSION

- John’s ministry was a transition from the dispensation of law and the prophets to the dispensation of the gospel.
- The summary of John’s message and ministry was 1) repentance and 2) public confession of sins. Those who were willing to meet these two condition were baptised by John in the river Jordan as a public testimony that they have repented from their past sins and were committing themselves to lead better lives [Mark 1:1-5].
- The main purpose of the message and ministry of John; 1) they prepared the hearts of the people of Israel for the advent and revelation of their long –awaited Messiah, Jesus Christ. 2) They provide a link between the dispensation of the law and the prophet, which was closed by John’s ministry, and the dispensation of the gospel,

which was initiated about three years later as a result of death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- John preached a baptism of repentance into remission of sins [Matthew 3:11], this means repentance came first before they could be baptised by John. John demanded from the Pharisees and the Sadducees when many of them came to be baptised to “Prove first by your actions that there has been a real change in your lives before you ask me to baptise you”. In other words they should provide evidence by repentance and remission of sins first.
- John’s baptism therefore illustrates that the outward act of being baptised serve as a visible confirmation that those being baptised had already passed through the experience of repentance and forgiveness. Baptism serves as an outward seal giving assurance of an inward transformation that has already taken place.
- However those who John baptised do not receive the abiding inward peace and victory over sin that accompany the Christian baptism which comes after the gospel message. It was transitory. But their hearts were prepared to receive the gospel message when it should be proclaimed.

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM – FULFILLING ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS

- The best introduction of the Christian baptism is the baptism of Jesus Himself [Matthew 3:13-17].
- However Jesus baptism was to “fulfil all righteousness” not for repentance of remission of sins because He had no sin to repent for [1 Peter 2:21-22].
- John acknowledged that it was he who needed to be baptised by Jesus [Matthew 3:14-15].
- So Jesus Christ was deliberately establishing a pattern and standard of behaviour in which He desired all Christian believers to follow Him. His baptism is an example set for all Christian believers.
- Jesus explained to John that He was submitting Himself for baptism to fulfil or complete all righteousness [Matthew 3:15].
- Jesus’ baptism and pattern according to His Word can be classified into three main reasons. 1) “Thus” denotes establishing a pattern for the method of baptism. He was not baptised as an infant even though He had been brought to Jerusalem as an infant to be presented to the Lord, but he was not baptised until He had come to years of understanding. So Jesus permitted Himself to be wholly immersed beneath the waters of Jordan and came up [Matthew 3:16].
- 2) “It is fitting” suggests that for those who would follow Christ, being baptised is something ordained by God. It is not a legal requirement like the laws of Moses, but it is for Christians a natural expression of sincere wholehearted discipleship. Jesus identified here with those who would follow His example.

- Finally, righteousness was what Jesus had inwardly, in allowing Himself to be baptised, Jesus fulfilled or completed this inward righteousness by an outward act of obedience to the will of His heavenly Father. It was through this outward show of obedience and dedication to God that Jesus actually entered into the active life of ministry by which He fulfilled the plan of God the father.
- This means that true Christians have not merely confessed and repented of their sins, but by faith in the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ they have been justified; God has imputed to them the righteousness of Christ Himself on the basis of their faith. This is why Christians are baptised.
- By the outward act of obedience they complete the inward righteousness which they have already received in their heart by faith. This marks the main difference between the Christian baptism from the baptism John preached and the reason why Apostle Paul would not accept John's baptism.

CONDITIONS FOR CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

- The first condition for Christian baptism is **REPENTANCE**. This can be seen in the response of Apostle Peter to the Jewish multitude's reaction to Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. Apostle Peter gave them instruction to repent and be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ [Acts 2:37-38].
- Jesus Christ gave the second condition for Christian baptism. He said he who **BELIEVES** and is baptised will be saved [Mark 16:15-16].
- The early Church took Jesus fully at His word. This means once a person believes in Jesus for salvation, he was immediately baptised. The experience of the Philippian jailer provides a dramatic example [Acts 16:25-34].
- The first two requirements for baptism, repenting and believing, line up with the first three foundational doctrines presented in Hebrews 6:1-2, 1) repentance, 2) faith, 3) the doctrine of baptisms. In the Christian experience baptism must be built on repentance and believing.
- The account of the house hold of Cornelius is also an example of the Christian baptism. Apostle Peter saw God's hand move with tangible evidence that not only did the house hold of Cornelius believe, they received the gift of the Holy Spirit and spoke in new tongues. This compelled Peter to baptise Cornelius a Roman gentile and his house hold in water [Acts 10:33-48].
- There is no evidence that children were considered eligible for baptism.

EMPHASIS ON TEACHING BEFORE BAPTISM

- The instruction that Jesus gave in Matthew 28:19-20 has been interpreted to mean that believers must be taught for weeks or months in some cases before they can be baptised. However, there is no evidence to back up this practise as seen in the present day Church. This is the same with baptising infants.

- The event of the day of Pentecost concluded with three thousand new believers being baptised on the same day [Acts 2:41]. Those who received the salvation message through Philip were baptised immediately [Acts 8:18]. This was also the same with the Ethiopian eunuch [Acts 8:29-38].
- After baptism, new converts continue to receive instructions as can be seen in Acts 2:42.
- This is the New Covenant scriptural pattern of establishing new converts in the faith after they have been baptised.

SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

TEXT: Romans 6:1-7

- The central truth of Christ's atonement and the ordinance of Christian baptism are simple and practical. As it is in the natural realm, after every death there follows burial. The same order applies also in spiritual realm: first death, and burial.
- Through faith in Christ's atonement we reckon ourselves, according to God's Word, to be dead with Him: we reckon our old man, the body of sin, to be dead. Thereafter, the next act appointed by God's Word is the burial of the old man, this dead body of sin.
- The ordinance by which we carry out this burial is the ordinance of Christian baptism. In every service of Christian baptism there are two successive stages: 1) a burial, 2) a resurrection. These two stages of baptism correspond to the two stages of the inner transformation within the believer who accepts Christ's atonement on his behalf: 1) the death to sin, 2) the new life to righteousness and to God.
- Christian baptism in water is, first, a burial in a typical grave of water and, second, a resurrection out of that grave into a new life that is lived to God and to righteousness. The burial is the outward expression of the death to sin, the death of the old man: the resurrection is the outward expression of the new life to righteousness and to God. The New Testament declares this to be the purpose of Christian baptism [Romans 6:3-4, Colossians 2:12].
- There are three important facts about baptism. 1) By true Christian baptism we are baptised into Christ Himself – not into any particular church, sect or denomination [Galatians 3:27]. 2) The effect of baptism depends upon the personal faith of the one who is being baptised; it is through faith in what God does. Without faith, the mere ceremony of baptism is of no effect or validity whatsoever. 3) The believer who is raised up out of the watery grave of baptism to walk in the newness of life does this not in his own power but in the power of God's glory, the same power which raised Jesus from the grave. The power which raised Jesus from the grave was revealed through Apostle Paul as "the Spirit of holiness"; that is, God's own Holy Spirit [Romans 1:4].

- Thus the believer through the waters of baptism, commit himself to a new life to God and to righteousness, which is to be in total dependence upon the power of the Holy Spirit.
- According to the New Testament pattern, each time new believers are added to the Church, they act out, through baptism, their identification by faith with Christ – first, in His death and burial to sin; second, in His resurrection to newness of life. In this way baptism keeps before the whole Church the great central purpose of Christ’s atonement.
- The Christian baptism is parallel to John’s baptism, first repentance then baptism.

THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

- The whole teaching of the entire New Testament agrees on this fact, clearly and emphatically stated: Jesus Christ alone – and no other – is the one who baptises in the Holy Spirit [Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33].
- The phrase “to be baptised in the Holy Spirit” suggests that the believers whole personality is immersed, surrounded and enveloped in the presence and power of the holy Spirit, coming down over him from above and from without.
- The baptism in the Holy Spirit does not make a person a member of the body of Christ. Rather it is a supernatural seal acknowledging that that person has already, by faith, become a member of Christ’s body.
- As Apostle Paul stated about our baptism into one body, it agrees with the phrase used in John’s baptism and the Christian water baptism. They both pointed to the act of baptism as an outward seal and affirmation of an inward spiritual condition [1 Corinthians 12:13].
- Jesus likens the gift of the Holy Spirit to the drinking of water [John 7:37-39].
- All the usage in the scripture such as “to drink of the Holy Spirit,” “to be filled with the Holy Spirit” and “to receive the Holy spirit” suggests an experience in which the believer receives the fullness of the Holy Spirit inwardly within himself [Acts 1:5, Acts 8:15, 17].
- It also indicate that the Holy Spirit comes down over, or is poured out upon the believer from above [Acts 2:2, 23, Acts 11:15, Acts 19:6].
- The key points of summary of the experience of the Holy Spirit baptism are these: 1) the experience of which we are speaking is made up of two distinct complementary aspects, one outward and the other inward. 2) Outwardly, the invisible presence and power of the Holy Spirit comes down from above upon the believer and surrounds, envelops and immerses him. 3) Inwardly, the believer, in the likeness of one drinking, receives the presence and power of the Holy Spirit within himself until there comes a point at which the Holy Spirit, thus received, in turn wells up within the believer and flows forth like a river from the depths of his being.

THE OUTWARD EVIDENCE

- The invisibility of the Holy Spirit was acknowledged by Jesus and compared to the wind [John 3:8]. Hence it is perfectly scriptural to use the word manifestations in connection with the Holy Spirit. The wind itself is invisible but the effect it produces can be heard and seen.
- This fact is confirmed by Apostle Peter's description of the effects produced by the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost [Acts 2:33]. Apostle Paul also acknowledged the work of the Spirit in his own ministry [1 Corinthians 2:4].
- The Holy Spirit can have a similar effect in every believer's experience [1 Corinthians 12:7].
- Paul's phrases such in connection with the Holy Spirit such as – the "demonstration of the Spirit" and the "manifestation of the Spirit" shows clearly that the presence and operation of the Holy Spirit can produce effects which can be perceived by our physical senses.
- In all the cases recorded in the New Testament we find that there is one – and only one – outward manifestation which is common, in each case the scripture explicitly stated that those who received this experience "spoke with tongues," or "spoke with other tongues" [Acts 2:2-4, 10:44-46, 19:6].
- Other manifestations were also mention, but none is mentioned as having taken place on more than one in all the occasions. On the day of Pentecost it was the sound of rushing wind which was not repeated in any other occasion. Again at Ephesus the new converts spoke with tongues but also prophesied. However this manifestation of prophesying was not mentioned as having occurred on the day of Pentecost or anywhere else. The only common manifestation is the experience of speaking in other tongues.
- It is therefore accepted New Testament evidence that speaking in tongues in an evidence of having been baptised in the Holy Spirit. However it is important to differentiate between the gifts of speaking in other tongues received as an added spiritual gift of the Holy Spirit and the gift of tongues that accompany baptism in the Holy Spirit of which it has been determined as being immersed in the Holy Spirit.
- This in essence is trying to differentiate between the fullness of God that produce fruit. One can receive the gift of "speaking in tongues" – dorea, which is supernatural utterance in tongues without receiving the gift of "other tongues" – charisma. But one cannot be baptised without speaking in tongues.
- The Apostles accepted speaking in tongues as evidence of baptism in the Holy Spirit.

RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

- The New Testament depicts two separate experiences, both of which are described as "receiving the Holy Spirit" in one use of the expression but not in the other.

- To distinguish these two experiences we would compare the events of two Sundays, each uniquely important in the history of the Christian Church. The first is the resurrection Sunday; the second is Pentecost Sunday.
- On resurrection Sunday Jesus appeared to the apostles in a group for the first time after resurrection, breathing upon and accompanied this breathing with “Receive the Holy Spirit” [John 20:22]. In Greek the same word *pneuma* means both “spirit” and “breath”. The words of Jesus could be translated “Receive holy breath”. With this experience the apostles passed from the “Old Testament salvation” to “New Testament salvation”. Their salvation was complete having met the two requirements of confessing Jesus as Lord and believing that God raised Him from the dead [Romans 10:9]. They had new life – eternal life - which had triumphed over sin and Satan, over death and the grave.
- Yet even after this wonderful encounter Jesus made it plain to the apostles that their experience of the Holy Spirit was still incomplete. He commanded them to wait until they are baptised in the Holy Spirit and thus endued with power from on high for effective witness and service [Luke 24:49, Acts 1:5, 8, 2:4].
- We can sum up the differences between the two experiences of receiving the Holy Spirit. On resurrection Sunday it was 1) the resurrected Christ, 2) the inbreathed Spirit, 3) the result: “Life”. On Pentecost Sunday it was 1) the ascended Christ, 2) the outpoured Spirit, 3) the result: “power.”
- The fact that a person has been genuinely converted does not by itself constitute evidence that that person has received the Holy Spirit. The evidence of receiving the Holy Spirit remains speaking with tongues.
- Speaking with tongues is not fruit. A person would as a matter of nature manifest fruit in the process of time, but receives gift as an event in his/her life – an experience by faith.

HOW TO RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

- Christ first purchased man’s redemption by His atoning death and resurrection. Then He ascended to His Father in heaven and there presented the blood which was the evidence and seal of redemption. Upon the Father’s acceptance of the blood, Christ received from the Father the gift of the Holy Spirit to pour upon those who believe in Him [Luke 24:49, Acts 2:33, Galatians 3:13-14, Hebrews 9:11-12, 12:24].

We would examine briefly the conditions which must be fulfilled in the life of a person who desires to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

- There is one basic principle which applies to every provision made by the grace of God. Every transaction between God and believers can only be by grace. And grace is received only through one means- Faith [Romans 11:6, Galatians 3:13-14].

- Apostle Paul in the above passages in the Scripture has contrasted expression “grace” and “works”. By grace Paul means the free, unmerited favour and blessing of God bestowed upon the undeserving, and even upon the ill-deserving. By works Paul means anything a man may do of his own to earn for himself the blessing and favour of God.
- Paul states that these two ways of receiving from God are mutually exclusive, they can never be combined. Whatever a man receives from God by grace is not of work; whatever a man receives from God by works is not of grace.
- The essential preparation for believers to receive the Holy Spirit is that they be instructed out of the Scriptures on the nature of God’s provision for them and how they may claim this provision through faith in the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. If this kind of scriptural instruction is first given and received with faith by those seeking the Holy Spirit, there should be no need for great effort or delay in their receiving the gift.
- Paul warned against any application of formulas or technique to receive the Holy Spirit. Faith is not a substitute for obedience. True faith is always manifested in obedience.

SIX STEPS OF FAITH

To express complete obedience, we find six steps set forth in Scripture which mark the pathway of obedience leading to the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Repentance and baptism

- Repentance is the inward change of heart and the attitude toward God that opens the way for the sinner to be reconciled with God. Thereafter, baptism is an outward act by which the believer testifies to the inward change wrought by God’s grace in his heart [Acts 2:38].

Thirsting

- One essential condition for receiving the fullness of the Holy Spirit is to be hungry and thirsty [Matthew 5:6, John 7:37-38]. God responds to our inner longings, but He is not impressed by our religious profession. God does not squander His blessing on those who feel no need for them.

Asking

- Jesus has placed upon God’s children an obligation to ask their heavenly Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit. The scriptural attitude Jesus taught was to ask until we receive, and not faint [Matthew 7:7-8, Luke 11:13].

Drinking

- After asking, the next step is receiving. Jesus calls this drinking [John7:37]. Drinking represents an active process of receiving. The infilling of the Holy Spirit cannot be received by a negative or passive attitude. No one can drink except of his own active volition, and no one can drink with a closed mouth [Psalm 81:10].

Yielding

- After drinking, the sixth and last step to receiving the Holy Spirit is yielding. Paul speaks to Christians about twofold surrender to God [Romans 6:13]
- Two successive stages are set before us as Christians. The first surrender is of yourselves – the surrender of the will and personality. There is however a further degree of surrender of our physical members.
- To surrender our physical members requires a much greater measure of confidence in God. In yielding ourselves – our wills – we yield obedience to the revealed will of God, but we retain the exercise of our own understanding. We are willing to do what God asks of us provided that we first understand what is asked.
- However in yielding our physical members we go beyond this. We no longer seek even to understand intellectually what God asks of us. We merely hand over unreserved control of our physical members and allow God to use them according to His own will and purpose without demanding to understand what God is doing or why He is doing it. This is trust.
- It is as we make this second surrender that we come to the place of total, unconditional yieldedness. And it is at this very point that the Holy Spirit comes in His fullness and takes control of our members.

THE ROLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- It is crucial to every believer to know that our transformation into the exact image of Christ is the mission of the Holy Spirit in our lives. This starts with our regeneration, then baptism or empowerment for transformation for service.
- It is our duty towards God to seek the knowledge of God and learn all we can about how to relate with the Holy Spirit. This is the way to maturity. The Holy Spirit is the New Covenant promise that Jesus ratified with His blood. He is our partner and the only one given to help Christians succeed in every area of life.

4. LAYING ON OF HANDS

TEXT: 2 Timothy 1:6

- “Laying on of hands” is an act in which one person places his hands upon another person with some definite spiritual purpose. Normally this act is accompanied by prayer or by prophetic utterance, or both.

- The practice of Laying on of hands may be considered as an adaptation of what is basically a natural human action or reaction to friendly acknowledgement of friendship and pleasure at meeting each other. For example in some parts of the world, when two men meet who are friends, it is normal for them to lay their hands on each other's shoulder as a friendly gesture.
- As a religious act the Laying on of hands signifies one of three possible things. 1) The person laying on hands may thereby transmit spiritual blessing or authority to the one upon whom hands are laid. 2) The person laying on hands may thereby acknowledge publicly some spiritual blessing or authority already received from God by the one upon whom hands are laid. 3) The person laying on hands may thereby publicly commit to God for some special task or ministry the one upon whom hands are laid.
- At times, all these three purposes may be combined in one and the same act of laying on of hands.

OLD TESTAMENT PRECEDENTS

The laying on of hands was an accepted practice in the earliest records of God's people, for imparting blessing, authority and healing.

- For instance, Jacob blessed the two sons of Joseph Ephraim and Manasseh who brought them to Jacob his father. Consider how Jacob blessed them [Genesis 48:14]. Jacob indicated that he was conscious of divine guidance in placing his right hand upon Ephraim the younger and his left hand on Manasseh the older giving the first and greater blessing to Ephraim and lesser to Manasseh the older.
- This passage shows it was an accepted practice that the blessing of Jacob should be transmitted to his two grandsons by laying his hands upon their heads; and furthermore, that greater blessing was transmitted through Jacob's right hand and lesser through the left hand.
- As Moses came to the end of his earthly ministry, he asked the Lord to appoint a new leader over Israel who should be ready to take his place [Numbers 27:18-20].
- Moses carried out this commandment of the Lord [Numbers 27:22-23].
- Moses' action produced a tremendous result in Joshua [Deuteronomy 34:9].
- By this divinely ordained act of Moses laying his hands on Joshua, Moses accomplished two main purposes: 1) He transmitted to Joshua a measure of spiritual wisdom and honour which he had himself received from God; 2) he publicly acknowledge before the whole congregation of Israel God's appointment of Joshua as the leader who was to succeed him.
- Another significant act of laying on of hands took place when Joash, king of Israel, went down to pay his last respects to the prophet Elisha who lay upon his deathbed [2Kings 13:15-17].

- Shooting the arrow eastward through the window symbolised the victory which Joash was to gain in battle over the Syrians. Elisha acknowledged God's divine appointment of Joash as the leader who would bring deliverance to Israel.
- This divine appointment of Joash was made effective through Elisha's laying his hands upon the hands of Joash as the latter held the bow and shot the arrow, which was symbolic of victory and deliverance.
- Through the laying on of Elisha's hands, there were transmitted to Joash, the divine wisdom and authority needed to equip him as the deliverer of God's people.

TWO NEW TESTAMENT ORDINANCES FOR HEALING

- There are two main ordinances for healing in the New Testament. The first is laying hands on the sick, the second is anointing with oil.
- The first associated with the ministry of physical healing was authorised in His final commission to His disciples [Mark 16:17-18]. Laying on of hands in the name of Jesus is appointed as a means for physical healing to be ministered to those who are sick.
- Anointing the sick with oil in the name of the Lord was latter appointed as an ordinance for physical healing of the sick [James 5:14-15].
- Both of the ordinances are effective only through the exercise of faith in the name of the Lord; that is, in the name of Jesus. In the case of anointing with oil, it is specifically stated that prayer must accompany this act. In the passage about laying hands on the sick in Mark's Gospel, no specific mention is made of prayer. However, in most cases it would be natural to pray for the sick person, as well as laying hands on him.
- This means it is possible to combine the two ordinances. Specific instructions' opposing the use of both ordinances was not given. It is perfectly scriptural to lay hands on the sick without anointing them with oil. Likewise, it is perfectly scriptural to anoint the sick without laying hands on them.
- The main difference in the two ordinance are these; anointing the sick is in reference to those who are already in faith "among you", whereas laying of hands on the sick is in reference to preaching the gospel to the unconverted or newly converted [Mark 16:15-20]. This indicates that the primary purpose of these supernatural signs – including the healing of the sick through laying on of hands – is to confirm the truth of the gospel message among people who have not previously accepted.
- It seems clear, therefore, that ministering to the sick through laying on of hands in the name of Jesus is primarily intended not for established Christians who are members of the churches but for the unconverted, or for those who have newly come to the faith.
- Sometimes complete healing is received instantly, as soon hands are laid on the sick person. At times, however, healing comes only as a gradual process. In the latter

case it is most important that the person seeking healing continue to exercise faith until the process of healing is complete.

IMPARTING THE HOLY SPIRIT AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS

- The next main purpose of laying on of hands, as practised in the New Testament, is to help those seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit.
- There are five accounts of how people received the baptism in the book of Acts; 1) the first disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost [Acts 2:1-4]. 2) The new converts in Samaria [Acts 8:14-20]. 3) Saul of Tarsus, later apostle Paul, in the city of Damascus [Acts 9:17]. 4) Cornelius and his household [Acts 10:44-46]. 5) The disciples at Ephesus, to whom Paul preached and ministered [Acts 19:1-6].
- In three out of the five cases those seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit were ministered to by the other believers through the laying on of hands.
- In Samaria the apostles Peter and John laid hands on the new converts and prayed for them [Acts 8:18].
- In Damascus the disciple Ananias laid hand upon Saul of Tarsus that he might receive his sight and also be filled with the Holy Spirit. In this case both physical healing and baptism in the Holy Spirit were ministered through the ordinance of laying on of hands.
- The case of Ananias and his ministry under the instruction of God proves that you don't have to hold any ministerial office in church to perform the act and function of laying on of hands in church. This is in line with what Jesus said [Mark 16:17-18].
- However, the Scripture also warns us that this ordinance of laying on of hands upon believers is not to be practised lightly or carelessly. Paul warned Timothy [1 Timothy 5:22].

WARNINGS ABOUT LAYING ON OF HANDS

- Apostle Paul gave three distinct warnings to Timothy: 1) do not lay hands on anyone hastily, 2) nor share in other people's sins, and 3) keep yourself pure.
- In the contact that occurs during laying on of hands either to receive the Holy Spirit, praying for the sick and ordination of ministers, there is always the possibility of spiritual harm resulting to one or both believers. If the spirit of one believer is not altogether pure – if it is defiled in any way by unconfessed sin or evil association – then there is a possibility that the spirit of the other believer may be harmfully affected by this defiling contact. That this danger is real is made plain by the two warnings which Paul gives in this particular context: “nor share in other people's sins” and “keep yourself pure.”

FOUR MAJOR SAFEGUARDS IN EXERCISING THIS MINISTRY

- This ministry should never be exercised lightly or carelessly but always in the spirit of prayer and humility.
- The guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit should be sought at every stage: with whom to pray, when to pray, how to pray.
- The believer who lays on hands must know how to claim on behalf his own spirit the continual purifying and protecting power of the blood of Christ.
- The believer who lays on hands must himself be so empowered by the Holy Spirit that he is able to overcome any kind of evil influence seeking to work in or through the one upon whom hands are laid.

These dangers exist in all cases of laying on of hands, but it is greatest where the purpose of laying on of hands is for baptism in the Holy Spirit. In a figurative way, we may say that the Holy Spirit is heaven's electricity, and the same principle applies in the heavenly as in the earthly realm: The greater the power involved the greater the need for adequate protection and safeguards.

IMPARTING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

- There is scriptural authority for a believer imparting spiritual gifts to others [Romans 1:11-12]. Apostle Paul explained the effect and purpose he intends this to produce upon the Christian there, for he adds "so that you may be established."
- Imparting of spiritual gifts is one scriptural way of establishing or strengthening believers in their faith and experiences.
- The free operation of spiritual gifts within a congregation enables the various members to comfort, to encourage and to strengthen one another. This in essence would be the mutual ministry between Paul and the Roman congregation.
- The operation and effect of spiritual gifts within a congregation was described by Paul in the similar terms in 1 Corinthians [1 Corinthians 1:4-8]. The operation of spiritual gifts were 1) the testimony of Christ is confirmed in them, 2) they are themselves confirmed or strengthened by God through these gifts.
- Paul also indicated God's revealed purpose that spiritual gifts continue to operate in the Christian church right up to the return of Christ [1 Corinthians 1:7-8]
- It is very crucial for every believer to understand the purpose of spiritual gifts and never to consider or treat them as optional. According to the New Testament, the supernatural spiritual gifts are an integral, built-in part of God's total plan for the church. Without these gifts in operation the church can never function on the level of power and efficiency God intended.

EXAMPLE OF TIMOTHY

- Certain definite facts can be established in the scriptures about Paul’s instructions addressed to Timothy. 1) Timothy received some definite spiritual gift [2 Timothy 1:6, 1 Timothy 4:14, 1 Timothy 1:18]. The precise nature of this gift is never specified by Paul. 2) We learn that this spiritual gift was imparted through the laying on of hands by local church elders described as “presbytery”. 3) The imparting of a spiritual gift to Timothy by the laying on of hands was associated with prophetic utterance [1 Timothy 4:14]. This means that the gift to Timothy was supernaturally revealed through the gift of prophecy and made effective by laying on of hands.
- God’s had a special, a special ministry and purpose committed to Timothy, the nature of which would require certain spiritual gift. The spiritual gift it was emphasised was vitally necessary to the success of Timothy’s ministry [1 Timothy 1:18, Ephesians 6:12].
- The Christian life – especially the life of a minister – is warfare, a continual contest against unseen forces of darkness and wickedness.
- Apostle Paul recommended remedy against fear and doubt that plagued Timothy [2 Timothy 1:7]. The remedy is twofold: 1) that Timothy should stir up –rekindle into flame – the spiritual gift that he had received through laying on of hands; 2) that Timothy should recall and be encouraged by the prophecies which outlined in advance the course that God had planned for his life.
- This same approach is available to direct, encourage and strengthen God’s people and appointed ministers.

COMMISSIONING MINISTERS

- The next purpose of laying on of hands is connected with the sending out of apostles from a local. The local Church at Antioch in Syria provides the clearest example of this [Acts 13:1-4].
- The above provides a great deal of information about the way in which, according to the New Testament, a local church conducted its affairs.
- First of all we notice that in this church at Antioch two definite spiritual ministries were present and were recognised by the church: those of prophet and teacher. Five men were recognised and mentioned by name as exercising these ministries.
- Second, we notice that these leaders in the congregation not only prayed, they fasted. Furthermore, they did not merely fast privately as individuals, but fasted together in a group.
- This is in line with Joel’s prophetic exhortations for the last days [Joel 1:14, 2:15, 28].
- Joel’s prophecy lays special emphasis on the leaders of God’s people. He specifies “the elders” [Joel 1:14] and “the priests, who minister to the Lord” [Joel 2:17]. Thus spiritual leaders of God’s people are called upon to set a public example in matter of

fasting. Clearly the leaders of the church at Antioch understood this, for “they ministered to the lord and fasted” [Acts 13:2].

PAUL AND BARNABAS SENT OUT

- One reward which they received for waiting upon God was that the Holy Spirit spoke directly to them and in this way revealed to them the mind and purpose of God for the extension of His work through them.
- This indicates that God had already spoken privately and individually to Paul and Barnabas about the work that He wanted them to do before He spoke publicly concerning them and their work to all the leaders of the church [Acts 13:2].
- The elders reacted to the supernatural revelation of God’s will by laying hands on Paul and Barnabas and sent them away after they have fasted and prayed. [Acts 13:3]. This means they fasted and prayed the second time after they received the revelation before laying hands on them.
- In the second period of prayer and fasting it is reasonable to suppose that the elders united together to claim on behalf of Paul and Barnabas the divine grace and power which they would need for the accomplishment of God’s plan.
- Thereafter, the sending forth of Paul and Barnabas from the church at Antioch was consummated by one further ordinance. The other leaders of the church laid hands upon Paul and Barnabas and so sent them forth.
- The act of laying hands represented the open acknowledgement by the church leaders that God had chosen and called Paul and Barnabas.
- Second, by laying hands upon Paul and Barnabas, the other church leaders claimed for them the special spiritual wisdom , grace and power which they would need for the successful accomplishment of their God- given task. This is similar to the commission of Joshua by the laying on of hands by Moses after being directed by God.
- It is clear that it is the Holy Spirit as the executive agent and arm of the God head now present on earth, who was responsible for the commissioning and sending forth of the two apostles.
- This is a perfect scriptural procedure and example of divine and human co-operation – God and His church working as partners together.

THE RESULT

- They reported back to the Church all that God had done with them on their first missionary journey [Acts 14:26-27].
- The outcome of their commission indicates that hands being laid on them constitute a means by which God’s servants may be commended to the grace of God for a special work to which God has called them.

- We can observe that they completed their God-given work. This means they successfully accomplished their work without omissions or failures. This means when God calls a man to special tasks, He also makes available to that man all the means and the spiritual grace required for the complete and successful accomplishment of that task.
- We should notice the impact of their ministry upon the Gentiles. They found that God had gone ahead to open the doors and prepare the hearts. Such is the power of united prayer and fasting: to open doors otherwise would remain closed. Power generated through prayer and fasting was made available through laying on of hands.

APPOINTING DEACONS AND ELDERS

- There is an account of appointment of seven men to an administrative office in the church at Jerusalem in the book of Acts [Acts 6:1-6].
- By common consent of almost all interpreters, it is agreed that the office to which these men were appointed was that which came to be designated by the official title of “deacon”. We find that the appointment was made effective through the laying on of hands by the church leaders.
- There were two classes of administrative officers. These two classes were elders and deacons. Closer examination of the actual words used in the original Greek will reveal that the three titles “bishop,” “overseer” and “elder” are merely three different names for the one and the same office. The Greek word “episkopos” in plain literal meaning is overseer. The 1611 King James Version rendered the word “overseer,” at other times “bishop”.
- Thus we find that these three words, bishop, overseer and elder, are merely three different titles used to designate one and the same office [Acts 20:17, 28, 1Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:5, 7].
- The main qualifications of the two administrative offices are set forth in the following passages of Scripture [Acts 6:3, 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1:5-9].
- The two main duties of the elders are described as “ruling” and as “labouring in word and doctrine” [1 Timothy 5:17].
- On other hand, the word deacon in its original form means a “servant.” The primary task as set forth in the scriptures of the deacons is to serve tables – that is, to minister to the material needs of the congregation. In doing this, they were also serving the apostles.
- The procedure for appointing deacons is outlined in Acts 6:3-6. The apostles delegated to the congregation as a whole the responsibility for choosing from among their own number men suited to fill the office of deacon.
- After these men have been chosen by the congregation, they were brought before the apostles, who first prayed over them and then laid hands upon them.

- This act of laying hands upon the deacons served three main purposes. 1) The apostles publicly acknowledged thereby that they accepted these men as fitted to hold the office of deacon. 2) They publicly committed these men to God for the task for which they had been chosen. 3) They transmitted to these men a measure of their own spiritual grace and wisdom needed for the task that they had to carry out. Two of these men appointed as deacons – Stephen and Philip – subsequently developed outstanding ministries of their own.
- For the account of the appointment of elders by Paul and Barnabas we may turn to Acts [Acts 14:21-23].
- According to divine pattern, all appointments in the church should proceed from the Holy Spirit.
- All these would indicate that the accepted way to ordain elders was by laying hands on them. Laying on of hands as an ordinance has a close vital connection with many important aspects of Christian life and ministry.
- In summary, the five main purposes indicated in the New Testament for lay on of hands are: 1) to minister healing to the sick, 2) to help those seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit, 3) to impart spiritual gifts, 4) to send out apostles and 5) to ordain deacons and elders in a local church.

5 RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

TEXT: Philippians 3:11

AT THE END OF TIME: ETERNITY

- Eternity is not merely the endless extension of time. Eternity differs in its nature from time. Eternity is an altogether different realm, a different mode of being. Eternity is God’s own mode of being, the realm in which God Himself dwells.
- God is called “the Everlasting God” [Genesis 21:33, Isaiah 40:28].
- Moses addresses God [Psalm 90:2].
- God Himself also defines His own eternal nature and realm [Isaiah 57:15].
- God gave Moses His name [Exodus 3:14]. These Scriptures reveals that eternity is an aspect of God’s own nature, the realm in which God has His being. The eternal an unchanging nature is revealed in God’s declaration of His name “I AM” and “I AM WHO I AM.”
- For God, past, present and future are ever united in an eternal present –an eternal “I AM.” Out of this revelation granted to Moses came the sacred form of God’s name, traditionally rendered “Jehovah.” Modern scholars suggest that it could more accurately be represented by the form YAHWEH – meaning “HE IS” or, alternatively, “HE WILL BE”. Some translators sought to express the meaning of this name by the title “the Eternal.”

- In the New Testament the same truths concerning the eternal, unchanging nature of God are brought out in the revelation granted to the apostle John on the isle of Patmos [Revelation 1:8].
- All things have their origin in God. All things are kept in being by God. And all things find their end and completion in God [Romans 11:36].
- Eternity, correctly understood, is not time in endless duration; rather, eternity is the nature and mode of God's own being, uncreated realm in which God Himself exists. Out of eternity, by the act of creation God brought into being the present world and with it the order of time as we know it – past, present and future.
- By another divine act God will one day bring this present world to an end, and with it time, as we know it, will once again cease to be. Time is directly and inseparably related to our present world order. With this world order time came into being, and with this world order time will once again cease to be.
- Within the limits of this present world order, all creatures are subject to the process of time. Time is one factor in man's total experience which he has no power to change.
- By a sovereign act of God, the space-time continuum came into being together with the present world order, and by another sovereign act of God this present world order, together with the space-time continuum [derived from the theory of relativity] in which it exists, will once again cease to be.
- For each individual, the end of life is the end of time. What awaits each departing soul as it steps from time into eternity? What is on the other side of time?

TWO UNIVERSAL APPOINTMENTS

- Beyond the immediate threshold of eternity the bible reveals two things which are the ultimate destiny of all souls: the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgement [1 Corinthians 15:22].
- Just as death is the universal fate of all, through their descent from Adam, so resurrection from the dead is the universal appointment of God for all: and this is made possible through the death and resurrection Christ.
- To this universal appointment of resurrection from the dead, the Bible admits only one class of exceptions. The exception is a wholly logical one: Those who never die will never need to be resurrected from the dead [1 Corinthians 15:51-53].
- In the above passage, Paul was referring only to true Christians who are alive at the time of Christ's return for the church. They will not die or will not sleep in death. Instead their bodies will be instantaneously and miraculously changed, and they will find themselves arrayed in bodies of an entirely new and supernatural kind.
- Corruption will be replaced by incorruption, mortality by immortality. Thereafter there will remain no further possibility either of death or of resurrection from the dead.

- Besides this class of Christians who will be alive at the time of Christ's return, we may leave open the possibility of two other exceptions to the universal appointment of resurrection from the dead. These are provided by Enoch and Elijah, the two men recorded in the Old Testament who were translated from earth to heaven without seeing death.
- Those who never die will never need to be resurrected from the dead. On the other hand the Bible does clearly reveal that all who die will also be resurrected from the dead.
- The other great appointment of God in eternity for all men is judgement. Paul warned the people of Athens that the whole world must one day face the judgement of God [Acts 17:30-31].
- God's appointment of judgement is made with the world at large, with the whole human race. This is why all men are commanded to repent, because all men will be one day judged [Romans 14:10-11].
- There are no exceptions to judgement as indicated by the universal application of the two phrases "every knee shall bow" and "every tongue shall confess to God".
- It is appointed for men to die [Hebrews 9:27]. This means or includes the whole human race.
- Resurrection and judgement are inseparably connected by the logic of Scripture for every human soul that passes out of time into eternity through death.
- In no case will anyone appear before God for judgement as a disembodied soul; but in every case it will be the complete human personality, consisting of spirit, soul and body, that will appear before the judgement of God. For this reason resurrection must necessarily precede the final judgement [2 Corinthians 5:10].
- Judgement concerns things done in the body while on earth. Since it is for the things done in the body that man must answer. God has ordained that man shall appear in his body before Him to answer for those things.

DIVERGING DESTINIES AT DEATH

- The first point which must be clearly established is that the part of man which is to be resurrected is his body – not his spirit or his soul. The resurrection of which the Bible speaks is the resurrection of the body.
- Man is a triune being. Apostle Paul offered prayer on behalf of Christians in his epistle to the Thessalonians [1 Thessalonians 5:23]. This talk about the complete man, the three elements enumerated that describes the total nature and personality of man [Hebrews 4:12].
- We find the relationship of man the creature to God the creator in the story of creation told in the Bible [Genesis 1:26]. When talking of image and likeness, we see a correspondence between the nature and personality of God and the nature and personality of man.

- In a corresponding way, the Bible reveals that the being of God is triune – that is, there is one true God, yet within this one Godhead we discern the three distinct Persons of the Father, the Son and the Spirit. Hence, the Bible reveals a triune man, created in the likeness of a triune God.
- The total personality of man has its origin in two absolutely distinct and separate sources. The physical, material part of man – his body – is formed out of the dust of earth. The invisible immaterial part of man has its origin in the breath of almighty God [Genesis 2:7]. This invisible immaterial part of man called the soul in the Scriptures is more fully defined in combination of spirit and soul together.
- At death, the invisible, immaterial element of man [the spirit and soul] is released from its earthly vessel. Thereafter, by the process of burial, man’s material part [his body] is restored again to the earth from which it came and through decomposition returns again to its original elements. Even where there is no actual burial, man’s body is always subjected to some process of disintegration or decomposition, which ultimately restores it to its original material elements.
- Consequently, it will be man’s body also which, by resurrection, will be raised up again from the same material elements.
- There is no suggestion anywhere in the Bible that, after death, man’s immaterial part – his spirit and soul – will be subjected to the same processes of burial and decomposition that await the body. On the contrary, there is evidence in many passages of Scripture that the destiny of man’s spiritual part, after death, is quite different from that of its body.
- Solomon, in his writings identified the difference in the destiny of man’s body at death and that of his spirit [Ecclesiastes 3:18-21, 12:7]. The teachings of Solomon concerning the destiny of man’s spirit at death is brief, but clear, and agrees with the indications given in many other passages of Scripture. At death, man’s body returns to dust, but the destiny of his spirit is upward, toward God.

THE RIGHTEOUS SEPARATED FROM THE WICKED

- Scripture does enable us to establish two definite principles. First, the appearance of the spirit of man before God is not the final judgement, which will take place only after the resurrection. Second, the spirits of the wicked and the ungodly can have no permanent access to the presence of God [Isaiah 14:9-10, Ezekiel 32: 18-21].
- We may therefore conclude that the appearance of the spirit of man before God immediately after death is for one main purpose: to hear the divine sentence appointing to each spirit the state and the place it must occupy from the time of death up to the time of resurrection and final judgement.
- Each spirit is consigned to its duly appointed state and place and continues there until called forth again at the resurrection of the body.

- Jesus Christ described the destinies of Lazarus and the rich man after death [Luke 16:22-26]. There is a fixed impassable gulf that could not be crossed from either sides between those who followed the example of faith of Abraham [called the father of those who believe], and the spirit of the wicked who did not believe.

CHRIST THE PATTERN AND THE PROOF

- The Bible revealed a prophetic anticipation of the experience of Jesus Christ during the period between His death and resurrection [Psalm 16:8-11].
- Both Apostles Peter and Paul interpreted these words as a direct prophecy of the burial and resurrection of Christ. Peter points out that, though these words were spoken by David, they do not apply to David because David's was left for many centuries in Sheol and his body suffered the process of corruption. Therefore this is one of the messianic prophecies spoken by David in the Old Testament referring to David's promised seed, the Messiah, Jesus Christ.
- Applied in this way to Christ, these words of David in Psalm 16 reveal two things that transpired at death of Christ. First, his body was laid in the tomb but did not suffer any process of corruption. Second, His Spirit descended into Sheol [the place of departed spirits] but did not remain there for longer than the period between His death and His resurrection.
- By the words of Jesus "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit," [Luke 23:46] we understand that Jesus here committed the destiny of His Spirit at death into the hands of His heavenly Father. His body, He knew, was to be laid aside in the tomb; but the destiny of His spirit was to be decided by God His Father.
- In all this we see that Jesus, having taken upon Himself, in addition to His divine nature, the nature of humanity, passed through the same experience that await each human soul at death. His body committed to the tomb in burial, by the hands of men; but His Spirit was committed into the hands of God, and its destiny was settled by the sentence of God.
- Peter and Paul further reveals what happened to the Spirit of Christ after it was thus released at death from the earthen vessel of His body [Ephesians 4:9-10, 1 Peter 3:18-20]. His Spirit descended into Sheol, the place of the departed spirits. On the day of His death upon the cross, He went first to the place of the spirits of the righteous, called "Paradise" or "Abraham's bosom."
- Since the Gospel record indicates that the death of Christ on the cross preceded the death of the two thieves, it seems natural to suppose that Christ was in Paradise to welcome the departed spirit of the penitent thief who followed Him there [Luke 23:43].
- From Paradise Christ then went further down into the area of Sheol reserved for the spirits of the wicked. It would appear that His descent into the place of torment was necessary for Him to complete the work of atonement for man's sin, since He had to endure in full not merely the physical but also the spiritual consequences of sin.

- At some stage while in this lower realm of Sheol, Christ preached to the spirit of those who lived in the days of Noah – that is the antediluvian age – and those who had consequently been consigned to a special place of imprisonment in Sheol.
- Then, at God’s appointed moment, when all the divine purposes of the atonement had been accomplished, the Spirit of Christ ascended up again from the realm of Sheol to the present temporal world. At the same time His body, which was lying lifeless in the tomb, was raised up from death, and spirit and body were once again reunited to form the complete personality [1 Corinthians 15:20-22].
- Paul indicates that the resurrection of Christ from the dead set a pattern which is to be followed by all men. In this pattern we may distinguish two main threads: 1) Man’s immaterial part – his spirit – is to come forth once again from the realm of departed spirits; 2) his material part – his body – is to be raised up again from death. In this way spirit and body are once again to be reunited, thus reconstituting the complete personality of man, in its material and immaterial parts – its three elements of spirit, soul and body.

DESTINY OF CHRISTIANS AT DEATH

- The New Testament indicates one important difference between the period that preceded Christ’s resurrection and that which followed it.
- As we have already seen, prior to Christ’s resurrection the departed spirits of the righteous were consigned to a certain area of Sheol, the netherworld, which was called “Paradise” or “Abraham’s bosom.” Once full atonement for sin has been accomplished, however, by the death and resurrection of Christ, thereafter the way open for the spirit of the righteous to ascend immediately and directly into heaven and into the presence of God Himself.
- In the moment before death, Stephen was granted a vision of Christ in glory at the right hand of God. His prayer, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,” expressed his assurance that immediately upon death of his body, his spirit would ascend into heaven into the presence of God [Acts 7:55-60].
- Paul confirmed this by the way he spoke about death [2 Corinthians 5:6, 8]. Paul implied two things: 1) while the spirit of believers remains within his body, it cannot be in the immediate presence of God. 2) As soon as the spirit of the believer is released by death from the body, it has direct access to the presence of God.
- Prior to Christ’s atonement, the departed spirits of the righteous were consigned to a place of rest and comfort in an area in Sheol, the netherworld referred to as Paradise. It was not a place of torment or punishment. Nevertheless, it was far removed from the immediate presence of God.
- The conclusion we have reached to the doctrine of resurrection is that, the pattern for the resurrection of all men is set by the resurrection of Christ Himself. That is to say, the departed spirit is called forth from the place to which it has been consigned by the sentence of God – whether in the realm of heaven or of the netherworld. As

the same time, the body is raised up by resurrection from death. Spirit and body are reunited, and the complete personality of man is reconstituted.

- Jesus immediately reassured His disciples about His resurrection, and further gave them positive proof of His identity and the reality of His body [Luke 24:39-40]. And to Thomas who initially didn't believe [John 20:27].
- Jesus was careful to give His disciples the plainest evidence that after His resurrection He had a real body, and that that was the same that had been crucified. The evidence was His hands and feet and His side, which still bore the marks of the nail and of the spear.
- In other respects His body had undergone important changes. It was no longer subject to limitations of a mortal body in this present world order. Jesus could now appear or disappear at will; He could enter a closed room; He could pass between earth and heaven. However, with due allowance made for these changes; it was still in other respects the same body that had been crucified.
- Furthermore, Jesus also promised His disciples that their bodies would be resurrected no less complete than His own [Luke 21:16-18]. Jesus even promised them that despite all that may or would befall his disciple, "Not a hair of your head shall be lost."

THOSE WHO ARE CHRIST'S AT HIS COMING [Mark of True Believers]

TEXT: [1 Corinthians 15:23]

- The scripture in the above text is referring to the second coming of Christ as the Bridegroom to take His bride, the church, to Himself.
- It is crucial for every believer to know that "Those who are Christ's" indicate possession. It is equivalent to saying "those who belong to Christ." This certainly does not include all those who make a profession of faith in Christ. It covers only those who have so fully and unreservedly yielded themselves to Christ that they are entirely His. They are no longer their own: they belong to Christ [2 Timothy 2:19]
- In the last resort, only the Lord Himself knows exactly those that belong to Him. In outward conduct, however, all such believers have one feature in common: they "depart from iniquity." This is the double seal. Any who lack this second seal are not among those whom the Lord acknowledges as His [Galatians 5:24].
- Professing Christians who lead careless, carnal, self-indulgent lives will not be numbered among those whom Christ will receive to Himself. Christ is coming, it is true, "like a thief," but He is certainly not coming to steal.
- The return of Christ is one of the main themes of biblical prophecy.
- There are five main purposes of Christ's second coming. 1) Christ would come for the church. He will come again as a bridegroom to receive to Himself all true believers as His bride. They will be united with Christ, either by resurrection or by instantaneous change in their bodies while still alive [John 14:3]

- 2) Christ will come for the national salvation of Israel. The remnant of Israel that has survived the fires of the great tribulation will acknowledge Jesus as Messiah and thus be reconciled to God and restore His favour and blessing [Romans 11:26-27].
- 3) Christ would come for the overthrow of Antichrist and of Satan himself [2 Thessalonians 2:8].
- 4) Christ will come for the judgement of Gentile nation. He Himself gave this prediction: [Matthew 25:31-32].
- 5) Christ will come for the establishment of His millennial kingdom on earth. This was predicted by Isaiah [Isaiah 24:23] and Zechariah [Zechariah 14:9]. The period of reign is given Revelation 20:4.
- Apostle Paul describes how Christians will be resurrected to meet Christ at His second coming [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18]. The primary purpose of this teaching was to comfort Christian believers concerning other Christian - relatives or loved ones - who have died.
- There will be three dramatic sounds to herald it. The first sound will be the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, as He Himself had predicted [John 5:28-29]. At this particular moment He will call forth the righteous dead – only those who died in faith. The calling forth of the unrighteous dead will be reserved for a later phase of resurrection.
- The other two sounds that will be heard at this point will be the voice of an archangel and the trumpet of God. The archangel here referred to is probably Gabriel, since it appears to be his special ministry to proclaim upon earth impending interventions of God in affairs to men. All through the Bible, one main use of the trumpet is to gather the Lord's people together in any special time of crisis.
- The sound of the trumpet will be the signal for all the Lord's people to gather together with Him as He descends from heaven to meet them. Upon earth two great events will occur in swift succession. First, all true believers who have died in faith will be resurrected. Second, all true believers alive on earth at that moment will undergo an instantaneous, supernatural change in their bodies.
- Then both these companies of believers – those who were resurrected and those whose bodies were changed without dying – will together be swiftly raised by God's supernatural power from the earth up into the air. They will be received into the clouds, and within these clouds they will be reunited with their Lord and with each other. Thereafter the Lord and His redeemed believers will forever be united in unbroken harmony and fellowship.
- The Greek word translated from the Latin word as rapture which Paul described when he says "we shall be caught up" is "harpazo." It is used to describe a swift, sudden, violent act like an act of a thief [Revelation 16:15, Matthew 24:42-43].
- It will be sudden, unexpected, without warning; it will culminate in one single, violent act of snatching away. Furthermore, that which is to be snatched away will be earth's most valuable treasure – the true Christians. However, as we have already

said, Christ's coming will differ from that of a thief in one extremely important respect: He will take away only that which is already His by right of redemption.

- Paul reveals that the Lord's gathering together with His raptured saints will take place in the lower air, quite close to the earth surface. He also refers again to this same moment of resurrection and rapture. [1 Corinthians 15:51-52].
- Paul unfolds "a mystery" – that is, a previously unrevealed secret of God's plan for the church. The secret thus revealed is this: All true believers will be raptured together at the Lord's coming, but not all those to be raptured will have died and been resurrected.
- Those who are alive at the Lord's coming will not die at all but will simply undergo an instantaneous and miraculous change in their bodies. By this change their bodies will be rendered exactly like those of other believers who have been resurrected from the dead [1 Corinthians 15:53]. Instead of being mortal and corruptible, the new body of each believer will be immortal and incorruptible.

WITNESSES AND MARTYRS

- In Revelation 11 we read the account of God's two witnesses during the tribulation period and of their eventual martyrdom "by the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit" –the Antichrist [Revelation 11:9-12] These martyrs resurrected in the open sight of their enemies after three and half day having been left unburied.
- It is interesting to notice that their ascension into heaven is similar to each of the other cases that we have already considered in that it takes place in the cloud. It seems clear that this as resurrection of the two witnesses is distinct from the resurrection of the Christians described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. It is not associated with the descent of Christ from heaven, nor is there any mention of other accompanying features, such as trumpet or the voice of an archangel.
- Apostle John described the first resurrection of only the righteous saints called "blessed and holy" [Revelation 20:4-6].
- However within the total resurrection of the righteous we may discern at least four distinct events. 1) "Christ the firstfruits" – that is, Christ Himself and those of the Old Testament saints who were resurrected at the time of Christ's resurrection. 2) "Those who are Christ's at His coming" – the true Christians who are ready to meet Christ at His return, together with those who died in the faith – all these together being caught up in clouds to meet Christ in the air. 3) The "two witnesses" of the tribulation period, who are left dead but unburied for three and half days and are then resurrected and ascend to heaven in a cloud. 4) The remainder of the tribulation martyrs, who are resurrected at the close of the tribulation period in time to share with Christ and the other saints in the privilege of ruling and judging the nations on earth during the millennium.

THEN COMES THE END [At the Close of the Millennium]

TEXT: [1 Corinthians 15:23-26]

- Paul indicates the other main events that will be associated with the final phase of the resurrection. At this time Christ will have completed His earthly reign of one thousand years, by the end of which God the Father will have brought all Christ's enemies into subjection to Him. The last of these enemies will be death.
- Thereafter, Christ the Son will in turn offer up His kingdom to God the Father. In accordance with His position as the Son, He will voluntarily place Himself and His kingdom in subjection to His Father [1 Corinthians 15:28].
- As we study the prophetic picture of the end, we notice the perfect harmony that exists within the Godhead between the Father and the Son.
- First God the Father will, during the millennium, establish Christ the Son as His appointed representative and ruler over all things. By the close of this period the Father will have brought all Christ's enemies into subjection to Him – the last enemy being death. Thereafter Christ the Son will in turn offer up in subjection to the authority of the Father both Himself and all that the Father has made subject to Him. In this way, Paul says, God the Father, through Christ, will be "all in all."
- The offering up of the completed Kingdom by Christ to the Father represents the climax and culmination of God's plans for all ages [Ephesians 1:9-10]. This will usher in "the administration of the fullness of times" – that is, the period which will mark the culmination and consummation of God's plans that has been gradually maturing throughout all preceding ages.
- Apostle John described Satan's attempt to oppose the authority of God and Christ and to stir up rebellion against it. This occurs at the end of the millennium [Revelation 20: 7-10].
- During the millennium Jerusalem will be the earthly centre of Christ's administration and rule over the nations of earth.
- During this period Satan will be kept confined as a prisoner in the bottomless pit, but at its close he will be allowed free just long enough to stir up this final rebellion among the Gentile nations, which will culminate in an attempt to attack Jerusalem.
- God will intervene, however with fire from heaven. The rebellion will be totally defeated. And Satan himself will be cast into the lake of eternal fire, there to be tormented forever together with the beast [Antichrist] and the false prophet. Both of these will already have been cast into the lake of fire at the time of Christ's return to earth and of the commencement of the millennium.

THE FINAL RESURRECTION

- John described the final resurrection of the remaining dead [Revelation 20:11-15]. Resurrection comes first, then judgement. The same principle is observed at every stage of resurrection. Since it is their bodies that men have committed acts of good or evil, it is in their bodies also that they must appear before God to hear His judgement upon those acts.
- We have already seen that all those who have trusted Christ for salvation will have been resurrected prior to the millennium. This will include both the saints of Old Covenant and saints of the New Covenant. It seems, therefore that the majority of those to be resurrected at the close of the millennium will be people who have died in sin and unbelief.
- Those who died in sin and unbelief were referred to as “the dead” by John. This is different from righteous dead. Those John saw resurrected at the close the millennium are still dead. Although resurrected from the grave in their bodies, they are still spiritually dead – dead in trespasses and sins, alienated and cut off from the presence and fellowship of God.
- They are brought before God for the last time; only hear His final sentence of condemnation upon them. Thereafter their destiny is the lake of fire, “the second death,” the place of final eternal banishment from God’s presence, the place which offers henceforth no hope either of change or of return.
- Among all these, however, Scripture indicates that there will be at least two categories of people who will come forth to the resurrection of life and not of condemnation.
- One such category includes people such as the queen of the South [Sheba] and men of Nineveh referred to by Jesus [Luke 11:31-32]. In each of these examples it is clear that the men of this generation [who rejected the mercy offered them through Jesus] will rise up [be resurrected] for the judgement of condemnation. Together with them, however, two groups will be resurrected who will receive mercy at judgement: the queen of the South and men of Nineveh.
- Unlike the Old Covenant saints these two groups were not granted revelation of Christ’s atoning sacrifice – foreshadowed in type and prophecy – in which they could trust for salvation. They did however respond in faith to the limited measure of light that came to them. At the close of millennium, therefore, they will be delivered from condemnation and enter into resurrection of life.
- A second category of people who will be delivered from condemnation at the final resurrection will be the righteous who had died during Christ’s millennial reign on earth [Isaiah 65:20, Revelation 20:13].
- Sheol is Hebrew translation for the Greek word Hades – a place of temporary confinement for departed spirits prior to their final resurrection and judgement.

After resurrection and judgement, all the unrighteous are consigned to lake of fire. The Hebrew word used in the Old Testament for the lake of fire is Gehenna.

- Death and Hades are persons [Revelations 6:8]. They are dark angels of Satan's infernal kingdom. It is obvious that only a person can sit on a horse.
- Death is a state or condition. It is the cessation of life, the experience which results in the separation of the spirit from the body. However, Death is also a person. Death is the dark angel, the minister of Satan who claims the spirit of every unrighteous person that is separated from his body when he dies.
- A similar truth applies to Hades. In one sense, Hades is a place of confinement for departed spirits. In another sense, however, Hades is a person. Hades, like Death, is a dark angel, a minister of Satan, following close upon heel of Death. Hades takes charge of the spirits of the unrighteous which have been claimed by Death and conducts them to the realm of departed spirits from which he receives his name – that is, Hades.
- The scene described above in Revelation casts light on the words of Jesus that if we keep His word we will not see death [John 8:51]. Jesus was not saying here that the believer will not experience physical death. He says that the believer will not “see death.” So Jesus was referring to the person of the dark angel whose name is Death, and to the other dark angel, his companion, whose name is Hades.
- Hence, Jesus means that the spirit of a true believer, on departing from the body, will never come under the dominion of these two dark angels, Death and Hades. Rather like the poor beggar Lazarus, the departing spirit of the true believer will be met by God's angels – the angels of light – and by them be escorted to Paradise.
- The apostles Paul and John both stated that Death and Hades will be destroyed and cast into the lake of fire [1 Corinthians 15:26, Revelation 20:14]. They will be joined by Satan. By this final act of judgement, the last of God's enemies will forever have been banished from His presence.

WHAT BODY WILL BELIEVERS HAVE?

- We would be considering the nature of the body with which Christian believers will be resurrected.
- In our earlier studies on this subject we have already pointed out that there is direct continuity between the body that die and is buried and the body that is later resurrected. The basic material of the body that is to be resurrected is the same as that of the body that is buried. That is to say, resurrection is the raising up of same body that was buried, and not the creation of a completely new body.
- However, once this fact is established, we must also add that, in the case of Christian believers, the body that is resurrected undergoes certain definite and tremendous changes.

- Apostle Paul used the analogy of a grain of wheat planted in the ground to illustrate the relationship between the body that is buried and the body that is raised up in resurrection [1 Corinthians 15:35-38].
- Three facts emerge: 1) There is a direct continuity between the seed that is planted in the ground and the plant that later grows up out the ground from that seed. The basic material of the original seed is still contained in the plant that grows up out of it. 2) The plant that grows up out of the original seed undergoes, in process, certain definite and obvious changes. The outward form of the new plant is different from that of the original seed. 3) The nature of the original seed determines the nature of the plant that grows up out of it. Each kind of seed can produce only the kind of plant that is appropriate to it. A wheat seed can produce only a stalk of wheat: a barley seed can produce only a stalk of barley.
- Similarly, the nature of the body that is to be resurrected follows the same pattern. 1) There is a direct continuity between a body that is buried and the body that is resurrected. 2) The body that is resurrected undergoes, in that process, certain definite and obvious changes. The outward form and appearance of the new, resurrected body are different from those of the original body that was buried. 3) The nature of the body that is buried determines the nature of the body that is resurrected. There will be a direct logical and causal connection between the condition of the believer in his present earthly existence and the nature of his resurrected body.
- Paul further details about the nature of the changes that believer's body will undergo at resurrection [1 Corinthians 15:39-44, 53]. He added that corruption must put on incorruption, and mortal put on immortality.
- Prophet Daniel foretold the differences in rewards and in glory among the resurrected saints [Daniel 12:2-3].
- The picture of the saints resurrected with the glorious bodies like those of the stars is also the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham [Genesis 15:5]. Included by God among Abraham's seed are all those who believe and obey the word of God's promise just as Abraham did – those who accept by faith in their hearts the divine seed of God's word. In fact, it is this incorruptible seed of God's word, received by faith in the heart of each believer that makes possible his resurrection among the righteous.
- According to God's original pattern in creation, man was to be a triune being consisting of spirit, soul and body. Of these three elements, man's spirit was capable of direct communication and fellowship with God and was intended to control the lower elements of man's nature – the soul and the body. However, as a result of man's yielding to temptation at fall, these lower elements of his nature – the soul and body gained control. This produced far-reaching changes both in man's inner personality and in his physical body. His body became "soulish," its organs and

function were given over to the expression and satisfaction of the lower desires of his soul but were incapable of fully expressing the higher aspiration of his spirit.

- However, the new resurrected body will be “spiritual.” Clothed in his new body, the spirit will once again be the controlling element, and the whole personality of the resurrected believer will function in harmony and perfection under the spirit’s control.
- Paul sums up the difference between the old and the new body by contrasting the body of Adam with that of Christ and by saying that the resurrected body of the believer will be similar to the Lord’s [1 Corinthians 15:47-49, Philippians 3:20-21].
- Concerning the nature Christ’s own body after His resurrection, the Gospel gives us certain interesting indications. It appears that He was no longer subject to those limitations of time and space with which we are familiar in our present earthly body. He will appear to disappear at will; He could pass through locked doors; He could appear in different forms in different places. He could also ascend to heaven and descend again to earth.
- In these and in other respects which are perhaps not yet revealed, the body of the redeemed believer after resurrection or rapture will be like his Lord. The unrighteous in their own order, will be resurrected for judgement and for punishment. There is no clear answer or even indication found in the Bible as to what kind of body they will have at resurrection. We must therefore be content to leave it unanswered.

THE UNIQUE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

- There are three main reasons why the doctrine of the resurrection occupies a special central place in the Christian faith. The first reason is that resurrection is God’s vindication of Jesus Christ [Romans 1:4].
- The second main reason for the importance of the resurrection is that it is the sure seal upon God’s offer of forgiveness and salvation to every repentant sinner who will put his faith in Christ [Roman 4:25] This shows that the sinner’s justification is dependent upon Christ’s being raised from the dead. Had Christ remained on the cross or in the tomb, God’s promise to sinner of salvation and eternal life could never have been fulfilled.
- It is only the risen Christ, received and confessed by faith, who brings to the sinner pardon, peace, eternal life and victory over sin [Romans 10:9].
- Finally, the third reason for the importance of the resurrection is that it constitutes the culmination of all our hopes as Christians and the supreme goal of our life of faith here on earth. Paul says that the resurrection is the supreme goal and consummation of all his earthly endeavours. Declaring that it is the motivating purpose of his life as a Christian [Philippians 3: 10-12].
- If we believe in the resurrection, our life aim and purpose will be like Paul’s: to attain it.

6 ETERNAL JUDGEMENT

TEXT: Psalm 119:160

GOD THE JUDGE OF ALL

- The Word of God teaches clearly about the judgement of God. The revelation of God as the judge of all, and the main principles according to which God's judgement is administered [Hebrews 12:22-24]
- The above Scripture presents 1) a description of God's dwelling place, 2) an enumeration of those who dwell there with God and 3) a presentation of God Himself.
- God's dwelling place is threefold: 1) "Mount Zion," 2) "the city of the living God" and 3) "the heavenly Jerusalem."
- The enumeration of those who dwell there is likewise threefold: 1) "an innumerable company of angels" – refers to those who kept their proper domain, joining neither in Satan's first rebellion nor in universal wickedness of both men and angels in the period before the flood. 2) "the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven" – represents the saints of new covenant, who, through the experience of new birth, have their names registered in heaven and thus become a firstfruits of God's new creation in Christ. 3) "the spirit of just men made perfect" – represents the saints of previous ages, who, through a lifetime's walk of faith, were gradually made perfect.
- Finally, the presentation of God Himself is threefold: 1) "God the judge of all." Here God is revealed to us in His sovereign, eternal authority as Judge – Judge of all, Judge of heaven and earth, Judge of angels and Judge of men. 2) "Jesus the mediator of the new covenant" – the One who can come between a righteous, holy God and lost, sinful men and reconcile the one to the other. 3) "the blood of sprinkling [that is, the sprinkled blood of Jesus], that speaks better things than that of Abel." The picture is completed by the revelation of the blood of Jesus, being both the means and price by which reconciliation has been achieved.
- The blood Jesus is contrasted with the blood of Abel. 1) The blood of Abel was shed without his own will or consent, spilled suddenly by a murderer's blow without warning; the blood of Jesus was freely given of His own consent as price of man's redemption. 2) The blood of Abel was sprinkled upon the earth; the blood of Jesus was sprinkled before the mercy seat in heaven. 3) The blood of Abel cried out to God for vengeance upon his murderer; the blood of Jesus pleads for mercy and forgiveness for the sinner.
- The revelation of God as a God of Judgement tempered by grace and mercy is in harmony with the total revelation of Scripture upon this theme [Genesis 18:25, Judges 11:27, Psalm 58:11, 94:2, Isaiah 33:22, 28:21].

- But the truest and most perfect expression of God's eternal nature is not judgement but in grace, not wrath but in mercy. Isaiah pictures God rising to administer Judgement as strange [Isaiah 28:21].
- The administration of wrath and judgement is alien to God's nature. It is not something He naturally desires to do. Renewed emphasis is laid upon the fact that wrath and judgement are alien to the abiding nature and purpose of God [John 3:17, 2 Peter 3:9].
- By sovereign eternal right, judgement belongs to God the Father [1 Peter 1:7]. The judgement of all men is declared to be the office of God the Father.
- Christ reveals that the Father has chosen in His sovereign wisdom to commit all judgement to the Son [John 5:22-23, 26-27]. Here it explicitly states that the office of judgement has been transferred from the Father to the Son.
- Two reasons were given for this: 1) because with the office of judge goes also the honour due to the judge, and in this way all men will be obliged to show the same honour toward God the Son as they would toward God the Father; 2) because Christ is also the Son of man as the Son of God. That is He partakes of the human as well as of the divine nature, and thus in His judgement He is able to make allowance, from His own experience, or all the infirmities and temptations of human flesh.
- So gracious and merciful, however, is the divine nature in the Son, as in the Father, that Christ, too, is unwilling to administer judgement. For this reason He has, in His own turn, transferred the final authority of judgement from His own Person to the Word of God [John 12:47-48].
- The final authority of all judgement is vested in the Word of God. This is the impartial, unchanging standard to which all men must one day answer. This same revelation concerning God's Word is given in the Old Testament by David [Psalm 119:160].
- This is to say all the standard and principles of God's judgement are contained within His Word.

FOUR PRINCIPLES OF JUDGEMENT BY THE WORD

- First, Paul declares that God's judgement is according to truth [Romans 2:1-2]. Paul is here speaking primarily about religious people who judge other people by one standard and themselves by another standard. God's judgement is according to truth – the revealed truth of God's Word. God's standard does not vary.
- Jesus Himself says to the Father "Your word is truth" [John 17:17]. The revealed standard of God's truth applies just as much to the one who judges as to the one who is judged.

- Second, God’s judgement is according to “deeds”: “[God] will render to each one according to his deeds” [Romans 2:6]. This principle of divine judgement is repeated many times over in Scripture [1 Peter 1:17, Revelation 20:12].
- The whole Bible makes plain that God, in His judgement of man, takes into account not merely external actions but also the deepest and most secret thoughts, impulses and motives of the heart [Romans 2:16, 1 Corinthians 4:5, Hebrews 4:12-13].
- The third principle of God’s judgement is that there is no partiality [respect of persons] with God [Romans 2:11]. Men are often influenced in forming their judgement by such external things as race, religion, profession, social position, physical appearance, wealth, education and so on. However, God’s judgement is not influenced or diverted by any such things [1 Samuel 16:7].
- Not only is God Himself never moved by respect of persons; He also strictly charges all those who exercise judgement in human affairs never to yield to this influence.
- The fourth principle of God’s judgement is “according to light.” Applied generally, this means that each person will be judged according to the measure of light and understanding made available to him [Romans 2:12].
- Those who have full knowledge of God’s moral standards revealed to them through the law of Moses will be judged by that law. But those who do not have a fuller revelation of the law of Moses will not be judged by that law, but only in accordance with the general revelation of God granted to the human race as a whole through the wonders of creation [Romans 1:20].
- Paul here states that a general revelation of God’s nature, that is, His eternal power and Godhead, is given through creation to all men everywhere – irrespective of race or religion – who attain to normal understanding.
- This therefore is the basic standard by which all men will be judged. However, those who receive an additional special revelation through God’s Word will be judged by the higher standard of moral knowledge thus granted to them. This principle of judgement according to light is contained in the Words of Jesus to the people of His day. [Matthew 11:20-24, Luke 12:48]
- Hence we will be judged by the measure of moral light and knowledge available to our generation.

GOD’S JUDGEMENTS IN HISTORY

- The first of two stages of God’s judgement is carried out in time; that is that part of God’s judgement which is carried out upon the scene of human history. The second of these two stages is God’s judgement in eternity. This second stage is referred to as “eternal judgement” [Hebrews 6:2].

- Eternal judgement is not carried out upon the scene of time or of human history. Eternal judgement is the judgement which awaits every human soul in eternity, after time and history have closed.
- There are logical and scriptural distinction between God's judgement in history and God's judgement in eternity [Exodus 20:4-6, Jeremiah 32:18]. These passages of Scripture and others like them makes it clear that – in certain cases, at least – the sins of one generation cause judgement of God to come upon succeeding generations, as far as down to the third or fourth generation.
- The righteousness of one generation can cause the blessing of God to come upon many thousands of their descendants. Such passages as these all deal with God's judgement in time: that is, in history.
- A clear picture of this is given in the following message of the Lord to His people Israel through prophet Ezekiel [Ezekiel 18:1-4]. God rejected the excuse that Israel of the time of Ezekiel was being punished because of the sins of the preceding generation. God warns them that He holds each one of them individually responsible for his own moral condition and that each one will be judged – in eternity – sorely for his own character and conduct, and not at all for anything that his ancestors may or may not have done [Ezekiel 18:20, 24].
- God is speaking about the condition in which each individual soul passes from time into eternity. The condition of each soul at this moment will determine the destiny of that soul for eternity.
- There are a number of historical judgements recorded in Scripture which set forth God's attitude toward certain sinful acts or conditions in such a clear and dramatic way that they constitute a warning to all those in succeeding generations who might be tempted to follow in sins of same kind.
- One clear example of this kind of judgement is provided by God's judgement upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah [Genesis 19:24-25]. New Testament referred to this several times [2 Peter 2:6, Ezekiel 16:49].
- Another dramatic instance of judgement is provided by the story of Ananias and his wife Sapphira [Acts 5:1-10]. The judgement of God had a strong effect on the people who heard it [Acts 5:11].
- There is no suggestion that God will always judge this kind of behaviour by professing Christians in such a swift and dramatic way. But the unchanging attitude of God toward lying and hypocrisy on the part of professing Christians is demonstrated by this incident as a warning to all generation of the church.
- God has always warned His people about the consequences of rebellion which has orchestrated judgement on them [Leviticus 26:14-45].
- However, before the prophecy closes, God also gives a promise that His mercy will never be fully or finally withdrawn from Israel [Leviticus 26:44]. Just as surely as God's warnings of judgement have been fulfilled, so has the promise of mercy been fulfilled, even in the midst of judgement.

- Perhaps the most striking example of God’s mercy in the midst of judgement is contained in the story of Rahab, as recorded in Joshua chapters 2 and 6. The story of Rahab proves that no soul is necessarily damned by background or environment.
- Even in the midst of the severest of judgements, the underlying purposes of God are still those of grace and mercy. For this reason, the revelation of God is summed up in Psalm 107:43.
- God’s judgements are not fully revealed in time. This applies to both punishment of the wicked and the reward of the righteous [1Timothy 5:24-25, Ecclesiastes 8:11]. For full revelation of God’s final judgements, we must pass beyond the scene of time into eternity.

THE JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

- The New Testament reveals three main, successive scene upon which eternal judgement will be carried out. Each of these scenes is marked out from the other by one distinctive feature: the type of seat upon which the judge will sit while carrying out the judgement.
- The first scene upon which the Judge will sit is called “the judgement seat of Christ.” Those to be judged here will be Christ’s own followers and servants, the true Christians.
- In the second scene the seat of judgement is called “the throne of [Christ’s] glory.” Those to be judged here will be the gentile nations remaining upon the earth at the close of the great tribulation, prior to the setting up of Christ’s millennial kingdom upon earth.
- In the third scene the seat of Judgement is called “the great white throne.” Those to be judged here will be all the remaining dead who will be resurrected at the close of millennium.
- According to the Scriptures, Christians will be judged first [1 Peter 4:17-18, Romans 14:10, 12, 2 Corinthians 5:10]
- Apostle Paul states that the things which will be brought up for judgement at this time will be “things done in the body” – the acts and behaviour of each Christian during his life here on earth. Paul indicates too, that every act performed by a Christian while here on earth must fall into one of two categories – either “good” or “bad.” There is no third category, no neutrality.
- Every act of a Christian has a definite value of some kind – either positive or negative. Every act that is not performed in faith and obedience, for the glory of God, is unacceptable to God and therefore bad. It is upon this simple basis, clearly revealed, that each one of us as Christians must expect to be judged.

- The judgement of Christians will not be for condemnation. True believer in Christ is cleared from fear of final condemnation as affirmed in various passages of the New Testament [John 3:18, 5:24, Romans 8:1].
- All the above passages make it plain that the true believers in Christ will never have to face a judgement of which the outcome will be final condemnation. In fact, the true believer in Christ will never need to be judged at all for sins he has committed. When a person comes as a sinner in faith to Christ, receiving Him as Saviour and confessing Him as Lord, the whole record of that person's past sins is immediately and eternally blotted out by God, never to be remembered anymore [Isaiah 43:25, 44:22].
- "Sins" are wrong acts that are committed without any necessary reference to a known law; "transgressions" are wrong acts committed in open disobedience of a known law. Sins are therefore compared to "a cloud," but transgressions to "a thick cloud." That is to say, transgressions are darker of the two. However, God's grace and power are more than sufficient to blot out both.
- If a believer sins and thereafter repents and confesses his sin, the record of his sin is erased and he himself is cleansed from all unrighteousness [1 John 1:9, 2:1-2]. This why a true believer need not fear final condemnation.
- The judgement of Christians is to assess their rewards. The true believer will be judged not in respect of righteousness but in respect of service rendered to Christ.
- The reason why the believer will not be judged in respect of righteousness is simple and logical. The righteousness of the true believer is no longer his own but the righteousness of Christ Himself, imparted to him by God on the basis of faith [1 Corinthians 1:30, 2 Corinthians 5:21]. God cannot question or call into judgement His [God's] own righteousness.
- The judgement of believers for rewards is described by Paul [1 Corinthians 3:11-15]. Paul makes it clear that this is a judgement not of every man's soul but of every man's work.
- This judgement concerns only those who have built faith not upon their own works or their own righteousness but upon the foundation of Jesus Christ and His righteousness. So long as their faith remains unmoved upon this foundation, their souls are eternally safe.
- The basis on which these two categories of "gold, silver, precious stones" and on the other hand "wood, hay and straw," are separated from each other is the ability to stand the "test of fire." The items in the first category – gold, silver, precious stones – will be able to pass through the fire without being consumed. The items in the second category – wood, hay, straw – will be consumed in fire.
- Quality is of infinitely greater importance to God than quantity. Gold, silver and precious stones are normally found in small quantities but nevertheless of great

value. Wood, hay and straw are all things that take up much space and are obtainable in large quantities but are of relatively little value.

- The glorified Jesus will be sitting upon His judgement seat and each one of us will stand directly before Him. The fire by which the works of Christians will be tried is therefore typifying the vision of Jesus that John saw on the island of Patmos [Revelation 1:14-15].
- In this vision Christ's feet "like fine brass" in a burning furnace typify the fires of tribulation in which He will judge the sinful acts of the ungodly while His eyes "like a flame of fire" typify the penetrating and consuming insight with which He will assess the works of His own believing people. In the fiery rays of those eyes, as each one stands before His judgement seat, all that is base, insincere and valueless in His people's works will be instantly and eternally consumed. Only that which is of true and enduring value will survive, purified and refined by fire.
- Christians need to ask themselves: How may I serve Christ in life so that my works will stand the test of fire in that day?
- There are three points concerning which each one of us should examine ourselves: motive, obedience, power.
- We should examine our motives. Is the aim of our service to please ourselves, for our own satisfaction and glory, or do we sincerely seek to glorify Christ and to do His'.
- We should examine ourselves on the point of obedience. Are we seeking to serve Christ according to the principles and methods revealed in the Word of God? Or are we fashioning our own forms of worship and service and then attaching to them the name of Christ and titles and phrases of New Testament religion?
- We should examine ourselves in respect of power. Paul reminds us, "The kingdom of God is not in word but in power" [1 Corinthian 4:20]. Are we seeking to serve God in the inadequacy of our own carnal strength? Or have we been renewed and empowered by the Holy Spirit? If so, then we can say like Paul [Colossians 1:29].
- Upon the answers to these questions of motive, obedience and power will determine the issues of our judgement in the day that each one of us shall stand before the judgement seat of Christ.

ASSESSMENT OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE

- Jesus Christ set forth the principles by which believers will be rewarded for their service in the parable of the talents [See Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 19:11-27].
- The central theme of both parables is the same. Each is given resources according to his own ability. That is God distributes to each believer the maximum number of talents that his ability will permit him use effectively. God does not give to any believer either more or less than he is able to use effectively.

- It is on their faithfulness, as expressed in the percentage increase achieved, that their judgement is based. The fact that one man received five talents and the other two is not the basis on which their faithfulness is assessed. The third who received one talent not only received no reward; he was actually deprived of the one talent which he had originally received, and himself was cast out from his lord's presence.
- One major conclusion from the two parables is that rewards for serving Christ faithfully in this present age will consist in positions of authority and responsibility in the administration of Christ's kingdom in the following age. In other words, faithful service in the present age leads to continued and extended opportunities of service in the next age. For those who are faithfully, this privilege, begun here in time, will be extended throughout the ages of eternity.
- In both parables alike failure to make active use of the talent or mina committed to each servant is described by the very strong word "wicked." In each case the Lord commences his judgement of the unfaithful servant by the phrase "you wicked servant."
- From this we learn that, by God's standards, wickedness consists not only in actively doing that which is bad, but just as much in the failure to do good when it lies within our power to do it [James 4:17]. In other words the sins of omission are no less serious than the sin of commission [Malachi 3:18]. The distinction is made by God between the righteous and the wicked. The righteous are defined as those who serve God: the wicked as those who do not serve God. Not serve God is in itself wickedness.
- Christ indicates in both parables that this same principle of judgement will be applied to all those who claim to be His followers and servants.
- There is an important difference in God's estimation described by the judgement of believer's works in the Lord's parable and Paul's description of the judgement of works. In the case described by Paul, the man's works were rejected but he himself is saved, whereas in the parable of Jesus the unfaithful servant not only loses his reward but is himself also rejected and cast.
- The difference appears to be that, in the case described by Paul, the man actually did try to do something active for the master; in fact, the examples of wood, hay and straw suggest that he did a great deal. However, his work was not of the kind or quality that would stand the test of fire.
- The activity of those whose work is wood, hay and straw though misguided and unrewarded did at least prove that his actual faith in Christ was genuine. For this reason the salvation of his soul was assured even though his works were burned.
- On the other hand, the unfaithful servant with one talent did nothing at all for his master – either good or bad. This failure to act at all showed that his profession of faith and service was vain and insincere [James 2:26]. The unfaithful is placed

on the same pedestal with the hypocrite and unbeliever – “into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

- Angels will eliminate all hypocrites.
- Before the true Christians are admitted to the place of Christ’s judgement seat, all hypocrites and false Christians will first be separated out from among God’s believing people and will receive the judgement due to them for their hypocrisy. This judgement of hypocrites is described in two parables concerning the kingdom of heaven [Matthew 13].
- Until the present age closes, the two kingdoms of heaven and of Satan will coexist [Matthew 12:25-28, Luke 11:17-20]. The two parables – the wheat and the tares, and the dragnet – both reveal that some of those who appear to belong to God’s kingdom have not, in fact, fulfilled the two conditions of repentance from rebellion and submission in faith to Christ as God’s appointed ruler.
- They have made an outward pretence of repentance and submission, but it did not come from a sincere heart. Consequently it did not produce the deep, inner reformation of Character which alone is appropriate to the kingdom of God. This parable reveals the special judgement that will come upon hypocrites at the close of the present age.
- It will be hard for God’s servants to distinguish the tares from the wheat. This would not be true if the tares represented people who had not made any profession of faith in Christ. Their presence is one way Satan seeks to discredit the testimony of the church.
- The same goes for the parable of the dragnet. The various creatures caught in the net represents all those who have made a positive response to the gospel invitation. These include people of every kind – both good and bad, both just and wicked.
- At the close of the age, the angels will separate out the wicked from the just and cast them into a place of punishment. Only after that will the good and righteous go on to receive the blessings and rewards of eternity with Christ.
- Before the judgement seat of Christ – which will be for only the true Christians – the angels will have separated out and cast into a place of punishment all hypocrites and false Christians.

THREE FINAL JUDGEMENTS

- There are three successive scenes through which God’s eternal judgement will be carried out. The first is the Judgement of Christian believers before the judgement seat of Christ. The second scene will be the judgement of the Gentile nations at the close of the tribulation, carried out before the throne of Christ’s glory. The third scene will be the judgement of all the remaining dead at the close of the millennium, carried out before a great white throne.

- We have treated the judgement of Christian believers. We will move on to the judgement of Gentiles. We however need to consider the main events that will lead to this judgement. This will help us understand why God has ordained a special judgement reserved only for Gentile nations.
- Paul refers to three different categories into which God has divided the human race. The Jews, the Gentiles and the Christians [1 Corinthians 10:32].
- The Jews are a special nation, separated out by God for purposes of His own from all other nations. The Gentiles are all remaining nations, except Israel. The church of God consists of all true believers who have been born again through faith in Jesus Christ. These are no longer reckoned by God according to their nationality, whether Jews or Gentiles, but as being “a new nation” in Christ.
- Scripture makes it clear that the judgement we are now considering, before the throne of Christ’s glory, will be for Gentiles only. There will be no Jews or Christians at this judgement because all these will already have undergone their own special judgement before the judgement seat of Christ.
- There will be no Jews present at this judgement because by this time Israel, as a nation, will already have passed through her own special judgement. All Jews who survive this special judgement will have been reconciled to God through the acknowledgement of Jesus as Saviour and Messiah.
- God’s final dealings with Israel at this time will complete the historical process of judgement through which He has been bringing them for nearly four thousand years. The subsequent judgement of the Gentile nations will mark a transition from historical to eternal judgement.
- There are two principles according to which God deals with the human race in blessing and in judgement. 1) A principle of blessing. God normally blesses the Gentiles through the Jews, but He blesses the Jews directly. 2) A principle of punishment. God normally punishes the Jews through the Gentiles, but punishes the Gentiles directly.
- First, in the closing stages of the tribulation, God will judge and punish Israel for the last time as a nation, through the instrumentality of the Gentiles. When this is complete, God Himself will intervene directly in judgement upon the Gentiles. Jeremiah described this final judgement upon Israel after they have returned as a nation to their own land [Jeremiah 30:3-9].
- Jeremiah foretold the order of events: 1) God will bring Israel back to their own land. 2) There will be for Israel a time of national peril and distress than any that they have previously passed through. 3) The Lord Himself will eventually intervene against the foreigners – the Gentile enemies of Israel – and will save Israel from them. 4) The national kingdom of Israel will again be restored upon the throne of David, under the supreme government of the Lord Jesus Himself. This period of the restored kingdom will be the millennium.

- This end-time gathering of the Gentile nation against Israel, and the direct intervention of the Lord on behalf of Israel, is further described in Zechariah [Zechariah 12:3, 14:2-4]. This intervention will culminate in His personal return to Mount of Olives – the very point from which He ascended into heaven at the commencement of this present dispensation.
- All rebellious elements will finally be purged out from among Israel, and those who survive this final purging will then be ready to be reconciled in repentance and humility to their God. This final purging is described in Ezekiel 20:37-38.
- The intervention of the Lord against the persecuting Gentile nations and His final reconciliation with Israel are further described in Zechariah 12:9-10. The Lord was speaking in the first person concerning Israel. Here foretelling the rejection and crucifixion of Christ.
- Paul also described this final reconciliation of Israel to God [Romans 11:26]. There will be no further need to judge Israel after passing through the fires of the great tribulation. Christ will need to judge the Gentile nations remaining alive on earth at the close of the great tribulation.

JUDGEMENT OF GENTILE NATIONS

- Jesus gave direct prophetic prediction of the judgement of the Gentile nations using the analogy of a shepherd dealing with his flock [Matthew 25:31-46].
- The purpose of the judgment that follow is to separate the sheep [those whom God accepts] from the goats [those whom God rejects]. The sheep will be received into the kingdom God has prepared for them – that is, Christ’s millennial kingdom. The goats will have final, irrevocable judgement pronounced upon them, by which they will be banished into everlasting fire for the devil and his angels.
- These rejected Gentiles will be sent forth not to Sheol or Hades but directly to the place of final punishment for rebels – the lake of fire. Into this lake the beast – the Antichrist – and his false prophet already will have been cast.
- The separation between the sheep and goat is based upon one decisive issue: the way in which those being judged have treated the brothers of Jesus; that is the Jewish people. Many passages in the Scriptures have indicated the world-wide hostility of some Gentile nations, their persecution of Israel either as individuals or nation.
- Joel presents a similar picture of the end-time gathering of nations for God’s judgement [Joel 3:1-2]. God declares that He will first bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem – that is, He will regather the scattered Jewish people in their own land. Then He will gather all the Gentile nations and bring judgement upon them. He will enter into judgement with the nations “on account of My people Israel.”

- Once the sheep have been separated from the goats, the judgement of the Gentile nations will be complete. By this time all those who are accounted worthy to enter into Christ's millennial kingdom will have passed through the refining judgements of God. First, Israel will be purged in the fire of the great tribulation. Then at the close the tribulation, the Gentiles will be purged by Christ's own direct intervention and judgement.
- After these purging judgements upon both Jew and Gentile, there will ensue a thousand years of peace and prosperity, with Christ ruling as King over all the earth.
- At the close of this period of one thousand years, Satan will make one final attempt to organise the Gentile nations in rebellion against Christ and His kingdom, but this rebellion will be brought to nought by the direct intervention of God.
- At this time Satan himself will at last be banished forever from earth and will be cast into the lake of fire, to join the Antichrist and the false prophet who will already be there.
- With this defeat of Satan's final uprising, all the rebellious among those living at that time upon the earth will be purged out, and it will then remain to judge the dead of all the previous ages. For this purpose, all the dead who have not previously been resurrected will at this time be called forth for judgement.
- In this way the stage will be set for the third and final scene of God's eternal judgement.

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGEMENT

- An ultimate end will come to sin and rebellion against the authority and holiness of almighty God: to be cast forever into the lake of everlasting fire [Revelation 20:11-15].
- Only those whose names are written in the Book of Life will escape this final judgement. The names recorded in this book are of those who during their life on earth availed themselves, through faith, of God's mercy and grace.
- There are various categories of people whose faith will save them from this final judgement. All those who put their faith in Christ's atoning sacrifice on behalf of mankind will already have been resurrected at the commencement of the millennium. They will have passed through their own appropriate judgement before the judgement seat of Christ – not for condemnation, but to assess their reward.
- It seems certain that the majority of those who appear before the great white throne will not have fulfilled the conditions of receiving God's mercy and will therefore be condemned to the lake of fire.

- There will be at least two categories of people before the great white throne who will escape condemnation and enter into eternal life.
- The first category will consist of people such as the queen of the South and men of Nineveh, who availed themselves of the mercy which God offered to them in one brief but decisive revelation of Himself. Scripture does not indicate how many others there may have been in the course of history who were given similar opportunity.
- The second category will consist of all those who died in faith during the millennium.
- Can we anticipate that there will be others to whom God will extend mercy from this great white throne? The answer to this is locked up within the omniscience of God. For us, with limited knowledge and narrow perspective, it is foolish to speculate.
- There remain many other areas of this vast subject which are totally beyond our powers of comprehension [Romans 11:33].
- Let us go on to perfection.

REFERENCES

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