

# **The Great Necessity For Informal Fellowship Meetings During The Great Tribulation**

**(By Alister Hamilton and William Turner and others)**

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All Scriptural quotations (unless otherwise stated) in this study are taken from the King James Version. The King James Version follows the vast majority of Greek texts in the order of about 1,000 to 10, and it is also confirmed by the ancient manuscripts in other languages, like the Gothic and Peshitta. It is in my opinion still the most accurate translation from the original Scriptures, and is my preferred version, and other translations quoted in this study, are tested against the King James Version. The Hebrew and Greek texts are taken from The Interlinear Bible.

I have stated some points in this study more than once, however, this is only because these points are of prime importance and vital truth for the believer and should be taken note of.

## **Foreword**

The structure of Church government, practices and ministries have changed out of all recognition pre 313 AD, when Constantine (who supposedly became a Christian), inspired by the Devil issued the Edict of Toleration (Milan), after which he heaped wealth, worldly power and position upon the Church. This had the effect that gradually the informal fellowship meetings and body ministry were replaced by what was in effect an Old Testament priest dependency, one man ministries which completely blocked any revival happening whatsoever, which kept Christians in spiritual immaturity all their lives. Mark 4v18,19, Rev 3v14-22. Over the centuries there was only brief periods of revival when parts of the Church returned to the simple informal fellowship meetings (which Christ had instituted in the Upper Room) and the Scriptures. Although departure from the early Church structure and practices surely greatly grieved the Trinity and prolonged the age of Grace by hindering the Second Coming of Christ; as His Second Coming now approaches the urgency for the reintroduction of the early Church structure and practices is all the more critical for the survival of Christians during the last seven years of this age so that they won't backslide and go into apostasy due to the great inrush of evil into the world. This is clearly seen by Paul's words in Heb 10v24-31, when he says in v25, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: **and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.**" He then goes on to say in v26, "For if we sin wilfully..." connecting v24,25 with v26-31. Paul was fully aware of the great evil that would be unleashed into the world during the Great Tribulation when the "mystery of iniquity" would work fully and the

world would experience a time like never before experienced by it. Dan 12v1, Matt 24v21, 2Thess 2v1-12, Rev 12v9,12. So the Lord inspired him (Paul) to write in the Epistle to The Hebrews of the great necessity for Christians during the last seven years of this age to gather together in the same kind of informal fellowship meetings that the Lord Jesus instituted in the Upper Room and which the apostles and the early Church were diligent to follow.

And so this study has come out of a deep concern for the survival of Christians during the Great Tribulation and the complete inadequacy of the present structure and practices of the mainline denominations to equip Christians to come through the Great Tribulation with an overcoming faith and to stand before the Lord Jesus at the Second Coming, victorious.

Alister Hamilton. 9<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

## Introduction

**Heb 10v23-25 states: Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.**

During the last seven years of this age (of Grace) and especially the last three and a half years (the period known as The Great Tribulation), God is primarily not going to use the mainline denominations to minister His presence, power and Life through to the world (and the Church), but He is going to use small groups of Christians who are earnestly and fervently seeking His face in prevailing prayer for His plans and purposes (and His presence and power to fulfil them). These groups of praying Christians will meet wherever they can, but mostly like the early church they will be gathering in their homes in informal fellowship meetings, and it is in this kind of meeting that God is going to manifest His presence and great power in a way never known or experienced before from the foundation of the world (Acts 2v16-21). During the last few decades, God has been raising up these small groups of earnestly seeking praying Christians and preparing them for the Great Tribulation. **(NOTE:** It will be these small groups of praying Christians in Israel (and in every country around the world) that will make up the Glorious Woman of Rev 12v1, a group of people, who are foreknown, designed, specially created and empowered by God for the Great Tribulation. It will be these believers who will fully trust and rely upon their Dear Saviour for His plans and purposes and His presence and power to fulfil them and this will be because they have no finances, political power or position behind them, so they have no choice but to have full faith and confidence in their Risen Lord, not like the many immature believers in the established denominations and worldly minded and unspiritual Pentecostal churches who have been kept in such a state by their blind leaders, who are in that state because they have followed the way of the Laodicean church, who find seeking the Lord for His plans, purposes, presence and power to demanding. A large majority of the 'foolish virgins' and 'evil servants' will be those Christians who have belonged to and attended the established denominations and unspiritual worldly minded Pentecostal churches, and likewise the vast majority of the 'faithful and wise servants' and 'wise virgins' will be those who fellowship and attend the small informal fellowship meetings. Matt 6v6, 15v14, 24v45-25v13, Acts 2v42-47, 4v23-31, Rev 3v14-22.) These groups will contain a considerable greater proportion of women than men and these praying women will be God's instrument in bringing in the last great revival upon the earth as spoken by God through the prophet Joel (Joel 2v28-32, Acts 2v16-21). It will be the same as when He used two elderly sisters, Peggy and Christine Smith, who were eighty four and eighty two years old respectively, one of them was nearly blind and the other bent almost double with arthritis. Unable to attend public worship, their humble cottage became a sanctuary where they met with God, even as godly Anna had done in the Temple in Jerusalem. Luke 2v36-38. These two dear sisters received a promise from God, which was, 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty and floods upon the dry ground.' Isaiah 44v3. Having received this promise they prayed and sought the Lord incessantly, a group of men in the same district who were also praying in a barn experienced a foretaste of the coming blessing and a young man in this meeting one night stood up and read out Psalm 24v3-6 with his hands held up to Heaven crying out, 'Oh God, are my hands clean? Is my heart pure?' He got no further, but fell prostrate to the floor. An awareness of God filled the barn and a stream of supernatural power was let lose in their lives and this was the beginning of the great Hebredian revival of 1949-52. These two dear elderly sisters had prayed fervently for over twenty years for revival and our wonderful Risen Saviour did not disappoint them. In these informal fellowship meetings, God will bring those Christians to a spiritual maturity far quicker than He ever could in the mainline denominations and unspiritual Pentecostal churches that practice one man ministries ever could (which keeps God's people perpetually in a state of spiritually immaturity), for in these informal fellowship meetings it will only be 'body ministry' operating, i.e., God, the Holy Spirit will use and minister through **every member** of the Body of Christ. 1Cor 12v7 states: 'But the manifestation of the Spirit is given **to every man** to profit withal' and 1Cor 14v26: 'How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, **every one of you hath** a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation...' The Church, which is the Body of Christ, is going to be changed from one that is totally vulnerable, to one that is empowered with the might and power of God and **NOT** only in defence but also in attack. **We need to pray that God will give us the realisation of this and pray it into reality. (Please see Appendix I: Vision by A C Valdez, Sr. and Appendix VI: Looking For And Hastening The Coming Of The Day Of God.)** It will be this kind of Church in many countries, equipped with the true 'charismata' ('gifts of grace'), which will preserve the 'denominational churches' from total

destruction due to the terrible evil and persecution in the world during the Great Tribulation when the Mystery of Iniquity (or better, Lawlessness) works fully. The Christians in these informal fellowship meetings will also collectively exercise the same spiritual power and authority in judgement upon the wicked (through the gifts of the Holy Spirit) during the Great Tribulation, like the Two Witnesses will manifest. 1Kings 18v11,12, Dan 11v32, Zech 12v8, Luke 18v1-8, Rev 11v3-6, 12v6,14.

It is also the 'Gideon Principle' that is going to operate during the dark evil days of the Great Tribulation, God will only use those humble trembling souls, who feel their great need of His strength, blessing, power and presence. Judges 6v12,15 states, 'And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour...And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house,' and 1Cor 1v27,28 states, 'But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.' The first words that the Angel of the Lord (Heb. Malak Yahweh, which means Yahweh Messenger, Who was none other than the pre-incarnate Christ, not only the Sent One under the New Covenant, but also under the Old as well, John 12v49) speaks to Gideon who had been hiding in the winepress from the Midianites threshing corn, are: 'The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour.' The Lord sees Gideon **NOT** as he felt and saw himself, **BUT** as He would make him, and gives him repeated demonstrations of His power to build up his faith to enable him to carry out the Lord's commission to deliver Israel. The Lord came and visited him on different occasions and gave him the signs of the fleeces, God built up his faith again and again, until he could believe. He did not expect Gideon to believe by raw faith (i.e., He did not just say to him, 'come on now believe the word that I have spoken'), no, the Lord visited him again and again and built up his faith. Judges 6v36-40. (Abraham and Sarah were visited by the Lord and angels, in order to strengthen their faith and overcome their unbelief and failure in the past. Gen chapters 17 & 18 (esp. 17v18, 18v12-15). See Rom 4v20, "was strengthened in faith;" Abraham's faith was strengthened by these visits, and the unveiling of the Divine presence and purposes. An increase of faith is always due to something that God does; either through the deposit of a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the soul and spirit, or through an open revelation of the Divine person and presence, or through angelic revelation, or through some other act and manifestation of Divine power. These divine encouragements transforms our faith to a living faith. This is a great consolation and leads to peaceful trust in God, instead of fretful striving. Let us cling fast to our heavenly Father's unveiling of His presence and purposes, and thank God for His angels, and cherish their help, and even more the Lord who sends them. James 2v21-26). God then showed Gideon that the Midianites and the Amalekites were trembling with great fear at the thought of the sword of Gideon the son of Joash coming against them for they knew that God had delivered them all into his hand. Judges 7v13-15. With man, the lesser the odds look that a thing will happen increases the probability that it will actually happen, however, it is the reverse that is true with God, in that the greater the odds, the greater the certainty it will happen and we see this in Gideon's three hundred men destroying, by God's presence and power, one hundred and twenty thousand men of the Midianites. When it is time for God to fulfil His purposes, **NOTHING** can stop it and the wicked and the powers of darkness tremble in great fear. Hence, as it is written in Acts 2v17, 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh...' will most surely come to pass (and we should continue to pray earnestly for this divine promise to be fulfilled until it actually is!), for this is one of the major divine purposes that God has for His people during the last seven years of this age, but especially the last three and a half years of this age, the period known as the Great Tribulation, when God visits His people with His presence and power like never before, to give the Church great authority and power over the Devil and the evil angels. God is going to show the wicked that He is not only a God of Love and Mercy, but a God of judgement as well!

It is also God's great desire to give us a revelation of Himself to our souls. Matt 11v27 states, 'All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him,' with Eph 1v15-23, 3v14-21. The Ephesian Christians were saved, filled with the Holy Spirit and for a number of years experiencing spiritual gifts, but Paul prayed for them to have a revelation of God to their personality. All those in the Old Testament and early Church who did anything for God, all had an open revelation of God, and so we need to pray that we will experience this as well. It is God's great longing and desire to give each one of His dear children the same kind of experience that the Old Testament prophets and early church experienced (and even more so during the dark evil days of the Great Tribulation), for without a vision the people shall surely perish. Proverbs 29v18, Isaiah 6.

It is a fact today, that the vast majority of the Church are in a comatose state as regards to its being upon earth during the dark evil days of the Great Tribulation, when God's time bomb, the Mystery of Iniquity will explode. In churches today they are so often taken up with the immediate that they miss what is ahead. This situation is just like when Christ entered Jerusalem and the children were singing His praises and Christ said that such praise and worship was perfect; but their knowledge was deficient, in that in another forty years the Temple and Jerusalem was going to be totally destroyed by the Romans, under Titus, Vespasian's son, due to the uprising of the Jews and the war that followed from 66 AD-70 AD. It is vital for the Body of Christ to pray now that God will raise up and set in the Church last day Elijah ministries like the Two Witnesses. It is also important to note, that when God releases His time bomb (i.e., the mystery of iniquity) into human history, He also will bring into the Church new levels of power and authority for judgement gifts. Judges 6v11-23, 1Kings

17v1,7, 18v5, 2Kings 1v2-17, Psalm 8v2, 24v3-6, 133 (all), Isaiah 66v2, Dan 11v32,33, Joel 2v28-32, Zech 12v8, Matt 18v20, 21v15,16, 24v9, Luke 18v1-8, 19v41-44, 21v16,17, John 14v12-14, 15v1-8, Acts 2v16-21,46, Rom 16v5, 1Cor 1v26-31, chapters 11-14, 2Thess 2v1-12, James 5v7,17, Rev 11v3-6, 12v1. **(Please see Appendix VIII: Mystery Of Iniquity And The Mystery Of God).**

### **The Informal Fellowship Meeting**

**The Church Was Planned And Ordained By God, Not Men.**

#### **A) Christ gave us the full and permanent teaching on Church Organisation.**

Our submission to the Lordship of Christ is proved by our submission to His will and truth, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine." John 7v17. The doctrine on Church government is as inspired and permanent a part of the foundation of Scripture truth as any other truth. Eph 2v20, 3v5, John 15v16, 16v13. When Christ founded the Church, He instituted its doctrine on organisation as well as its other doctrine. **God conceived and planned the Church before Creation; it is not a man-made institution.** Eph 1v4,5,11, Col 1v26,27, Rom 8v28-30, 1Cor 2v7. The New Testament Scriptures are our only basis for doctrine on Church organisation as well as the other Christian doctrine. Our standard of Church organisation is not even early post-apostolic Church organisation, for the traditions of even this early period can lead us astray. **The Scriptures alone are the sole rule of faith and conduct.** 2Tim 3v14-17, 1Cor 14v37, 2Pet 3v2,15,16, Rev 22v18,18. God was not negligent of the organisation of the Church; He did not leave it to the discretion or ingenuity of its leaders, or to the customs of the people, district, or land where the Gospel was preached. **Before creation the Trinity had ordained, planned and predestined all things in relation to the Church and its organisation.** They considered what was the best method of Church organisation to encourage spiritual growth and evangelistic success, and at the same time be suited to every age, nation and circumstance, and would survive best in persecution. **When Christ founded the Church, He built it to his own specifications, design, plan and order.** Matt 16v18.

#### **God did not leave Church organisation to human ingenuity.**

The same ingenuity of man, that has produced many different systems of worldly government, has been applied to Church government. This has inevitably resulted in a departure from New Testament organisation, doctrine and practice; and a consequent loss of the spiritual life and power that the early Church experienced. God did not leave the pattern of Israel's worship to the ingenuity of godly Moses. Indeed, God warned Moses to follow the exact pattern of organisation and worship that He had given him. Heb 8v5, 1Chron 28v19. God did not leave the structure of Church organisation to men's desire, ingenuity, discretion, accommodation or expediency, He has given clear details of how His Church should be organised and run. **Unfortunately, Christian leaders throughout Church history have followed the example of Israel's religious leaders and built religious power structures, and replaced the divinely ordained organisation of the Church with their own traditions.** This has resulted in the frustration of the Divine purposes and the disappearance of the manifestations of Divine love, life and power that were so apparent in the early Church. If it were not for the godly praying hearts in many churches, all that would be left is a dead form, which brings disillusionment and discouragement to needy souls desperately seeking God's power and blessing.

#### **B) Unscriptural Church Organisation often violates Christ's Lordship.**

Church history reveals that men have arrogantly and presumptuously altered the structure of Christ's Church; they felt that they could improve upon Christ's form of Church organisation. Psalm 19v13,14, Col 1v18-20, 2v6-10. **If we lay aside His truth for our own ideas, we can end up with a religion, which though called Christianity, has really little to do with it.** Gal 1v6-10, 2Cor 11v1-6. The Church is Christ's Church; converts are born at God's will, not at the will of men; the Church is God's flock; it is bought with Christ's blood, and it is under the superintendence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. John 1v12,13, Isaiah 53v11, Acts 20v28, Titus 3v5, 1Pet 1v3,23. God can, and does, overlook genuine ignorance, but he cannot overlook wilful ignorance and rebellion. Acts 17v30, 1Sam 15v23.

The unity of Christ's Church cannot take place around the constitutions of men, it can only take place when the Church is subordinate to the Lordship of Jesus and the Holy Spirit and follows their directions. The true Christian finds no appeal in the organic unity of church federations; he looks and longs for a true fellowship and unity of the Spirit, and a genuine body ministry of believers, who own Jesus as Lord. If we refuse to accept the Lordship and leadership of Christ, there is always barrenness in our organisations and constitutions no matter how doctrinally correct or adequate they may seem to be. When the Church lost its first love and began to get away from God, men began to usurp God's authority and build their own religious kingdoms, while claiming that they were building God's kingdom.

#### **The Church as God's "Ecclesia," is under His direction and control.**

When God used the Greek word "Ecclesia" to describe His followers, it signified an assembly or congregation to the Jews.

**“Ecclesia” had been used by Israel for many years to signify a united group of people under God’s control.** In the Old Testament the Hebrew words for the gathering together of the Israelites are “edhah,” which means “congregation;” and “qahal,” which means “assembly.” In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), “edhah” is almost always translated as “synagogue” (Strong’s NT:4864), and “qahal” usually as “ecclesia” (Strong’s NT:1577). Young states that “edhah” is “an appointed meeting,” and “qahal” is “an assembly called together, a called and invited gathering.”

To the Greeks, “ecclesia,” meant the gathering together of the citizens of a town by an heralds trumpet, and according to Num 10v1-3, the Israelites were gathered together in this way. So when God used the word “ecclesia,” it signified an assembly to His hearers. The Hebrew equivalents had been used by Israel to signify a united group of people under God’s control. **God intended the Church, like Israel, to be under His permanent control, supervision and guidance.** In the Gospels Jesus only spoke twice of the “ecclesia;” in Matt 16v18, He speaks of the universal and complete Church; in Matt 18v17, He speaks of the local Church which can consist of as few as two or three Christians. We see from Matt 16v18, that there is a close connection between “the Kingdom of Heaven” and the “ecclesia.” The “ecclesia” are not only God’s assembly; they are the visible representatives of God on earth, and under His direct control and guidance. The direction and guidance of the Church should come from God, not from organisations, committees, or conferences directed and guided by men.

### **God’s all-embracing Church compared with Judaism and the Jewish Synagogue.**

The Christian Church, “ecclesia,” was no longer only Jewish, it included every person of every nation who accepted Christ as his or her Saviour. Gal 3v26-29. God’s worldwide Church fully embraced Gentiles which the Jews did not do. The use of the word “ecclesia” would distinguish Christ’s people from the Jews in their synagogues; synagogue is from “syn,” which means “together,” and “ago,” which means, “to bring.” Though synagogue is used of a Christian meeting in James 2v2, Christ’s words in Matt 16v18, give a strong hint of separation from the Jewish synagogue, for Jesus speaks of “My Church,” as distinct from the Jewish synagogues. Christians gathered together and recognised Christ as their Lord, which the Jews certainly did not do. In Acts 19v32,39,41, the citizens of Ephesus formed an “ecclesia,” that is, an assembly; the citizens of the kingdom of heaven should form an assembly in the locality where they live. **The Church is not the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God, it is part of that kingdom, and its visible representative upon earth, and it preaches the coming of that kingdom on earth. Let us never forget that the headquarters of the Church of Christ is in heaven, not upon earth.**

### **C) Church organisation is not a progressive Revelation.**

Some would say that there is no systematic explanation of Church government in the Scriptures, and that Church government is a progressive revelation, which varies according the varying circumstance or need. **There may be no systematic and logical explanation of Church government in the Scriptures, but neither is there systematic teaching on other Christian doctrines and theology.** There are general principals and incidental references to Church government in the Scriptures, and these combined together give a clear picture of the early Church teaching on Church organisation. It is very difficult for many Christians to follow the formal prolonged doctrinal treatises and systematic theologies on Christian doctrine, as good and necessary as these may be. God, in His great wisdom, gave the basic truths of Christian doctrine simply, so that all can understand, and the Scriptural teaching on Church organisation is no exception.

The New Testament Scriptures give no support to the idea of organisational development. Indeed, these Scriptures condemn any deviation from their revelation. Gal 1v6-12, Jude v3,4. To believe in progressive revelation outside of the Scriptures, is a most dangerous doctrine, and it has led to many soul-destroying heresies, and a denial of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2Pet 2v1, 3v16. There are many cults today that have been founded on the claim of extra revelation outside of the Scriptures. **The Scriptures are the only foundation for Christian doctrine and practice.** These Scriptures are the revelations of God to His Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles and prophets, and the accounts of His dealings with mankind. Eph 2v20, 3v5. A church organisation that defies God’s pattern cannot preserve the purity and power of the Church. The statement that progressive organisational development of the Church was necessary to preserve the Church from heresy and fanaticism has no support from Scripture or Christian experience. Church federation has nearly always led to persecution of godly Christians, and has caused far greater evils than it has cured. John 16v1-4, 2Tim 3v12.

### **Do we experience the essential heart of living truth, or do we have an empty outline of truth?**

Paul uses the word “morphosin,” in Rom 2v20 and 2Tim 3v5, to speak of “an outline of truth without the substance,” the “morphosin” without the “morphe.” In Rom 2v20, Paul says that it was folly for Jews to be proud of being chosen recipients of divine truth, when they did not obey that truth, or experience God and His truth. In 2Tim 3v5, Paul tells us to turn away from Christian forms which lack the reality and power of God. Though Scriptural constitutions and fundamental beliefs may give us a necessary outline and code of faith, they will not on their own preserve the purity of the Church. **We**

**need a heart cry for mercy, earnest prayer, and a return to early Church practices, if we are to be preserved from error.** We can have correct rules of faith and conduct and resist the Holy Spirit. **Jesus said that we could only preserve our spiritual life only by abiding in Him and obeying His words.** The impartation of God's life comes from seeking God, and not from church constitutions, or even from a correct doctrinal outline of truth, as valuable and necessary as this can be.

It is a disturbing fact that the constitutions of men often deny, reject some vital Scripture truths, and their teaching on Church government. It is not so spiritually demanding to depend on an organisation, or follow a formal Church order and service. To recognise and follow our heavenly Father's directions and plans, and to have His love and power operating in our churches demands real humility, prayerfulness, and a close walk with God. This is directly opposite to man's carnal nature, for flesh dominated people love their own ways, and seek for power, position, prestige, influence and wealth. The unconsecrated carnal mind loves to build its own kingdom and say, "Is this not great Babylon that I have built?" and, "I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing." Dan 4v30, Rev 3v17. Many have decided against seeking God for a manifestation of His love and power, and have chosen instead, power, popularity, and influence within a religious structure. It can be difficult and frustrating for earnest Christians to operate or manifest the love and power of God through His spiritual gifts, in churches where the leadership manifests these wrong motives, and resists the Holy Spirit and His gifts.

### **Are we God's "Ecclesia," or are we only His "kuriakon?"**

Our English word "church," like the Scottish "Kirk" and the German "quirt," is derived from the Greek "kuriakon," which means, "belonging to the Lord," or simply, "the Lord's." The adjective "kuriakon," only occurs twice in the New Testament, where it speaks of "the Lord's supper," and "the Lord's day." 1Cor 11v20, Rev 1v10. In the New Testament the word "kuriakon" is not used in reference to Christian believers, instead it uses "ecclesia," which, as we have already seen, conveys not only the thought of a people belonging to God, but also a people under His direction and control. Church federation can take the control of the Church out of the hands of God and put it in the hands of men. Christians in such churches belong to God, but as they are so often under men's control instead of God's, it is more correct to call them by the word "kuriakon," than by the word "ecclesia." The belief in the progressive revelation of Church government, and the consequent development of church organisations, has proved to be an unmitigated disaster for Christ's Church. The evils that have come as a result of a departure from New Testament organisation, and the resultant affiliation and federation of churches, cannot be over-emphasised or exaggerated. The blood of the millions of Christian dead, who have been killed in the name of God, cry out against the religious kingdoms of men that have committed the sin of Cain. Gen 4v10,11, Jude v11.

### **The Churches Must Obey Jesus As Lord.**

#### **A) The early Church owned Christ's Lordship in Evangelism and Worship.**

The Scriptures insist that Jesus is the Head of our churches, and so we should seek His will, plans and guidance, and not depend on our plans or programmes. Matt 18v18-20, 28v18-20, Eph 1v20-23, 4v7-16, 5v21-23, Phil 2v9-11, Col 1v18,19, 2v19, 3v9-11, Rev 19v16. The early Church at Jerusalem enjoyed the liberty, flexibility and power of the Holy Spirit in both fellowship and evangelism; this resulted in a great number of converts, and a considerable variety of content and great blessing in their fellowships meetings. It was not like so many modern Churches who extol Jesus as Lord, but do not obey Him, and please themselves in what they do. Peter learned by bitter personal experience that it was wise to obey his Lord; God cleansed him of his bigotry, and made him a great blessing. Acts 10v1-48.

Paul states that the Holy Spirit should direct our Church gatherings, and the person who is moved by the Holy Spirit has the right to minister. All rights in a church fellowship gathering should depend upon the direction and blessing of Christ, and rigid control of a meeting by one person should be unknown. The early church Pastors guided and taught each local church, but they certainly did not monopolise the ministry in a church, several believers could minister on a theme as the Lord led them, and other Christians ministered in "psalm, doctrine, tongue, revelation, or interpretation." 1Cor 14v26. Even the most spiritual and capable were not allowed to monopolise a meeting, they had to give way to others who had something from God, "Let the first hold his peace." 1Cor 14v29-31. The domination of ministry by one person denies Christ's Lordship over His Church. It is not till post-apostolic times and literature that we read of a presiding officer in the worship and fellowship meetings of the local churches. It is true that Paul as an evangelist had a preaching hall and took the lead there as the principle speaker and debater, and he could and did take the major part in a special meeting for ministry, but he did not monopolise the local Church fellowships. Paul said that in the local Church fellowships, the Christians were to act as a body, and to minister to one another under the direction of the Holy Spirit and Christ. Acts 19v8-10, 20v6-12, 1Cor 12v4-27.

### **The presence of God through communion with Him is the secret of blessing and victory.**

**Moses was quite unwilling to lead Israel and fight her enemies without the presence, blessing and guidance**

of God, he had the sense to realise that it was only God's overshadowing providence that made Israel different from the surrounding nations. Exodus 33v11-20, NB v14, 34v5-9. **It was the presence and power of God that gave the early Church victory.** The acid test of our dependence upon God is the amount of time that we give to prayer and waiting upon God, as groups or individuals. True prayer is not the ability to say long prayers in public, God condemns this. Matt 6v5-15, 23v14, Mark 12v40, Luke 20v47. If we fail to earnestly seek God we shall be in the same lamentable spiritual state as the church at Laodicea. They were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;" but they did not know it. They said they had need of nothing, when they needed to seek Jesus and humbly ask Him to open their eyes and heal their pitiful spiritual condition. Rev 3v17-19. Those who really love God love His presence. Heb 11v5,6, Psalm 27 all, NB v4,8. Earnest and prolonged seeking of God is a searching test of ones spirituality and love of God. See how the early Church practised prayer and waiting upon God.

**The verb "deomai."** Luke 10v2, 21v36, 22v32, Acts 4v31, 10v2, 2Cor 8v4. The verb "erotao," Luke 16v27, John 14v16, 16v26, 17v9,15,20.

**The verb "euchomai."** Rom 9v3, 2Cor 13v7,9, James 5v16, 3John v2, Acts 26v29, 27v29.

**The verb "proseuchomai."** Luke 3v21, 5v16, 6v12,28, 9v28,29, 11v1,2, 18v1,10,11, 22v46, Acts 1v24, 6v6, 8v15, 9v11,40, 10v9,30, 11v5, 12v12, 13v3, 14v23, 16v25, 20v36, 21v5, 22v17, 28v8, Eph 6v18, Col 1v3,9, 4v3, 1Cor 14v13,14,15, 1Thess 5v17,25, 2Thess 1v11, 3v1, 1Tim 2v8, James 5v13,14,18, Jude v20.

**The noun "deesis."** Luke 1v13, 2v37, 5v33, Rom 10v1, 2Cor 1v11, 9v14, Phil 1v4,19, 2Tim 1v3, Heb 5v7, James 5v16, 1Pet 3v12.

**The noun "enteuxis."** (Intercession) 1Tim 4v5, plural in 2v1. **The noun "entugchano."** Rom 8v26,27,34, Heb 7v25.

**The noun "proseuche."** Matt 21v13,22, Luke 6v12, Acts 1v14, 2v42, 3v1, 6v4, 10v4,31, 12v5, 16v13,16, Rom 1v9, 12v12, 15v30, 1Cor 7v5, Eph 1v16, 6v18, Phil 4v6, Col 4v2,12, 1Thess 1v2, 5v5, Philemon v4,22, 1Pet 3v7, 4v7.

## **B) The variety and flexibility of a fellowship led by the Holy Spirit.**

In the early Church there was flexibility under the guidance of God, in many modern churches the services are in a cast iron rut and routine, with a resultant spiritual deadness and bondage. **Paul's preaching in the Hall of Tyrannus was to non-Christians, here he preached and defended the Gospel; the Christian fellowship meetings took place in the homes of Christians. We need to clearly see the difference between an evangelistic mission and a Christian fellowship, where Christians are gathered together to build each other up in God.**

### **a) Informal Christian fellowship gatherings.**

This consisted of prayer, praise and worship, conversational sharing of experience, discussion of problems and prayer for them, the manifestation of spiritual gifts, the study of the Scriptures, with all being able to comment, and a meal at which the Lord's Supper took place. In 1Cor 11v1 to 14v40, Paul is correcting disorders at the Lord's Supper, and showing them the correct way to conduct their gatherings for fellowship, prayer and worship. **The Last Supper conducted by Jesus gives us the divine order for Christian fellowship, as well as the celebration of the Lord's Supper.** There was a great blessing produced by the open and flexible informal fellowship meetings, which were under the guidance and control of the Holy Spirit. Nowadays, religious leaders exclude almost all ministry or participation from their flocks, and do not allow God to inspire Christians to give a contribution and to develop their ministries, and so ministries are often strangled at birth. **The ministries that do develop do so in spite of these religious systems, and not because of them.** No matter how competent a minister may be in preaching and pastoral work, he is a failure if he does not practice informal body ministry and develop ministries in the local church. God desires His children to develop ministries, not remain in permanent spiritual babyhood. Some will object to this participation in ministry by all Christians and say, "You open the door to fanatics and encourage the immature to make mistakes by your informal body ministry." To this I answer, "Informal body ministry is God's order, not mine."

Godly, wise, spiritual and gracious elders will preserve churches from the dangers of fanaticism, and gently correct the mistakes of the immature and inspire them to further effort. **We should not restrain profitable ministries, but unprofitable ministries should be restrained.** Jesus has set ministries in the Church, but He has not relinquished the control of the Church to them, He is the Head of the Church. The substitution of Christ's Lordship over His Church and informal body ministry, with one-man ministry, cannot help but produce frustration, barrenness and division. Formal, spiritually lifeless services are as great an abuse of God's order as fanaticism, and are just as great an offence to God. There can only be real growth and blessing when the Holy Spirit is given His rightful place and ministry.

### **b) An informal evangelistic meeting.**

This could take place in synagogues, the open air, hired building, or home; to large groups, or even to one person, like our Lord's conversation with the woman at the well. **There are instances of Jesus and Paul preaching sermons, however, the practice of informal discussion in synagogue, hall, home, or open-air, and the confirmation of the truth by miracles, was the usual Divine pattern for apostolic evangelism.** Rom 15v18-21. This informal evangelism was attractive to the outsider, and was anything but boring, which certainly cannot be said of many modern

services, which often have to be endured rather than enjoyed. I am not thinking only of some traditional churches; the lightness and frivolity, spoken of in the King James Version of Jer 23v32, has afflicted many Pentecostal churches. "Lightness," is "pachazuwth," (Strong's: OT6350), frivolity, from (Strong's: OT6348), "pachaz," to bubble up or froth. See 2Cor 1v17, "elaphria," (Strong's: NT1644), levity. **God wants us to enjoy His presence and the fellowship of other Christians in profound depth; this will fill us with "joy unspeakable and full of glory."** 1Pet 1v8.

Jesus and His apostles expected to be questioned or interrupted while preaching, and they experienced this regularly, indeed, it was the norm. In their proclaiming the gospel as an herald, "kerusso," Acts 8v5, 9v26, 10v37,42, 15v21, 19v13, 20v25, 28v36; or telling and announcing good news, "euangelizo," Acts 5v42, 8v4,12,35,40, 10v36, 11v20, 14v15, 15v35, 17v18; they "talked and discoursed," "laleo," Acts 8v25, 11v19, 13v42, 14v25, 16v6; they told thoroughly, "katangello," Acts 4v2, 13v5,38, 15v36, 17v3,13, 1Cor 9v14; they often did this in a conversational style by reasoning, questions and even heated debate, "suzeeteo," Mark 8v11, 12v28, Luke 24v15,32, Acts 6v9, 9v29; and dialogue, "dialegomai," Acts 17v2,17, 18v4,19, 19v8,9, 20v7,9, 24v12,25 (also occurs Mark 9v34, Heb 12v5, Jude v9). See also "peitho," to persuade," Acts 13v43, 14v19, 18v4, 19v8,26, 26v28, 28v23, 2Cor 5v11. **The best method of evangelism, preaching and teaching is by informal discussion, dialogue and persuasion in friendly and amiable conversations with people.**

The early Church Christians did not invite people to hear the Gospel and sit passively and mutely until an appeal was made; they preached the Gospel in the open air, in their daily contacts, and from house to house, and those who were converted joined their Christian fellowships. Acts 5v42, 8v4. Inviting unbelievers to meetings is not normal New Testament evangelism, the early Church went out to preach the Gospel. **The miraculous was the cutting edge of New Testament evangelism,** in Rom 15v18,19, Paul said that he made the Gentiles receive and obey the Gospel "by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." Formal Church services will certainly not meet the needs of this modern generation, we need the greater apostolic and evangelistic ministries to win converts and break the ground for the witness of the ordinary church members. The informal New Testament meetings for fellowship, under the blessing and guidance of the Holy Spirit, will sustain those who come to know Jesus as their Saviour. This Divine pattern is suitable, and will be successful, with every age and nation. When Jesus is owned as Lord, the Church is victorious in both evangelism and worship.

### **C) The New Testament ministry gifts are appointed by God, not by men.**

The ministries that God sets in the Church are based on His spiritual gifting and not on natural talent or ability. **The early Church turned the world upside down by spiritual ministry gifts from God, not by their natural talents, and it is these ministry gifts that the Church needs so badly today, not more money, machinery, or better education.** These ministry gifts are the result of divine sovereignty, not human desire, or ordination. God sets these gifts and ministries in the Church, and Jesus directs them. Matt 9v38, 1Cor 12v28, Eph 4v8-11.

### **Ordination, is it from Heaven, or from men? Matt 21v25, Mark 11v30, Luke 20v4.**

Some object to the statement that ordination to ministry comes from heaven, and not from men, and state that elders, deacons, and even apostles, had hands laid upon them to appoint them to a ministry. This was undoubtedly true, however, this appointment to God's work, was really the recognition of the gift and call already received from God, and which was already manifested in their ministries. **The laying on of hands by men is an empty formality without the divine ordination and gifting of God.** The religious leaders who killed Jesus were certainly not ordained by God, they resisted God. Acts 7v51-53. In God's eyes a person has authority in Christ's Church, not because men will it, or because a person has received ecclesiastical training or ordination, but because He Himself has given them a ministry.

The modern term "ordination" has come to have a technical significance not found in the New Testament. The Greek words translated as "ordain" in the Authorised Version simply mean, "to appoint, choose and set apart." Acts 6v5,6, 13v2,3, 14v23, 1Tim 2v7, 4v14, 5v22, 2Tim 1v6. Modern denominations have replaced God's ordination and Christ's commission, with their ordaining councils. I recognise that ordaining councils do choose people who have had a call from God. However, it is also true that many people are ordained to lead in God's work, who have no call or right to do so, and many others who have received a definite commission from Christ are excluded and rejected. **Very few of our modern denominations would have ordained any of the twelve apostles, even though they are so highly regarded by religious leaders today.** Many Church leaders today reject the miraculous powers that the apostles experienced, and oppose those who manifest the same spiritual gifts. **These religious leaders, as in Christ's day, extol the prophets of the past, but oppose the same kind of ministries in the present.** Matt 23v29-39. The apostles of Christ's day were looked upon as deluded, undesirable, unlearned and ignorant men, by the religious leaders of Israel. Christ's apostles had not been taught in the schools of the Rabbis, but they were certainly not unlearned or ignorant in regard to hearing and obeying the voice of God. The apostles were lacking in men's ecclesiastical training, but God Himself had trained them in the essentials of true religion.



### **Systematic traditional training often disqualifies one from divine ordination.**

God did not choose any of the learned Rabbis that men had ordained, the systematic training in men's traditions had made them entirely unsuitable for leadership in Christ's Church. Christ's apostles had the essentials of true religion, faith, hope, love, humility, a love for Jesus, and a thirst for God, and so God chose these simple, earnest, and spiritual young men to lead His Church. Young men, who have received spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries from God, have an important part to play in Christ's Church today. The apostles were chosen by God, and not by men, or by themselves; even Jesus did not appoint Himself. 1Cor 12v18,28, Heb 5v1-10. **It was ordination from heaven that counted.**

**Giving people the names of the New Testament offices will not give them that ministry, a person has to have a ministry from God, or they are an empty pretender.** In the New Testament it was the actual ministry of a person that decided what they were called. They were not just called apostles, prophets, pastor-teachers, and evangelists, they possessed and manifested these ministries, and they were clearly seen and recognised by the members of the churches. **You can label "treacle," as "best quality jam," but it is still "treacle;" an empty claim to New Testament ministry gifts is even more foolish and wrong.**

### **Denominational closed-shop ministries often oppose divinely given ministries.**

The early Church ministry was not a closed denominational shop. The ministerial certificate of the early Church was a ministry gift from Christ, which was accredited by signs, wonders and miracles. **It is sad that ecclesiastical machinery has replaced God's empowerment in many denominations, and this is a major reason for the lack of revival.**

The elders who pastored and taught the local churches were ordained by Paul, not by his own feelings, it was because they were seen to possess a ministry gift from Christ. The Holy Spirit had given these ministries and made them overseers in their churches. Their ministries were actually in operation in the local churches before Paul appointed them; it was purely a matter of recognising these divinely given ministries. Acts 20v28-32. The seven deacons at Jerusalem were chosen by the people for their spiritual ministry as well as their wisdom and godly character. They were well-known and well-trusted by all the Christians, not only on the grounds of their wisdom, graciousness, godly character, and ability to "show mercy;" they were also "full of the Holy Spirit," and possessed a definite spiritual ministry. Deacons should not only be gentle and kind, and good people of "good reputation," they must be "full of faith and the Holy Ghost." Acts 6v3,5,8.

### **The early Church recognised and appointed local people to Church leadership.**

When the local church was founded and the elders appointed, the local church recognised and appointed other ministries that the Holy Spirit had given and developed in the church. The local church appointed Timothy, and the elders laid hands on him and asked God to bless him. They recognised that his ministry had developed sufficiently for Timothy to take his place among the ministries of the local church. 1Tim 4v12-16, 2Tim 1v6. When Paul wrote his letters to Timothy, he was between 35 and 40 years of age. **Local elders did not resent developing ministries in their churches, they glorified God for them; and if God gave some younger Christian in the local church a greater ministry than any one else in it, the elders particularly rejoiced, because this was the fruit of their oversight and proof that their ministry was a success.** It is a bitter, sour, Saul-like spirit of jealousy that looks upon developing ministries in the local church as a threat to one's authority. 1Sam 18v6-14. Love greatly rejoices when others are blessed more than themselves, and heartily thanks God for the part that He has given them in developing these ministries, and the part that they have to play in God's work. 1Cor 13v4-7.

Paul appointed local people as leaders whose life and ministry gift were recognised, appreciated and loved by the people in the local church. **The question seems to have been, "Who do you have confidence in to lead you?"** After Paul had appointed the first elders in the local church, the appointment of other elders was left in the hands of the local elders and Christians; they knew the spiritual qualifications that were necessary for a man to be an elder or deacon, because Paul had instructed them in this matter. 1Tim 3v1-16, Titus 1v4-16, James 5v13-18. **Paul and the other itinerant ministries exercised a spiritual oversight and moral authority over the local churches, but they did not take the control of the churches out of the hands of the elders, or interfere with their decisions, each church was responsible to God for its own work.** The apostles exercised the oversight of love and fellowship, not of official position, their work was to start churches, and then to instruct and inspire the flocks and develop their ministries, not to dominate, or dictate to them. Eph 4v8-14, 1Pet 5v1-7.

### **D) The ministries God gives can only be sustained by communion with God.**

#### **We must follow the glory cloud.**

The New Testament ministries can only be sustained by communion with God. We see in the Scriptures that God gave His authority to those who followed His leadings and commands. Moses was Israel's leader, but he did not lead them in his

way and will, he obeyed God's orders. God led Israel through His glory cloud, Moses had the good sense to obey God's directions, and follow His glory cloud. This same is true of the New Testament ministries, only those who have a ministry of divine life and follow the glory cloud, who have the right of leadership and authority in Christ's Church. 1Cor 12v28, Acts 10v38.

**We can be channels of God's love and power.**

**Jesus earnestly desires us to be channels of His love and power, He longs to pour His mercy, tenderness, truth, delivering power, and deep affection through us to others, but this can only happen when we abide in Christ.** John 15v1-17. No one is a true minister of Christ who does not minister His love, mercy and power to others. It is not enough to preach truth; truth must minister God's power, life and love to needy souls and bodies. 1Pet 1v12. All the ministry gifts are intended to minister the love, power and grace of God to God's flock and to knit it together in love. The ministry of elders is particularly pastoral; however, the Lord Jesus told the young apostle Peter, that pastoral ministry was included in his apostolic ministry. John 21v15-19. **The ministry gifts should reveal Christ and the Father to people.** Gal 1v15,16. **A spiritual ministry does not just teach doctrine, it brings people into a living experience of God.**

**The development, extension, and interdependence of spiritual ministries.**

The ministry gifts Jesus gives are capable of development and extension. Stephen and Philip were ordained to be deacons, because the church recognised that their spirituality, godliness and love for people, proved that they had a ministry from Christ to fulfil that work. Jesus also ordained them to be fervent evangelists, and they had a double ministry. We read in Acts 13v1,2, that Paul and Barnabus possessed teaching ministries in the church at Antioch, then God made them apostles. They had received a previous call to this work, "Separate me Barnabus and Saul for the work to which I have called them." They had faithfully prepared for this work by fulfilling a pastoral and teaching ministry, and so the call became a reality, and God sent them out on an apostolic mission. They were not sent out at their own desire or man's direction, they were sent out by the Holy Spirit, God confirmed the reality of their call through other prophets and teachers.

In Acts 13v1,2, we see that the ministry gifts were directed by God, but they were not independent of other Christians, they worked together, as should all the parts of the body of Christ. Even apostles needed helpers, and the comfort and spiritual help of other Christians, a striking example of this is in 2Cor 2v12-14, where Paul states that he was incapacitated because Titus was not there, and so was not able to take advantage of God's door of opportunity. See also Acts 12v11,12, 21v4,11,12, 28v12-15, 1Cor 8v6, 2Cor 8v16-24, Eph 6v21,22, Phil 2v25, 1Thess 3v1,2, 2Tim 4v9-13,20,21, Titus 1v5, 3v12,13. We read in Acts 15v32, that Silas was a prophet, but when he went with Paul, God gave him the additional authority and ministry of an apostle. 1Thess 1v1 with 2v6. Peter was an apostle, but Jesus also gave him the office of Pastor and Elder as well. John 21v15-19, 1Pet 5v1-5. So we can see that one person can have several ministries given to them by Christ. God usually founded local churches through apostolic or evangelistic ministry, and then He developed ministries in this church. Every ministry working together and operating under the guidance of Christ the Lord.

**E) God still sets these ministries in the Church today.**

God has "set" spiritual ministries and their accompanying spiritual gifts in the Church all through this age of grace, and He still sets them in the Church today, when He can find those who love God and people enough, to desire to be channels of His power and love. The word for "set" in 1Cor 12v28, is "etheto" the third person singular aorist indicative of "tithemi," it is the same word that is used in John 15v16, which is translated "ordained." It simply means, "to put, place, or appoint." See Acts 5v25, Matt 5v15, 1Tim 1v12, 2v7, 2Tim 1v11, Heb 1v2, etc.. **God has permanently placed these gifts in His Church during this age.** Those who say that these miraculous ministries of the Church no longer exist, resist this ordination and gifting by God. The truth is that they do not have the spiritual qualifications to manifest these ministries, and are unwilling to expend the spiritual effort necessary to receive these qualifications, and to keep these ministries. They fear the opposition that comes against such ministries. **It is spiritually demanding to seek God for His plans and power, but there is little spiritual effort required to rely upon oratory, good music, and a pleasant program of services, and so men have replaced God's abilities and ministries with their own standards, abilities and ministries.** This unwillingness to follow the example of the early church, and obey God's command to desire spiritual gifts, is a grave sin, "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." 1Sam 15v23. It is certainly not Scriptural to say that spiritual gifts ceased after the apostolic age, as the following facts prove.

**1) Peter said that spiritual gifts would continue to the end of this age.**

In Acts 2v16-21, Peter confirmed the prophecy of Joel that spiritual gifts would continue right up to the great and terrible day of the Lord, the day of Christ's return. Rev 16v14-16, 6v12-17, Matt 24v29-31. Peter insists that the gift of the Holy Spirit is for all, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord

our God shall call." Acts 2v38,39. There is no Scripture to contradict or limit the prophecy of Joel; indeed, both Scripture and Christian experience confirm this prophecy. Those who deny that spiritual gifts are for today have looked in vain for one clear Scriptural statement that spiritual gifts were withdrawn after the apostolic age. They have wrested and distorted 1Cor 13v8-13 in an attempt to justify their unbelief, and have made the quite unwarranted assumption that the, "that which is perfect," at which the gifts of the Holy Spirit are to pass away, was the completion of the canon of Scripture. Honest theologians state that there is no justification for this interpretation. Ellicott says of the "that which is perfect," "This verse shows, by the emphatic "then," that the time when the gifts shall cease is at the end of this dispensation. The imperfect shall not cease until the perfect is brought in."

"A New Testament Commentary," edited by Howley, Bruce and Ellison, states on 1Cor 13v10, that there is no support in the Biblical usage of "perfect," or its cognate forms, for the suggestion that "the perfect" refers to the completion of the Scripture canon, and that the interpretation of "that which is perfect" as the Scripture canon, has been made to explain away the absence of certain spiritual gifts from their churches. How illuminating! An examination of 1Cor 13v10, proves that it is totally untrue to say that "that which is perfect" is the Scripture canon.

**a) The subject under discussion in 1Cor 13 is love in relation to the whole of Christian experience.**

Paul includes giving, martyrdom and knowledge, as well as spiritual gifts; there is no mention of the Scriptural canon. Paul's theme is love, he does not close 1Cor 13 with the greatest of these is the Scriptural canon," he says, "the greatest of these is love." "That which is perfect," occurs at the coming of the kingdom of God, when we have a face-to-face vision of the God of love. 1Cor 13v12. The Christian enjoys this kingdom at death, 2Cor 5v6-8, Phil 1v21-23, Heb 12v22-24, Rev 6v9-11, but this endless kingdom of love will not come to earth until the return of Jesus on the great "day of the Lord," at the end of this age.

**b) How can it be the Scripture canon if "full knowledge" has not been given and perfected?**

It is certainly inconsistent and dishonest to say that 1Cor 13v8 informs us that spiritual gifts have passed away, and yet admit that our present partial knowledge has not yet been replaced by the full knowledge of God's kingdom. This verse makes it quite clear that the "perfect day," when "that which is perfect" comes, is when God's kingdom comes to earth. It is only then that we shall have the full knowledge of ourselves and others, and "we shall fully know as we are fully known." This "full knowledge" occurs at the judgement seat of Christ, when our works and character are revealed. 1Cor 3v11-15.

The time when the gifts "pass away," is when the Church of Christ on earth exchanges its present partial spiritual power and knowledge, for the complete and perfect "face to face" experience of God and the "full knowledge" of His power, truth and love. What 1Cor 13v8, is really teaching, is that the Church on earth can expect its spiritual gifts and limited knowledge to continue, until they are superseded by, and swallowed up in the experience and knowledge of God's kingdom. When 1Cor 13v8 is really fulfilled, the Church will be glorified in Heaven and enjoying God's glory, power, truth and love to the full.

**c) Paul compares his own Christian experience on earth with that of the perfect day.**

Paul compares his experience of God on earth with that in heaven to a non-speaking baby's experience with that of an intelligent man. This certainly does away with the idea that Paul is referring to the Scripture canon, when he speaks of the perfect day, for Paul even knew truth outside of the New Testament canon, truth he was not permitted to utter. 2Cor 12v1-4. Paul knew by revelation much, if not all, of the truth contained in the book of Revelation, for he speaks of the trumpets, 1Cor 15v51-53; of the evil career of Antichrist and his judgement, 2Thess 2v1-12; of the two resurrections and the last judgement. 1Cor 15v21-28. The lack of the future knowledge of the condition of the churches in Revelation did not make Paul "a non speaking babe," he knew the vast preponderance of New Testament truth. Indeed, Paul knew more of God's truth in theory and experience than any person who has ever lived, except the Lord Jesus. 1Cor 15v10.

Having the full New Testament canon does not make us superior in knowledge to Paul, indeed, in comparison to Paul, we are the babes. The illustrations that Paul used of a non-speaking babe compared with a man, and a dull reflection in contrast with a face-to-face vision, only makes sense if they are interpreted in the clear sense of the context, as a comparison of our present earthly experience of God now, compared with our experience of God in His kingdom. The only things that will bear any comparison with Heaven, and are the same in Heaven as on earth, are faith, hope and love; our present knowledge is nothing compared to the knowledge of Heaven. Paul said that his partial knowledge was to cease and pass away when the complete came, so it cannot be the canon of Scripture, for we still need all of it until Jesus comes. Those who insist on interpreting, "that which is perfect," as the Scripture canon, end up with a great many contradictions and difficulties, a proof of wrong exposition.

**d) Notice how Paul tells the Corinthians after 1Cor 13, to desire spiritual gifts.**

Paul does not say that they did not need to bother with spiritual gifts any more because they were soon to finish; he gives them the correct teaching on the gifts, and tells them to seek them for their spiritual welfare. 1Cor 14v1-3,12,18,39. Spiritual gifts profit and built up Christians, they carry on the ministry of Christ, and meet great needs in the body of Christ. Isaiah 53v10, 1Cor 12v7,18-31. **Both Israel and the Church have always needed God's power, as well as God's truth, to meet the needs placed before them.**

**e) In 1Cor 13, Paul considers spiritual gifts and the other principal aspects of our experience in relation to love.**

Paul speaks of "ALL sacred secrets and ALL knowledge," the ultimate in sacrificial giving, and martyrdom for God's sake, as well as spiritual gifts. The knowledge mentioned is not just supernatural knowledge; it is "all knowledge" and includes Scriptural knowledge. Even divinely inspired truth will be nothing compared with the face-to-face meeting with God its author. There is no Scripture that gives stronger evidence that spiritual gifts will continue right up to the end of this age, than Paul's statement in 1Cor 13, that spiritual gifts will continue right up to this face to face meeting with God.

**2) Spiritual gifts occurred throughout the Old Testament dispensations in periods of revival.**

This was usually when there were people willing to receive them and seek God for them. **If spiritual gifts were manifested throughout the age of Law, should they not be manifested throughout the age of grace, during which the Spirit of God is said to work in greater measure and with greater manifestations, than He did in the age of Law.** Heb 8v10-13, 2Cor 3v6-18. The Scriptures tell us that the new covenant was to be more glorious and more full of the Holy Spirit's workings throughout all its duration than the age of the Law.

There is no Scriptural justification for the statement that signs, wonders and miracles could only be expected at the start of the age of grace. Acts 2v16-21,38,39. To say that we could not expect miracles after the apostles finished their ministries, would mean that the age of grace was less spiritually powerful than the age of Law, a statement the Scripture absolutely refutes. **The cause of the lack of spiritual gifts in this age of grace is the same as it was in the previous age of Law, spiritual apathy, backsliding, low or non-existent faith, and the lack of love for needy mankind.** Gideon had the sense to realise that when God was with you, miracles took place. Judges 6v13. The Jews required a sign of spiritual authority from any prophet; they knew that if God commissioned anyone, He gave them the spiritual power and authority to manifest spiritual gifts. 1Cor 1v22. All New Testament ministries, including elders, were expected to manifest spiritual gifts. 1Cor 12v28, James 5v13-19. If God manifested spiritual gifts throughout "the ministration of death," that is, the Law, how much more will He do it during, "the ministration of the Spirit?" 2Cor 3v6-11. The New Testament dispensation is promised, and possesses, more gifts from God than the Law, not less. All thirsty believers in Christ can receive the Holy Spirit's power and fullness. John 7v37-39.

**3) All spiritual gifts must be here if all have not gone.**

Those who insist that spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries are not for today must insist that God has removed them all, not just some, if they are to be consistent. If they believe that spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries are not for today, then they must not pray for divine healing, this is a gift of healing; they must not pray for guidance or illumination upon a problem, this is a word of wisdom; they must not pray for God's anointing upon ministry or for Satan's power to be lifted from people's lives or minds, or for people to be blessed, this is a gift of faith; they must not pray for material needs to be met, this is a working of miracles; they must not pray for a revelation of God to the soul, this is a discerning of spirits; they must not pray for an inspired utterance from God, this is a prophecy; they must not pray for inspired praying, this is the prime use of the gift of tongues.

**Those who say that spiritual gifts have ceased, often actually pray for the manifestation of spiritual gifts.** Christians who say that spiritual gifts are not for today are really unwilling to seek God for those gifts; they refuse to submit to the experience that God desires to give them. They are not prepared to accept the full Scriptural standard, or the Lordship or wisdom of Christ over these spiritual gifts. **Those who reject spiritual gifts completely would in reality totally remove God's influence from His Church.** If God only works through His word today, as some insist, there is no point in the ministries of the Holy Spirit at all. Paul clearly states in 1Cor 12v21, that we cannot say that we have no need of these ministries and gifts, they are all essential, if Christ's body is to function as He intends. It is only difficult for Christians to witness effectively if God's gifts and ministries are missing.

Some would say, "I believe in God's power and influence, but how can you be sure that you will get the Holy Spirit and not some evil spirit?" We answer that true Christians believe the promise of Christ, that they cannot receive any false spirit or gift, if they are seeking God for His gifts and blessing. Indeed, the Scriptures emphatically state that it is only by seeking God for His power and gifts that we can be spiritually safe, and successfully resist the Devil; we certainly can't outwit or defeat Satan on our own. Psalm 24v3-6, 27v1-14, 42v1-11, 46v10, 62v1,2, Acts 1v14, 2v42, 3v1, 4v29-33, 6v2-4, 8v14-17, 9v11,12, 10v2,9-20, 12v5,12, 13v1-4, etc. Eph 6v10-20, James 4v7-10, 1Pet 5v5-11. etc. **Those who refuse to seek God's power for fear of receiving some false spirit, have in reality already been defeated by**

**Satan, and have shown a lack of faith in God's ability to care for His children. Satan kept Israel out of Canaan through fear and unbelief; they could not trust God to look after them. Indeed, the Scriptures reveal that it has always been those who have failed to seek God for His blessing and spiritual gifts, who have been influenced by evil spirits.** Heb 3 and 4. Let us see, then:

**F) The distinguishing characteristics of God's Spirit-Filled children.**

**a) God's children believe God's promise of blessing for them.**

God has given many "exceeding great and precious promises" that tell us that He will give us spiritual blessing and spiritual gifts, those who deny that the miraculous is for today, don't have a Scriptural leg to stand on. All the promises of God are still "yea" and "Amen" in Christ Jesus, and we can still experience God's love, gifts and power today. 2Cor 1v17-20. It is certainly not honest or consistent to believe in a Christianity that has none of the New Testament love, life, and power. Just as the body is dead without the spirit, so is an intellectual Christianity that is devoid of the movings of the Holy Spirit. James 2v26. Christianity is not a doctrinal exercise; it is an experience of God. **Those who refuse to accept that spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries are for today, make Christianity an intellectual exercise over God's dealings in the past, instead of a living experience of God and His gifts in the present.** God's children should accept God's promises to them, not try to find an excuse for not seeking or receiving them, by wresting the Scriptures.

**b) God's children earnestly seek and love God's presence.**

Those who have clean hands and pure hearts love to seek God, "this is the generation of them that seek Him," Psalm 24v3-6. True Christians, like David, love to wait upon and seek God. Psalm 40v1, 62v1,5. Their hearts pant for Him. Psalm 42v1-3. The last thing that heretics and apostates want to experience is the overwhelming presence of God, but true Christians long for it. The early Church loved to seek God and spent hours and days doing it. There is a vast difference between a short prayer aimed at the hearers, and the prolonged and earnest seeking of God that we see in the New Testament. False cults may say short prayers, but they will not spend time in prolonged seeking of God, for the evil spirits that influence them, will not allow them to do this. False cults are under the influence of evil spirits, and in Deut 18v9-19, we see that seeking God and true and full recognition of Christ is diametrically opposite to seeking or pursuing evil spirits. Lev 19v31, 20v6, Isaiah 8v19-20. Prolonged, earnest seeking of God is an acid test of one's source of inspiration. Heb 11v6, 1John 4v1-6.

**c) God's children manifest God's character and love in their lives.**

Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Matt 7v15-23. This does not mean the size or growth of a church organisation. True Christianity does not consist of statistics or empty talk, but rather of consecration to God, purity of life, and love of people. Paul warned those of the Corinthians, who were living deplorable lives, that they had no knowledge of God. 1Cor 15v34. It is true that even godly men, like David or Peter, may fail God badly under heavy temptation, but this is totally different from the sinful wallowing in the mire spoken of in 2Pet 2v1-22, Jude v3-25 and Rev 2v13-16,20-24. **Christian love and purity cannot be truly counterfeited or imitated by Satan's children.** Hypocrites may pretend and play-act, but "agape" love is inimitable and incomparable. Christians will not only die for their brethren, but also for their enemies. 1John 5v1,2, 2v1-22, Matt 5v43-48.

**d) God's children believe the truths in God's Word.**

Another acid test of a person's source of inspiration is whether they conform to the fundamental doctrines of Scripture. If the Holy Spirit moves a person, their doctrines and practices will be the same as those of the early Church. When a person is taken over by an evil spirit, their doctrine is corrupted and bears no resemblance to New Testament truth. John said that those who are inspired of God believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah, and that He has come in human flesh, whereas those who are inspired by Satan reject this. The Messiah of the Old Testament is "The Mighty God," Hebrew, "El Gibbor," an exclusive title of Jehovah. Isaiah 9v6, 10v21, Jer 32v18. He is "God with us." Isaiah 7v14 with Matt 1v23. Many Scriptures state that Jesus is the eternal Creator God of the Old Testament.

**A person's source of inspiration is revealed by their attitude to Jesus, those who reject His deity, humanity, atonement, and teaching, are moved by Satan, those who accept them are inspired by God. The personal appropriation of Christ's sacrifice for sin is always the cleavage point between Divine and Satanic doctrine. Rev 12v10-12. We know and rejoice in the experience of redemption by Jesus from the penalty and power of sin. False cults reject the Christian teaching about sin and judgement, and state that personal redemption by Christ's blood is unnecessary.** False cults either reject completely the idea of a personal God, or so pervert the idea of God that He is unrecognisable as the Christian's God. Many false prophets address prayers to God and Christ, but they distort the doctrine of Christ, and preach "another Jesus, ---and another gospel," and are "accursed." 2Cor 11v3,4, 1John 4v1-5,15, 2v11,23, 5v1, Matt 7v15-29, Gal 1v8,9.

**e) God's children desire to answer Satan's lying wonders with God's miracles.**

How illogical and inconsistent it is to say that the Almighty God no longer does any miracles, and only Satan does miracles today. God is a God that only does wonders, and His children should do the same by His power. Exodus 3v20, 15v11, Job 9v10, Psalm 77v11,14, 136v4, Isaiah 8v18, Acts 4v22,43, Rom 4v2,3, Heb 2v4. God has not left all the miracle-working to Satan during this age, God has promised miracles throughout this age, and that this age will close with the greatest show of spiritual power the world has ever seen, God's two witnesses have amazing spiritual gifts given to them to answer Satan's lying wonders through the Antichrist. Rev 11v1-12, 2Thess 2v7-12. **None of the prophets or apostles vindicated God merely by talk; God confirmed the truth of their words through signs, wonders and miracles.**

**G) The financially undemanding structure of the early church ministries.**

**The itinerant ministries enjoyed some measure of support from the churches, but the churches did not direct them, nor did they control the churches.** Acts 13v1-4, 16v6,16, Phil 4v10-19, 3Jn v5-11. In the early churches there was no local church buildings, or centrally governed denomination into which funds were sent, and which kept the preachers of the Gospel with a fixed income. In the Bible we see individual faith in God, not faith in an organisation. Ministers in a modern church organisation can expect some measure of security without trusting and depending on God. Few modern ministers would be prepared to accept the financial insecurity and poverty of Christ and His early Church ministries. Matt 8v19,20, Luke 9v57,58, Acts 3v6, 2Cor 8v9. A sacrificial cross was an essential part of New Testament ministry. Matt 10v38, 16v24. The Lord Jesus chose men who were prepared to trust God over their finances, the idea of a group of Christians building a church building, and supporting their minister, was unknown in the early Church. The pastor-elders of the early Church usually worked and kept themselves, those who had devoted themselves to study and Church responsibilities, and were financially embarrassed as a result, received gifts from the local church, but usually on the level of financial aid given to the poorest in the church. 1Tim 5v17,18, 1Pet 5v1,2. The itinerant ministries also received gifts and hospitality to meet their needs, or like Paul they worked to meet their own essential needs. 1Cor 9v1-19, 2Cor 11v8,9, Phil 4v10-19. **The vast majority of the finances collected by the early churches were for the poor, and these collections for the poor are totally different from the disgraceful and corrupt appeals for money that we often see in our day from some so-called Christian ministries.** John 12v5,6,8, 13v29, Acts.2v44,45, 4v32-37, 2Cor 8v1-9, Rom 16v17,18.

**Hatch writes on page 147 and 148 of his Bampton Lectures on "The Organisation of the Early Christian Churches:"**

"The funds of the primitive communities had consisted entirely of voluntary offerings. Of these offerings those officers whose circumstances required it were entitled to a share. They received such a share only on the grounds of poverty. They were, so far, in the position of the widows and orphans and helpless poor. Like soldiers in the Roman army, or slaves in a Roman household, they were entitled to a monthly allowance. The amount of that allowance was variable. When the Montanists proposed to pay their clergy a fixed salary the proposal was condemned as a heretical innovation, alien to Catholic practice. (Eusebius H.E.5.18.2.: 5.28.10). Those who could supplemented their allowances by farming or by trade. There was no sense of incongruity in their doing so. The Apostolical Constitutions repeat with emphasis the apostolic injunction, 'If any man would not work, neither should he eat.' (Const. Apost.2.62. 2Thess 3v10,12, 1Thess 4v11). Those who could supplemented their allowances by farming or trade. There is no early trace of the later idea that buying and selling, handicraft and farming, were inconsistent with the office of a Christian minister. The bishops and presbyters of those early days kept banks, practised medicine, wrought as silversmiths, tended sheep, or sold their goods in open market. They were like the non-juring bishops a century and a half ago (about 1730), or like the early preachers of the Wesleyan Methodists. They were men of the world taking part in the ordinary business of life. The point about which the Christian communities were anxious was, not that their officers should cease to trade, but that in this as in other respects, they should be examples to the flock." End of quote.

**Hatch continues in his notes at the bottom of page 148, to tell how the leaders of the primitive Church usually worked, he states; -** "Among the latter are the case of Spiridion who tended sheep in Cyprus, ---of a bishop who was a weaver at Maiuma, ---of one who was a shipbuilder in Campania---one who practised in the law courts, ---of a presbyter who was a silversmith at Ancyra. --- Basil, Epist.198 (263), vol.4 p.290 speaks of the majority of his clergy as earning their living by sedentary handicrafts, and Epiphanius, ---speaks of others doing it in order to earn money for the poor." End of quote.

**All Christians are priests in the eyes of God:** 1Pet 2v5,9, Rev 1v6, 5v10, 20v6.

The early Church Christian ministry was not looked upon as priesthood, in the sense of ministers alone having a priestly authority and power. God has made all Christians members of "a royal priesthood," and "kings and priests unto God." When two or three Christians gather together (Matt 18v20), they make up a church, even if no church ministries are present. There is only one High Priest of Christianity, our Lord Jesus. The early church at Jerusalem shows us that God intended His Church to be a voluntary fellowship of Christians, who are united by love for Christ and one another, and free

from priest craft, despotism, or dictatorship.

### **Authority or Insubordination?**

The Scribes and Pharisees challenged both John Baptist and Christ as to the source of their authority; they looked upon them as insubordinate rebels, and divisive troublemakers. The Church of Jesus has always had the same problem; Christ's heaven-sent ministries have always been looked upon as "insubordinate" and "divisive," by people who are determined to preserve their religious power structure and position. The apostles were insubordinate to men, but obedient to God; the Scribes and Pharisees were obedient to men but insubordinate to God. Dissension always comes between those who seek influence from men, and those who seek authority from heaven. Authority from Heaven is not decided by human opinion; it is proved by divine gifting and conformity to Biblical teaching and experience. The people who murdered Jesus claimed that they had been given authority from God to kill Him; this false claim to Divine authority has been repeated again and again in Church history, by those who have murdered many dear children of God, who had received a definite authority from God. Indeed, it almost seems impossible not to be called a heretic by men, when you have God's authority, and we should certainly doubt if our calling and ministry is from God, when all men speak well of us. Matt 5v10-12, 23v19-39, Luke 6v26.

### **The Early Church was Guided by Christ into Body Ministry.**

The Church is described as Christ's building and temple, Eph 2v21; as Christ's beloved bride and wife, Eph 5v22,23, Rev 19v6,7, 21v2,9, 22v17; as Christ's household. Eph 2v19, Gal 4v10, 1Tim 3v14, Heb 3v5. However, here I want to consider the Church as Christ's body. 1Cor 12v11-31, Rom 12v3-5, Eph 4v7-11. Christ desires all the members of His Church, from apostles to young converts, to act together as a body under His guidance. Under the inspiration of Christ every member has something to contribute to the spiritual ministry of the Church, this is what we mean by body ministry.

#### **1) Body ministry took place in fellowship, worship, evangelism and ministry.**

Body ministry involves the participation of all believers in fellowship, worship, evangelism and ministry. **There was no division between clergy and laity in the early Church, all believers are priests.** 1Pet 2v5, Rev 1v6. Every child of God has the right to minister what they receive from God. "Everyone hath,"---"ye may all prophesy one by one." 1Cor 14v26,31. Paul said that the Corinthians had the right idea in desiring body ministry, but they selfishly wanted to do everything, and did not make way for other people's ministries. **Paul said we need a Holy-Spirit co-ordinated body ministry, not all-ministry.** All rights in the Church spring from Christ; the Quaker principle is correct, members have the right to minister only as Christ directs. The prophets and pastor-teachers in the local church should only act under the inspiration of Christ, like the rest of the believers. This is spiritually much more demanding than a program. It also demands real humility and gentleness in the pastor-elders, who may have to call a halt to unprofitable ministry, or correct wrong teaching and fanaticism.

In many churches, Christians are judged to be faithful and true by their ministers, if they sit passively in their church pews for years. Paul did not teach this kind of spiritual decadence, he certainly did not want Christians to be passive listeners, or "none-speaking babes," he desired them to develop ministries and grow spiritually. Eph 4v11-15. This shows the importance of having a fellowship meeting where Christians can develop their gifting and ministries. Paul taught that in these fellowships there was to be a real participation of all the local church members in body ministry. Today, many Christians fear body ministry, because of the demands that it will make upon them. Others feel that young Christians will make mistakes, and will not be as presentable to the world as a polished well-spoken minister. However, unless "everyone has" something from Jesus in our fellowships, they are not genuine New Testament church fellowships. Some modern Christians, who go regularly to church services, have never been to a New Testament fellowship meeting at all. In most churches a "minister" has replaced Christ-directed body ministry, and this has kept multitudes of Christians in spiritual infancy and immaturity.

The Greek word "kerusso," "to proclaim as a herald," obviously implies that there was a place for an uninterrupted discourse in preaching, teaching, and evangelism in the early Church. However, in both evangelistic and fellowship meetings, the more usual pattern was dialogue, discussion, reasoning, and question and answer in an informal conversational manner. There was far more participation and discussion in Paul's preaching hall, than there is in today's church services. "Dialogue," "dialegomai," is used in Acts 17v2,17, 18v4,19, 19v8,9, 20v7,9, 24v12,25. "Peitho," to persuade, occurs in Acts 28v23,24, in connection with Paul's evangelism. "Suzeteo," to reason, is used of Paul's and Stephen's irresistible Scripture reasoning with those who opposed them. The arguments of these great Christians was unanswerable, so their opponents murdered Stephen, and planned to murder Paul. Acts 6v9,10, 9v29,30. Modern Christianity has cramped and straightened even the Gospel mission to a formal service, which it certainly was not in the early Church.

#### **2) Body ministry encourages and develops ministries in God's flock.**

The Holy Spirit is the overall superintendent of the whole Church of Christ, His aim is to produce ministry in each local church. The object of the New Testament leaders, therefore, was to produce ministries in the flock by informal body ministry. Eph 4v8-14. In Eph 4v14, Paul speaks of immature believers without the ability to minister; the word he uses for "children," is "neepios," which means literally, "none-speaking ones," or "without the power of speech," its literal meaning was lost in general use, but immaturity was always associated with it. "Neepios" occurs in Matt 11v25, 21v16, Luke 10v21, Rom 2v20, 1Cor 3v1, 13v11, Gal 4v1,3, Eph 4v14, Heb 5v13. Paul says in Eph 4v14, that those who remain children, and do not grow and minister, are at the mercy of false teachers, who though seeming to play the game, are really using loaded dice and trickery. "By the sleigh," is "en tei kubia," which means literally, "in the throw of a dice." By craft and trickery is "panourgia," and methodical deceit is "methodia." Crafty false teachers can fool God's babies as easily as a conjurer or trickster can deceive a young child. Paul's statement has been proved true again and again by the way that false cults have deceived many Christians, because they have been kept in doctrinal and spiritual infancy by the churches which they have attended.

We read in Heb 5v13,14, that the Hebrew Christians had been converted long enough to have grown into able teachers of God's Word, but most of them were still immature non-speaking babies, when they should have grown to maturity. Christians who are mature ("teleios," Strong's NT:5046), full grown, perfect), have "by constant use" ("hexis," (Strong's NT:1838), habit), had their senses "exercised" ("gumnazo," to exercise vigorously) and are "able to discern" ("diakrisis," (Strong's NT:1253), judge thoroughly) between "good" ("kalos," (Strong's NT:2570), properly beautiful, but also that which is good, virtuous, valuable and precious.) and "evil" ("kakos," (Strong's NT:2556), worthless, depraved, injurious, pernicious, evil). Elders are to bring their flocks to maturity as soon as possible; this involves giving them moral example, doctrinal stability through correct teaching, and leading them into an experience of spiritual gifts. Elders are to make sure that the doctrine and experience of their charges is sound and healthy, "hugiaino." 1Tim 1v10, 6v3, 2Tim 1v13, 4v3, Titus 1v9,13, 2v1,2. The maturity of their flocks is the test of an elder's ministry.

Many Christians have been kept in spiritual infancy by their religious leaders for decades, and are "none speaking ones," they have been taught only to listen, and have not developed any ministries. This is very dangerous for the Christians concerned, and disastrous for the effectiveness of the Christian witness. **Ministers who keep their members in spiritual immaturity, and don't allow God's babies to grow, frustrate God's longing desire for the spiritual and doctrinal growth of His children. Those who thwart the spiritual growth of God's children in this way, certainly cannot expect a, "Well done," when they meet Jesus.** Indeed, such ministries that are in the Church during the last seven years of this age, but especially during the last three and a half years, the period known as the Great Tribulation, are the 'evil servants' referred to in Matt 24v45-51, and the vast majority of their flock are the 'foolish virgins' referred to in Matt 25v1-13. God gives a ministry of some kind to every Christian, but if people are not given a chance to develop their ministries, they will wither and die, instead of grow and develop. Happy, indeed, is the Christian fellowship, or church, that allows the Holy Spirit to give and develop ministries, it can be a veritable heaven upon earth. Eph 4v7,12.

Christians are stultified by passivity and formality in one-man ministry meetings. However, in the freedom of informal meetings, with sympathetic friends we know, love and trust, there is far less stress and strain, and we feel much more at ease and are less likely to be nervous, and we know that our friends don't mind if we do stutter, stammer or hesitate. The informality, sympathy and friendliness, enable and encourage even the most timid to discuss God's Word and manifest spiritual gifts. Informal, body ministry meetings bring greater interest, absorption and increase in Scripture knowledge. Christians can learn far more by dialogue and discussion, than they can by passively listening to one speaker, and if they get something from God's Word for themselves and minister it to others, it will mean far more to them than if they are just a passive listener. In Luke 11v5-13, Jesus said that God will abundantly bless with the Holy Spirit, those who earnestly seek Him to obtain "bread for others." This determined seeking of God for something to meet the needs of people, brings greater dependence upon the Holy Spirit, this will certainly bring greater operations of the Holy Spirit. **In 1Cor 14v23-25, Paul says the revelation of the secrets of peoples hearts will make them acknowledge that God is in the midst. This shows that we can manifest the same gifts that Jesus manifested when the Samaritan woman had the secrets of her life revealed by Jesus.** This brought about her salvation and brought revival among the despised Samaritans, this can happen today, when we submit to the leadings and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

I have found that informal meetings have a really beneficial effect upon children. **When children associate Christianity with formal, dead services, they grow up not wanting it.** However, when they see the liberty, fellowship, love and joy in Christian meetings, and feel the presence of God, and see His acts and manifestations, they desire and enjoy Christian experience.

### **3) Informal body ministry meets deep spiritual needs in the Church.**

There are important ministries of the Holy Spirit that rarely take place in many churches; such as the healing of memories and hurts, and a release from burdens and worries, by the gift of faith. This is not a kind of Christian psychology, which under the guise of spirituality is really an invasion into people's privacy. **It is a sin to resurrect and demand the**



**details of people's past sins and lives, they are buried with Jesus.** Woe betide anyone who digs up what God has buried. Rom 6v1-4. The Christian who operates God's power and revelation gifts, often never needs to know what that need is; there is often simply the revelation of a burden and need, and the knowledge when God has met that need. The Holy Spirit is a perfect gentleman, He does not want to parade people's innermost secrets and problems before all. He will only show us specific needs, if He thinks that it is absolutely necessary, and many times this information will only be for the person praying to know, and it should not be spoken out to others. Many of the Holy Spirit's revelations are for secret prayer, not public utterance. It is also often very wise and necessary to seek God for the lifting of people's hurts and burdens without them even knowing it, or openly praying for them, just as our Lord did for people in need when He attended the synagogue services at Nazareth.

I have found, through over many years experience, that people come into formal meetings with burdens and time after time go out with the same burdens. Christians just don't get to know one another, or each other's needs in formal meetings. In an informal meeting, or in a time of prayer after a formal meeting, these burdens can be met by the power and revelation gifts of the Holy Spirit. **Formal meetings can have a definite place, but they need to be followed by informal fellowship and ministry, if we are to meet people's needs and experience the fullness of God's blessing.**

#### **4) Informal body ministry produces a remarkable fellowship of "Agape" love.**

Body ministry makes Christians depend on one another instead of themselves, and this is not only a real antidote to pride, it also produces real love between Christians. 1Cor 12v20-26, John 13v35. **We are to learn from, and help each other.** 1Thess 2v4-9. In genuine body ministry, there is an exercise of mind over doctrine, and controlled emotion in worship and praise. There is also an exercise of spirit in contact with God and in ministry to others, and a remarkable fellowship of love between Christians and their God. It is this contact with God and love for each other that gives life to our doctrine and worship. Jesus said that we must worship God in spirit and in truth, and this involves loving our brothers and sisters in Christ. John 4v24, 13v35. Those who have experienced this remarkable love and fellowship of spirit with other Christians, know what Christ meant when He said, "I pray that they may be one, as we are one." John 17v20-22. When Christ ministers through the local church as a body, there develops a remarkable fellowship of saints, which is as real as their fellowship with God. It is this deep ministry of the Holy Spirit and real fellowship in Christ, that creates and constitutes the liberty Paul speaks of in 2Cor 3v17,18. **Freedom and liberty in the spirit, does not consist in the repetition of twenty lively choruses again and again, this can be the worst form of bondage, if it is not led by the Holy Spirit. True liberty comes from a God anointed worship, and a love impregnated body ministry, which produces real fellowship and friendship in Christ.**

In many modern churches there is no fellowship of the saints, Christians just don't get to know one another. In the early Church there was the atmosphere of love and friendship, which enabled Christians, not only to share their blessings, but their burdens too. They could talk of their deep problems, and even their sins, knowing that they would be lovingly and thoughtfully prayed with, until their spiritual and physical needs were met through the power and love of Christ. James 5v14-20. When Jesus is in control, a friendship, fellowship and tender burden bearing, can take place in an informal house fellowship, that can never take place in formal church meetings.

**We can have fellowship without membership and membership without fellowship.** Many Christians are looking to the wrong "ship" for blessing. In many churches fellowship takes place in loving conversations after the services, but often there is little or no fellowship during the services. This is certainly not a New Testament Christian fellowship, where all were of "one accord," "one soul" and "one mind." It says in Acts 4v32, "There was one heart and soul in the multitude of those who believed." This shows that there can be a real unity in a multitude of Christians, and Christians should gather together in these large groups for teaching and fellowship, but they should also break up into separate small meetings for closer fellowship and body ministry participation. Where numbers get large, there can, of necessity, only be a limited number of people taking part. This is why John Wesley divided a church into a number of class meetings, and limited the size of these class meetings. This deep and loving fellowship of saints with God and each other, will preserve us from backsliding in these evil last days. Heb 10v24,25.

The depth and beauty of true Christian fellowship can be seen in Phil 2v1, Paul speaks of "consolation in Christ," "parakleesis;" and "comfort of love," "paramuthion;" and "bowels of compassions," "tis splagchna," tender higher emotions; and "mercies," "oiktirmoi," pities. All these beautiful, heavenly emotions, spring from a "fellowship of the spirit," "koinonia," a partnership and sharing of the common fountain of their life in God. "Koinonia," means a common sharing, communion, joint participation and fellowship, occurs in Acts 2v42, Rom 15v26, 1Cor 1v9, 10v16, 2Cor 6v14, 8v4, 9v13, 13v14, Gal 2v9, Eph 3v9, Phil 1v5, 2v1, 3v10, Philemon v6, Heb 13v16, 1John 1v3,6,7.

In Phil 2v2, Paul speaks of Christians being "one in soul," "sunpsuchoi;" and "of one mind," "to hen phronountes," we are to have harmony of desires and feelings, and unity of thought. The book of Acts is full of this unity; when Christian's enemies are of one accord, Acts 7v57, 18v12, 19v29, Christians certainly need to be united and of "one accord." See Acts 1v14, 2v1,46, 4v24, 5v12, 15v25, Rom 15v6, in every case the word is "homothumadon." See Acts 8v6, 12v20.

The early church at Jerusalem experienced a glorious unity, fellowship and love, and a joint participation in the Holy Spirit's ministries. It is true that Satan tried to spoil this unity, and succeeded in many churches, but in Acts 2 and 4, we certainly see this lovely fellowship in Christ. The fruit and influence of the Holy Spirit is love, and where He is in control, there is entreaty, tender consolation, tender higher emotion and pity, and a real sharing, trusting and binding together in Christ.

#### **5) Body ministry even took place in newly formed Churches.**

Infant churches depended upon their founders for the majority of their teaching and spiritual guidance, however, they were also encouraged to exercise body ministry. 1Cor 12v4-31. Indeed, body ministry participation in teaching was a normal part of synagogue services, so the Jews would be used to this. The Jewish synagogues were more conformed to the New Testament pattern of body ministry, than most of today's churches. **Modern ministers would die of shock if their sermon was interrupted by a question, or their statement challenged, or someone else asked permission to comment or give a contribution, yet this was the normal procedure of the synagogue and early Church.** The Jewish converts in Paul's churches already had a good knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures, and already knew how to practice body ministry in relation to teaching, they just had to learn and practice body ministry in relation to spiritual gifts. The Jews in Paul's churches, knew the Old Testament Scriptures very well, but it was not just a question of learning the doctrines and teaching of the New Covenant, it was also essential for them to experience the powers of the age to come. It was not just a question of theology, but of spiritual dynamic as well. **The rapid spiritual development of the churches through body ministry enabled Paul to appoint elders within two or three years of churches being founded.**

Unlike Paul, many Christian leaders today, resent rather than encourage developing ministries in their churches, however, to keep God's children in an infantile state is a serious sin, for it frustrates God's purposes and ministrations. This is especially true in regard to God being able to let the last seven years of this age to begin to come to pass, because He finds it so difficult to find believers who will seek Him so that He may prepare them to become members of the Glorious Woman in Rev 12. When ministries are not allowed to function, or are suppressed, there are only two alternatives, frustration or separation. The early Church members developed rapidly in spiritual strength in the informal meetings in believers homes, they got to know each other well, and shared each others burdens and joys.

#### **6) Body ministry took place in the Lord's Supper.**

**We see in 1Cor 11v21 to 14v31, what actually happened at a New Testament communion service, which took place in the believers' houses, it consisted of spiritual ministry plus spiritual gifts. The Lord's Supper was part of the fellowship that took place in the body ministry of the local church.**

##### **a) The Lord's Supper nearly always took place in a home.**

The insistence that the Lord's Supper should only take place in a church building under the control of a paid minister, is quite unscriptural. For well over 250 years, the Romans did not allow Christians to own church property, they met in homes, catacombs, the open air, or hired buildings. With so many believers in the churches, Christians had to celebrate the Lord's Supper in many homes, and this they did. Acts 2v46. When our Lord instituted the communion service, He did so in a private house, and with close friends. Church leaders usually object to the Lord's Supper taking place in homes, because they desire to uphold their power structure, and to have things firmly under their control. It was for this reason that the religious leaders of our Lord's time persecuted Jesus and His Church. Love is content to see others blessed and rejoices to see God's Word fulfilled. **How often has clerical tyranny disguised itself as zeal for God and righteous indignation.** We can celebrate communion and remember our Lord's death, whenever, or wheresoever it is desirable, in a church building, a home or in the open air. Only two or three believers are necessary, and any believer can administer and partake of the Lord's Supper.

##### **b) The Lord's Supper had the divine order of informality and spirituality.**

The Passover feast was a family occasion, a social event, as well as a spiritual event; there was the divine order of informality and spirituality. The Lord's Supper was also an informal occasion, part of a Christians social fellowship with other Christians, part of an ordinary simple meal, and after a family meal, it was naturally supernatural. **God intends Christians to ENJOY spiritual fellowship together, not to be formal, distant and restrained with each other.** Notice the sweet, conversational, natural, informal nature of the Lord's last supper. We see the conversation between Christ and John, Christ and Peter, Christ and Judas, Peter and John, and separate conversations between other disciples. Jesus gave informal teaching, prophetic insights from the Scriptures, and prophetic warnings of His death and betrayal, mixed with encouraging promises, sublime praying, and a telling practical lesson in humility, when He washed their feet.

**It is a striking fact that the early Church linked the Lord's Supper and Christian fellowship with social**

**fellowship.** Their Christian fellowship was also a glorious free informal Holy Spirit anointed social fellowship, "And day by day continuing with one mind in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart." Acts 2v46, 1Cor 11v20,21,32-34. The idea that we should fast before taking the Lord's Supper has no Scriptural basis; Jesus instituted it, "as they were eating in the Passover night." Matt 26v26. The whole aim of the Lord's Supper in the early Church was not just listening, but also the development of ministry and spirituality through sharing fellowship and experience in a conversational manner. The joy of the Lord that makes us strong is developed in this environment. Neh 8v10.

In many churches Christians gather for the Lord's Supper, but there is little communion or fellowship of the saints. I am not saying that the formal communion services are wrong, or that Christians are not remembering their Lord's death, they certainly are. I am saying that if there is no informal, conversational sharing of experience and loving ministry to one another, we have not reached the New Testament ideal of a communion service. There can be no communion, where there is disagreement and division; deep love, trust and fellowship was the New Testament basis of fellowship. 1Cor 10v17, Matt 5v23,24. Paul warned the Galatians that if they did not walk in love to each other they would bite and devour one another. Gal 5v13-16. Fellowship is based on mutual love for each other. We are one body, united by one Spirit, having one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one Father. Eph 4v1-6, Rom 8v9.

We see from Acts 20v7-12, that hours of fellowship, instruction and talk could take place both before and after the Lord's supper. There was prolonged informal fellowship, discussion, teaching and worship, as there was at the actual Last Supper. It is a sign of spiritual inertia and weakness, when a great deal of time is given to singing, and there is hardly any teaching and discussion of the Scriptures. At the actual last supper we only read of one hymn being sung, this obviously is not the rule, for we read in Eph 5v18,19, of Christians thanking God and admonishing one another in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." We read in Col 3v16, that these songs are to be based on the Scriptures, like the marvellous hymns of the Wesley's, their content being full of glorious doctrinal and experimental Christian truth. Beautiful church music may be elevating, but without the blessing of God it can degenerate to the level of mere entertainment. Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs are indeed very blessed, when we are filled with the Spirit, and make melody in our hearts to the Lord.

### **c) The Lord's Supper took place at any time, any number of times a week, anywhere, and by any believer.**

The Lord's Supper was instituted, not on the first day of the week, but on a weeknight, as a supper. We read in Acts 20v7, that Christians gathered on that occasion on the first day of the week, however, this is not the only day, for the Lord's supper can be celebrated on any day. Though the Passover meal was a supper, it does not mean that the communion service should only take place in the evening, for Acts 2v46, indicates that it can take place at any time during the day, though evening was probably the best time for most believers. The head of the house administered the Passover feast, however, all Christians are kings and priests and can administer the Lord's Supper. **Men have replaced the simplicity, beauty, and freedom of the communion service with their own forms, and have taken much of the blessing away, however, if we follow the pattern laid down by Jesus, we shall always find blessing, and God.**

### **7) Christ inspired women to take part in Body Ministry.**

The New Testament tells us that women were anointed by God to participate in the worship and ministry of the Church. Indeed, the Scriptures reveal that women sometimes led in God's work. **Miriam, a notable prophetess, led the women in praise and prophecy; she is given the credit with Moses and Aaron for delivering Israel from Egypt.** Exodus 15v20,21, Micah 6v4. Deborah was not only a prophetess, she was also the leading judge of Israel; notice that she was not made the leader of Israel by men, God appointed her, and led her to victory over overwhelming foes. **Through her spiritual power, Israel had victory for 40 years.** Judges 4v1-5v31. The prophetess Huldah was the spiritual giant and spiritual leader of her day, when anyone wanted to have a word from God they went to Huldah. Jeremiah was alive at this time, but when good king Josiah needed a word from God, he sent the high priest to Huldah for God's guidance; she had a superior prophetic ministry, and could get the word of the Lord far quicker than Jeremiah. (See Jer 42v7, it took ten days for Jeremiah to get the word of the Lord.) Huldah's prophecy brought about Josiah's revival. 2Kings 22v13-23v25. Anna the prophetess was the person closest to God in Israel at the time of Christ's birth, Israel's male religious leaders were spiritually dead, and were spiritual babes compared to this godly prophetess. God used Anna to minister His love and life, and to meet the needs that they missed. God can, and often does, do the very same today. Luke 2v36-38. History reveals a vast army of godly women, like David's mother, "the handmaid of the Lord;" and Hannah, the mother of Samuel; Jochebed, the mother of Moses, and many others, who have been the channels of God's love and power to their children and their generation. They changed history by their prayers and spiritual ministries. **When men have grown spiritually cold and formal, it has often been left to godly praying women to rekindle the fires of revival. Men nearly always monopolise the pulpits and positions of authority, women usually take the lead in love, spirituality, prayerfulness and faith.**

### **The Devil and misguided men have tried to squash the ministry of women by misquoting certain texts.**

An examination of these verses shows that both are concerned with domestic matters.

**The first Scripture is 1Cor 14v34,35:** "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; --- it is a shame for women to speak in the church." In 1Cor 14v34,35, we see that the wife had to ask their husbands at home, this was certainly not over teaching, for in the informal house meetings of the early Church there was always liberty to do this. Paul had just stated in 1Cor 11v4, 5, that women could pray and prophecy in the church, and you cannot do this and be silent, and an examination of 1Cor 11v16-20, proves that Paul had been considering church practice, not private prayer. 1Cor 14v4,5,22-24,29-33, Acts 2v16-18. Paul said they must not discuss domestic matters at church fellowship meetings. Paul had said in Gal 3v28, that in Christ there is neither male or female.

The word "speak," "laleo," in 1Cor 14v34, has been translated "chatter" by some scholars, because "laleo," literally means, to chatter like a bird, to talk much, to prattle. It is true that in the New Testament the word is more used in the sense, "to talk," "to speak," but who is to say that Paul was not using it in its basic meaning, which would make very good sense in the light of the Christian fellowship gatherings in the Middle East in Paul's time. The synagogues did not possess our modern order, propriety, formality and "reverence." While the synagogues did not have the drunken, uproarious and disgraceful revelry that accompanied heathen religions; they enjoyed a real freedom and informality. The word "silence" was spoken to the restless, emotional and talkative Orientals, Greeks and Latins in Corinth, who were not used to any discipline, routine and order, not even in the informality of the synagogue meeting. **In the synagogues there was a very definite informality; extempore prayers were permitted, and those who desired to read the Scriptures and make comments upon them, could do so. Anyone who was thought to express wrong teaching in prayer or preaching was immediately stopped.** Acts 13v45-47, 18v6,7. Dialogue freely took place in the synagogue meeting. Acts 17v2,17, 18v4,9, 24v12,23. "dialegomai," Matt 2v34, Jude v9.

In "A New Testament Commentary," Howley, Bruce and Ellison, state with commendable honesty, that the verb "lalein," translated as "speak" in 1Cor 14v34, is used to generally to refer to any specific kind of speaking. They say that the suggestion cannot be ruled out, that Paul is merely speaking of irregular talking, in the form of soothing or rebuking babies, shouting out a remark or query, or just plain chattering. **There can be no doubt that Paul is referring to unedifying abuses of their freedom to speak, pray and prophecy in church gatherings, which Paul says is their right in 1Cor 11v5,6.** Since two or three Christians could make up a New Testament fellowship, Matt 18v20, when two or three Christian women meet and pray together, they make up a church meeting, must they be silent? of course not! The New Testament meetings were nearly always informal meetings in a home, and it was certainly not disgraceful for women to talk in this social fellowship, which accompanied Christian fellowship. **Satan is delighted over the restrictions that men have placed on the ministries of the Holy Spirit through God's handmaids; he knows that the Church has lost a great deal through these restrictions.**

The ordinance in 1Cor 14v34, is said to be based on the law, "but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law," however, no Scripture states that a woman could not pray, prophesy or preach. In Gen 3v16, God warns women that men would ruthlessly dominate them; however, this was a warning of bad home relationships, not church practice. In Gen 3v16, God did not curse women, it is a bad translation. In Eph 5v21-33, Paul instructs husbands to love their wives as Christ loves His Church, there is to be no bossing or hardness, there is to be the fellowship of love. In 1Pet 3v7, Peter warns that God will cut off and not listen to the prayers of a bad or inconsiderate husband. Ill-treatment of wives or women will have to be answered for on judgement day.

**The second Scripture is, 1Tim 2v11:** "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man," should be viewed strictly in the context of which they are spoken. In 1Tim 2v11,12, Paul is also referring to domestic matters, as the context clearly shows, for in v13,14, Paul speaks of Eve's relation to Adam and to child-bearing. Paul said that women should not usurp a man's place, and this is certainly true in the home; however, if God gives a woman a ministry, she is not usurping a man's place, she is taking her Christ-appointed place, she is only usurping a man's place if God has given her no ministry. **The trouble with the Church today, is not that women are usurping men's authority in the Church, but rather because men are usurping God's authority over the Church, by their traditions and practices.** It is true that Miriam tried to usurp Moses place and authority and suffered a very necessary chastisement from God for it. Num 12v1-16. However, there are far more cases in Scripture of men resisting and usurping God-appointed ministries, than there ever are of women. **It is a fact that women have manifested apostolic, prophetic, evangelistic, and pastor-teaching ministries.** Women are ideally suited to a prophetic ministry, for God has given women a love and gentleness of spirit to care for their children and husbands, which is really the basic essential for a prophetic ministry. As Paul said, love towards others is the best and most powerful channel of spiritual gifts, and so women, who have developed love, by loving and caring, are often able to manifest the higher gifts of revelation, power and comfort, with great blessing. The women that do this are certainly not usurping men's authority; they are fulfilling the ministry that God has given to them.

**Women certainly did not keep silent in the early Church, God told them to speak and minister.**

Women were included in the great commission, they can proclaim the Gospel, and be used in healing the sick. Women first announced that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Matt 28v5-10,18,20, Mark 16v16,17. They also spoke out in

tongues in the upper room, on the day of Pentecost. Acts 1v8,12-14. Women are looked upon in the same way as men regarding worship and ministry by the apostle Paul. Gal 3v28. We read in the New Testament of women who were recommended for their spirituality and ministry. There were the women without whose help Christ's ministry could not have continued in the way that it did. Luke 8v1-4. There was godly Priscilla, helper of Apollos, she had a church in her home. Acts 18v24-26, Rom 16v3-5,19, 2Tim 4v19. We see Paul's women fellow labourers, Junia, Rom 16v6,7; Phebe, Rom 16v1,2; and other women. Phil 4v3. Luke was impressed by the prophetic gifts of Philip's four daughters. Acts 21v8,9. Dorcas had a spiritual as well as a practical ministry; she was loved by all for her practical godliness. Acts 9v32-42. We read of the "elect woman" of 2Jn v1, another notable spiritual woman. Besides these there were a multitude of women who prayed, prophesied and preached, as the Hebrew of Psalm 68v11 states, "The Lord gave the word, and great was the multitude of women who published it." Blessed are those who publish the good tidings of Christ's Gospel. Isaiah 52v7. I feel that it is dishonest and hypocritical to give a woman a place in the ministry in difficult mission fields, and refuse them the same place in much easier conditions at home.

Women can make their homes a ministry, and men should co-operate with them in this. Paul said that older women should teach younger women sound doctrine and wise practice in the home. Titus 2v1-5, 1Thess 4v11. It is often better for Christian women to minister to women's needs for prayer, where this is possible, to save from criticism. **It is certainly very unwise and dangerous for men to pray with women on their own, if a man does have to pray with a woman, others should be present if it is at all possible.** If we practice this it will save from appearance of evil, and will in particular save young people from emotional involvement, which can injure their feelings and spiritual growth, and cause even greater problems. Women, who have children, already have a congregation in their home, and they can minister love, faith and teaching to their children, which will never leave them. I owe an incalculable debt to my own dear departed mother for her constant love, concern, and support, and the inspiration of her prophetic ministry. God has often changed history through the ministries of godly mothers; think of godly Hannah, the prophetess, the mother of Samuel; Elizabeth the prophetess, the mother of John the Baptist; godly Mary the prophetess, the mother of our Lord. 1Sam 2v1-11, Luke 2v1-16. We thank God for women, like Hannah, who have made their grief, problems and frustrations, an incentive to seek God, and as a result have blessed whole communities and nations. Mary of Bethany was the one above all others, even more than John, to minister to Jesus in His hour of need. Mary's faith, genuine affection, concerned love, and fellowship of spirit, strengthened and sustained Jesus, and her name is recorded in the Gospel for all time because of it. Luke 10v38-42, John 12v3-8, Matt 26v6-13, John 11v1,2,5,6. Godly praying women are the spiritual backbone of most churches.

There are millions of Christian women today who are winning souls, blessing saints, preaching, prophesying, teaching, comforting the needy, and labouring on very difficult mission fields, with a ministry from Christ, out of a pure love for Him and mankind. May God richly bless every one of His handmaids! God puts His Spirit upon those He commissions, and Spirit-filled women have the right to minister as God directs. Num 11v29. **God has poured His Spirit, not only upon His menservants, but upon His handmaids as well, and given them a very definite ministry and place in His Church, therefore, those who resist women's ministry, resist God.** Acts 2v15-20. **Sister, obey God, not men's traditions. You must pray, prophesy, and preach as God leads and enables you, and do not allow anyone to make you bury your God-given talents, in the soil of silence.**

#### **8) Body ministry took place in Church decisions and Church discipline.**

We have already seen under pastor-elders, how the local churches put forward those Christians who had a definite ministry from Christ, to be their pastors. We see from Acts 6v2,3, that all the Christians in Jerusalem gathered to discuss the problem of looking after poor widows, "then the apostles called the multitude of the disciples unto them and said, 'Look ye out, seven men'....and the saying pleased the multitude." There was leadership, but not exclusive leadership or exclusive authority, not even by the twelve apostles; all the believers were consulted, and they put forward the men they knew would do the job the best. It was a family matter decided by all. There seems to have been no disagreement at all in the choice of the seven deacons. This is Divine wisdom; there is nothing more divisive than clergy or councils making decisions regardless of the feelings of "the multitude of the disciples." The regular meeting in the Scandinavian Pentecostal churches, at which policy is discussed and problems ironed out, where all can take part, is an essential part of New Testament Christianity. This means that problems in the churches are not allowed to carry on without being dealt with, so undercurrents of criticism or frustration of ideas do not occur. Important decisions should not be imposed on the local churches by the leadership of the churches with a "take it or leave it" attitude, they should be tested to see if they "please the multitude" of the disciples. Acts 6v5, 15v28.

In the church at Antioch, prophets and teachers gathered for fellowship and prayer together. Acts 13v1-4. However, they were not deciding church policies, they were "ministering to the Lord," and waiting upon Him, for His blessing, guidance, and a deepening of their ministries. It was God who sent Barnabus and Paul on their apostolic mission, the church at Antioch recognised this call and stood behind them in it.

#### **The "Council" Of Jerusalem.**

Many church leaders believe that councils of ministers should make decisions for their churches, and they quote "The Council of Jerusalem" to prove their point. However, **if we examine Acts 15 closely, we will find that it gives no authority for councils, or synods composed of ministers, or representatives, autocratically deciding the policies and running of the churches.**

Dean Farrar writes on page 243 of his, "The Life and Letters of St. Paul:" "It is only by an unwarrantable extension of terms that the meeting of the Church of Jerusalem can be called a 'Council,'....It was not a convention of ordained delegates, but a meeting of the entire Church of Jerusalem to receive a deputation from the Church of Antioch." End of quote.

### 1) Notice who gathered at Jerusalem and why.

God had opened "a door of faith" to the Gentiles, but Satan tried to destroy the basic and essential truth of justification by faith, through those who had joined Christ's Church. Satan had tried to destroy the Church by persecution, but his attack by intrigue from within was far more deadly and dangerous, and but for the apostle Paul would undoubtedly have succeeded. Certain "false brethren" from Judea tried to close "the door of faith," and bring the lovely converts at Antioch into the bondage of their own belief, they demanded obedience to the Law of Moses, instead of proclaiming the glorious liberty and freedom of the New Covenant. These Judaizers refused to accept the obvious implication of God's dealing with Cornelius and his friends. Satan through them tried to destroy the Church with the God-given tradition of the Old Covenant. **The Judaizers blindly refused to see that Christ had fulfilled the Law with its types and prophecies, so the type was no longer necessary; they had Christ the living fulfilment of the type, not the shadow.** Heb 8v1-13, 9v15,23,24, 10v8,9.

The Judaizers inferred that the Gentile Christians were not only inferior to unregenerate Jews, they systematically taught that Gentile converts had to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses, or they could not be saved. Acts 15v1,5. "Except," is "ean me." In Acts 15v1, the word "taught," is "edidaskon," the imperfect active of "didasko," to teach, to teach or speak in a public assembly, the imperfect shows that they began to teach and kept it up. The Judaizers made a systematic attempt to bring the converts at Antioch into legalism, they practised a determined espionage and proud indoctrination of these lovely young converts. Antioch had proved its love and friendship with the church at Jerusalem with a very generous gift. Acts 11v30.

These Gentiles' hearts burned with love for Christ and their Jewish brethren in Christ, Paul was determined that this was not going to be extinguished by legal bondage. Paul and Barnabus challenged these Judaizers, "they had no small dissension and disputation with them," Acts 15v2, the word for "dissension" is "staseos," which means "insurrection" or "violent disruption;" the word for "disputation," is "zeteseos," which means dispute or discussion. It was a prolonged row, and these Judaizers refused to accept the revelation of the Church age as preached by Paul, Satan made a determined attempt to destroy the New Covenant truth through these Judaizers. Gal 5v1-4. Even the combined mighty ministries and Scriptural knowledge of Paul and Barnabus failed to convince these self-appointed guides of Christ's Church of the error of their ways. The church at Antioch appointed Paul and Barnabus and some others to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders to settle this matter.

On their journey to Jerusalem Paul and Barnabus reported to the churches of Phoenicia and Samaria how the Gentiles had turned to God, and their news was received with great joy and praise. At Jerusalem Paul and Barnabus again "declared all things that God had done with them." Acts 15v3,4. After the welcome of the Jerusalem Church and the elders and apostles, battle is joined, the Christian Pharisees insist that these Gentile converts "must," "dei," be circumcised and charged to keep the Law of Moses. They evidently were still as narrow in their outlook as when they challenged Peter over his preaching to the Gentiles in the home of Cornelius. Acts 15v5 with 11v2-18.

We read in Acts 15v24, that the Judaizers from the Jerusalem Church had greatly troubled and subverted the church at Antioch. "Troubled," is "etaraxan," the aorist of "tarasso," to agitate, to disturb, to throw into confusion, to make the heart palpitate. John 14v1,27. "Subverting," is "anaskeuazontes," the present participle of "anaskeuazo," to plunder, ravage, pervert, and destroy," it has the thought of the reversal of good that had been done, or the tearing down of what had been built, and is used to describe the plundering of a town. The idea of deciding the matter with the church at Jerusalem, came from the church at Antioch, not from the church at Jerusalem, and so all the Jerusalem church, and representatives of the Antioch church, gathered to discuss the problem. The Judaizers had greatly damaged the church at Antioch, and were severely censured for it. It seems the Judaizers either withdrew, or submitted to the decision for a while, whatever they did at this point, they later certainly started up their divisive and satanically inspired activities again.

This conference at Jerusalem was not a conference of ministers from many churches, but appointed representatives of the church at Antioch, meeting the whole church of Jerusalem. This is the only meeting of this kind in recorded in the New Testament, even though, by modern standards, many more would have been thought necessary, and held on a regular basis. It was a meeting to decide the answer to a fundamental doctrinal point. The decision had consequences for the Church universal, for it decided whether the Church and Gentile believers were to keep the Jewish Law, or be separate

from Judaism.

When Christian leaders insist that they have the right to lead and decide matters on their own, they are departing from New Testament principles, and in particular Acts 15v22,25, where we see that "the whole church" was involved and of "one accord" in this critical decision. The Holy Spirit confirmed their decision, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us." Acts 15v28.

**NB** It is obvious that the first gathering at Jerusalem in Acts 15v4 was adjourned, for 15v6, speaks of another gathering. It is between these two gatherings that the private conferences of Gal 2v1-10 undoubtedly took place. Dean Farrar writes: "I have here assumed without hesitation that the visit to Jerusalem of Gal 2v1-10, though here mentioned as though it were a second visit, was identical with that of Acts 15, and therefore was in reality his third visit." End of quote.

Farrar then details the five visits of Paul to Jerusalem, which I have detailed as follows in my own words.

1. Paul's visit after his conversion on the Damascus Road. Acts 9v26.
2. When Paul brought the contribution for the poor at Jerusalem. Acts 11v30.
3. Paul's visit to resolve the problem of the Judaizers at the Council of Jerusalem. Acts 15v2.
4. Paul's visit after his second missionary journey. Acts 18v22.
5. Paul's visit to fulfil a vow at Jerusalem, and before his imprisonment at Caesarea. Acts 21v17.

Farrar continues: "Now this visit of Gal 2 could not possibly have been the first; nor as it is proved by Gal 2v7, as well as by the whole chronology of his life, could it have been the second; nor, as we see from the presence of Barnabus (compare Gal 2v1 with Acts 15v39) could it have been the fourth; for no one can assume that it was without accusing Paul of disingenuous suppression when he spoke to the Galatians of this sole intercourse which he had with the apostles; and that it was not the fifth is quite decisively proved by Gal 2v11.

By the exhaustive method, therefore, we see that the visit dwelt on in Gal 2 must have been the third. It would, indeed, be inconceivable that it was some visit not recorded by the author of the Acts if there were any reason whatever for such a supposition; but when we consider how impossible it was that such a visit should have occurred without the knowledge of St. Luke, and how eminently the facts of it accorded with the views which he wished to further, and how difficult it is to find any other occasion on which such a visit would have been natural, we have no reason for adopting such an hypothesis. Nor, indeed, can anything be much clearer than the identity of circumstances in the visits thus described. In the two narratives the same people go up at the same time, from the same place, for the same object, in consequence of the same interference by the same agitators, and with the same results. Against the absolute certainty of the conclusion that the visits were one and the same there is nothing whatever to set but trivial differences of detail, everyone of which is accounted for in the text." End of quote.

Luke would hardly have passed over the events of Gal 2v1-10, if they had taken place in Acts 11v29,30; it is also difficult to fit 14 years between Acts 9v27 and Acts 11v29,30; also Gal 2v1-10 cannot be Acts 11v29,30, for Paul saw the elders, not the apostles, and in Gal 2v1-10, Paul proved that he was not behind the greatest apostles in experience and knowledge. So, we come to the conclusion that in Acts 15v5-29, we have the public narrative of events, and in Gal 2v1-10, we see the private discussions of Paul with the other apostles. Paul and Barnabus saved the Church from staying within the Old Covenant.

We see, then, leading men among the brethren meeting for discussion, but not for decision without the approval of the rest of the church at Jerusalem. In Acts 15v4,6,12,22, the whole church at Jerusalem gathered to consider the problem of the relation of Gentile Christians to the law and circumcision; not only apostles and elders, but "all the multitude," and "the whole multitude of disciples," and "the whole church," were involved in the discussion and the decision.

## **2) Notice the freedom of participation in discussion and the unanimous decision.**

The apostles did not assume authority over the meeting of the two churches, they let discussion freely take place, they did not direct by apostolic authority, or by prophetic revelation. Nor did the elders, who were the pastors of the two flocks, insist that they were the only ones to hear and decide the matter. The apostles and elders did not decide the issue on their own, all the Jerusalem church was there, and all God's local family was at the discussion. Considerable time was given for people to air their points of view, grievances and objections. The Judaizers were given opportunity to fully state their views and there was "much questioning and disputing," "polles zeteseos," but there was no attempt to silence them, or to rush things to a decision by a majority vote, or to limit discussion and debate. There was a prolonged controversy and discussion over what to believe, it was a question of faith, and all could take part, not just a select few. This questioning, debate and discussion, was a blessing, it made everyone think through the implications of the New Covenant.

After there had been much debate, Peter stands up and repeats how God directed him to preach the Gospel to Cornelius and his friends (about twelve years before), all of whom were Gentiles. God saved these Gentiles and filled them with the Holy Spirit just as He did the Christian Jews. Peter then asks the telling question, "Why tempt ye God?" that is, how could

they accuse God of making a mistake, or refuse to follow His guidance as the Israelites had done at Massah and Meribah. Exodus 17v7, Deut 6v16, 1Cor 10v9. Peter then says that the Christian Gentiles should not be compelled to carry a yoke, which they as Jews had never been able to bear. Matt 11v30, 23v4. Peter finishes by saying that salvation is by faith in Christ not in ceremony or ritual, and it is fitting that the last words of Peter in Acts are for forgiveness and liberty in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul and Barnabus follow up Peter's account and conclusions from God's dealings with Cornelius, with their own account of God's dealings and mighty workings with the Gentiles. Peter's words had silenced everybody, Acts 15v12, and prepared the way for the appeal to Christian experience, these facts were far more eloquent than any intellectual argument. James then gives the Scriptural proof to back up God's directive to Peter to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, by quoting Amos 9v11,12, from the Septuagint, and finishes by recommending four simple prohibitions for the Gentiles, which would stop them stumbling the Jews. These were abstaining from eating food offered to idols; from things strangled, Gen 9v4, Lev 3v17, 7v26, Deut 12v16, 1Sam 14v33, Acts 10v15, Rom 14v14; from blood, dishes made from blood were common among Greeks and Romans; and from fornication, which was treated very lightly, indeed, as natural and permissible, by the heathen. Acts 15v21. Notice the insistence of appeal to God's workings and God's Word, not only to God's Word, or just God's workings, but also to both. Peter, Paul and Barnabus, tell of God's workings, Peter gives a very strong Scriptural warning as well, and James concludes with Scriptural proof and the practical application of that truth.

### 3) Notice the unanimous decision.

There was prolonged discussion, then decision; nothing was done until unanimity was reached, "having come to one accord," v25, "then it pleased the apostles and elders, **WITH THE WHOLE CHURCH,**" v22, "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us." v28. **The decision was confirmed to be of God by the unanimous decision of the whole church, and the Holy Spirit.**

We cannot expect to get God's will in a church with a prayerless and worldly "rule by majority vote," this is a carnal expedient. We know that elders were elected by the popular vote of Christians, but this was a statement of confidence in proven ministries, and this was done prayerfully, and is quite different from worldly majority voting. Both Christian and worldly experience has often proved the majority to be wrong and the minority right. The report of the twelve spies proves that the carnal and unbelieving often outnumber the spiritual and full of faith. Num 13v1 to 14v45. Rule by majority vote often brings dissension, disagreement, confusion and distrust, and hinders fellowship, which is certainly against the divine desire that God's children should be one. Rule by majority vote has led to families and friends being either estranged, or indoctrinated to vote certain ways, and has resulted in fights for power behind the scenes, which can only be described as worldly and wicked. **It is a tragedy when churches are divided into voting power groups, these power struggles destroy fellowship, and frustrate the desires of the Holy Spirit, and instead of the unanimity that brings certain victory, there is a division that brings sure defeat.**

We must seek "the mind of the Lord," and recognise Jesus as the Head and Guide of His body the Church. Rom 12v4,5, 1Cor 12v12-27, Eph 4v11-16. **A body goes into convulsions when it is sick and is not directed by the head, this is a true picture of Christ's Church, when we do what we want, and not what He wants. We must be willing to pray until we all come to the same mind, this proves our submission to Jesus.** John 17v20-22, Rom 15v5-7, 1Cor 1v10-13, 2Cor 13v11-14, Eph 4v1-6,14-32, Phil 1v27, 2v1-5, 4v2, 1Thess 5v12-15. Jesus desires us to be one as He was with the Father, this oneness springs from mutual love, and this alone gives an effectual testimony to the world. A public practical unity of the spirit is essential, and the God who brought the Christians of the early Church, with their different ways, thoughts and backgrounds, to one accord, will do the same for us if we will humble ourselves and seek His face.

**To obtain the mind of the Lord, prolonged united prayer has to be exercised by a church; there is no short cut.** Prophecy may well confirm guidance from God, but it can never do away with the necessity of a person or church earnestly seeking God for His will. All local church members must have God's peace in their hearts before important decisions are made, if there is no unanimous decision, the matter should be left week by week, month by month, again and again, until all are of one accord. The China Inland Mission of Hudson Taylor practised this method, the secretary said, "When there has been a delay, it has always proved to have been a wise step, and the necessary guidance has come later on....no inconveniences have been found to arise from the plan." In an age of rush, quick decisions and worldly government and management techniques, churches have to be careful not to partake of the spirit of the world, or they can miss the good and perfect will of God. **The Trinity works by unanimity of plan, and churches should too, we should seek and follow the perfect plans that God has for His churches.** If the early Church had been as prayerless as many modern churches, Satan's attack by cherished tradition would certainly have succeeded. **Without diligent waiting upon God in prayer and worship, defeat is inevitable.**

Some have objected to the practice of unanimity on the grounds of 2Cor 2v6. "hoi pleiones," "the many," or "the majority," of 2Cor 2v6, means all the church except the sinning brother. A church should restrain action until there is unanimity of opinion, this demands the fruit of the Spirit, longsuffering and self-control, but it is the divine highway to divine guidance.



#### 4) Notice the appealing and reasonable spirit of the decrees to the churches.

The apostles and elders at Jerusalem gave their decisions to the Gentile churches in a gentle manner, they did not pontificate, or act as lords. Matt 20v25-28, 1Pet 5v3. The decrees are given in an appealing advisory spirit, for Acts 15v28,29, reads, "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well." "Ye shall do well," is certainly not hard legalism, it is the language of love and reasonableness.

We read in Acts 16v4, that the decisions of the apostles and elders and members of the church at Jerusalem are called, "the decrees," "ta dogmata," meaning decisions, or decrees, from "dokeo," to give an opinion. "Dogma" is used in Col 2v14 and Eph 2v15, of the legal requirements of the ordinances of the Law, and in Luke 2v1 and Acts 17v7, of the decrees of the Caesars. The decrees of Acts 16v4, are said to be, "ordained of the apostles and elders;" "ordained," is "kekrimena," the perfect passive participle of "krino," to judge, to decide, the perfect emphasises the permanence and abiding nature of the decrees. In Eph 2v20 and 3v5, Paul confirms that the foundation of doctrine was laid down by apostles. The important thing about the Jerusalem decree was that the heads of the church at Jerusalem, and the apostles, admitted that circumcision was not essential to salvation, and a Gentile was not to be compelled to be circumcised or keep the Law. This brought temporary peace to the Gentiles, but it did not finally settle the problem, as we see from our next point.

#### 5) Notice the danger of being restricted by a former God-blessed tradition.

There was a great conflict in the early Church over the relation of the Law to Christianity; even genuine Christians were very slow to realise that Christ had fulfilled the types and prophecies of the Old Covenant, and He had instituted a completely New Covenant. The early Jewish Christians still followed and cherished their old forms and traditions, we are no different from them, and we too are often slow to follow the Lord Jesus to the blessings of the New Covenant. In our day we often still see former God-blessed cherished traditions being an hindrance to Christians experiencing the fullness of New Testament Christian experience. The numbers of zealous Jews who became Christians was so great, that it appears that Peter, James and Barnabus were overcome by them, it seems from Gal 2v12 that they had compromised New Testament truth through fear of offending them. This proves how we all need to watch our hearts, if men of God of this calibre can be inconsistent and compromise truth when pressured to do so by Jews who were loathe to put on one side their former Jewish traditions. We can all fail God if we do not keep close to Jesus. It is only as we seek the mind and will of God in earnest prayer, that we shall be clear-sighted enough to discern God's will, and strong and courageous enough to perform it.

We read in Gal 2v11-21, that Paul reprovved Peter and Barnabus, for living like Christians one day and like Jews another day. It was very wrong for them to treat Gentile Christians as brothers one day, and then to shun them as Gentiles another day, because of the fear the Jews and the Judaizers in the Church, so Paul publicly rebukes Peter and Barnabus for this. Paul's words were obviously received by Peter, for we find no trace of bitterness in Peter towards Paul, he recognised his great ministry, and his divinely inspired New Testament truth. 2Pet 3v15. Peter and Paul honoured and respected each other, and Paul's correction did not spoil their affection for each other, they parted in friendship, a lesson we need to note. Barnabus did not separate from Paul on the grounds of this correction; it was on the issue of Paul's rejection of Mark, a relative of Barnabus. Paul later as good as admitted that he had been wrong over Mark, when he asked for his help, and Peter spoke well of Mark also. Col 4v10, Philemon v24, 2Tim 4v11, 1Pet 5v13. This teaches us that even the judgement and actions of apostles and notable Christian men, can be suspect at times, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." 1Cor 1v26-31.

When Paul came to Jerusalem after his second apostolic mission, the issue of the relation of Christianity to the Law came to a head again. The church praised God for what He had done through Paul, but they were obviously suspicious of Paul's doctrine. They asked Paul to take part in a Nazarite vow, to show that he did not teach "apostasy from Moses," as the Judaizers had said that he did. **Paul did not teach "apostasy from Moses," this was a devilish parody of his teaching, he taught the fulfilment of Mosaic type and prophecy in Christ.**

Paul had made a vow in Acts 18v18, and undertook a Nazarite vow in Acts 21v23-27. This involved the sacrifice of burnt offerings, sin offerings and peace offerings, as well as a basket of unleavened cakes and a libation of wine. Num 6v1-21. While it is true that God had ordained the ceremonies of the Law, and the Jews had practised them in God's will for fifteen centuries, and the apostles had used the Temple for a period, Luke 24v53, Acts 3v1, there can be no doubt that the Old Covenant had passed away when Christ came and died. John 1v17, Matt 11v11-14, Heb 8v7-13, 10v1-9. It is almost unbelievable to see Paul, the chief exponent of justification by faith, not only standing in the Temple and submitting himself to the Law, but also to the petty ceremonial additions of the Rabbis. Paul must have realised that he was giving the Judaizers, who had seized on his circumcision of Timothy as a proof of his inconsistency, Acts 16v3, some real ammunition to use against him. Why did Paul do it? Some have tried to justify Paul's visit to Jerusalem and his

involvement with Temple worship on the following grounds, which I personally am not happy with.

1) Those who try to justify Paul's observation of Temple rites, say that Paul did not give way on the issue of justification by faith, the brethren at Jerusalem admitted that this was not the issue. Acts 21v25. They say Paul was acting on the principle he laid down in 1Cor 9v19-23, it was an act of love, to the Jews, he became a Jew to win them to Christ. **However, this expediency involved a considerable compromise with truth.** Paul had called the Judaizers, who said that keeping the Law was essential to salvation, "false brethren," "dogs," "false apostles," "deceitful workers," and servants of Satan. 2Cor 11v13-15, Gal 2v4, Phil 3v2. In both Galatians and Corinthians, Paul had said that no one could be justified by the Law, and said that all who taught they could were accursed. Gal 1v6-10, 2v16, 3v10-14. Paul had called the ceremonies of the Law "weak and beggarly elements," as a means of justification, and said that circumcision was an unnecessary mutilation. Gal 4v9-11, 5v12.

2) Those who try to justify Paul's observation of Temple rites, say that when Paul withheld truth from those who could not bear it, he was following the example of Jesus who withheld truth from those who could not bear it. John 16v12. Jesus did veil the truth of the implications of the New Covenant from His apostles, even after His cross and resurrection, because of their inability to bear that revelation, because they were so bound by the traditions of the Old Covenant. Jesus had to leave that to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is evident from the apostles question, "Lord will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" that even after the forty days ministry of the risen Christ, the apostles did not understand the truth about the Church. Paul might have tried to justify his observation of Temple rites by thinking that if Jesus had been limited in what He could say to His apostles, then he had the right to act in the same way, and that if the matter had been thrashed out immediately, it would have produced great disorder in the Church, and great opposition from the Jews.

However, nothing can justify Paul's visit to Jerusalem, for the Lord had told Paul not to go there. The problem of the relation of the Church to Judaism was going to be solved a mere ten years ahead, when the destruction of Jerusalem ended the Jewish state and religion. Those who defend Paul's action, say that he looked upon his vow as an act of public consecration to God and as an appeal to the Jews, not as a means of justification, however, it was an act of expediency, and was a carnal attempt to remove barriers and win people over, but instead of doing this it produced a riot and more persecution, just as the Lord had warned Him.

#### **NB: Paul disobeyed God when he went to Jerusalem.**

The above reasons are not satisfactory, for in Acts 21v4, God told Paul **NOT** to go to Jerusalem, and his disobedience brought about tragic results. Acts 20v22,23, 21v4,11-14. Why did Paul disobey the Lord and go to Jerusalem? Paul's love for his people drove him to Jerusalem; he was willing to be accursed from Christ, if it could only have saved them. Rom 9v1-5. **It is very sad that the apostles and elders of the church at Jerusalem were the means of bringing the prophetic warnings to pass.** They should have defended Paul's teaching of the New Covenant, but their appeal was based on an unscriptural expediency, and it nearly cost Paul his life. It all shows how difficult it is to break free of our traditions, and how the fear of man can hinder and harm the church of God. **If we are not careful we can be as presumptuous and disobedient as the Israelites, who disobeyed God's command to Moses that nothing was to be added or taken away from the pattern that He had given, Heb 8v5, they ignored this command and added thousands of their own traditions and rules and so made the Word of God of none effect. In the end they persuaded themselves that their tradition was God's truth and rejected Christ in favour of their own tradition and murdered their Messiah.**

#### **Excommunication and Discipline.**

Jesus personally instituted the procedure for discipline in the Church. Matt 18v15-22. **Not every private wrong has to be brought before the local church as the Lord makes clear in Matt 18v15-17, the person wronged should first aim at a private reconciliation, then, if there is no repentance and reconciliation, before witnesses, and finally before the whole church; then if they do not repent, they are not to be treated as a Christian brother until repentance is forthcoming.** Matt 5v23,24, Luke 17v3,4. Jesus insisted that the whole local church performed the discipline of a member of a local church. Charges must be established in the presence of all, and confirmed by at least two or three witnesses, there is to be no conviction or hearsay or tittle-tattle. 2Cor.13v1. In the whole of the New Testament there is no such thing as a group of ministers gathering to discipline and excommunicate at their own will; there must be no secret sessions or private condemnations, justice has not only to be done, it has to be seen to be done by all the local church. Failure to do this puts the 'judges' in the way of discipline from Christ Himself. If we fail to follow Christ's pattern of church discipline, then Jesus, as the Head of the Church, personally disciplines the saints that He loves. This is why some of the Corinthians had died, and many others of them were very ill, so that they would not be condemned with the world. If we will judge ourselves, we will have no need of Christ's discipline and judgement. 1Cor.11v23-33. **The Lord's supper is either a place of cleansing or a place of condemnation.**

Immorality, dishonesty, heresy, and the like have to be publicly dealt with by the whole local church, and believers who will not repent of wrong are to be shunned. Matt 18v17, 1Cor 5v1-5,9-13, 1Cor 6v4-10. **However, the aim of discipline**

**is not mere punishment, it is the preservation of the church and the restoration of the offender.** 1Cor 5v5, 2Tim 2v17, 1Tim 1v20, Rom 12v19-21, Gal 6v1. The Scripture also makes it clear that a person is a heretic who rejects Jesus as their Saviour and divine Lord. 1John 4v1-5, 2John v9,10, Gal 1v6-9. Rejection of apostles and their writings by Christians, was to result in their company being shunned and the person looked upon as a perverted and sinful Christian. 2Thess 3v6,14,15, Titus 3v10,11. If a person loved the pre-eminence they could be cast out. 3John v9,10. No one can be accused unless there is firm evidence; the elders are not to be accused unless there are two or three positive witnesses. 1Tim 5v19. **The emphasis should always be upon mercy and longsuffering, where this is at all possible.** However certain sins are so serious that severe spiritual discipline has to take place, this can involve direct judgement from God, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira; or the delivering to Satan for discipline as in the case of the wicked man of 1Cor 5v1-5, and Hymenaeus and Alexander. 1Tim 1v20. **Notice, those who upset the faith of Christians with wrong doctrine are dealt with in the same way as the immoral.** The exercise of the gift of faith in judgement was performed in the New Testament by the whole local church, or by apostolic ministry. 1Cor 5v1-5, 4v21, 2Cor 1v23, 13v10. This kind of disciplines brought a very healthy fear of God upon the early Church. Acts 2v43, 5v11.

The Lord Jesus warns us that religious people will excommunicate us, when we fulfil His words, and follow Him and others who have prophesied and preached God's Word. Luke 6v22,23. This was certainly fulfilled; the Jewish Christians knew what it was to suffer the temporary and permanent cutting off of religious and social privileges (the "Niddui" and "herem,") and even the solemn handing over, with fearful curses, to God for judgement and final perdition, (the "shammata.")

Religion that rejects God's workings, loves to act as if it was acting on His behalf, many solemn excommunications done in the great name of God, have really been the workings of Satan. The true Christian must expect to be slandered, opposed, criticised and persecuted by religious people, just as the Lord Jesus was. **If there is no Satanic opposition we should really doubt if we are really serving the Lord as we should.** Luke 6v26. When the Church of Christ acts as His body and ministers His life and love, there is an inevitable response from the dark powers that control the minds of men. Let us go forward in the steps of our crucified and risen Lord, in Heaven it will all seem such a small sacrifice for what He has done for us.

#### **Christ Ordained Local, Self-Governing Churches.**

##### **1) The local Church is not a building, it is a group of born-again Christians.**

The early Church had no external visible organisation in the form of buildings; there was not even an official meeting place for Christians. **Christian believers gathered for fellowship at any place or hour that was suitable.** These meetings usually took place in homes, the open-air, or even in the catacombs, the place and time being decided at the convenience of each group of Christians. There was liberty as to where and when Christians could worship. Christ stated in Matt 18v20, that two or three Christians gathered together in His name could know His blessing and presence. In John 4v19-24, Jesus said that Christian believers can worship God anywhere and at any time, without a Temple, or any kind of building. Christ's Church organisation did not follow the empire building and power structures of men, or even of Old Testament Jewry. The Israelites spoke with great reverence of the Temple as, "The house of the Lord," and they had consecrated buildings for worship, yet in the New Testament, there is no mention of Christian church buildings, and no hint that they are thought to be desirable or necessary. Paul states that every Christian is a temple of God, and God's glory is going to be manifested through Christians, not in buildings made of bricks and mortar by human hands. Acts 7v46-50, 17v24, 1Cor 3v16,17, 2Cor 6v16, John 2v21.

A New Testament local church consisted of all the Christians in an area or locality. It was not a Gospel Hall, Mission, or any other kind of church building. All churches in the New Testament are local churches; there are no churches larger than a locality. The smallest part of a local church was the church in a house, but it was linked to the other Christians in that area, who met in other homes. If the locality was large and there were many thousands of converts, as at Jerusalem and Rome, there were many house fellowships. **Paul instructs these fellowships not to be cliquish, and so they gathered together for fellowship, and to discuss matters of importance, or to hear outstanding ministry.** The whole church in a locality made up the body of Christ in that area. **If a church is not as wide in its outlook as the body of Christ in a locality, it is sectarian.** We should recognise that every truly born-again Christian is part of the Church of Christ in that area. We should follow the divine pattern and wisdom of meeting together to hear outstanding ministry, and also gather in house meetings for fellowship, and sharing in order to develop ministry and spiritual growth. Acts 2v46, 4v31, 5v12,42, 6v2-7, 10v27,28,30, 15v4,12,22,23,30, 20v7,17-37. Evangelism can take place both in large meeting, or small house meeting. Acts 5v12,42, 28v23-30.

**Quite a considerable part of the remarkable things that took place in the life and ministry of Christ, took place in homes.** The worship of Christ by the wise men took place in a home. Matt 2v11. Christ healed Peter's wife's mother in Peter's home. Matt 8v14, Mark 1v29, Luke 4v38. Christ ate with, and ministered to, sin-sick, needy souls in Matthew's house. Mark 2v15, Luke 5v29. Jesus brought peace to a sinful woman in a home. Matt 7v36-49. Jesus had wonderful fellowship in the home of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Luke 10v38, John 11v5. Jesus and His apostles centred their

operations around the homes of sympathetic friends and helpers. Matt 13v1, 17v25, Mark 2v1, 9v33, 10v10, Acts 10v6,17,32, 16v15, 18v7,8, 28v40, Matt 10v12,13,14, Mark 6v10, Luke 9v4, 10v4,5,7. Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead in a home. Matt 9v23, Luke 8v51. He healed the Syrophenician daughter lying sick and demon-possessed a distance away in her home. Mark 7v24-30. Christ healed a paralytic in a persons home. Mark 2v1-12. The Lords supper took place in a home. Matt 26v3, Luke 22v10.

**The early Church carried on Christ's practice of ministering in homes.** It was in a house that the Holy Spirit fell on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2v2. The disciples who were converted on the day of Pentecost used their homes for fellowship and the Lord's Supper. Acts 2v46. The risen Christ sent Ananias to help Paul in a house, and Paul was healed and filled with the Holy Spirit as a result. Acts 9v11,17. God instructed Cornelius to ask Peter to come to his house to preach the truth; the result was a glorious revival. Acts 10v2,22, 30,44-48, 11v12-14. The disciples had a prayer meeting in Mark's house for Peter's deliverance, and God answered their prayers. Acts 12v12-19. **The early Church fellowship meetings were centred around homes, this is an indisputable fact of Scripture as well as of Church history.** Acts 2v2,46, 5v12, 12v12, 20v7-9, 21v8-12, Rom 16v3-5,23, 1Cor 16v19, Col 4v15, Philemon v2. Paul persecuted the Christians who were meeting in homes, before he himself became a Christian. Acts 8v3.

The fellowship between Christian groups was wisely limited in times of severe persecution, to protect the Christians in these groups. When the Prefect Rusticus examined Justin Martyr (scourged and beheaded for Christ in approx. 166 AD), and asked him, "Where do you assemble?" Justin answered, "wherever it suits each ones PREFERENCE and ABILITY. You take it for granted we all meet in the same place; but this is not so, for the God of the Christians is not circumscribed by place, but being invisible fills heaven and earth and is everywhere worshipped and glorified by the faithful." Rusticus then asked, "Tell me where you meet together, or in what place you collect your disciples?" Justin answered, "I am staying at the house of one Martinas, and I know no other place of meeting besides this, and if one wished to come to me I communicated to him the words of truth." A quote of Neander from Justin Martyr.

We can see, then, that when Paul speaks of there being divisions at Corinth, in 1Cor 1v10-14, 3v1-9, he is not speaking of the Christians in Corinth dividing up into separate groups for fellowship; in a city of 100,000, as at Corinth, and many converts, the division into smaller groups for close fellowship was essential. Acts 18v9-11. The thing that Paul is condemning is the lack of recognition, love and fellowship between these groups, it appears some refused to fellowship in larger groups with the whole local church in that area, or when they did they were full of pride, criticism, and a sense of superiority. This kind of attitude made profitable Christian fellowship quite impossible, and Paul tells them that while they persisted in this attitude, they were carnal and immature babies, and could not hope to progress spiritually. 1Cor 1v2,12, 3v4. This same condemnation applies today to those who will not recognise other truly converted Christians.

A.T. Robertson says the Greek "hairesis," our "heresy," means simply a choosing, from "haireomai," to choose, to take for oneself, and then a chosen opinion, then in a bad sense as a party or faction. Gal 5v20, 1Cor 11v19. It is used to describe a school of thought, like that of the Sadducees in Acts 5v17; of the Pharisees in Acts 15v5; and in Acts 24v5, Paul uses it of Christians. Christianity was a sect everywhere spoken against. Acts 28v22. **In Gal 5v20, "haireseis" means "choosings," or "preferences," and is division on the grounds of doctrinal belief.**

Vincent says "haireseis" means 'parties', into which divisions crystallise." The word occurs in Acts 5v17, 15v5, 24v5,14, 26v5, 28v22, 1Cor 11v19, Gal 5v20, 2Pet 2v1. **Paul tells us that if we make emphasis upon certain nonessential doctrines and Christian teachers a cause of division, we are working after the flesh.** Damnable heresies will of necessity produce division, 2Pet 2v1, Titus 3v10, 1John 4v1-5, **but there should be no antagonism or division between local leaders or Christians, on the grounds of human personality, doctrinal preference, race, politics, social standing, denominational affiliation, or like or dislike of various ministries. The body is one.** However, we see in Acts 13v42-48, 14v19 and 19v8-10, how Paul could no longer have fellowship with the Jews because they contradicted Paul and blasphemed the truth that he taught, and persecuted him. One can well understand how very upset the Jews were when they saw their members accepting Paul's teaching and leaving their fellowship, but what alternative was there when they were so hard-hearted, stubborn, malicious and unbelieving. When the Jews spoke against Paul's doctrine and refused to believe, he had no other alternative but depart from them and separate the disciples from the corrupting influence of these Jews. The same thing can happen today between Christians experiencing revival, and those who are content with their church tradition, and reject the Holy Spirit's ministries, and so separation may be unavoidable. However, bitterness should be avoided like the plague, we may like the Lord Jesus speak the truth with feeling, but not in a bad temper. Matt 23v1-39, Acts 28v23-30.

**Churches can vary a great deal in their spiritual condition. Having local churches and house fellowships does not automatically solve every problem, there has to be wise leadership and permanent abiding in Christ for spiritual progress. Some churches and house fellowships are centres of revival, Bible teaching, fellowship, and manifest God's power and love through spiritual gifts. Others churches, like some of the churches in Revelation, have serious problems, and even grave sin in them. Some are self-centred, religious clubs with no evangelistic emphasis. Some have merely transferred one-man ministry and formality from the church building to the home, and the same cast iron bondage with it.**

## 2) There is no Church federation seen in the New Testament.

The New Testament local church was a voluntary, self-supporting, self-propagating society, with no subordination to outside ecclesiastical centres or civil authority. There is certainly no church federation seen in the New Testament, we read that all the believers in a city were a church, 1Cor 1v2; there are the churches of a district or an area. 2Cor 8v1, Gal 1v2, Acts 9v31. **The smallest expression of the universal Church was the church in a house.** Meetings in various homes or other suitable places soon replaced the meetings in Temple or synagogue. Acts 2v2,46, 5v12,42, 10v2,22,30,44-48, 12v12-19, 20v7-9, 21v8-12, Rom 16v3-5,23, 1Cor 16v19, Col 4v15, Philemon v2. **Each local church was made up of all the Christians in an area, and each house fellowship had to answer to its spiritual oversight.**

The ministries that founded infant churches, obviously had a real interest in the spiritual welfare of those that they had brought to Christ, and nourished in the faith, they did, however, leave the oversight of the local church in the hands of local men as soon as possible. Paul exercised a loving apostolic oversight, but it was not just an official position, it was a divine ministry gift and the superintendence of love. **No apostle had the right to found a private church or denomination; the authority of an apostle was moral and spiritual not official.**

Apostles have a very real and definite delegated spiritual authority from God, not only to be a channel of blessing, but also to act in spiritual discipline and judgement. This was not just mere talk, but a very real operation of the power of God in judgement. Acts 5v1-11, 13v9-12, 1Cor 5v1-5, 4v21, 2Cor 1v23, 13v10, 1Tim 1v20. The leaders of Bethlehem trembled when Samuel came to them, because of his ministry and authority from God, they realised that you could not play the fool with someone who manifested mighty spiritual gifts and acted on God's behalf. For the same reason there was a very healthy respect for apostles in the New Testament, and great fear fell on all the Church and the outsiders, when Ananias and Sapphira died through Peter's authority in God. 1Sam 15v1-5, Acts 5v1-13.

**NB: People joined the New Testament Church by baptism in Water.**

**Baptism in water proclaims to all that we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and demonstrates our faith in Jesus, and identifies us with Him in His death and resurrection. It is a public witness to all that Jesus not only died but rose again, and that we are now dead to the old life and walk a new life in Christ.** Rom 6v3-5,11, Gal 2v20, 1Cor 15v1-4, 2Cor 5v17. In Rom 6v4, "buried," "sunthapto," does not mean, to put down under the ground and cover up, it speaks of the performing of burial rites, and the disposing of a dead body, by either burial or burning. However, though Christ was not buried under ground, He was entombed, which for all practical purposes had the same effect. Our old life has been disposed of, for we account ourselves as dead with Christ to the old life, and publicly witness to our determination to follow our risen Lord. **It is not just adults, but believers who are to be baptised, that is, people who are old enough to believe and receive the Gospel truth.** Acts 2v37-42, 8v12,13,36-3, 9v17,18, 10v44-48, 16v14,15,31-33, 18v8, 19v1-7, 22v16, Matt 28v19, 3v2,3,6.

In the New Testament baptism is always linked with repentance and faith, and people should be baptised almost immediately after conversion. **Baptism followed repentance and faith in Jesus, it did not precede it, only those who believe in Jesus should be baptised.** Any believer, not only New Testament leaders, could baptise a convert. Acts 8v12,13, 1Cor 1v13-17. Every believer should be baptised, but unbaptised believers should not be excluded from the Lord's Supper or Christian fellowship. **In the New Testament there is no other kind of church membership recorded other than baptism in water.** In 1Cor 12v13, we see **the Holy Spirit was the agent of regeneration, baptism in water was the outward sign of regeneration,** no other act of church membership was necessary. **It is a remarkable thing that Christ took the sinners place, not only on the cross, and in Hades, He identified Himself with us in baptism.** Mark 1v11, Luke 3v21, Matt 3v15.

The Greek word "baptizo" is used for both baptism in water and baptism in the Spirit. "Bapto," "to dip," only occurs three times in the New Testament, in Luke 16v24, John 13v26 and Rev 19v13. In Rev 19v13, "bapto" is used in its secondary sense to dye or stain. The primary meaning of "baptizo," is "to immerse," or "to submerge," but in its secondary meaning, which is developed from its primary meaning, refers to the influence which one thing exercises over another. "Baptizo," then, can speak not only of an immersion, but also of an impregnation, and infusion of the element in which it is baptised, as in dyeing or staining, it speaks of a bringing into complete subjection to an influence, and an imbibing of the virtues and nature of that influence. We should also note that in many cases, though not in every case, the same distinction occurs between the Greek words "bapto" and "baptizo," as between the English equivalents, "to dip" and "to immerse," the one being a momentary or temporary covering, the other usually implying a prolonged or permanent covering.

In reference to baptism in water "baptizo" is used in the weaker sense of "bapto," to dip, otherwise all those who are baptised would be drowned. "Baptizo" is used in the New Testament in its sense of permanent immersion and infusion, in regard to baptism unto repentance and remission of sins, and in baptism in the name of the Trinity, and baptism into the body of Christ, and baptism in the Holy Spirit and fire. Matt 3v11, Mark 1v4, Luke 3v16, Matt 28v19, 1Cor 12v13. These

baptisms do not speak of a temporary dipping in an element; they speak of being permanently and abidingly under the influence of the thing suggested. To be baptised unto repentance and remission of sins, means being brought under the power and influence of repentance and remission of sins, not for a moment, but for all time. To be baptised into Christ's death and resurrection, as Paul states in Rom 6v3-11, is to be permanently identified with Christ in them, and receive all the benefits and influences of them, not for a moment, but for ever. To be baptised with the Holy Spirit and fire, means that our whole personality is permanently impregnated with and under the influence of the presence, power and sanctifying purity of the Holy Spirit. To be baptised into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is not just a mere baptismal formula, it is to come under the power and influence of the Trinity, not for a moment but permanently and eternally. To be baptised into the body of Christ, is the permanent placing of ourselves under the influence and power of Christ and His body, the Church. Baptism, then, is more than an outward sign; it is the placing of oneself, under the headship of Christ. The important thing is not just to go through the form of water baptism, but also to have the whole personality imbued, stained, impregnated, and influenced, abidingly and permanently with Christ's death and resurrection life, and all their accompanying benefits.

Scholars admit with Dean Stanley, that baptism means "a plunge, an entire submersion in deep water," and say it was the universal form of baptism until the 13th Century. The Greek word for "sprinkle," "rhantizo," is used in Heb 12v24 and 1Pet 1v2, but it is not used in relation to Christian baptism. The words for "pour," such as "ballo," John 13v5 and "katacheo," Matt 26v7, and "ekcheo" Rev 16v1-4,8,10,12,17, "ekchuno" Luke 22v20, and "epicheo" Luke 10v34, are not used in relation to Christian baptism. **It is a monstrous lie to say that infants who die unsprinkled or unbaptised are lost eternally, it can be said to those who say such things, "in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines, the precepts of men."** Matt 15v7-9.

**Though we see infant churches being helped by the leading ministries of other churches, Acts 13v1-4, there is no trace in the New Testament of any church being directed by another church, the unity of Christ's Church was a spiritual fellowship and unity, not an organisational unity.** Churches could give "the right hand of fellowship" to visiting Christians or Christian ministries, or give "letters of recommendation" to well-respected Christians who had ministry gifts, but there was no central government by men. Gal 2v9, Acts 15v25, 18v27, 1Cor 16v10, Col 4v10, 2Cor 8v22. The right hand of fellowship was not church membership, it was recognising a person as a fellow Christian. In Gal 2v9, we see the right hand of fellowship pushed to one side the accusing Judaizers, and united Paul with the apostles as an equal in God's work. In the New Testament, there was a lovely spiritual fellowship, not a formal membership; a formal membership, which has no spiritual fellowship and unity, is like a skeleton without flesh and life. The New Testament Church had a recognised doctrinal standard, but it was the simple and lovely bond of love for Christ and each other that was the basis of New Testament membership. In Acts 2v42-46, we see a truly lovely fellowship of saints, a mutual love of indescribable beauty. The blessing of God upon their informal, spiritual, friendly gatherings, not only made them enjoyable, but spiritually enriching and heavenly, so different from so many of today's formal and dry meetings, that have to be endured rather than enjoyed.

Even as late as the middle of the third century, the independence of each local church was still insisted upon; Cyprian, martyred 258 AD, was probably one of the strongest advocates of Church unity, but he insisted that in each community each shepherd was only responsible to God. Christ is the Head of a body united by love, and Church unity is built upon mutual love, not upon ecclesiastical discipline and authority. **To the outsider, the early Church looked very fragile and easy to destroy, but actually it was very strong and grew with incredible speed.** There is no stronger bond than that of fervent Christian love, and no organisation and direction better than that received from Christ. The early Church enjoyed the loving superintendence of apostolic and other leading ministries, and recognition of other churches and their ministries, but there was no domination of the local church by people outside of the local church.

### **3) How the departure from the early Church organisation took place.**

The first things to go were the leadership of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and a Christ-directed body ministry. Then elders, plural, were replaced by a presiding elder, who later took over the rule of the whole local church. The second stage was an affiliation of churches in conference, whose decisions, though at first advisory, became more and more binding upon the churches, and power became concentrated into the hands of the representatives of these churches. The representative's authority then came to depend, not upon his spirituality, but on the size and importance of the population of the area that he represented. The third stage of church federation was the upholding of ecclesiastical traditions and decisions by civil power. Those who desire a much more complete study upon this can read Dr. Hatch's (The Organization Of The Early Christian Churches) outstanding book on this subject.

We need to remember our Lord's anger at the unscriptural traditions of the religious leaders of His day, when we reject the Word of God and replace it with the traditions of men. Matt 15v1-13, 23v1-39, Mark 7v1-23, Luke 11v37-54. God is just as unhappy today with traditions that make void His Word, and frustrate His will and purposes. **Religious leaders, who cling to men's traditions and reject Gods truth, will never have a revival.** They invariably reject Christians who have been given ministry gifts by Christ, just as the religious leaders of Christ's day rejected Christ and the ministries that He had appointed, and hindered the workings of the Spirit of God. 1Pet 2v4. Christ called Israel's religious leaders

"hypocrites," and He said that their worship was vain. Christ told His disciples to leave these blind leaders of the blind alone, for God was going to root them up and deal with them, this is good advice for us to follow. Matt 15v1-14.

#### **4) The great evils that Church federation can lead to.**

I again want to make it quite clear that I am not against denominational churches. I certainly do not want to censure and destroy the beautiful, inspiring and beneficial acts of worship that take place in denominational buildings, but I do want to see an end to denominational bigotry, unscriptural tradition, and resistance to the Holy Spirit's workings. **Denominational buildings can, like the school of Tyrannus, be centres of evangelism, teaching, fellowship and revival, if godly men lead them.**

We must above all remember that love suffers long and is kind; we must speak the truth in love and not in condemnation. Let us exercise patience and Christian love with those who are seeking God, but find it difficult to break from the mental prisons of their own traditions. Jesus has been so loving, patient and kind to us in our stupidity, slothfulness, waywardness and pride. Let us forgive one another as Christ has forgiven us. Eph 4v31,32. **The way to break down the barriers between churches is for Christians to have fellowship and prolonged prayer together, in Christ's presence barriers disappear and love and mercy triumph.** Let us now go on to consider the dangers of denominationalism.

##### **a) Church federation almost invariably leads to a sectarian bigotry that shocks the world.**

The unbeliever will accept the fact that when there are many Christians, they will need to meet in different places, but they are greatly hindered from becoming Christians by denominational bigotry and the consequent bitter spirit and rivalry that many Christians manifest to each other. Christ said, "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, and by your love to one another." John 13v34,35, 15v10-14. **A false imitation unity and love and denominational mergers will not deceive the world, they want to see genuine Christian love between Christians, then, and not before, the world will believe.** John 17v20-23.

The beloved Grimshaw, though a Church of England minister himself, built three churches for other denominations when they moved into his area, he was not going to have competitive division in Christ's body, we need to imitate his magnanimous spirit. Organic unity into one massive ecclesiastical system is entirely unscriptural and undesirable, we do not want one great denomination governed by men, we need one body united under the Lordship of Christ. **Indeed, ecclesiastical central government by men, in reality usurps Christ's prerogative of guiding His local and universal Church, as He thinks best, and shows a real unbelief in the fact that Christ is personally guiding His local and universal Church.**

Denominationalism and church federation produce and perpetuate division in Christ's Church. It is a striking fact that in a few years after 1848, the Wesleyan Methodists lost about one hundred thousand members, because they insisted on the supremacy of the Methodist Conference, instead of the independence of the local church fellowships like those of the early Church. Churches whose basis of fellowship is mutual love springing from recognition of Christ as Saviour and Lord, give a real testimony to the world. Many Christians have restricted their view of the Church and Christian fellowship to one denomination, instead of recognising, embracing, and fellowshiping with all true believers in Christ. Indeed, Christians who have this wider New Testament view of Christ's Church, are looked upon as "unfaithful to our movement," or as "unreliable rolling stones," if they do not restrict their ministry and fellowship to one denomination. Whatever a person's denomination, if they are "born again," and know Christ and the Father in a living way, they are our brother or sister in Christ. **Paul tells us that if we perpetuate these man-made divisions and do not recognise other Christian believers, we are carnal and immature spiritual babies.** 1Cor 3v1. Those who say "I am holier than thou" are a smoke in God's nostrils. Isaiah 65v5.

A denominational spirit narrows a Christian's outlook and limits a proper vision of Christ's Church. The early Christians called themselves believers, brethren, disciples, saints, followers of the way, and Christ's Church, they did not recognise any need for an organisational name, or man-made ecclesiastical structure. Faith, fellowship and love were the uniting bonds of the early Church. It is possible that the name of "Christian" has been given divine approval, for in Acts 11v26, "called," is "chrematisai," the aorist infinitive of "chrematizo." For Peter uses it in 1Pet 4v16, to describe believers in Jesus. "Chrematizo," is also used in the sense of a Divine command in Matt 2v12,22, Luke 2v26 and Acts 10v22, and in Rom 7v3 for "called." See also Matt 2v12,22, Luke 2v26, Acts 10v22, Rom 7v3 Heb 8v5, 11v7, 12v25, for "chrematizo." Some think the Gentiles gave this name to the Christians to distinguish them from the Jews. Acts 11v26, 26v28, 1Pet 4v16. It is only used once to describe Christians in the apostolic writings, by Peter in 1Pet 4v16, the more tender and intimate words of "beloved," "believer," "sister," "brethren," "disciple" and "saint" are the words that are used to describe Christians and their relationship to each other and to Christ. **Jesus is the Head of a remarkable family, linked together by our love for Him and each other. It is love that binds the Church together and gives a testimony to the world, not constitutions or ecclesiastical machinery.**

## **b) Church federation usurps Christ's authority and usually frustrates His plans and ministries.**

Christ is the head of the Church, but men love to usurp His authority and to take the power into their own hands. Even church affiliation is very dangerous if it results in power being concentrated into the hands of a very few representatives, for this inevitably leads to Christ's Lordship over His flocks being replaced by men's rule. When Christian leaders become spiritual dictators and are touchy about their position and authority, they have never partaken of the Spirit of Christ, and lost the view of Christ's Lordship over His Church. The rule of men nearly always results in the rejection and isolation of the ministries that Christ has set in the Church, and they are not able to minister in churches because of denominational closed-shop attitudes.

**Though the New Testament apostles are universally praised by today's modern churches, it is very doubtful if any of them would be accepted by the vast majority of today's churches.** Healings, tongues, miracles, and hot sermons, are certainly not wanted, and are often opposed by most of today's church leaders. Most of the religious leaders of Christ's day opposed Him, and in the end succeeded in killing Him. **We need "the authority from Heaven" that Jesus and John Baptist experienced.**

Jesus did not desire or seek position in men's organisations, or their approval, authority and backing, He was content to do His Father's will, and be a blessing. Jesus never tried to join or start a religious hierarchy, He bypassed the religious leaders of His day and chose simple, unlearned men, of poor education, to be His apostles and lead His Church. God chose men who had a burning love for Jesus, and whose limitations made them depend on Him. **Paul said that Christ chooses nobodies to lead in His Church, and said that he gloried in everything that made him Christ-dependent, so that Christ's power would rest upon him.** 1Cor 1v26-32, 2Cor 12v7-10. The idea that a person should not be allowed to minister unless they have high academic and intellectual qualifications is completely foreign to the New Testament.

## **c) Church federation usually replaces body ministry with one-man ministry.**

When divine ordination is replaced with human ordination, and one-man ministry replaces body ministry, the effect upon the spiritual life of a church is disastrous. Paul tells us that Christians should minister to each other as a body works together, often the least talented, naturally speaking, being the greatest blessing because of the manifestation of God's "charismata" through them. 1Cor 12v4-7,21-25, Rom 12v4-13. This was a fundamental principal of New Testament ministry and fellowship. The churches recognised teachers should not monopolise ministry, all have a part to play in the local church. Eph 4v1-16.

There was also a very definite place for an evangelistic mission in the New Testament, with one person having the leading part in debate, as in Paul's missions. Acts 14v12, 19v8-10. However, if we are to completely follow the New Testament, dialogue and reasoning should take place in both local church fellowship and evangelistic mission. "Dialegomai," occurs in Acts 17v2,17, 18v4,19, 19v8,9, 20v7,9, 24v12,25. "Reasoning," "suzeeto," occurs in Acts 6v9, 9v29. Some church buildings fulfil well the purpose of missions, even if they do not permit New Testament dialogue. We must also remember that Paul did not found missions buildings, he founded local churches with body ministry. **It is quite Scriptural and correct to rent a building for evangelistic purposes, as it appears Paul did at Ephesus, but it is wrong only to have an evangelistic mission, missions should found churches with New Testament body ministry.** The problem with buying and building consecrated buildings, is that it is so financially demanding and time consuming, that it can seriously restrict the practical helping of the poor and needy, which was the main use of New Testament church finances.

**The Old Testament guild of priests, which left God's people in a state of permanent dependence and religious pupillage, has no place in Christianity.** There is a change from the Old Testament prophetic and priestly offices, which had a mediating and exclusive ministry, to the New Testament priesthood and ministry of all believers. 1Pet 2v5,9, Rev 1v6. **All Christians can minister, as God illuminates and leads.** 1Cor 12v7. The Old Testament priestly and prophetic offices were imperfect, because by being mediatory, they excluded God's people from close fellowship with God. **In this age of grace, only Christ, the High Priest, has a ministry of mediation between the Father and Christians. Though the Church has important and leading ministries, they do not mediate between Christians and their God.**

The guidance of a local church was not placed in the hands of one person; the local church was to be centred on God, not on any human leader. The domination of a church by even a gracious person can check the development of ministry in the church and hinder the movings of the Holy Spirit. Many modern church leaders resist the New Testament pattern of body ministry, and follow the Old Testament idea of exclusive priestly office, and desire their congregations to remain babies forever. This denies the New Testament principle of body ministry, and keeps Christians in a state of permanent pupillage and dependence on their religious leaders. It is a tragedy that the training of many modern clergy is aimed at producing priest-dependence. Denominations usually choose leaders who have the intellectual and academic qualifications and ability to lead churches, without any help from their congregations.

We do not place a premium upon ignorance, but we must note that Jesus chose unlearned men of poor education to be



His apostles; they had to depend on God or fail. Natural ability can be a hindrance instead of a help in God's work, if we depend on it instead of God. In 1Cor 1v26-31, we read that God's choice of leaders humbles human pride and brings greater glory to God. What was true in New Testament times is often true today, a person ordained by men, and given a religious status, is not necessarily ordained by God, and a person who is ordained by God, is often not recognised by religious denominations.

#### **d) Church federation usually leads to self-dependence and pride.**

Denominationalism encourages a false feeling of power, pride and self-sufficiency. A large or growing organisation can give a completely false sense of achievement, and lead to something even worse, a reliance in a denomination's resources instead of God. When churches or denominations feel that they can say, "I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing," or "Is not this great Babylon that I have built," they are in a very dangerous spiritually bankrupt condition. Pride of denomination and reliance on human resources, should be seen for the serious sins that they are. Dan 4v28-37, Rev.3v17. Uzziah was marvellously helped by God until he was strong, then his heart was lifted up and he did corruptly. 2Chron 26v1-21. The same feeling of security and worldly influence has often had the identical effect upon churches and denominations. **When a denomination directs and supplies every material need, church leaders feel very little need to seek, trust, or wait on God for His guidance and power, and so churches become spiritually dead and lifeless.** It is a tragedy when church leaders equate worldly influence and power, with spiritual power and spiritual success, they usually mean the very reverse.

**Many churches that manifest spiritual gifts can suffer from the same spiritual complacency and self-sufficiency as the church at Laodicea. Many churches seldom, or never, experience any spiritual gifts other than tongues, interpretation of tongues, and prophecy, yet it is the other six gifts that make all the difference between victory and defeat for churches.** People come into most of today's churches, with deep spiritual, physical and emotional burdens and other great problems, and yet there is no real attempt to meet these poor people's heart-cries to God for help. Teaching or tradition is looked upon as sufficient, and leaders are content with the superficial, and people never have their deep needs met, year in and year out. The churches that do this are in the same condition as the church at Laodicea, and like that church, they do not know, or will not admit their need, as Christ said, "**Thou knowest not, that thou art wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.**"

In many churches, Jesus is longing to meet the heart-broken needs of people, but is firmly excluded from doing so by the arrogant self-satisfaction, stubborn self-will, and crippling traditions of these churches. Even though the Lord Jesus looks upon even Laodicean churches with His great and wonderful compassion, He can only look upon such a state of affairs, as criminal negligence, and on the day when He judges His Church He will certainly say so. Rev 3v19-22.

Paul did not depend on oratory or excellency of speech, when he came to Corinth, he relied on the demonstration and power of the Spirit. 1Cor 2v1-5. This is just the opposite of most churches today, who imitate David's great sin of numbering Israel, and so prove that they are relying on, and glorying in, their numbers, worldly possessions and influence. 1Chron 21v1-30. God reprov'd David, and started to destroy the thing that David gloried in, He can do the same with us, let us "do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God." Micah 6v8. **Let us make sure that we are Christ-dependent, not self-dependent, or denomination-dependent, and let us carefully watch our traditions.** Church tradition, like the tradition of the Jews, can replace the desires, commands, doctrines and workings of God, with men's teaching and practice, and a form can be perpetuated that hinders, or even excludes, the mighty workings of the Holy Spirit.

#### **e) Church federation usually leads to unscriptural and worldly power structures.**

As we have already seen, all Christians in local churches took part in important local decisions; but in modern denominations, the power usually resides in the hands of a few ordained representatives. Men usually ordain those who will do the will of their denomination, and so they perpetuate their own kind of power structure and make the ministry a closed shop, and only those who conform can join. The Lordship of Christ over the Church's ministries is replaced by the rule of men. Denominations can get to the place where they have enough financial wealth and ecclesiastical machinery to perpetuate their own type of power structure and standards without any help from God. Church history has proved that denominations, like the world, will fight to obtain and retain, power, wealth, prestige, influence and position. **Satan fell through this same love of power, he lusted after God's position and for adulation and power, and proud men have done exactly the same thing in the Church.**

#### **The struggle for power.**

**It is a striking fact that Jesus was totally financially destitute, and came to preach His Gospel to the poor, and that the early Church consisted mainly of people of little political power, wealth and influence.** 2Cor 8v9, Luke 4v18, 1Cor 1v26-31. Constantine used the Church as a means of exercising political power and control, and many others followed his example, until church organisations became an instrument of power and influence in the hands of the

powerful and wealthy. Love of power has pervaded all denominations and has destroyed their spiritual vitality and effectiveness. It is a great tragedy that most denominations and churches, large and small, have become largely concerned with upholding their power structure, prestige and worldly influence. Some denominations have great worldly wealth and influence, but they are lacking in spiritual power. **The spiritual power a church possesses is nearly always inversely proportional to its worldly wealth, influence, and ecclesiastical complexity.** Men love to pass minutes, resolutions, and constitutions, and these man-made traditions, like the traditions of Judaism, often replace the truth of the Holy Scriptures. Matt 15v1-9, Mark 7v1-13. How easily the precepts of men can replace and frustrate the will and Word of God. Some conference resolutions and church minutes have made many churches and denominations secure against revival. Every church minute that narrows the fellowship of the local church is not of God, and will have to be answered for at the judgement seat of Christ.

#### **The resistance to the Holy Spirit. Acts 7v51-53.**

It is a striking fact of Church History, that churches or denominations, which have lost God's blessing, use their worldly power and influence to resist a move of the Holy Spirit. Genuine revivals of religion have always been violently opposed by unspiritual religious leaders, who have been determined to preserve their power structures. **Churches and denominations, which have been formed out of the fruits of a spiritual revival, and have lost the revival fire, are often the bitter opponents of a new revival, because it exposes their own spiritual need, and threatens their power structure and their position as spiritual leaders.** The Jews murdered Christ because they were envious of His spiritual power, and because they thought that He was threatening their power structure. John 11v47,48, Acts 13v44-47, Matt 27v17,18.

The fear of the Ephesian idol makers, of losing their prestige, position, and wealth, caused them to violently oppose Paul, and the same base reasons have always moved men to oppose genuine revival. Men love to have despotic power, and try to make people conform to their standards and system. Acts 19v23-28. It becomes obvious from a study of Church history, that Satan has often used federated churches, and state controlled church systems, to kill and persecute the true children of God. **Suppression of truly spiritual Christians has always followed church federation and organic church unity, as surely as night follows day.** Church history proves that federated churches have often proved as good an instrument of Satan for persecution, as the pagan Roman Empire. However, persecution of true Christians in a genuine move of God, is by no means limited to state churches or older denominations, the last move of God that has dried up and lost God's power and become an denomination, has often been a great hindrance, and the most bitter opponent, of God's new move of the Holy Spirit.

As denominations, fellowships and churches begin to get away from God and lose the blessing of God, they try to preserve their structure by emphasising faithfulness to that organisation and subservience to its leaders, regardless of whether they are fulfilling a spiritual ministry from Christ or not. Ministers often spend much of their time praising and uplifting their denomination, and emphasise faithfulness to their denomination and its ordained ministers, and there is often little reference to faithfulness to Christ and His New Testament standards. The glorious loving leadership and true fellowship of the early Church cannot be compared to this denominational bondage.

In John 13, Jesus washed His disciples feet to show them that Christian leaders are to serve God's people in love, not to lord it over them. **The love of power in the apostles had blinded their eyes; they were fighting for position and power a few hours before the Cross.** Jesus clearly demonstrated to them, by washing their feet, that they should serve each other in genuine humility and love. In Matt 20v20-28, James and John asked for position and power in the kingdom, but Jesus told them that the leading positions in His kingdom were for the most humble, sacrificial and loving, and that leaders in His Church were to be servants not overbearing lords. Jesus said that Christians can be "great," "megaloi," but warned us that true greatness is manifested in genuine humility and humble service. Mark 10v43,44, Luke 9v46-48, 14v11. Great Christians never "lord it over" others, "katakourieuousin," or exercise authority as a tyrant, "katexousiazousin." Jesus said the way to be first, "protos," and "great," in God's eyes, is to minister as a bond slave, "doulos," and a menial servant, "diakonos," even as He had done. Matt 20v20-28.

In 1Pet 5v1-5, Peter tells us the very same thing, pastor-elders are not to lord it over their flocks, but are to lead by example. Church history shows us how little heed has been taken to these words of Jesus and Peter. Men have so loved their religious power structures and their position in them, that they have resisted the Holy Spirit, lied, deceived, tortured, murdered, and pillaged, to uphold and preserve their religious power structure, and they have usually done it in the name of God. John 16v1. The Scripture tells us that those who hate and kill in the name of God, are not God's children, they partake of the spirit of Satan, who was a liar and murderer from the beginning. John 8v44, 1John 2v7-11, 3v10-17, 4v20 to 5v3. When Christ's disciples wanted to call fire down from heaven upon the hostile Samaritans, Jesus rebuked them and told them that their attitude was evil, and that they should seek to save and bless, not destroy. Luke 9v51-56. **True Christians are not concerned with power structures or fighting to uphold them, they are concerned with doing the will of God, and being a channel of God's blessing.**

**f) Church federation makes it easy for Satan to corrupt and persecute the Church.**

If one person, or a group of ministers governs a denomination, Satan has only to influence these ministers to affect all their flocks. If a local church is ruled by one person, and has a one-man ministry, the same is true; Satan has only to influence one person to make it difficult for all. One minister, even if he is kind, moral and good, can bring a church into bondage, if he is lacking in spiritual anointing, devotion and prayer. **A minister can be a good intelligent Christian, but if he is not used to the movings of the Holy Spirit and His gifts, and body ministry, he will be a hindrance to revival.** It is also true that one can have a gracious veneer and yet determinedly resist the movings of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries cannot be received by intellectual training at theological college; they are received through communion with Christ. **Indeed, many theological collages have been corrupted by Satan, and systematically train students in unbelief, not in vital New Testament Christianity, and so a whole denomination is affected and corrupted.**

**When Christians are organised into denominations, they are more easily controlled, captured, killed and persecuted, by antichristian forces, a thing that we need to take note of in these evil last days.** The New Testament house fellowship is the only way that Christians can have fellowship in some countries today. The Church in Communist countries survived spiritually, because it followed the pattern of independent local churches gathered in house fellowships. The fine buildings, organs, choirs, and singing, can fulfil a useful function in our present circumstances in Western countries, but they are a burden in periods of militant persecution, and can be closed in hours, as events in many countries have proved. Men's insistence upon church federation, really prepares the Church for destruction in times of persecution. **Only a love dominated church, which fervently seeks and waits upon God in prolonged prayer, can ensure the spiritual glow that will preserve the church in persecution, and deliver the church, local and universal, from spiritual death and corruption.**

When churches tried to make a powerful system to save themselves from heresy, they brought greater evils upon their churches than they cured. The man-made form that was instituted to preserve the Church has really produced and perpetuated many forms devoid of the Holy Spirit. The form that was produced to preserve from heresy, has often produced and perpetuated that very thing. The edict of toleration of Constantine in 313 AD, and the consequent enforcement of orthodoxy by the state, was an unparalleled disaster for the Church. **The union of the state with the Church did not save the world, the world's wealth corrupted and defiled the Church and rendered it spiritually powerless. The Church exchanged worldly power, prestige, buildings and gold for true spiritual wealth, and authority.** God will not manifest His power to uphold the traditions of men. The dangerous and powerful wolves that Paul warns us of in Acts 20v29, have often been church organisations, and they have also spoken "crooked, perverted doctrines," which have greatly damaged the churches. 1Cor 1v11-13, 3John v9, 1Tim 1v20, 2Tim 1v15.

When denominations evangelise other nations, they try to impose on these nations, not a New Testament form, but their own tradition and form of worship, and these traditions and forms are often quite unacceptable to the people of the nations that they are evangelising, and they hinder the evangelistic success and spirituality of the Church. **The simple organisation of the early Church appeals to every nation.** False tradition is disastrous for evangelistic success, and Satan is happy if he can keep people conformed to these traditions. How often churches expect the unconverted to conform to their method of evangelism, without any thought of whether it is Scriptural or not. **The New Testament forms of evangelism were completely successful, Gospel preaching, either by discussion or heralding, in street, home, open-air, as well as consecrated building, such as a synagogue or Temple, brought tremendous results, because it was not only attractive and interesting, but also because it was anointed by the Holy Spirit and confirmed by mighty signs, wonders and miracles.**

### Conclusion

One of the greatest evangelistic forces in the New Testament Church was its practical love and care for people; indeed, the majority of its finances (95% off) went for caring for people in need. Church buildings and ecclesiastical systems consume the vast majority of the finances that Christians can give, and often little is left for the needy, and so one of the most powerful evangelistic appeals of the Church is lost. The early Church appointed deacons in every church to do works of charity; some modern churches have followed this practice and have brought great relief and blessing to the needy. Large building projects and complex organisations are very expensive and time consuming, and hinder rapid growth; the early Church grew very rapidly by following God's simple pattern. Samuel G. Green, on page 55 of his, "A Handbook of Church History," states that Justin Martyr wrote about 140 AD, "There is not one single race of men, whether Barbarians or Greeks, or what ever they may be called, nomads or vagrants, or herdsmen living in tents; among whom prayers and giving of thanks are not offered through the name of the crucified Jesus."

Samuel Green continues, on page 56: "Gibbon and Milman estimate the population of Rome at the beginning of the third century as one million two hundred thousand, and the calculation of the former that a twentieth were nominal Christians may be adopted as a minimum." This means that there were at least 60,000 Christians in Rome at this time. The spread of the Gospel and the conversion of tens of thousands of people, had taken place without any external form of buildings or denominational organisation. If we follow Christ's New Testament pattern we shall also be amazed at the results. **There is**

## **a vital connection between following the simplicity and spirituality of the early Church organisation, and revival.**

New Testament ministries are intended to bring people into a living experimental knowledge of God and His truth. Why, then, are there so few of the higher ministries in operation? The following answers suggest themselves. Much of the fog of the dark ages of the Church is still with us, even in evangelical circles. Ministers are often conformed to the denominational mould, and anything outside this mould is viewed with suspicion and opposed. Authoritative decrees from federated church leaders has forced those under them to resist the desires and movings of the Holy Spirit, and Satan has used this to keep churches from New Testament principles and practices. Acts 7v51-53. In Church history this has resulted in Christians with God's anointing upon them being rejected, opposed and even murdered. There are few who are willing to stand the sacrifice, suffering and poverty involved in following their Lord in this way. We have to very definitely take up our cross and follow Jesus, if we are to sustain His ministry gifts to us. A divinely directed New Testament ministry gift is almost certain to involve personal Calvaries in manifesting and ministering Christ's resurrection life. Many preachers are unwilling to walk this way, preferring to preach and believe in a spiritually sapping and worldly "prosperity gospel." The cry from God's longing, loving, tender heart is still the same, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Let us hear His call and obey His commands, and then we shall not only see Him in glory, but also hear His "Well done." Let us say, "Here I am. Send me!" Isaiah 6v8.

### **The Distinguishing Features Of Christ's Church At Jerusalem.**

The church at Jerusalem manifested the essential characteristics and distinguishing features that God desires in His Church.

#### **A) They had a vital encounter with their risen Saviour.**

They knew His precious blood had cleansed them from sin, and had opened the way into the presence of God the Father. 1Peter 1v19-22, Heb 10v25, Rev 12v10,11. Jesus was intensely real and precious to them; many infallible proofs confirmed their experience. Acts 1v3, 1John 1v1-7. The substitutionary atoning death of Christ was personally accepted and applied to the soul, this sharply divides the false prophet from the child of God. Cults manifesting demon power always reject Christ's atonement, and Christ as the only Saviour. 1John 4v1-6.

#### **B) They believed God's promise of blessing for them.**

They earnestly sought for the promise of the Father and the accompanying blessing; they did not try to find an excuse for not seeking the baptism and gifts of the Spirit, by twisting the Scriptures. Those who refuse to accept that spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries still function today, very often do so, because they desire to make Christianity an intellectual exercise of God's dealings in the past, they do not want a living experience of God in the present. It is certainly not honest or consistent to believe in a Christianity that has none of the New Testament love, life and power; as the body is dead without the spirit, so is an intellectual Christianity that is devoid of the manifestations and gifts of the Holy Spirit that occurred in the New Testament. James 2v26. All the promises of God are still "Yea" and "Amen" in Christ. 2Cor 1v17-20. We can experience God's love, gifts and power today, Christianity is not a doctrinal exercise, it is a vital experience of the living God. Those who refuse to seek God's power and gifts for fear of receiving some false spirit, have already been defeated by Satan, and have shown a lack of faith in God's ability to care for His children. Luke 11v9-13. Satan kept Israel out of Canaan by fear and unbelief, they could not trust God to look after them, or believe for His miraculous interventions. Indeed, the Scriptures reveal that it has always been those who have failed to seek God for His promised blessings and spiritual gifts, who have been influenced by evil spirits. See Hebrews 3 and 4, Matt 23v34-39, John 8v38-44.

#### **C) They earnestly sought God in prayer.**

The early Church realised that only earnest prayer could bring victory, blessing, and spiritual safety. It is God's presence, love, gifts and guidance that cause us to triumph. Exodus 33v11-23, N.B. v14. The New Testament is full of promises of spiritual blessing and power, and the early Church earnestly sought God for them. Acts 1v14,24, 3v1, 4v31, 6v4,6, 8v15, 9v11,40, 10v4,9,30,31, 11v5, 12v5,12, 13v3, 14v23. 16v13,16,25. 20v36. 21v5. 22v17. 28v8. etc. (There are so many Scriptures upon this that I have just confined myself to the book of Acts.) Earnest and prolonged seeking of God is a searching test of our spirituality and love of God, and it really shows whether we own the Lordship of Christ or not. Those who have clean hands and pure hearts love to seek God, "This is the generation of them that seek Him." Psalm 24v3-6. True Christians, like David, love to wait upon and seek God, their hearts pant for Him. Psalm 40v1, 62v1,5, 42v1-3.

The last thing that backsliders, heretics and apostates want to do, is to feel the presence of God; but Christians who are walking in the light long for it. The early Church loved to seek God in prayer and spent hours and days doing it. There is all the difference in the world between a short prayer aimed at the hearers instead of God, and the prolonged and earnest seeking of God that took place in the early Church. Christ-rejecting false cults may say short prayers, but the prolonged

seeking of God is a thing that they will not do, for the evil spirits that influence them will not allow them to do this. John informs us in 1John 4v1-5, that Christ-rejecting cults are under the influence of evil spirits; seeking God and a full recognition of Christ's deity, eternity, and redeeming blood, is diametrically opposite to seeking or pursuing evil spirits. Deut 18v9-19, Lev 19v31, 20v6, Isaiah 8v19,20. Prolonged, earnest seeking of God is the acid test of one's source of inspiration. Heb 11v6.

The majority of the disciples in the upper room were Galileans, and it was a real sacrifice for them to obey Christ's command to tarry for the promise of the Father in the upper room at Jerusalem. Luke 24v49, Acts 2v7, 1v13,14. For a variety of reasons, at least 380 out of the 500 brethren of 1Cor 15v6. were missing, more if we count the women in the upper room. Without a doubt, many had perfectly legitimate and good reasons for not being present, such as working to provide for their families, and looking after dependants, and so on. Whatever the reasons were for not being in the upper room, they missed God's initial and most remarkable outpouring of the Holy Spirit on His Church. They missed one of God's great epochal purposes for the Church through their absence, and we miss Divine blessing if we fail to obey the command of Jesus to tarry and pray for the promise of the Father. Luke 11v9-13.

#### **D) They manifested God's character and love in their lives.**

We should follow the example the church at Jerusalem, when it was moving in its initial power and sweet first love, immediately after the outpouring on the day of Pentecost. What tender concern and love they manifested to each other! Their unity, which sprang from a common love for each other, is one of the outstanding features of the early Church. The apostles, elders and church members promptly and wisely dealt with practical matters that caused division and friction. There was a healthy fear of God and sin through God's prompt dealings with satanic infiltration and intrigue. Acts 5v1-11, 6v1-7, 15v1-35, 2v42-47, 4v31,32. In sharp contrast to this was the church at Corinth, which Paul had to rebuke for disunity and lack of love. 1Cor 15v34.

Jesus said, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Matt 7v15-23. This does not mean the size of a church organisation, for Christianity does not consist of statistics or empty talk, but rather of consecration to God, practical holiness and a real love of people. It is true that even godly men, like David or Peter, may badly fail God under strong temptation, but undesirable and unnecessary as this is, it is totally different from the sinful wallowing in the mire spoken of in the Scriptures. 2Peter 2v1-22, Jude v3-25, Rev 2v13-16 and 3v20-24. Hypocrites may have a pleasant veneer, and may pretend and play-act, but Christian love is inimitable. Christians will not only die for their brethren, but also for their enemies. 1John 5v1,2, 2v1-22, Matt 5v43-48. Christian love and purity cannot be truly imitated or counterfeited by Satan's children. John 13v34,35.

#### **E) They believed Christ's teaching and doctrine.**

The apostle John said in 1John 4v1-5, that those who are inspired of God accept the Lord Jesus as the Messiah of the Old Testament, whereas those who are inspired of Satan reject this. Many Scriptures state that Christ is the eternal Creator God of the Old Testament. John 1v1-3, Eph 3v9, Col 1v16,17, Heb 1v2,8,10. A person's source of inspiration is revealed by their attitude to Christ; they reject His deity, atonement and Scriptural teaching if Satan moves them, but accept the truth about Jesus if they are inspired of God. As soon as a person is taken over by an evil spirit, their doctrine is corrupted and bears no resemblance to New Testament truth, and in particular the truth about Christ. The personal appropriation of Christ's sacrifice for sin is always the cleavage point between Christian and Satanic doctrine. Rev 12v10-12. False cults manifesting demon power reject the Christian doctrine about sin, God's judgement upon sin, and state that personal redemption by Christ's blood is unnecessary. False cults manifesting demon power also either reject completely the idea of a personal God, or so pervert the idea of God that He is unrecognisable as the Christian's God. False prophets may pray to God and Christ, but when they deny Christ and distort His doctrine, they in reality preach "another Christ, and another Gospel." 2Cor 11v3,4, 1John 2v22,23, 4v1-5,15, 5v1. A curse rests on those who distort Christ's Gospel. Gal 1v6-9. The converts at Jerusalem continued steadfastly in the doctrine that the apostles had received from Christ, and so should we. Acts 2v42, Jude v3,4.

#### **F) They had an evangelistic fervour.**

The early Christians had to tell others about their Saviour, they even made ruthless persecution an opportunity for spreading the Gospel. Acts 8v1-8, 11v19,20, Phil 1v7,12-14. The apostles preached Christ before Pentecost, and this was their passion afterwards. Acts 2v14-41, 8v35, 9v19-22. We cannot expect great blessing and gifts, if our zeal and outlook are confined to spiritual selfishness. We experience Christ's heavenly riches in the greatest degree when we minister them to others; "Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over." Luke 6v38. This applies to the giving of spiritual things as well as the giving of material things. Churches that are not evangelistic will die spiritually, for it is only as we obey the command of Jesus, to go into all the world to preach the Gospel, that we shall really prove the full meaning of the words, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." Mark 16v15, Matt 28v18-20. Even when persecuted for the Gospel the apostles preached Jesus consistently and urgently as often as opportunity arose. Acts 5v41,42.

### **G) They answered Satan's lying wonders with God's miracles.**

God inspired and empowered the evangelism of the early Church; they did not rely on human oratory or ability. It was easy for the early Church to witness and win souls, they had such proofs of a risen Christ in the signs, wonders and miracles that Jesus was doing through His Church. It is only difficult for Christians to witness effectively, when these New Testament ministries, gifts and power are missing. If we refuse to recognise the need of these mighty ministries and their accompanying spiritual gifts, we are as spiritually crippled as a man without arms and legs. Paul emphatically tells us in 1Cor 12v21, that we cannot do without any of these ministries and gifts. They are all essential today, if Christ's body is to function as He intends. Indeed, the Church cannot minister in power without them.

How illogical, inconsistent, and unscriptural it is to say that the Almighty God no longer does any miracles, and that only Satan does miracles today. God is a God that only does wonders, and the sons and daughters of God are expected and commanded to manifest His power and love. Exodus 3v20, 15v11, Job 9v10, Psalm 77v11,14, 136v4, Isaiah 8v18, Acts 2v38,39 with Luke 24v49, Acts 4v22,43, Rom 4v2,3, Heb 2v4. God has promised great miracles throughout this age; it is folly to say, as some do, that God no longer does miracles and that any miracles that take place are the work of the Devil. God has promised that this age will close with the greatest show of spiritual power the world has ever seen, God's two witnesses, and probably many others have mighty spiritual gifts given to them to answer Satan's lying wonders through Antichrist and other children of the Devil. Rev 11v1-12, 2Thess 2v7-12, Acts 2v16-21, Dan 11v32,33.

None of the Old Testament or New Testament men of God vindicated God by mere talk; they had spiritual gifts and spiritual ministries. When God sent His men to answer Satan's servants, He has always given them spiritual gifts; He never sent them in their own power. The early Church was victorious because it answered the lying wonders of men like Simon the sorcerer, and Elymas the sorcerer, with the miracles of God. Acts 8v8-24, 13v6-13. Evil occult forces operating through idolatry, sorcery, witchcraft, Spiritualism, etc., were one of the greatest obstacles to the spread of Christianity. The early Church did not defeat these powers of evil by mere intellectual argument, they out-miracled them with the power of God; see the tremendous revival at Ephesus in Acts 19v10-20. The message of the crucified Christ was foolishness to both Jews and Greeks, but because it was confirmed by God's miracles, many were compelled to believe. 1Cor 1v23, 2v1-10. Can we hope to succeed without the equipment, which the early Church, and God, felt, was essential for the effective preaching of the Gospel? We face the same challenge of evil occult powers; we need the same equipment from God to defeat them.

### **H) They acted as a body under Christ's leadership.**

Paul taught that all the members of Christ's body, from apostles to young converts, are intended by God to act together under the guidance of Christ the Head, as a body. 1Cor 12v11-31, Rom 12v3-5, Eph 4v7-11. Every child of God has the right to minister something from Christ, when Christ moves them. 1Cor 14v26,31. This is, of course, speaking of a Christian fellowship; pioneer evangelism should be left to the mature spiritual ministries of the Church. Paul said the Christians at Corinth had the right idea of ministering as a body; the trouble was that they all wanted to do everything and to do too much. The object of the New Testament leaders, was to produce ministries in each local church. Those who fail to do this are not fulfilling a New Testament ministry. Eph 4v8-14. In Eph 4v14, Paul speaks of immature believers who do not possess any ministry from Christ, and he says that they are at the mercy of false teachers. Heb 5v13,14. The Holy Spirit is the overall superintendent of the whole Church of Christ, His aim is to produce ministry in the Church.

The continuous prayer life of the early Church at Jerusalem, shows they realised the need of being subordinate to the lordship of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. There was a sense of eagerness in the early disciples, to see God work in His Church; if we insist on keeping to our programmes and routines, we will find that we have missed the things that the early Church experienced. Are we as willing to let the Holy Spirit forbid some of our activities and plans, or stop us preaching as Paul was in Acts 16v6-10? Until we are, we shall only be students of the book of Acts; we shall know little or nothing of "the Acts of the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit comes to lead us on to maturity, but unless we acknowledge His leadership and guidance we will not attain it, we may become old Christians, but we will never become mature Christians. Eph 4v12, 2Cor 3v18, Luke 6v40, Heb 5v11-14.

### **I) They were prepared to suffer for their Saviour.**

The early Christians had to count the cost of their faith, they, like their Lord, were despised and rejected by worldly men. They were looked upon as followers of a crucified heretic, their faith meant persecution. Acts 5v40-42, 8v1-4, 1Thess 1v5,6. There were periods of rest from persecution, e.g. Acts 9v31, but Paul warned Christians that if they lived godly lives, they could expect persecution. 2Tim 2v9, 3v11,12. We are not to invite persecution; indeed, Paul told us to influence the lives and actions of political leaders, by our prayers and godly living. 1Tim 2v1-3. Christ told us to run away from those who persecute us, and try to kill us; there is no place for a false bravado in the Church of Christ. Matt 10v23. The early Christians triumphed over militant opposition because they esteemed the reproach for Christ's sake, as greater riches than all the treasures of the world. Heb 11v26. The Christians treasure is in heaven, not on earth, our eternal home

is with our heavenly Father, and what a wonderful Father and home we have! Matt 7v19-34, 1Peter 1v3-9. We are pilgrims and strangers on the earth, we seek a better company and country, and we have a heavenly hope; for God is preparing for us a city. Heb 11v13-16, 1Peter 2v11.

When we seek God for the fullness of the Holy Spirit, with the same attitudes of heart and mind as the early Christians at Jerusalem, we shall have the same powerful manifestations of the Holy Spirit's power. Nothing will be able to stand before us; multitudes will be saved, healed, and filled with the Holy Spirit. We shall be the blessing that God intended all His children to be.

### **Some More Thoughts On The Importance Of The Informal Fellowship During The Great Tribulation.**

**Heb 10v23-25, Ac7s 2v40-47: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching... And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."**

The conditions and atmosphere in societies around the world during the last seven years of this age, and especially during the Great Tribulation, will be so evil that it will take determined faith, perseverance, great grace and a correct understanding of last day prophetic truth to come through with an overcoming faith. Dan 9v27, 12v1, Matt 24v9-25, 2Thess 2v1-12, 1Tim4 v1,2, 2Tim 3v1-9, 2Peter 1v17-19, Rev 7v9,10,14, 12v4,5,7-12, 13v2,5-7,10,13-15. The informal fellowship meetings of the early Church did not take place in specially purpose built buildings as is usually the case today, but occurred in the houses of the believers or where and when it was convenient; the Lord Jesus was indicating this when He said in Matt 18v20: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

### **The new converts would have experienced the following in the informal fellowship meetings:**

- a) They would learn the first principles of the oracles of God, with a view to progressing onto maturity and knowing Christ as their Great High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek in the heavenly places, and last day prophetic truth to mention just a few. 2Thess 2v1-3, Heb 5v10-6v2.
- b) Water baptism was looked upon as a command to follow immediately after conversion, followed closely by the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues just as the disciples did on the Day of Pentecost. Acts 2v1-4,16-21,38,39.
- c) They followed the example of the ministries of the Church and diligently used the gift of tongues (in private prayer), and were inspired (by the ministries of the Church) to manifest spiritual gifts and get used to the movings of the Holy Spirit. Matt 6v6, 1Cor 11v1, 14v18, 1Thess 5v17.
- d) Unity in the Holy Spirit was the norm, they were of "one accord." Acts 1v14, 2v1,46.
- e) They would have indulged in prolonged social and spiritual fellowship. 1John 1v3.
- f) Body ministry. Cor 12v4-31.

The informal fellowship meetings were underpinned by the diligent use of the gift of tongues (in private prayer) at every opportunity by the believer (even more so by the ministries of the Church) at any time of the day or night, even as Paul did. Rom 8v26-28, 1Cor 14v2,4,18,28, 1Thess 5v17, Jude v20,21. In the use of the gift of tongues, new believers followed the example of the ministries in the Church, even as the apostles and disciples followed the example of the Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry in His use of the gift of tongues. 1Cor 11v1, 14v18. So, the great presence and power in the informal fellowship meetings of the early Church resulted from this diligent use of tongues by all the Christians. 1Cor 11v1-14v40. The Devil and the powers of darkness know that the gift of tongues is the most important of the gifts of the Spirit (1Cor 12v7-11) as it is from its diligent use from which the other eight gifts will flow from (in love), greatly manifesting the presence and power of the Risen Lord through His Body, the Church. And so because of its great importance the Devil and his evil angels have (and will continue to) demean and vilify it in the minds of believers, and even more so as the dark evil days of the Great Tribulation approaches, evil as the Devil did to the Lord Jesus during His

forty day temptation in the Wilderness. Matt 4v1-11, Luke 4v1-13, John 8v44, Rev 12v9.

**Acts 2v42 states: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."**

1) The Apostles' doctrine: This consisted of "the principles of the doctrine of Christ" as listed in Heb 6v1,2 with Acts 6v2,4, 1Peter 2v1-3.

2) Fellowship: Greek, "koinonia" (Strong's NT:2842), which means participation, or (social) intercourse, partner, sharer in common interest. A relation between individuals which involves a common interest and a mutual, active participation in that interest and in each other. The word answers to the Latin "communio," from "communis," "common." At the informal fellowship meetings both social and spiritual fellowship occurred as at the Last Supper in the Upper Room.

3) Breaking of bread: This occurred with a simple meal ("feasts of charity," Jude v12), the taking and sharing of the bread and wine.

4) And in prayers: The believers in the early Church did not question the merits of the gift of tongues in private prayer, they welcomed it and followed the example of the apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers and mature Christians in the Church, and used it extensively. 1Cor 14v15.

We can pray in tongues at all time during the day for it is the Holy Spirit Who is praying, and as it's a function of out spirits we do not have to think about how or what to pray for, hence we can carry on with other activities using our mind. Rom 8v26-28, 1Cor 14v2,14. When believers in a local Church exercise the gift of tongues in prayer diligently, it greatly helps bring that local Church to a unity of mind and purpose on spiritual matters and with the Holy Spirit. Acts 2v46, 4v24, 5v12, 15v22,25. With a unity of purpose and faith and being in one accord, on that local Church the Lord commands a blessing and anointing and the efficiency of the combined faith is greatly enhanced. Lev 26v8, Joshua 23v10, Matt 18v19.

It enhances the love and affection between Christians, especially in a local Church so that "fellowship in spirit" takes place between those believers. 1John 1v3. With this deep affection and (agape) love being manifested in a local Church, the other eight gifts of the Spirit will manifest spontaneously, it is "the more excellent way," "faith that worketh through love" or as the Amplified Bible states, "faith activated and expressed and working through love." 1Cor 12v31, Gal 5v6.

The unity, love and faith that this brings in believers to a local Church will bring the presence, power and protection of the Lord upon it greatly; so that the place where they meet with their Risen Lord will become Holy Ground. Exodus 3v5, 13v20,21, 14v19,20, Joshua 5v15.

The Lord's presence, power and protection over these meetings are the kind of informal fellowship meetings that the Christians represented by the "glorious woman" will experience during the Great Tribulation, when, as a group of believers will also exercise the same level of power and authority that the Two Witnesses will manifest. The vision of this glorious woman reveals to us one of God's major purposes for the last days. She represents a group of people, who are foreknown, designed, specially created and empowered by God for the Great Tribulation. It is a group of praying (Greek, "proseuchomai" (Strong's NT:4336)) people, with prepared hearts and special ministries for the last days, who will operate with awesome power as a prayer-warrior group behind the scenes. God also gives a definite promise that He will protect, provide and empower the seeking hearts in His Church in a new and special way in the last days, and will not leave His Church defenceless in the Great Tribulation. This glorious woman reveals that part of the Church will be clothed with the fullness of God's power, and will be transported, protected and fed by God. **This group is a major part of God's answer to the mystery of iniquity, and it is one of many such groups, who operate in Israel and other parts of the world.** Matt 18v18,19, Luke 18v1-8, John 14v12-14, Rev 11v3-6, 12v1,6,14. **(Please see Appendix II: Some Practical Advice On Private Prayer, Appendix III: "The Lord's Prayer" and Appendix IV: Put On The Whole Armour Of God Eph 6v10-20).**

The informal fellowship meeting stimulates and produces spiritual maturity in the new converts and young Christians, as they are looking entirely to the Lord and not to organised religious structures that has wealth, power and political influence which invariably is dominated to a certain extent or completely by the Devil. The new Christians follow the example of the ministries and mature Christians. With the great presence, power and liberty that comes with these informal fellowship meetings, they are inviting and desirable to children, teenagers and young adults. Matt 19v14, Rom 8v22, Gal 5v1. It also creates an evangelistic fervour in Christians to the people they mix with and meet during their daily lives. Mark 16v15-18, Acts 11v19-21. There is no exclusivity in the meeting to minister, all Christians can minister as the Holy Spirit comes upon them; it is the anointing that gives the authority for an individual to minister. 1Cor 12v7, 14v26, Gal 3v28.



The diligent use of the gift of tongues by Christians brings the Overshadowing power and presence of God to the informal fellowship meetings, even as with Israel in the wilderness of Sinai. Exodus 13v21,22, 40v36,37, Psalm 91 (all). This Overshadowing of God with Israel resulted in the not only great protection, but great provision, their feet did not swell, their clothes and shoes did not wear out and there was none sick amongst them, and they received food and drink from His hand. The informal fellowship meetings of Christians during the last seven years of this age (and especially during the Great Tribulation) will also experience the same kind of experience, although in a far greater measure. Deut 29v5, Neh 9v19-21, Psalm 105v37, Rev 11v3-6, 12v6,14. The Lord Jesus, during His earthly ministry, also followed the "glory cloud" with a result that many wonderful signs, wonder and miracles were done through Him, not only miracles of healing, raising the dead, but also miraculous production of food and wine. John 2v1-12, 5v19,20,30, 6v1-14, 11v38-44. The informal fellowship meetings will experience the same kind of signs, wonders and miracles (and indeed greater), that the Lord Jesus experienced during His earthly ministry, with the addition of the authority to bring judgement and discipline upon the wicked. Dan 11v32, Luke 18v1-8, John 14v12-14, Rev 11v5,6. The Overshadowing presence and power of God will have resulted from Christians binding the strongman so as to walk and live in the Heavens with their Risen Lord (Our Great High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek) as priests of the Melchizedek Priesthood, manifesting His power and love to a needy Church and world through the gifts of the Spirit. Heb 2v17, 3v1, 4v14,15, 6v20, 1Peter 2v1-10, Rev 1v5,6, 5v9,10.

If the Lord instructed Moses "See, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount," in regards to the Tabernacle of Meeting, how much more should the Church follow the pattern shown to the Apostles by Our Lord in the Upper Room in regards to the informal fellowship meeting (which was the Passover meal), when we, His dearly beloved people meet together with Him and each other! Matt 18v18-20, 26v17-30, Luke 22v14-38, John 13v1-17v26, 1Cor 11v2-14v40, Heb 8v5.

**The New Testament Church needs to follow the example of Moses in obedience to the Word of God and follow the pattern that Our Lord gives in the Scriptures for our informal fellowship meetings!**

The informal fellowship meeting of the early Church was planned by the Trinity before creation and was designed to withstand not only persecution, but also to produce rapid growth and maturity in new believers so as to develop ministries. Mark 16v15-18, Eph 4v7-16, Heb 5v11-6v2. Paul, after he had evangelized an area, would leave the new Church in the care of God the Holy Spirit and move on, returning after some time to see how they were progressing. After 1-3 years he was able to see the ministry of Pastors and Teachers having developed in local men, and so with the agreement of the local Christians was able to lay hands on them and "ordain" them, the Lord having developed that ministry gift in them. Acts 14v23, 1Tim 3v1-7, Titus 1v5-9, James 5v13-18, 1Peter 5v1-4. The ministries of the early Church, when they saw a developing ministry really encouraged the development of that ministry in that disciple. Eph 4v7-16, Heb 5v11-6v2. This is in sharp contrast to today when the actual structure (government and practices in a local Church) and the very ministries in these local Churches greatly (and sometimes actively) hinder the development of ministries and indeed keep new Christians in complete immaturity for decades!

The Pastor and Teacher who do not develop ministries in their flocks have lost their crown, even as those Pastors and Teachers who say the gifts of the Spirit ceased at the end of the Apostolic age and so are not available today. These Pastors and Teachers are effectively saying to the Lord of the Church, Who shed His Blood to redeem them, "we don't want you in our meeting as we have our own program." They totally shut the Lord Jesus out of His Church. We must remember that the headquarters of the Church (The Body of Christ) is in Heaven and **NOT** in some church hierarchy run by committees! We need to earnestly seek our Heavenly Father in prayer to find out His plans and purposes for a local Church even as the early Church did who followed the Lord Jesus' example that He practised during His earthly ministry. Psalm 24v1-6, Matt 4v2, Luke 5v16, John 5v19,20,30, Acts 2v42, 4v23-31.

The structure, government and practices in very many churches in the West today are designed (by the Devil) to keep Christians in spiritual immaturity. It also shuts Christ firmly out of His Church so that Christians go out of every meeting with the burdens, problems and sicknesses they came in with, and this goes on year after year. With no maturity in the Christians coming through there is little or no evangelical fervour so that there is almost no witness to the unconverted around a local Church, and what there is, is "oratory" with absolutely no miracles. It is this kind of powerless religion that the Pastor/Teacher of these Churches have gone through, so they simply pass on their dead ("word only") tradition to their flocks. 2Tim 3v5, 1Peter 1v18. In the Church today, there is little or no communion with the Risen Lord, so that His plans and purposes for a local Church are never realised.

After the start of the Great Tribulation, all the outward structures of the Church in the countries conquered and under the control of Antichrist will be totally destroyed and any Christians associated with them that are found by Antichrist's armies, secret police and followers will be killed immediately. It will only be those Christians who are meeting in the informal fellowship meetings who will have any chance of coming through the Great Tribulation with an overcoming faith. The outward structure of the Church in countries not under the control of Antichrist will not totally escape' having their buildings attacked and damaged by demonic inspired unbelievers and also suffering persecution, for Christians will be hated by all nations. Dan 7v21,22, Matt 24v9,10, Mark 13v9,12,13, Luke 17v34-37, 21v12,16-18, 2Tim 3v1,12, Rev

13v6,7,10. The informal fellowship meetings during the Great Tribulation will not only resist and weather persecution, but will also have the authority and power to judge and discipline the wicked (mankind and angels) who are not persecuting Christians, but making life difficult for others by their evil actions. Dan 11v32, Matt 18v19,20, Luke 18v1-8, Rev 12v1,6,14.

In a Church service today, generally the seats and pews are all set so that everybody faces the speaker, so everybody is looking at the back of someone's head. There is absolutely no fellowship (either social or spiritual) between brother and sisters in Christ. It's like a strict father and mother who set their children down at the dinner table and nobody is allowed to speak to any other member of their family, all the communication is one way, from the strict stony faced parents. The only interaction and fellowship takes place after the service and then only briefly as the Church stewards want to get everybody out of the Church building to get home for their dinner or tea. This kind of Church gathering would make any unsaved person run a mile from, the unsaved want to see love manifested and a reality! The Trinity, Who is longing to come into out meetings and meet the needs of the broken, needy and sick are firmly shut out of their Church! John 17v23.

The Trinity longs to come amongst Their people with their divine presence and power so as to minister to us and through us to others, so that burdens are lifted; mental, emotional and physical needs met and we are energised in our very innermost beings by Their presence and power. They long to comfort us and speak tenderly to us with great affection. Exodus 34v6,7, John 15v9, 1Cor 12v4-31, 14v1,3,5,26,31, Phil 2v1-4. The Lord also wants us to have fellowship with each other, both social and spiritual, He wants us to get to know our brothers and sisters and create a bond of love with them. 1John 1v1-3. The Lord feels such a great sorrow and grief at being shut out from having fellowship and interaction with those whom He has redeemed by the shedding of His Blood in many of our services today and individually in the prayer time. Rev 3v20. When the last great revival (the latter rains) occurs just before the Lord's Second Coming, many churches in the denominations will be bypassed by the Lord, unless they have been earnestly seeking His face, and if they have and the Lord visits their church, they will not retain His presence and power unless they start meeting in informal fellowship meetings. Psalm 24v1-6.

The love, affection and trust amongst believers that the informal fellowship meeting brings automatically brings the promised presence, power and blessing from the Lord, which in turn brings a wonderful unity amongst believers. Psalm 133 (all), John 17v21,22, Acts 1v14, 2v1 (KJV), v46 (2v40-47). This wonderful unity that occurs because of "the glory," brings believers from every walk of life, country and nation to "one accord and mind." (Greek, "homothumadon," (Strong's NT:3661), An old adverb in "-don" from the adjective "homothumos" and that from "homos," "same," and "thumos," "mind or spirit, with the same mind or spirit." Common in ancient Greek and papyri.) Gal 3v28. It is not automatic, but has to be worked at, and will be obtained by wise and godly leadership. 1Cor 4v15.

The one hundred and twenty disciples in the Upper Room "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication..." Acts 1v14, and on the Day of Pentecost, "they were all with one accord in one place." Acts 2v1. This beautiful unity of the Holy Spirit needs to be retained or else sectarianism, bigotry and schisms can arise. 1Cor 3v1-8, Gal 5v15. The love between believers must be real and not just lip service, we are commanded by the Lord Jesus that we are to love each other as Christ loves us. John 15v12. The presence, power and glory of the "latter rains" is much greater than the "former rains" (i.e., the outpouring on the Day of Pentecost) and so the unity of the Spirit is even more important to maintain. Ananias and Sapphira died (executed by the Lord) for just one lie, but this judgement and discipline by the Lord through Peter brought a real healthy fear of God upon all, and a great increase in mighty signs, wonders and miracles through the Church. Acts 5v1-16. We need to make sure we do not grieve the Holy Spirit. Psalm 78v40, Eph 4v30. God the Holy Spirit will produce in our informal fellowship meetings the wonderful condition and attributes listed in Phil 2v1, which will certainly be needed during the dark evil days of the Great Tribulation, so that we are energised and empowered by Him. Eph 6v10, Heb 10v23-25. These greatly empowered informal fellowship meetings will enable the believers to go out into the world and witness with great authority and power to those around them. Mark 16v15-18, Acts 11v21,22.

The apostolic and evangelistic ministries founded churches, and subsequent ministries (initially apostolic, prophetic and later on pastor and teachers) are responsible to how the new converts of a local church will grow and mature in the Lord. The apostle and prophetic ministries have the initial responsibility of teaching doctrine, getting informal fellowship meetings going, inspiring ministries in the converts, getting them manifesting spiritual gifts and used to the movings and workings of the Holy Spirit. They are to be a pattern to their converts, even as Paul and Peter was to their converts. Acts 11v19-26, 13v1, 1Cor 11v1, James 3v1, 1Peter 5v1-4. It is important to bring on the developing ministry of the elder, overseer, pastor and teacher of local men (and women), which then enabled the apostle and prophet who were developing ministries to hand the oversight of the local church over to them. Paul and his helpers were able to set local pastors and teachers to take over after one to three years.

During the last seven years of this age, especially the Great Tribulation, the Scriptures tell us that there will be two types of pastors and teachers in the Church, those who will teach truth and those who will teach lies and error. Those who teach truth will ensure that their flock will be prepared and come through the Great Tribulation with an overcoming faith, and those who teach lies and error, will ensure that they and their flock backslide and go into apostasy and lose their

salvation. There will be many false prophets and wolves in sheep's clothing in the Church during the last seven years of this age. Matt 7v15-23, 24v5,6,11,23-28, 45-25v13, Mark 13v5,6,21-23, Luke 12v42-48, 21v8, 2Thess 2v1-3,9-12, 1Tim 4v1-3, 2Tim 3v1-9, 2Peter 2v1-22, Jude v12-19, Rev 13v1-18. The ministries in the Church (apostle, prophets, pastors and teachers) are to protect the church against false prophets and teachers. Those who taught destructive heresy (doctrine that would overthrow the faith of believers) were handed over to Satan by Paul for the destruction of the flesh (i.e., execution). Hymenaeus, Alexander and Philetus are stated as such. Acts 20v28-31, 1Tim 1v19,20, 2Tim 2v16-18.

The pattern of the early Church at Jerusalem is the pattern that the last day Church upon earth should implement, as the same results will be achieved, except that a greater presence and power of God will be operating through it. In Matt 24v3, the apostles ask the Lord Jesus for the signs that would precede His Second Coming and the end of the age, which He gives in the Olivet discourse (Matt 24, Mark 13 Luke 21). However, one of the first signs is the great worldwide outpouring of the Holy Spirit that occurs just before the beginning of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> prophetic week (Dan 9v27) and continue through the last 7 years of this age right up until Christ's Second Coming. This last and greatest revival of all and is referred to as "the latter rains," was prophesied by the prophet Joel in Joel 2v28-32 and was referred to by Peter in Acts 2v16-21 (and Acts 3v19-21). The veil that the Devil has cast over all nations, also (unfortunately) lies over much of the Church as well and there are many warnings in the New Testament from the Lord Jesus and the Apostles that we should not be deceived in the coming dark evil days. Isaiah 25v6-9, Matt 24v4, Mark 13v5, Luke 21v8, 1Thess 4v13, 5v4, 2Thess 2v1-3, 1Tim 4v1, 2Tim 3v1, 2Peter 3v3.

Matt 24v55-25v13 informs us that there are two types of pastors and teachers and Christians in the last days, the faithful and wise servant, the evil servant, the wise virgin and the foolish virgin. The reserve of oil in the lamps of the wise virgins not only represent the correct interpretation of last day prophetic truth, but also being baptised in the Holy Spirit and manifesting His gifts in the heavenly places during the Great Tribulation as priests of the Melchizedek Priesthood and participation in the informal fellowship meetings. Heb 10v23-25. The faithful and wise servant represents the pastors and teachers who teach correct last day prophetic truth (i.e., the post tribulation Advent and Rapture in glory) and has implemented informal fellowship meetings and Body ministry, inspiring Christians to seek last day ministries and manifest spiritual gifts. The evil servant represents pastors and teachers who teach a secret pre-tribulation Advent and Rapture, and does not implement informal fellowship meetings, neither will they encourage and inspire Christians to seek a ministry or spiritual gifts. Matt 24v48,49. In Matt 24v48 the Lord Jesus warns us about the danger of believing a secret pre-tribulation Advent and Rapture when He says, "My lord delayeth his coming." Why "delayeth," the answer is that the evil servant is expecting the Lord to come BEFORE the beginning of the Great Tribulation, and when the Great Tribulation starts with a deluge of evil into the world, the Lord not having come as the evil servant thought He would do before the Great Tribulation, he says in his heart, "My lord delayeth his coming." The evil servant is completely overwhelmed by the great inrush of evil into the world with the result that he backslides and goes into apostasy, ending up drinking with the drunkards and beating Christians.

Christians in general follow the example and teaching of their pastors and teachers, so the foolish virgins are those Christians who follow their erroneous last day prophetic teaching, and also end up backsliding and going into apostasy like their pastors and teachers. James 3v1, 1Peter 1v18,19, 5v1-4.

The informal fellowship meeting will be a defence against the great lawlessness that will be upon earth during the Great Tribulation when the mystery of lawlessness works fully, for in it the Christian will be energised by God's grace and power. Gen 6v1-11, Dan 8v23, 12v1, Matt 24v12,13,21,22,37,45-25v13, 2Thess 2v1-12. It will also energise the believer's faith so that they will not be worrying and fretting over their everyday needs being met, but will be "seeking first the Kingdom of God" in full assurance that God will meet all their needs. Psalm 23v1, 34v9, 37v4, Matt 6v24-33, Luke 12v22-48, 21v34, Phil 4v19.

The "meat" that the steward feeds to His household (and himself) is critical to "having their loins girded about and their lights burn," i.e., looking for and being prepared for the Second Coming of Christ. Luke 12v35-48. The "meat" that the steward teaches to His household, is also the "meat" that he lives by, and so is an example to His Lord's household. The "faithful and wise steward" and the household will be ready and waiting to receive their Lord when He comes. However, the steward who says in their heart, "my Lord delayeth His coming" will begin to beat the menservants and maidens and to eat and drink with the drunken (when His Lord doesn't come when he expects Him) and so their Lord comes at an hour they are not aware of, and He will cut them in sunder and appoint them their portion with the unbelievers. The ministries of the Church will be held to account by the Lord Jesus in regards to what they teach to His flock and the example they give in their walk of faith. Luke 12v47,48, James 3v1.

Heb 8v5 (with Exodus 25v9) states: "See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount." It was the pre-incarnate Christ Who spoke these words to Moses which he surely listened to and obeyed. It was this same Christ Who gave the pattern and instituted the New Testament informal fellowship meeting (the Passover meal) in the Upper Room on the night He was betrayed, and the apostles and the early Church were diligent to follow it. Very many good and godly leaders have strayed far from the pattern that the Lord Jesus gave at the Last Supper. If the Church implements this pattern it can expect the same results, a wineskin filled with new wine, the glory of God. Luke

5v36-39, Acts 4v29-31, 5v1-11.

The vast majority of Churches today still have the old wine and wineskin in operation and refuse to give them up, as they require little effort from those participating in them. This kind of structure sees little happening from God. Many Churches today in the West are patterned on the Old Testament structure of the mediation of priest and prophet and not New Testament where the believer, through the shed Blood of Christ, has direct access into God's Presence in the Most Holy place in Heaven. We are no longer servants but sons and daughters of the Living God, with the glory of the New Covenant far exceeding that of the Old Covenant. Rom 8v14-17, 2Cor 6v8, Gal 4v7, Heb 8v11. The covering and veil that the Devil has cast over all nations has surely been cast over the Church of Christ in many areas, the refusal to implement the informal fellowship meeting being one of them. Isaiah 25v6-9. The Churches in the most affluent countries of the world are those most effected by this blindness. These Churches trust in wealth, political power and worldly position and not in what the Living God can do for them! Dan 4v30, Psalm 20v7, Rev 3v17.

**What represents the oil in the virgins vessels? Matt 25v1-13 (with Matt 24v45-51).**

There are two types of pastor and teachers in the last seven years (and especially during the Great Tribulation) of this age, the first is the "faithful and wise servant" and the "evil" (Greek, "kakos," Strong's NT:2556). They are tasked by the Lord Jesus to give His household "meat in due season" ("season," Greek, "kairos," Strong's NT2540, a divinely appointed time). The servants flocks fall into two categories, "wise" and "foolish" virgins. The reserve of oil in their vessels represents everything they will need to do and have to come through the Great Tribulation with an overcoming faith. This reserve is given to them by their pastors and teachers, and the greater ministries of the Church.

**a) The primary meaning is the correct interpretation of last day prophetic truth, for it is this that will give light in the darkness during the Great Tribulation. Matt 24v12,21, 25v1-13, 1Peter 1v18-21.**

b) Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues, leading to a diligent use of the gift of tongues. John 7v37-39, Acts 1v4,5,8, Rom 8v26-28, 1Cor 14v2,4,15,18, 1Thess 5v17, Jude v20,21.

c) "The principles of the doctrine of Christ." (Foundation Truths). Heb 5v10-6v2, 1Peter 2v1-3. **(Please see Appendix VII: Foundation Truths)**

d) Knowing Christ not only as Saviour, but as our Great High Priest after The Order of Melchizedek, i.e., fulfilling the office of priest in the Melchizedek Priesthood. Heb 6v19,20, 1Peter 2v1-10, Rev 1v5,6, 5v9,10. Living in the heavenly places with our Risen Saviour and manifesting His power and love to a needy world and Church.

e) The informal fellowship meeting, which is patterned on the Last Supper in the Upper Room. Matt 26v17-30, Mark 14v12-26, Luke 22v7-38, John 13v1-17v26, 1Cor 11v1-14v40, Rev 12v1.

f) The presence and power of Our Risen Saviour. Eph 6v10-20.

g) Praising, worshipping and thankful hearts, which is vital to getting into and walking in the heavenlies with the Lord Jesus. Neh 8v10, Psalm 95v1-11, Luke 24v53, Acts 2v27, Heb chapters 3 & 4, Phil 4v4, 1Thess 5v16.

h) We will need to listen to the Voice of Him Who speaks from heaven! Heb 12v25, Rev 2v7,11,17,29, 3v6,13,22.

i) An encounter with the Risen Lord Jesus.

j) An abundant manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit which spring from love and a diligent use of the gift of tongues, in body ministry. 1Cor 12v4-31.

k) Fervent "agape" love for our brothers and sisters. John 15v12.

l) The vast majority of finances going to look after the poor, needs, orphans and widows.

j) A fervent prayer life for all the ministries and saints. 1Cor 14v15, Eph 6v10-20, 1Thess 5v17.

k) Being of one accord and mind with our brothers and sisters in the (local) Body of Christ. Acts 1v14, 2v1,47.

l) Endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace until we come to a unity of the faith. Eph 4v3,13.

m) They will have "digged deep" and laid their foundations upon rock. Luke 6v47-49.

Christians will need **ALL** of the above (which the “faithful and wise servant” should lead them into), if they are to get through the Great Tribulation with an overcoming faith and stand before the Judgement Seat of Christ that they might receive a reward, Matt 24v45, Rev 22v12.

Psalm 119v105 with 2Tim 3v16 states: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path...All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

Acts 2v44,45 states: “And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.”

The early New Testament Church did not tithe (i.e., give 10% of their income to the Church), but gave gifts, often selling property or land and gave it to the ministry in the local Church responsible for finances (The Deacon). This money was almost exclusively (95% of) to help the poor and needy widows, orphans and strangers. This was a great evangelistic tool as well. In today’s (Western) Church the poor are usually completely ignored and 95% of the finances goes to building programs, upkeep of Churches, ministers’ salaries, and many other unscriptural projects. Under the Old Covenant the tithe was used mostly to look after the poor, widows, orphans and strangers, the rest being given to the Levites. The early Church followed the example of the Lord Jesus Who had a money bag (which Judas was in charge of) to help the poor. John 12v6, Acts 6v1-7, 9v36, 11v29, 1Cor 16v1. The great care and concern for the poor and needy by the early Church brought a real blessing and anointing upon it, for the poor and needy have a very special place in God’s Great Heart of Love. Isaiah 3v14,15, 32v7, 58v7, 61v1, Luke 4v18,19. Neglect of the poor and needy by much of the Church today is a **MAJOR** sin committed by it! The Church at Smyrna was financially poor, but spiritually rich, in contrast to the Church at Laodicea which was financially very rich but spiritually bankrupt. Rev 2v8-11, 3v14-22. With this great concern for the poor, the Church at Jerusalem also had worshipping and praising hearts, before and after Pentecost, and a genuine love and affection amongst the Christians, they really took the Lord’s great command to heart. John 15v12.

The present one man ministry (Old Testament priest prophet dependency) in many Churches is a product of Satan, which dates back to 313 AD, when Constantine (supposedly) became a Christian and made Christianity the official religion of the Roman empire. He then heaped wealth, political power and prestige upon the Church, which then progressively came out of their informal fellowship meeting structure and progressed to the Old Testament structure of priest prophet dependency, to one man ministry. This Old Testament structure keeps God’s dear children in permanent spiritual infancy so that no overcomers arise to rule with Christ during the Millennium, the present world rulers (Satan and his evil angels in the heavenlies) having been cast; Satan into Hades, and the rest of the evil angels into the Lake of Fire, at the end of this age when Christ comes to destroy the wicked and take His people home and set up the Millennium Kingdom. The longer the Devil can prolong one man ministries in the Church, the longer he prolongs the Age of Grace and his time ruling in the heavenlies and hinders God’s loving plans and purposes coming to pass, for He greatly wants to get the required number of overcomers so as to replace the present evil rulers with His family, the sons of God, under the Son of God. Psalm 2 (all), Matt 24v41, Rom 8v14-39, Eph 6v10-20, Rev 11v15-18, 14v1-5,9-11, 19v11-21, 20v1-3,10. God is really looking forward to the ages of ages for it is then that the redeemed will really shout and jump for joy with great gusto as we see God’s wonderful plans and purposes coming to pass. Eph 2v7. **(Please see Appendix V: The spiritual qualities that make up the character of the overcomer).**

Over the centuries the Devil has removed every bit of the structure of the early Church pre 313 AD that would have encouraged spiritual maturity in the Church and hence shorten the Devil’s reign in the heavenlies. During brief periods of revival, God managed to revive different aspects of the informal fellowship meetings, but once the revival petered out, the Church reverted to the “old wineskin,” one man ministries. The clergy, pastors and teachers of today are so bound by the unscriptural man made traditions handed down from their spiritual fathers, even as the twelve apostles were so reticent to see that God was dealing with the Church and not Israel. The theology of the Scribes and Pharisees, which the apostles had imbibed over the years as they sat in their local synagogue, was that Messiah would come and throw off the Roman yoke and restore the kingdom to Israel. The apostles completely missed Christ’s first Coming and the Church, and only saw His Coming in power and great glory to restore the kingdom to Israel. Matt 16v21-23, Acts 1v1-8, 1Peter 1v18.

We as Christians need to see God’s Truth in His Word and what He has provided for His Church in these last days so that we come through the Great Tribulation with and overcoming faith and stand before His Throne in white garments. 2Tim 3v16, Rev 7v9,10,14, 19v7-9.

The corrupting influence of man-made unscriptural traditions handed down from our spiritual fathers (Greek, “patroparadotos,” (Strong’s NT:3970), literally, “handed down from one’s fathers.”) cannot be overstated, such is the effect, that Christian’s spirits and minds become darkened (reprobate) and completely blind on matters of Christian truth when they have believed a lie. This is very clearly seen in regards to the government, practices and ministries in the Christian Church. Today, many churches around the world are founded upon Old Testament practices and not on the new wineskin and wine of the New Testament Church, which are the ministries of the Holy Spirit working through every member of the Body of Christ in the informal fellowship meetings and evangelism. Luke 5v36-39, Rom 1v28. The apostles repeatedly refused to believe that the Lord Jesus had to die upon the Cross, and so when He was crucified their faith

completely failed and they ended up behind a locked door full of fear. Matt 16v21-23, Luke 9v44,45, 18v31-34. The structure of the new wineskin requires spiritual effort and determination to be sustained by close communion with the Lord Jesus. Psalm 24v1-6.

Luke 5v39 states: "No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new, for he saith, "The old is better." The new wine is the workings and energies of God the Holy Spirit working through the Body of Christ, through which the Lord Jesus continues His earthly ministry, now that He is Risen and in Heaven as our Glorified Saviour and Great High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek. Isaiah 53v10, 61v1,2, Mark 2v43, 5v12-16, 11v19-21, 16v15-18, Luke 4v18,19, 1Cor 3v9, 12v4-31, 14v1,26-32. This requires spiritual effort, perseverance, faith and patience so that the Lord's plans and purposes are found and His presence and power are present to fulfil them, The believers who have been used to drinking "the old wine" have no desire to taste "the new wine" for the "old wineskin and wine" requires little or no spiritual effort or exertion which outcome gives "a form of godliness without the power." 2Tim 3v5. It has been and is the Lord's great desire to continue His earthly ministry through His Body, the Church, in every generation since His Resurrection and Ascension as our Great High Priest after the order of Melchizedek and Christians as priests of the order of Melchizedek. Many Christians today, like Israel in the Wilderness, draw back and cannot trust God to take them into the heavenly places, and so limit the Holy One of Israel. Let us adopt the same spirit as Joshua and Caleb and say, "they are bread for us." Num 14v9,24, Psalm 78v41.

In the last seven years of this age there will be "famines, pestilences and earthquakes in many places." Matt 24v7, Mark 13v8, Luke 21v11. These terrible calamities happen in the normal cycle of life upon earth, however, there will be a great increase in these during the last seven years. Some of the causes of the famines will be drought and flooding due to drastic changes in the weather, of which even now we are seeing the beginning of. Another cause will be due to the great banking and economic crash that will occur around the world. The "pestilences" that occur will include epidemics of bacterial and viral diseases, plus massive swarms of locusts and other swarming insects that will destroy vast amounts of growing food stuffs. Although here in the UK we experience very few earthquakes, these will dramatically increase in regularity and strength not only in the UK, but also around the world, especially along geological fault lines in the earth. With God's presence and power tabernacling over informal fellowship meetings, Christians, like Israel of old in the Wilderness, will be protected from **ALL** pestilences, famines and earthquakes. Christians will be protected from sickness and disease caused by pestilence, hunger from famine, or from injury and death from earthquakes. Neh 9v11,12,15,21, Psalm 91 (all), 105v37,39,40,41, Matt 18v20, John 14v12-14, Rev 11v3-6, 12v1,6,14.

Luke 21v11,25 states: "Great earthquakes shall be in divers places...the sea and the waves roaring." During the last seven years of this age we will see a great increase in the number of tsunamis around the world on coastlines of countries that will be caused by the increase of earthquakes in the floors of the oceans. There will also be an increase in the number of great storms (hurricanes, tornadoes, derecho storms, hail and snow storms, tropical and thunder storms and lightning) around the world, bringing increased rainfall and flooding. Our Heavenly Father will inform us about any type of adverse weather conditions coming towards us that we need to be made aware of so that we can prepare for it.

### **In the world today some of these specific end time signs have begun!**

Christians can also expect and experience, during the last years of this age, and especially during the Great Tribulation, a great increase in (open vision) visitations of angels, and even the Lord Jesus Himself, not only to themselves, but also during informal fellowship meetings, to encourage, protect and provide for. John 14v18,21, 17v24, Acts 12v5-19, Heb 1v14.

Psalm 91 states: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation."

This beautiful psalm gives a firm promise of the Overshadowing power and presence of God giving complete protection, provision, deliverance and guidance to those who are living the life of prayer and seeking God's face, not only to the individual Christian but also during the informal fellowship meeting. Individual Christians and informal fellowship meetings will also be given the ability of entering into timelessness for protection.

Psalm 23v5 with 91v7 states: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies...A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee." The ability of entering into timelessness (by and in Him Who is transcendent, i.e., He Who exists apart from the material universe and spiritual heavens), will be the experience of the Two Witnesses (and the other last day Elijah ministries) and those Christian groups who make up the Glorious Woman all over the world. The Lord Jesus was also given this ability during His earthly ministry for protection from a premature death. 1Kings 8v12, John 8v59, 14v12-14, Acts 8v39,40, Rev 11v3-6, 12v1,6,14.

There will be many false prophets and teachers in the Church during the last seven years of this age, they are the "tares" that the Devil plants. Matt 13v24-30,36-43. The "evil servant" (Matt 24v48-51) is also a "tare" that the Devil has planted in the Church. These false prophets and teachers bring not only eternal damnation upon themselves, but also upon many in their flocks and of their charges, the "foolish virgins" who took no reserve of oil in their vessels. These false prophets and teachers with their corrupt doctrine and their corrupt example of faith and life which their misguided and spiritually blind flock will follow. Matt 24v11,23,24,25,26, 1Tim 4v1-3, 2Tim 3v1-9, 1Peter 5v3, 2Peter 2v1-22. These false prophets and teachers will reject and deny all the truth that would give them light during the dark evil days of the Great Tribulation, they, like the "foolish virgins" have taken no oil in their vessels. Matt 25v3, 1Thess 5v2,3, Rev 16v15. Many of those Christians who reject the new wineskin and wine, and who prefer the old, are the "evil stewards" and "foolish virgins."

The evil seeds that the Devil has put into the Church in an attempt to destroy as many Christians during the Great Tribulation are:

- 1) Introduction of a secret pre-tribulation advent and rapture which was hitherto the 1830's unknown to the Church, either Roman Catholic or Protestant.
- 2) The cessation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, one of their main arguments of this camp is that "when that which is perfect has come (they say refers to the Canon of Scripture) then that which is in part (the gifts of the Spirit) will be done away."
- 3) The cessation of the greater ministries (apostles and prophets) in the Church.
- 4) Introduction of the "old wineskin" and "wine," saying that the "new wineskin" and "new wine" is irrelevant and not required, due to the spiritual effort required to maintain it.
- 5) Introduction of tithing for the upkeep of expensive buildings, building programs, running unscriptural programs and excessive salaries for church leaders, which results in little (if any) of a churches finances going to the poor and needy. 2Peter 2v1-3.
- 6) Introduction of the false teaching of Docetic and Cerinthian Gnosticism into the Church through the "Original Sin" and "Born in Sin" theories introduced by Augustine and then into reformed theology through Martin Luther (who was an Augustinian monk) and John Calvin who greatly venerated Augustine.

The evil seeds that the Devil has put into the Church over the preceding centuries is a part of his evil plan, "the mystery of iniquity," in an attempt to prolong his days of freedom during the age of grace and to destroy as many Christians as he can during the last seven years of this age due to the fact that very many will be unprepared for the Great Tribulation and simply backslide and go into apostasy. Matt 24v21, 2Thess 2v1-12.

The structure (of government, worship and practices) in a church either encourages or hinders revival in that church. The structure in the vast majority of the churches throughout the world today actively hinders revival in those churches, due to the fact that in those churches they have a one man ministry, priest and prophet dependency which will completely stop and hinder revival even as money, wealth, political power and position does. Rev3v14-22. The church at Laodicea believed that wealth, riches and political power equated to great spirituality, they trusted in their wealth and money and not in the Living God and what He could do for them. Amongst other things they had become prayerless, and had firmly shut the Lord Jesus out of their informal fellowship meetings, they even would have had manifestation of prophecies and tongues and interpretation on occasions.

In these churches with one man ministries, their formal services has replaced the informal fellowship meetings, where Christians do little or nothing in the service and the pastor and teacher, minister and a few others do everything, the congregation sitting impassively. As their reliance is upon the pastor teacher they have no incentive to seek the Lord in prayer or study the Scriptures, and so their Lord is firmly shut out of His Church because such a structure keeps Christians in spiritual immaturity. The pastors and teachers and ministers who tolerate such a man-made unscriptural structure are following in the sin of the Scribes and Pharisees, who actively hindered the people of God entering into fully what God had for them, the experiencing of the presence and power of God in the heavenlies and experiencing the powers

of the age to come. Matt 15v1-9, Luke 11v52. It is the firm desire of many one man ministries to keep a firm control on the people of God's activity in such meetings, hence shutting out the Lord Jesus.

In many church services and meetings today there is only a few people who minister, but in the informal fellowship meeting there are many, for God desires every believer to be a priest, i.e., the Lord desires to minister through every one in the informal fellowship meeting. 1Cor 12v4-31, 14v26-31,40, 1Peter 2v1-10. Rev 1v5,6. The Old Testament type structure in churches today is a product of the Devil, who delights to keep God's people in spiritual immaturity en masse and bind them with heavy burdens, sicknesses and diseases to prolong his days in the heavenlies and so hinder God's plan to send the Lord Jesus to set up the Millennium Kingdom. Isaiah 25v7, Rom 1v28. The veil cast over all nations has been cast over the spirits and minds of many Christians on this most important issue.

Many churches today are as firmly resistant to revival as the Temple, synagogues, Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees in Our Lord's day. He did not choose one of the religious leaders of His day to lead in His Church. To bring revival He completely bypassed the Temple and its religious structure and chose ordinary working men, many of whom had had an encounter with the Living God through the ministry of John the Baptist. The glory, which had left the Temple, moved to a room (The Upper Room), in an ordinary house! And so shall it be with the last great revival of this age (the latter rains), He again will completely bypass the religious structures of the denominations of today, and bring in into being through humble praying men and women who are thirsting after Him in earnest prayer. Psalm 42v2, Matt 5v6, John 4v10-15, 7v37-39.

Isaiah 44v3 states: "For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring."

### **Conclusion**

As the last seven years of this age approaches, Christians can either partake of the new wineskin and wine and have a real opportunity coming through the Great Tribulation with an overcoming faith and not be ashamed when they stand before the Lord Jesus at His second Coming, or they can remain in the structure of the old wineskin drinking old wine so that when the Great Tribulation breaks upon the whole world in a great deluge of evil they will be completely overwhelmed by it, backslide and go into apostasy. Matt 24v12,21,45-25v13, Luke 18v1-8, 21v36, 2Thess 2v1-3.

### **Appendix I: Vision by A C Valdez, Sr.**

In 1929, I was preaching in Vancouver, British Columbia. I had gone to the 6th Avenue Church that seats 1,000 people. The old building is gone. I sat down on the platform and looked down at the congregation for the Sunday morning service. There were 18 people. I had crossed the continent from Los Angeles to get to that meeting--18 people in my first service. My first thought was, My Lord and my God, the nerve, asking me to come across the country to stand here in front of 18 people. Now, that was my first thought. Now, I no sooner thought that when God spoke to my heart and said, "Son, I want you to comfort these people." They needed comfort, Brother. He gave me the capacity to comfort them. I started preaching comforting words. If I had given way to the human, Brother, I would have skinned them alive and tacked their hides up on the wall. People in a condition like that don't need a skinning; they need comfort. God helped me. He poured in the oil and the wine. He helped me to comfort those people. They began to cry all over the place, as they needed comfort. The tears began to stream down their cheeks. They had gone through a terrible trial in that city, and the name of "Pentecost" was in the newspapers of that city, and it wasn't very good. The things that they had put into the newspapers were enough to keep most anybody away. I had 18 people in the inside and thousands on the outside. God began to work, and the Spirit began to come forth. By the following Sunday the place was well filled. The Holy Ghost began to bring them in. By the end of the third week they had to take down the partition that separated the coat room from the main auditorium to put more seats in that auditorium that seated a thousand. It packed out. They packed the place, standing up and down the winding stairs and outside of the church building and out into the street. The glory of God came down. Souls began to get saved, and the sick were healed. We had a glorious victory over the world of flesh and the devil. The ministers were so happy. They said, "Lord, in spite of that death, you've given us victory." Right in the middle of that victory, I stood in 6th Avenue Church one day with the power of God on me. All of a sudden the ceiling just disappeared. Now, when I say "vision," my friends, I know that some visions are what the Bible calls "night visions," like in a dream. You will find that in the Bible. Dreams are also called "visions." Generally speaking, a vision is differentiated by what you see with your eyes open, that which you see when you are not asleep. In this particular case I was standing on my feet, when all of a sudden the walls and the ceiling just faded right out. I began to see this vision, and the Lord showed me. I looked up and saw what answers to the description of an ICBM (Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile), just as real as any picture that you would see--or the real thing if you've ever seen one of those missiles. It was just as real as you would look upon one if it were right in front of you, two or three feet away! I saw it. It was passing over a skim of clouds, not heavy clouds, but a thin skim of clouds. I was standing on the side of this mountain, a residential district. I was looking over into a bay area. It would appear like I was in Berkeley, if you've ever been to Berkeley, and the Berkeley hills. I was looking into the bay area toward San Francisco, the San Francisco Bay region, that direction. I saw the freeway. I don't say that it was the Oakland freeway that is there today. I don't know



where it was, my friends. I do know this, that I was standing on the side of this mountain, overlooking a huge metropolis, when I saw this missile directed toward the city; and suddenly, being electronically controlled, no doubt, it plummeted right down into the city and then exploded. Then I saw the fireball, which answers to the description of what I have seen in a civil defence film release of the first hydrogen bomb explosion. This happened in 1929! The atom was not split until 1932! Yet I saw it as clear as I see you here tonight. There was a purpose in it. I have been warning people ever since that this thing is coming! As the day approaches, my friends, I feel more vibrant than ever before! I have got to bear testimony to what I saw with my eyes! I have got to warn God's people that they must live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit and be filled with the Spirit if they want God's protection in these last days! I saw this thing blossom out in all of its beautiful colors. Did you ever see a picture of it? It is a beautiful sight, but it is a horrible sight. All of the colors of the rainbow you can see in that big ball as it swells out. Then the pressure that it creates following the explosion, it demolishes everything before it. It leaves a crater over 300 feet deep and over 2 miles across. It is capable of destroying a huge metropolis the size of New York City in one blast. Even though there were no freeways in 1929, I saw freeways. I saw them run and jump in their cars to escape, but there was no escape! I saw the aftermath of this explosion. I saw all of the details. The Spirit of the Lord picked me up. Like St. Paul, whether in the body or out of the body, I don't know! All I know is, my friends, that God took me and whisked me across that area where the bomb hit in the midst of that huge metropolis. There was nothing left. The center where it struck was molten, like molten glass. It wasn't, my friends, until I was carried way beyond the residential area that I began to see any sign of debris. Finally, I came to what looked similar to snow or sand drifts piled up against the fences and buildings. I saw piles of iron, like broom straw, only much finer than broom straw. It was in piles and in patterns--everything completely destroyed! Finally, way, way out, beyond what I felt was the residential area, I began to find signs of human beings, only in pieces--torsos, heads, hands, arms, and legs. They were scattered around everywhere! The Spirit of the Lord carried me out farther. I began to find signs of life. People were running. Everybody was blind. (I didn't know in 1929 that if you are 35 miles away from the explosion and you happened to be looking in that direction, you would never see again. I didn't know that at that time.) Everybody was blind, my friends. They were running and screaming and bumping up against this and that and the other, bouncing back, children blind and screaming and crying out for their parents and parents for their children. The farther I went, the more the confusion, and the cries increased. My friends, even tonight, while I am speaking to you, I can hear those cries! I can hear those cries, children and parents screaming out for one another! It was a terrible sight to behold! If I were to live 10,000 years, I know I could just close my eyes and hear those screams and see the terror that was written all over the faces of parents and children! A terrible sight, indeed. Then, my friends, the Spirit of the Lord took me. Oh, I wonder how fast I was going. I could see the mountains and the hills just passing before me. I came sweeping down over a large valley. In the distance I could see, as I began to approach, a body of people that looked like tens of thousands. I don't know how many were there. It was a sea of people. Long before I got there, I could see. As I came down closer, I could discern them. They had their handkerchiefs. They were wiping their tears from their eyes. Then for the first time I began to hear heavenly anthems. I could hear the Hallelujahs, in bass and tenor and soprano and alto, voices blending together. That mass of humanity was lifted together by the heavenly music. I came right down in the midst of them. There they were, God's people. This is what I saw, friends. They were all dressed up like they were ready for the Sunday service. Their hair was parted. Nothing was disturbed. There was no soil on their shirts. They were cared for so perfectly that everything was in order, my friends. Their faces were clean. Their clothing was clean. Everything was in order! The only word you could use to describe them would be "meticulous" Meticulous! Glory to God! What a wonderful thing to be in the hands of God! I say that God is going to protect his people in these last days IF they live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit and keep filled with the Spirit! Dan 3v26,27.

## **Appendix II: Some Practical Advice On Private Prayer.**

### 1) Use your Bible in your prayer time:

I have proved that Bible study with prayer is the best way of seeking God for hours in prayer, recorded Bible readings also have real value, and can provide valuable inspiration and aid to prayer while driving the car, but "watch and pray."

### 2) Use the gift of tongues that the Holy Spirit has given to you:

The gift of tongues is given primarily for prayer and worship, and if used diligently it will not only bring answers to prayer for ourselves and others, it will also build faith, love and spiritual strength in us. This gift enables us to praise and worship the Lord as He deserves, and gives us the ability to express the otherwise inexpressible love and devotion that we feel for Him. 1Cor 14v2,4,14,15,17, Acts 2v4,11, 10v44-46.

### 3) Do use your hymn book:

In 1Cor 14v15, Paul said we should sing and pray with the understanding as well as in tongues. Eph 5v18-20, Col 3v15-17. We can do this by reading and singing hymns that express what we feel and desire. In Acts 16v25, the literal sense is, "praying, they sang hymns." Use the great hymns of the Church; for they cover every need and circumstance, as well as every aspect of prayer and praise. Mature Christians need hymns of depth and substance, use this Divine treasury of Christian experience.

4) Use recorded sacred music:

Some recorded sacred music has a great anointing; and it can be a great blessing to listen to them in our prayer times and our tasks around the home. Sacred music is a great blessing, particularly if we are experiencing spiritual conflict, or are in physical need. Elisha used music to carry him into the presence of God; he asked for a minstrel to play while he sought God in prayer; "and it came to pass, when the minstrel played, the hand of the Lord came upon him." 2Kings 3v14-16. In both Bible study and prayer, I have proved the value and divinely ordained inspiration of sacred music, it has been more blessing to me than I can ever tell. Do use this heavenly means of grace.

5) Don't be tied to one posture, or one time of prayer:

We know from Eph 3v14, that Paul knelt in prayer, but he did not limit his praying to kneeling and praying. Paul told us to "Rejoice always; never stop praying; in everything give thanks; for this is God's will in Christ Jesus for you." 1Thess 5v16-18. Paul stresses the importance of a life of prayer, not just a time of prayer. Do not just kneel and pray, sit and pray, walk and pray, work and pray, and rest and relax and pray. We can practice and enjoy prayer at any time. "Sitting." Acts 2v2. With "feet fast in stocks. Acts 16v24,25. "Lifting to heaven holy, loving and devoted hands, which are unstained by anger, disputes and dissensions." 1Tim 2v8. The most important attitude in prayer, is the posture of love and dedication to God and others.

6) Follow the pattern for prayer that Jesus gave us in, "The Lord's prayer":

Jesus tells us the attitudes of heart and mind that will bring a knowledge of God, a fullness of the Spirit and answered prayer.

7) Raise your hands (Exodus 17v8-16 with 1Tim 2v1-8):

When Moses let his arms drop due to being weary, Amalek prevailed over Israel, but when his arms were then supported by Hur and Aaron until the going down of the sun, Israel then prevailed and Joshua defeated Amalek. When a believer raises their hands when praying (see also Ezra 9v5, Neh 8v6, Psalm 28v2, 63v4, 88v9, 119v48, 134v2, 141v2), this has the effect of releasing divine power into the heavenlies against Satan and the powers of darkness and shutting them down and de-energising them, making them powerless and so rendering the servants of Satan powerless (whom they energise).

### **Appendix III: "The Lord's Prayer."**

In answer to the request of the disciple in Luke 11v1, in Luke 11v2-4, the Lord Jesus then gives them a "pattern" of how to pray (i.e. this is the "pattern" He had used during the first thirty years of His life at Nazareth and in His Earthly ministry, except He had NO sin to confess in connection with the phrase "and forgive us our sins/debts, Matt 6v12, Luke 11v4). This "pattern" is commonly referred to as "The Lord's Prayer," however, it is not an actual prayer, but the "pattern" of how we should pray (Greek, "proseuchomai" (Strong's NT4336), which is used in both Matt 6v9 and Luke 11v2). This is the 2nd place in the New Testament where this "pattern" has been recorded, the first being in Matt 6v5-15 (esp. v9-13).

Matt 6v9-13 states:

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

Luke 11v2-4 reads:

"And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil."

The Essential Attitudes Of Heart And Mind In Prayer.

Jesus tells us the attitudes of heart and mind that bring a knowledge of God, a fullness of the Spirit and answered prayer.

We must realise our position in Christ, we are sons of God.

"When you pray, say, Father." In Jesus we have a new and blessed relationship with the Father; we are brethren of Christ, joint heirs with Christ, and God's own beloved children. 1John 3v1, John 15v9, 17v23, Rom 8v17, Heb 2v10-20,

6v13-20. Hallelujah!

We must have a continual spirit of worship.

"Hallowed, revered, and honoured, be thy name." God is seeking worshippers, not empty flattery, which God deplores. True worship recognises with sincere gratitude and deep love that we owe everything we are, have and will have to our Creator and Redeemer. John 4v23,24, Matt 15v7-9, Mark 7v6-9, God is worthy of all our respect, adoration, love and esteem. Rev 5v11-14.

We must desire to see God's kingdom and will to be manifested on earth.

"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." There is not only desire and longing; there is positive action and costly sacrifice, under God's direction, to see His kingdom extended. This is a personal matter between ourselves and God, we must always be very careful to distinguish between people who put pressure upon us to build up their personal kingdoms, or other human pressure groups, and the will of God. John 21v19-22, Matt 10v37-42, Acts 15v25,26.

We must be free from anxiety over material needs.

"Give us this day our daily bread." We must believe, as it is absolutely true, that our heavenly Father loves us intensely and will meet all our needs. Phil 4v19, Matt 6v25-34. A spirit of materialism and worldly anxiety will effectively incapacitate us from useful service for the kingdom of God. 1John 2v15-17. This does not mean, of course, that we have to neglect our families, those who do this "have denied the faith," and are "worse than unbelieving heathen." 1Tim 5v8.

We must have a tender conscience and repentance from any known sin.

"Forgive us our sins." In Luke 11v4, Luke uses the word "hamartia," "sins;" whereas, Matt 6v12 uses "opheilemata;" a word that Paul uses in Rom 4v4 to speak of legal debts. Christ obviously used both; He taught that our sins are debts to God and others. Wilful sin closes our hearts to the blessing and love of God. Heb 10v19-39, 1John 1v5 to 2v6.

We must have a forgiving spirit towards those who have sinned against us.

We must beware of roots of bitterness and an unforgiving spirit, for Jesus warns us that we can only ask for forgiveness "in proportion as, or like as," "hos," we forgive others, a truly solemn warning, which is reiterated by Christ elsewhere. Matt 6v12,14,15, Mark 11v25,26. Jesus tells us to rebuke Christians who sin against us, and IF they repent, we must forgive them. Luke 17v3,4. Let us make every effort to achieve reconciliation and forgiveness with Christians, and make it easy for those who have offended us to repent, and exercise a forgiving spirit to them. However, Jesus said that repentance is necessary before fellowship can be restored, and failure to repent after the procedure laid down in Matt 18v15-17, means that a person loses their rights to be treated as a Christian. Let us remember that God's forgiveness is always conditional upon repentance. Matt 5v23,24, 18v20-35, Mark 11v22-26, Luke 6v37, 23v34, Eph 4v30-32, Gal 6v1-3, 1John 4v20,21. Jesus certainly did not try to be reconciled with Israel's religious leaders; His attacks upon them were extremely contentious. Matt 23v13-39, Luke 11v39-54. Christ asked the Father to forgive the soldiers who were crucifying Him, they really did not know what they were doing; however, there was no such prayer for the religious leaders of Israel, who knew full well what they were doing, Jesus said they had seen God and hated Him. Luke 23v34, John 15v22-25. Stephen manifested a forgiving spirit to his implacable enemies, and asked God not to lay his murder to their charge; however, God could not forgive them, for He cannot forgive unrepentant sin, even though He may long to restore and pardon. Acts 7v59,60, Matt 23v37-39, Luke 19v41-44. Christians who hurt and offend others, and do not repent, face an inevitable discipline from their heavenly Father, and so do those who fail to forgive others, when those who offend them repent. We know that we have a genuine revival when Christians get right with each other and fervently love each other. Rom 12v14-21, 2Cor 13v1, Gal 6v1. Our enormous debt to God should keep us from fighting over our comparatively trifling debts to each other. Matt 18v21-35, Heb 12v14,15.

We must allow God to lead us from dangerous paths.

Christians should have a fear of sin, and a fear of getting out of the will of God. As someone has said, "lead us not into temptation," is an Eastern way of saying, "Father, please keep us from going out of your will, into paths that lead to spiritual danger or sin." God can, by various means, stop us from going into spiritual danger, if we are prayerful and willing to be led by Him. Psalm 141v4, 1Cor 10v13, Acts 16v6-9. We should always be prepared for our heavenly Father's stops or diversions.

We must trust God to deliver us from evil, and the Evil One.

In the phrase, "lead us not into temptation," Jesus was speaking of dangers and temptations that can be avoided by

prayerful living. See Luke 22v40. Here He speaks of conflicts with evil that we cannot avoid and must face. These conflicts demand a prayerful life and a real faith in God, for we cannot defeat Satan on our own, we must draw near to God before we can effectively resist the Devil. James 4v6-8. Persecution or opposition of some kind or other will always come against the consecrated child of God, and supernatural opposition from Satan is often channelled through his earthly friends. Matt 4v1-11, Acts 13v50-52, 2Cor 1v8-10, Eph 1v2, 6v10-20, 2Thes 3v1-3, 2Tim 2v12, 3v12. We must believe that God will deliver us, and will answer our prayers, as we follow and obey our Lord's pattern of prayer, and if our prayers accomplish anything, we must remember that His power has brought it to pass, and we must give Him all the glory.

#### **Appendix IV: Put On The Whole Armour Of God Eph 6v10-20.**

To deliver the captives of Satan, we first have to have victory over him in our lives, we have to bind the strong man before we can spoil his goods. We have to overcome Satan by answering every lying temptation with the Truth, we have to put on ALL the armour of God. Matt 12v18-30, Mark 3v22-30, Eph 6v10-20. It is as follows: -

The belt of truth: A right knowledge of God's Word and Christian Doctrine.

The breastplate of righteousness: God's Word of Truth is applied to the life and it results in a practical holy life, the heart is kept pure, there is integrity of purpose, truthfulness, sincerity, genuine love and faithfulness.

The feet shod with the Gospel: An evangelistic fervour; a desire to extend God's kingdom and preach God's good news of forgiveness and peace.

The shield of faith: The 4 feet by 2 feet Roman type shield is spoken of here. A complete trust in God and His word at all times, can quench all Satan's flaming darts.

The helmet of salvation: A disciplined and pure thought-life. We think what God thinks, and weigh everything up in the light of God's Word and our salvation. False doctrines, impure thoughts, and worldliness are banished from the Christian mind. All is looked upon and judged in the light of an eternal future.

The sword of the Spirit: The ability to use God's Word against Satan and his children. This presupposes a knowledge of the Scriptures and essential Christian Truth.

Prayer: (Greek, "proseuche" (Strong's NT:4335) and "enteuxis" (Strong's NT:1783) which mean "the making of interventions with power so as to affect a change in circumstances"). The spear, or bow and arrow? A vigilant, intelligent and persevering prayer life, for all the saints and the ministries that God has set in the Church. Rom 12v6-8, 1Cor 12v28, Eph 4v8-11.

#### **Appendix V: The spiritual qualities that make up the character of the overcomer.**

The spiritual qualities that make up the character of the overcomer. Rev 2v7,11,17,26-28, 3v5,12,21.

Christ has solemnly warned the Christians of the last days that they will have to live very careful, prayerful and godly lives if they are to overcome and come through the gross darkness of the Great Tribulation with flying colours. Dan 7v25, 8v23, 12v1, Matt 7v24-29, 24v11-13,42-25v13, Mark 4v19, Luke 8v14, 18v1-8, 1John 2v28, Rev 7v9,14-17.

**NOTE: There is no such doctrine as a secret pre-tribulation Advent and Rapture taught in the Scriptures!**

The spiritual qualities that cause a person to be an overcomer and the things an overcomer does and is are as follows:

1) They Love The Word Of God. They are not lazy in Bible study, they learn the doctrines and truths of God's Word, they know truth and long for more, it is the joy and rejoicing of their heart. Joshua 1v8, Psalm 1 all, John 17v17,26, Acts 17v10,11, 20v32, Rom 6v17, Eph 6v14,17, 2Tim 3v15-17, Heb 5v11-14, 2Pet 2v2.

2) They Love To Do God's Will. They actively serve God, they seek the lost, they have an evangelical fervour. Isaiah 52v7, Matt 6v10, 26v42, 28v18-20, John 4v34, 5v30, 12v26, Rom 12v1,2, Col 1v9, Heb 10v7, 12v23. They obey the will of God as revealed by the Spirit of God. Rom 8v14, Eph 4v30, 1Thess 5v17, Rev 2v7,11,17,29, 3v6,13,22. They obey the will of God as revealed by the Word of God, e.g. "follow after love and desire spiritual gifts." Matt 7v21, 12v30, Luke 6v46, 11v34, John 14v21-24, 1Cor 14v1.

3) They Love To Seek Their Father's Face. They love to pray, they have a life of public and private praise and prayer, they tarry for the Spirit, they wait on God. Psalm 27v8, 34v3,6, 37v9, 62v1,2,5,6 84v4-10, 91v1,2,9,14,15, Matt 6v5-15, Luke 11v1-13, 18v1-8, Eph 6v18,19, 1Thess 3v10, 5v17, Jude v20,21.

4) They Love To Walk With God In Their Daily Lives. They live a practical holy life. Rom 8v5-14, Gal 5v16-26, Eph 4v1-3,17-32, 5v1-6v9. By the grace of God they keep themselves pure and in victory. They are not in bondage to sin. By the grace of their Saviour they have overcome the world, the flesh and the Devil. Psalm 37v23,24, Matt 5v8, John 16v33, Rom 6v14-23, 2Cor 7v1, Phil 3v7-21, 1Thess 4v2,3, 1John 2v13-17, 3v1-10, 4v4, 5v4, Rev 14v1-5.

5) They Love the Brethren. Psalm 133v1-3, John 13v34,35, 15:12-15, Acts 1v14, 2v1,44-47, 4v32,37, Phil 4v1, 1Thess 2v11, 1John 3v10-24, 4v7-5v3. They love to have fellowship with God's people, and dwell on the things of God together. Deut 6v4-9, Prov 27v17, Mal 3v16-18, Heb 10v24,25. In the home as well as the church building. Matt 23v37-39, Acts 2v1-4 with 1v13, Rom 16v5, 1Cor 16v19, Col 4v15, Philemon v2. Our conversation should be centred on heavenly things and should be such as becomes the Gospel of Christ, gracious and loving like those of our gracious Lord, "They were all astonished at the beautiful words that fell from His lips." Luke 4v22 cf. Col 4v6. If this is not so, there is a definite need of reconsecration. Matt 15v10,11, Mark 7v20-23, Eph 5v4,5.

6) The letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation give us a very good idea of what the Lord expects of the Christian, and what an overcoming Christian is like. We read the Christians are to have works, love, service, faith, patience, increasing works, a willingness to be faithful unto death, a separation from the world, spiritual alertness, and the thing that will assure all these, they must keep their fervent first love for Christ. Perhaps more qualities of the overcomer could be added to these, but these will suffice. In ALL things we are to follow the example of Christ, for by His grace we can overcome ALL that comes our way. Matt 11v28-30, 13v23, Luke 8v8,15, John 15v1-8, 1John 2v6, 4v17, Rev 12v10,11.

**NOW is the time to prepare for the dark evil days of the Great Tribulation, for those who are unprepared for it will surely backslide and go into apostasy. Luke 6v46-49, 2Thess 2v3.**

#### **Appendix VI: Looking For And Hastening The Coming Of The Day Of God.**

It has been the consensus amongst Christians for many centuries that they individually or collectively can do absolutely nothing to hasten the coming of the day of God. However, it is the complete opposite that is true, 2Peter 3v12 states:

**"Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God**, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?" (NKJV)

"Hastening" is in Greek, "speúdontas," the present active participle (accusative also) of "speúdo" (NT:4692), which means "to speed" i.e. urge on (diligently or earnestly); by implication, to await eagerly, (make, with) haste unto, to cause something to happen soon, to hurry up. Archbishop Trench, in his work "The Authorized Version of the New Testament" makes the following comment:

"..."Hastening on;" i.e. "causing the day of the Lord to come more quickly by helping to fulfil those conditions without which it cannot come; that day being no day inexorably fixed, but one the arrival of which it is free to the church to hasten on by faith and by prayer."

Both "looking for" and "hastening" in the Greek are in the present continuous tense (active voice), which shows that each individual believer **MUST** keep praying (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336) and "enteuchomai" (NT:1793), both of which have the meaning, "to make "interventions" (with power) so as to affect a change in the circumstances.") and watching for the signs of the Lord's Second Coming to appear and to keep it up until He actually comes in great power and glory to destroy the wicked and to take His people home. Luke 17v20-18v8 (esp. 18v1), Luke 21v36 (RSV), Rev 5v1-14 (esp. v8), 8v2-6 (esp. v3,4).

With this in mind, each individual believer can by praying (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336) and "enteuchomai" (NT:1793), which mean, "to make "interventions" (with power) so as to affect a change in the circumstances.") hasten the coming the day of God. The following eight **NBs** contain the thoughts and great desires that are upon God's heart at this present time that He is seeking His Church to pray ("proseuchomai" (NT:4336) and "enteuchomai" (NT:1793)) into being and so to quicken the coming of the day of God.

**NB1:** As the last seven years (the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel's 70 week prophecy, Daniel 9v20-27) of this Age (the Age of Grace) rapidly approaches, especially the last three and a half years of this Age (the period known as The Great Tribulation, Dan 9v27, Matt 24v15-28, Rev 7v9-17), the Devil is busy endeavouring to put his evil servants into positions of power and authority; wicked people who will put the Devil's and Antichrist's evil plans into operation (which is to kill as many people (both believers and non-believers) and destroy as much as possible, before they themselves are destroyed at Christ's Second Coming by being consumed by the breath of His mouth, 2Thess 2v8). It is during the last three and a half years of this Age, that the Mystery of Lawlessness (the Devil's evil plan) will work fully; which will be the result of the Devil and his evil Angels being expelled from the Heavenly places by Michael and his Angels into the Earth, and God's restraint upon the Devil and the powers of darkness being completely removed, hence The Great Tribulation will begin, which should be

pointed out is due to the "great wrath of the Devil, because he knows that he has a short time," and **NOT** the wrath of God. Rev 12v7-17 (esp. v 12), 2Thess 2v1-12.

The Devil will then proceed to put his evil plan (the Mystery of Lawlessness) into operation through Antichrist and other evil persons, whom he has put into positions of power and authority (Matt 4v8-10, Rev 13v1-10, 16v12-16), so it is **NOW** most vital, that we, the believers, are obedient to this most important injunction made by Paul in 1Timothy 2v1-8 (with Rom 13v1-7), to make "interventions" (with power) ("proseuchomai" (NT:4336) and "entunchano" (NT:1793), 1Tim 2v1), (for and against) "for all men, for kings and all who are in authority," that God will put honest, upright, wise, godly and compassionate persons into places of power and authority, and thwart the Devil's attempts to put his own evil servants into these places; for it is the Most High Who rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomsoever He wishes, and sets over it the lowest of men. Daniel 4v17.

**NB2:** Rev 12v6,14 states:

"And the woman fled into the wilderness, where **she hath a place prepared of God**, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days...And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that **she might fly into the wilderness, into her place**, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent."

This group of specially prepared Christians (that flee from Antichrist in Jerusalem and the surrounding area) is definitely said to have a place prepared by God for them to escape to at the beginning of the Great Tribulation; it is **MOST** important that Christians should pray (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336)) **NOW**, for God to prepare the areas of Edom, Moab and Ammon ("the wilderness" that is referred to in Rev 12v14 and which are situated in the eastern part of modern day Jordan) to be ready to receive this "glorious woman" at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. Christians firstly should invoke the following covenant names in the heavenly places over these three areas (and modern day Jordan), Yahweh Tsabaoth, the Lord of Hosts (1Sam 17v45, Psalm 46v7,11), and Yahweh Jireh, the Lord Who See and Provides (Gen 22v14), that these areas will know continuous angelic protection from this time forth, right up until the second coming of the Lord Jesus, but especially during the dark evil days of the Great Tribulation, and that **ALL** things will be **FULLY** "prepared" by "the Lord Who Sees and Provides" for His people. Secondly, Christians should also impart the divine benediction by using the priestly blessing of Numbers 6v22-27 upon Edom, Moab, Ammon and modern day Jordan. If Christians pray like this **NOW**, these areas of Edom, Moab and Ammon, will most certainly be **FULLY** prepared and protected by God, to receive His people at the beginning off the Great Tribulation, so that they are fed, kept, guarded and protected right up until the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus. **NOTE:** Rev 5v8, "...which are the prayers (Greek "proseuche" (NT:4335), "to make interventions with power so as to affect a change in circumstances.") of saints." 2Pet 3v12. (We see in Rev 4 and 5, the preliminaries in Heaven just before the seals are opened, that is, before the events of the last seven years of this Age start to come to pass (Daniel's Seventieth prophetic week, Dan 9v27). The seven seals reveal Satan's evil plans for the world during the last seven years of this age. Paul calls Satan's plans "the mystery of iniquity." 2Thess 2v7. The seals reveal the major catastrophic stages of the career of Antichrist from the time when he makes the covenant, until the great day of the wrath of the Lamb brings his evil career to a close. It is the "prayers of the saints" (Rev 5v7,8) that precipitates God the Father to invite the Lord Jesus to take the Book out of His right hand so as to loose the seven seals thereof to bring to pass the last seven years of this age. Dan 9v27, 6v1-17, 8v1)

**NB3:** We read in Matt 9v37,38:

"Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, **but the labourers are few**; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, **that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.**"

It is also most essential for Christians (especially those Christians in Israel) to pray (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336), "to make interventions with power so as to affect a change in circumstances.") **NOW** for God to raise up the Two Witnesses, and other Christians whom He will set in the Body of Christ with the same level of power and authority as the Two Witnesses. We **MUST** also pray (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336)) for God to give these "labourers" the same kind of power and authority that He gave unto the prophet Elijah (1Kings 17v1-21v29, 2Kings 1v1-2v11 Dan 11v32, Rev 11v3-6), and then to "send them forth into His harvest." It is also a necessity for us to pray (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336)) for God to fulfil such prophecies and promises, as those stated in Rev 11v3-6 and Zech chapter 4, but especially the wonderful promise and prophecy that He spoke through His servant Malachi in Mal 4v5,6 (with Luke 1v17 and Matt 17v11):

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers, the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Christians **MUST** pray (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336)) **NOW** for "last day Elijah ministries" to be set in the Body of Christ by God! Rev 5v8.

The number of "last day Elijah ministries" that God will be able to set in the Church will be directly proportional to the amount of praying (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336)) performed by the Church for God to set such ministries in it; i.e. the more the Body of Christ prays (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336)) for God to set such ministries in the church, the **MORE** "last day Elijah ministries" will **actually be set in it by God!**

Behind every great prophet and prophetess, there has **ALWAYS** been someone behind the scenes, who has earnestly sought the Lord and prayed (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336)) them into their ministry. Very often this is the result of the prayers (Greek "proseuche" (NT:4335)) of a godly loving mother or aunt; as in the case of Jeremiah, when his aunt, the great Old Testament prophetess, Huldah, was the person responsible for praying (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336)) him into his prophetic ministry as a young man. We can gauge the depth of her spirituality and prophetic ministry from the incident when King Josiah asked Hilkiah, the high priest, to inquire of the Lord as what should be done at that time, Hilkiah promptly went and sought out Huldah, and as soon as he had asked for the word of the Lord, Huldah was able to give it to him straight away. However, when the remnant of those left in the southern kingdom came and asked Jeremiah to seek the word of the Lord for them, it was ten days before the reply came from the Lord for them (which they didn't heed anyway); and so from this, we can see just how in touch with the Lord Huldah was and the depth of her spirituality and prophetic ministry! 2Kings 22v3-20 (esp. v14), Jer 1v1-19 (esp. v6), 32v7, Jer 42v1-22 (esp. v7).

**NB4:** Rev 12v1 (with Rev 12v2-17) states:

"And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars."

The vision of this glorious woman reveals to us one of God's major purposes for the last days. She represents a group of people, who are foreknown, designed, specially created and empowered by God for the Great Tribulation. It is a group of praying (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336)) people, with prepared hearts and special ministries for the last days, who will operate with awesome power as a prayer-warrior group behind the scenes. God also gives a definite promise that He will protect, provide and empower the seeking hearts in His Church in a new and special way in the last days, and will not leave His Church defenceless in the Great Tribulation. This glorious woman reveals that part of the Church will be clothed with the fullness of God's power, and will be transported, protected and fed by God. **This group is a major part of God's answer to the mystery of iniquity, and it is one of many such groups, who operate in Israel and other parts of the world.**

Another of the desires upon the great loving Heart of our Heavenly Father, is the necessity for His people to get ready and prepared for the dark evil days of the Great Tribulation; however at the present moment in time, very few, if any, Teachers or Preachers in the Church are talking about these vital Truths, and when they do mention it, it is nearly always to state that the Christian does not need to be concerned about the Great Tribulation, because they will miss it, having been raptured before it starts. **I wish to state here and now, that those (so called) preachers and teachers who propagate such lies, the Lord Jesus plainly states are amongst the false prophets and teachers of the last days, and a severe judgement awaits them!** The Lord Jesus clearly states that His Second Coming will be visible to every eye, and will be with great power and glory, the elements melting with fervent heat, which will be accompanied by the greatest earthquake that the earth has ever known! It is **NOW** vital for **EVERY** Christian (especially those Christians in Israel) to get close to the Lord Jesus, and pray (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336)) that He will prepare His people into such groups (as represented by the glorious woman in Rev 12v1) in every country around the world, but **ESPECIALLY** in Israel! Dan 11v32, Joel 2v28-32, Zech 12v8, Matt 24v21-30,48-51, 28v20, Luke 18v1-8, 2Pet 3v10, James 3v1, Rev 1v7, 12v1-17, 16v18.

**NB5:** Psalm 2v8 and Rev 5v7 reads:

"**Ask of me**, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession...And **he came and took the book** out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne."

The "He came and took the book," is the fulfilment of the "ask of me" of Psalm 2v8, it is when God brings to pass the prophetic events that will close the Age, and bring in Christ's kingdom. Psalm 2v8, Dan 2v44,45, 7v13.

It is most important for **ALL** believers to pray (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336), "to make interventions with power so as to affect a change in circumstances.") **NOW** that God will invite the Lord Jesus to come and ask Him for His inheritance and possession, so that He takes the Book out of His Father's right hand, so as to open the seven seals thereof to bring to pass the last seven years of this Age, so that the Father can then, at the end of these seven years, send the Lord Jesus to come and deal with the wicked once and for all, to take His people home and bring in everlasting righteousness by sealing up vision and prophecy and setting up the Millennium Kingdom. **NOTE:** Rev 5v8, "...which are the prayers (Greek "proseuche" (NT:4335)) of the saints..." with Matt 6v9,10, "After this manner therefore pray (Greek "proseuchomai" (NT:4336)) ye...**Thy kingdom come.**" (It is the "prayers of the saints" (Rev 5v7,8) that precipitates God the Father to

invite the Lord Jesus to take the Book out of His right hand so as to loose the seven seals thereof to bring to pass the last seven years of this age. Dan 9v27, 6v1-17, 8v1) Dan 9v27, Matt 6v5-15, Luke 11v1-13 (esp. 11v2), 2Pet 3v12, Rev 11v15-19.

(The seven seals show the major stages in the career of Antichrist, from the covenant, to seven years later, when he and his evil system is destroyed on the great day of the Lamb's wrath. An angel asks who is worthy to rule the world after Antichrist has brought the world to almost complete ruin; the answer is only Christ and His faithful brethren. Rev 5v5,9,10, Rom 8v19. This age will close when Jesus has enough brethren to rule the Millennial kingdom with Him. Rev 14v1-5, 17v14, 2Pet 3v12. John's vision in Rev 4 and 5, was not a revelation of events in Heaven in the time of John, it was a vision of events in Heaven just prior to the last seven years of this age. When Jesus opens the seven seals, it starts the last 7 years of this age, and the mystery of iniquity. Dan 9v20-27.

Satan's plans are restrained by God, and even when the mystery of iniquity is allowed to have its final fling, God reigns and His kingdom will surely come quickly. All of Heaven's inhabitants are perfectly satisfied at Christ's worthiness to open the seals and receive the kingdom, and they rejoice that divine love will rule the nations, after the evil rule of men. John was heartbroken and wept because no one could open the book and loose the seals, but one of the elders comforted John and said, "Weep not; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the book, and loose the seals thereof." As God, Jesus was the source of David's family and the means of its sustenance, anchorage and strength; as a man He was the offspring of David. Isaiah 11v1,10, Rom 1v3,4, Rev 22v16. John looks for this Lion of Judah, but sees a Lamb as it had been slain. The most courageous act of the Lion of Judah was His death as the Lamb of God, this shows His courage and love more than all else. The title "Lamb" occurs 29 times in Revelation, but it is only applied to Jesus 4 times in the rest of the New Testament. John 1v29,36, Acts 8v32, 1Pet 1v19. Men often use mighty beasts and birds of prey as symbols of power, but God uses a Lamb to show the greatest act of courage, strength and love the world has even known; Calvary is the ultimate act of power and love. The Lamb of God is worthy to reign because of the sacrificial love revealed in His death upon Calvary.

The Lamb of God has not only redeemed sinners, but has made them kings and priests unto God as well, and the faithful saints will reign with Christ in the Millennium and eternity. Rev 5v10, 20v4-6, 22v3-5. Christ has won the right to reign, the Father has no favourites, He has "no jobs for the boys," those who rule will have to prove their worthiness to rule, even as Jesus has proved His worthiness to reign. Rev 3v21, 5v5, Phil 2v6-11, Rom 2v11, Acts 10v34, Heb 5v5-10, Dan 7v13,14. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

**NB6:** On the day of Pentecost, Peter stood up and said in Acts 2v16-21 (with Joel 2v28-32):

"...This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; **And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh:** and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, **before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.**"

The Lord Jesus, during the His Post-Resurrection ministry to the Apostles, had told them "I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high," when He (the Holy Spirit) that was with them, would then enter them, which was the Baptism in the Holy Spirit that they would receive. Luke 24v49, John 7v39, 14v17, Acts 2v4,38. It was during the Post-Resurrection ministry that the Lord Jesus had instructed them regarding Joel's prophecy, that this was the glorious prophecy which referred to the "Promise of the Father" (i.e. power from on high), and that it was **vital** for them to tarry in the Upper Room, and pray (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336), "to make interventions with power so as to affect a change in circumstances.") this great prophecy and promise into reality. The Lord Jesus did not tell them the precise timing of when they would receive the Promise of the Father (this was because that if they had known, some of them might have just sat back and said, "well I don't need to pray (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336)), God is going to do it anyway"), but simply said, "ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Acts 1v5. The Apostles were obedient to His command, and with other disciples (one hundred and twenty of them in all), they prayed (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336)) Joel's wonderful great prophecy and promise into reality. Acts 1v14,15, 2v1-4. The great outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was only a partial fulfilment of Joel's prophecy, which also had a fulfilment throughout the whole of the Age of Grace to encourage the Church to pray for revival, blessing, spiritual gifts and ministries from their risen Lord. 1Cor 12v7-11, Eph 4v7-16. Joel's great prophecy and promise has a final and complete fulfilment at the end of the Age of Grace, for it specifically says, "**it shall come to pass in the last days...I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh...before that great and notable day of the Lord come.**" Even as the one hundred and twenty disciples in the Upper Room prayed (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336)) Joel's wonderful prophecy and promise into reality on the Day of Pentecost, it is also **VITAL** for the Church to pray (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336)) **NOW** for God to pour out of His Spirit upon the Church and the world...i.e. "**upon ALL flesh.**" God's people need to claim the complete fulfilment of Joel's great prophecy and



promise **NOW**, and **MUST** continue to claim the complete fulfilment of it right up until the Lord's Second Coming. There will certainly be a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit when Daniel's Seventieth week starts, when Antichrist "confirms a covenant with many (including Israel) for one week," which also refers to the opening of the First Seal. Dan 9v27, Rev 6v1,2. Another and even greater outpouring will occur, when Antichrist breaks the covenant, and sets up his image in the Temple in Jerusalem (at the beginning of the Great Tribulation). During the last seven years of the Age of Grace, the Church and the world will know a time of the greatest worldwide revival that has ever been experienced, and **NOW** is the time for the Body of Christ to pray (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336)) so that this great outpouring becomes a reality very soon, and also is **FULLY** experienced during the last seven years of this Age. Acts 2v16-21, Rev 5v8, 11v3-6, 12v1.

**NB7:** With the Devil and his evil angels being cast out of the heavenlies into the earth, and God's restraining hand being removed from them, the Great Tribulation then ensues. The responsibility for the restraint upon the powers of darkness and the wicked upon the earth, during the Great Tribulation, will be the Church's, and it will be through each individual believer's prayers (Greek, "proseuche" (NT:4335)) and "interventions" (with power), (Greek, "enteuxis" (NT:1783)), both of which mean, "to make interventions with power so as to affect a change in circumstances."), that this restraint will occur. The amount of evil and wickedness that will be found in any society around the world during the Great Tribulation, will be inversely proportional to the amount of prayer (Greek, "proseuche" (NT:4335)) and "interventions" (with power) (Greek, "enteuxis" (NT:1783)) that the believers of that society will make, in other words, the more prayer and "interventions" (with power) that the believers make for their society in which they live, the less evil and wickedness will be manifested in it. Hence, as soon as Antichrist sets up his image in the Temple in Jerusalem and breaks the peace treaty with Israel, the Great Tribulation then ensues and these are the signs that the Christian should be earnestly watching for, so that as soon as they appear, the responsibility for restraint upon the powers of darkness, wicked persons and wickedness in the world will lie solely with the Church. It is at this time that each individual believer **MUST** start making prayers (Greek, "proseuche" (NT:4335)) and "interventions" (with power) (Greek, "enteuxis" (NT:1783)) against the evil angels and wicked people upon earth to restrain their activities. When the wicked see Divine judgement falling upon other evil persons (which will be via the believer's prayers (Greek, "proseuche" (NT:4335)) and "interventions" (with power) (Greek, "enteuxis" (NT:1783))), many (although not all) will think twice before putting their evil desires into practice to hurt, harm or kill God's dear children, hence, the believer's prayers and "interventions" (with power) will actively restrain the wicked. It will be during the Great Tribulation that the last World War will occur (before the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ), and the desire of the Devil (through Antichrist) will be to smash the world completely, which Antichrist will do with vast conventional armies and limited exchanges of nuclear weapons. So, it is vital for Christians to exercise prayer (Greek, "proseuche" (NT:4335)) and "interventions" (with power) (Greek, "enteuxis" (NT:1783)) **NOW**, so that they will be spiritually prepared for those terrible dark evil days, and can act as an effective restraint upon the powers of darkness and the wicked during the last three and half years of this Age, so that the country and society in which they live is not completely destroyed by Antichrist's armies and followers. Isaiah 26v9, Dan 9v27, 11v32,41, Zech 12v8, Luke 18v1-8, 2Thess 2v1-12, 1Tim2v1-8, Rev 6v7,8, 9v13-21, 11v3-6,18, 12v13-17.

**NB:8** Praying in tongues (diligently) will make us kings and priests unto God (through the intercessions of our Great High Priest, so that we rule upon the earth during the Millennium and the ages of ages), thus fulfilling the "mystery of God" at the seventh Trumpet. Rom 19-30, 1Cor 14v18, 2Tim 4v8, Heb 7v25, Jude v20,21,24, Rev 5v8-10, 10v7, 11v15-18, 14v1-5, 21v7, 22v5.

**Also NOTE:** Another reason why God cannot let the last seven years of this Age (of Grace) begin to come to pass is that the required number of overcoming Sons, who will replace the present world rulers (the Devil and the evil angels) in the heavenly places during the Millennium, must first be begotten, educated and tested; and so when God knows that this number is at hand, He will then invite the Lord Jesus to take the Book out of His right hand, so that He might loose the Seven Seals thereof; which will then bring to pass Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> (prophetic) week, which will end with the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus when He comes in great power and glory (so that **EVERY** eye will see Him), to deal with the wicked once and for all, to take His people home and bring in everlasting righteousness by sealing up vision and prophecy. It will be when the six and seventh seals are opened and the seventh Trumpet sounds (these all occur on the last day of this age (the Age of Grace) at the Second Coming of Christ) that the "mystery of God" will be completed. (The "mystery of God" is God's plan to put both Heaven and Earth under the rule of His Son Jesus and His bride (i.e. the Church), and to fulfil upon the earth the promise made to Abraham and his seed, Israel, that they should inherit the earth. The inhabited earth to come is not again to be put under angels, but under Christ and His brethren who overcame.) The believer who accepts the call of their Lord, to rise up with Him into the heavenly places, to conquer and defeat the Devil and powers of darkness, so as to enter into and inhabit their Heavenly Canaan, will be exercising a priestly ministry of the Melchizedek Priesthood (by manifesting God's great power and love to the worldling and Church through the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, upon earth and the heavenly places), with Jesus as their Great High Priest (after the Order of Melchizedek). It is the Christians who are exercising a priestly ministry of the Melchizedek Priesthood who will be praying (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336)) and "entunchano" (NT:1793), which mean "to make interventions with power so as to effect a change in circumstances.") for the Lord Jesus to take the Book out of the Father's Right Hand and so bring to pass the last seven years of this age. These Christians will also be praying (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336)) and "entunchano" (NT:1793)) for God to bring judgement upon the wicked who are persecuting and killing Christians during the dark evil days of the Great Tribulation. These Christians are a group of people, who are foreknown, designed, specially created and empowered by God for the

Great Tribulation; a group of praying people, with prepared hearts and special ministries for the last days, who will operate with awesome power as a prayer-warrior group behind the scenes. God also gives a definite promise that He will protect, provide and empower the seeking hearts in His Church in a new and special way in the last days, and will not leave His Church defenceless in the Great Tribulation. Some of these Christians will belong to a group of believers in Israel during the dark evil days of the Great Tribulation, who are represented by the glorious woman of Rev 12v1 (already mentioned in **NB2** and **NB4**), which reveals that part of the Church will be clothed with the fullness of God's power, and will be transported, protected and fed by God. This group is a major part of God's answer to the "mystery of iniquity," and it is one of many such groups, who operate in other parts of the world. It is these Christians who will be exercising a priestly ministry of the Melchizedek Priesthood during the last seven years of this age (and even more so during the dark evil days of the Great Tribulation) and who will be amongst those who will rule with Christ during the Millennium. (Rev 5v10, "...and hast made them kings and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.") Dan 9v20-27 (esp. v27), 10v13-21, 11v32, Matt 25v41, Mark 16v15-18, Luke 17v20-18v8, 19v11-27, 24v46-49, John 3v13, 7v37-39, 12v40, 17v24, Acts 1v4-8, 2v16-21, Rom 1v17, 4v1-25, 8v12-39, 1Cor 9v24-27, 12v1-14v40, 12v31, 15v50-54, Eph 6v12, Col 3v1,2, 1Thess 4v13-18, 2Thess 2v1-12 (esp. v8), 1Tim 2v1-8, 2Tim 4v8, Heb 2v4,5-13, 3v1-4v16, 7v25, James 1v12, 1Pet 2v1-9, 5v1-4, Rev 1v7, 4v1-5v14, 6v12-17, 7v1-8, 8v1,2-6, 10v1-11 (esp. v7), 11v15-19, 12v1,6,7-9,14-16, 14v1-5, 21v7.

**The believer, by praying (Greek, "proseuchomai" (NT:4336)) and making "interventions" (with power) (Greek, "enteuxis" (NT:1783)) as indicated in these seven NBs ("nota benes"), will surely "hasten the coming of the Day of God." 2Pet 3v12.**

Also see the "Introduction" of "Jesus Prays For His Own" at: [www.truthforthelastdays.com](http://www.truthforthelastdays.com) for a full study on the Greek words for the making of prayer.

**Appendix VII: Foundation Truths.**

**A Text Book for Young Christians.**

**By C L Parker.**

**Tutor Hampstead Bible School, Kenley, Surrey.**

**(Formerly Chaplain, Fellow, and Tutor of University College, Oxford)**

To my students, who by patient listening and unceasing questioning, have through the years, forced upon me hours of strenuous Bible study, this booklet, to which they have contributed so much, is affectionately dedicated.

**Contents.**

**Foreword.**

**Introduction.**

**Repentance From Dead Works.**

**Faith Towards God.**

**Baptism In Water.**

**Baptism In The Spirit.**

**The Laying On Of Hands.**

**The Resurrection Of The Dead.**

**Eternal Judgement.**

**The Cross Of The Lord.**

The Foundation of Repentance from Dead Works, and of Faith towards God, of the Doctrine of Baptisms, and of Laying on of Hands, of Resurrection of the Dead, and of Eternal Judgment. Heb 6v1,2.

**Foreword.**

It is a pleasure to commend to the thinking student this first edition of a book by a painstaking scholar and theologian upon the intriguing subject, which he has called "Foundation Truths."

My mind was made up before first reading the script that I would not agree with the writer simply because he was a friend of mine. It is a happy mood to be in when one can disagree reasonably. That was how I first read this textbook.

I found, however, that after reading a few pages, this care-free mood was not guaranteed any permanence: for the writer's logic, careful application of abundant scripture references and sincere appeal to his readers to prove to their own satisfaction his interpretations of fundamental truth, made it very difficult for me to disagree. This I presume was just where he wanted me—thinking—thinking for myself.

This is a textbook for the careful reader: and its subject matter is worthy of painstaking study. The doctrines considered are vital and essential to an understanding of both God and man, sin and salvation, death and life, heaven and hell.

The chapter on Eternal Punishment is very provocative and should be studied prayerfully with an open Bible at hand. This subject is as much for the heart as for the intellect. One's heart is warmed as it is plainly shown that God is not a Being with a split personality, as many must have thought Him when considering His judgments: a loving God to His own people, but fearful in hatred and revenge upon a disobedient host of unbelievers!

God is love: and at no time nor in any circumstances does He change: for in His unchanging love and mercy He provides a secure Keeping Place for the unbelievers and thus preserves the eternal peace of His own beloved people. This is Hell—God's madhouse, for the ultimately irreconcilable.

If this brief foreword were for purposes of comment, then it would be as long as the book. It is not. It is a privilege granted me to commend this book to all students of God's Word and to those who love His appearing. **George Newsholme. (An outstanding Pastor, and former Principal of the Hampstead Bible School.)**

#### **Foreword.**

It gives me great satisfaction to recommend this third edition of Foundation Truths by one of the Lord's most esteemed servants.

The value of these thought-provoking studies can never be truly estimated in mere words. I am most grateful to Lord for allowing me the privilege of hearing them expounded by the writer himself in the lecture hall of the Hampstead Bible College; there was never a dull moment!

Ever since Foundation Truths have been committed to print I have never been without a copy, and it has been my joyful practice to pass them on to others in the hope that they will be as enriched by them as I have been.

**Clyde Young. Assemblies of God Minister, Sunderland.**

#### **About The Author.**

##### **A summary of the life of C. L. Parker by his son, John Parker.**

Cuthbert Layland Parker was born in 1887, gained 1st Class Honours at St. John's College, Oxford in 1908 in the Classics (Latin and Greek), was ordained priest in 1912 and became a Tutor at University College, Oxford, from 1912-1918. He also gained a blue and two half blues while at St. John's in Rugby, Swimming and Athletics respectively.

Mr Parker's varied and unusual career in the ministry meant that at one time he was General Secretary of Assemblies of God and at another was Vicar of St. James, Clerkenwell, London and Chaplain to the Royal Free Hospital when it was on Grays Inn Road.

It was during his first curacy at St. Luke, Redcliffe Square, that an old lady prayed for him to be saved - it must have been a rather well to do church, more traditional than evangelical. Mr Parker used to tell how, at this time, he was sitting in the garden, smoking a pipe and reading his Greek New Testament, when the Holy Spirit illuminated the Word, and he cried out 'By gad, the Bible's true!' He then went into the pulpit and told the people he had been telling them lies thus far - and now would tell them the truth!

In 1917, Mr Parker married Phyllis Harcourt Kent at St. James, Clerkenwell, of which at that time his father was vicar and of which he would become vicar 20 years later. It was during this latter period that the church experienced an outpouring of the Spirit, which must have made it one of the earliest charismatic churches of the 20th century.

Returning to 1917, Mr Parker, and his wife Phyllis, quickly absorbed and entered into the fundamental truths of New Testament Christianity, such as Justification by Faith, Divine Healing, the Second Coming, etc. It was not long before he commenced his teaching ministry at various Bible Colleges (including the Bible League College and the Assemblies of God Bible College in Surrey), and also as a Convention Speaker all round the country.

His style of teaching was to allow his students to ask questions as the lecture proceeded, and sometimes this would drive him back to the Word of God to search out the answers. So both he and his students grew in their understanding of the Scriptures, and there are many alive today who still remember with gratitude how his teaching revolutionised their Christian lives and their theology.

"Foundation Truths", based on Hebrews 6v1,2, contains the essence of his teaching, built around his graphic representation of man's Spirit, Soul and Body (1Thess 5v23) - to which he gave the name 'Archie'! Any readers of these pages will find themselves challenged and stimulated theologically and generally, whether or not they agree with all Mr Parker's conclusions.

**A Guide to the Diagrams.**

**The Serpent represents sin; dead when coiled, alive when upright.**

**The Book represents Moral Law, whether of God or of conscience.**

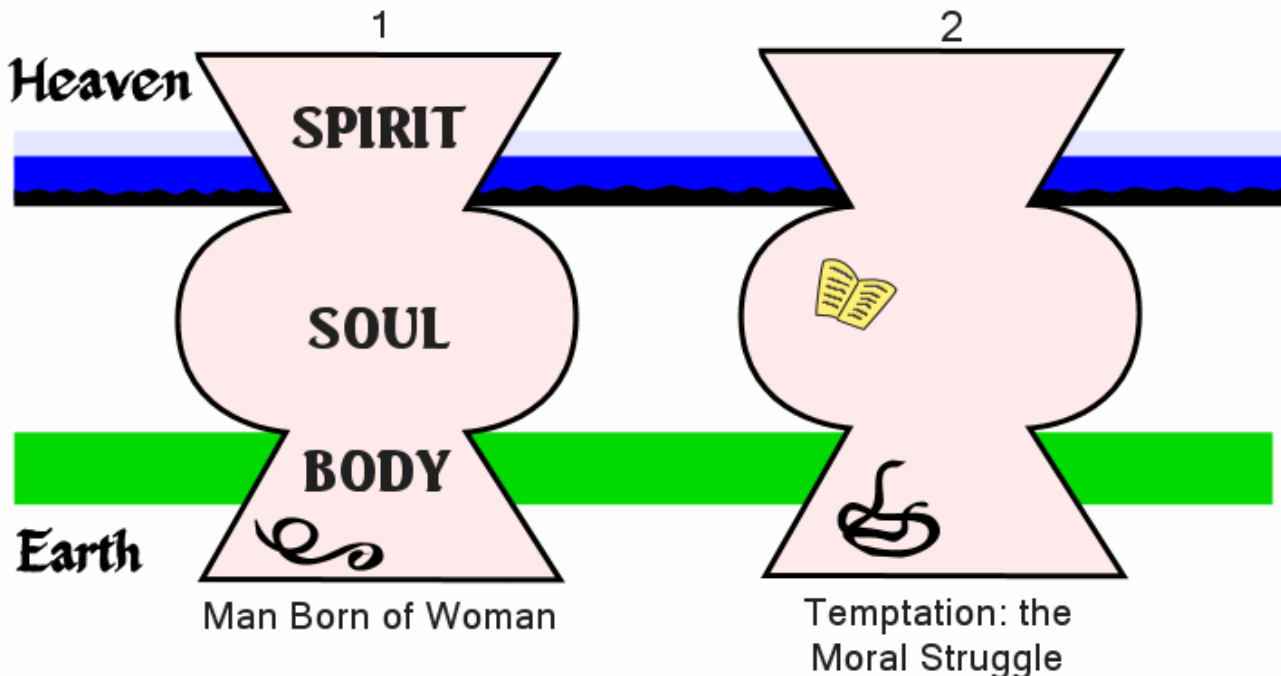
**The Dove represents The Holy Spirit of God.**

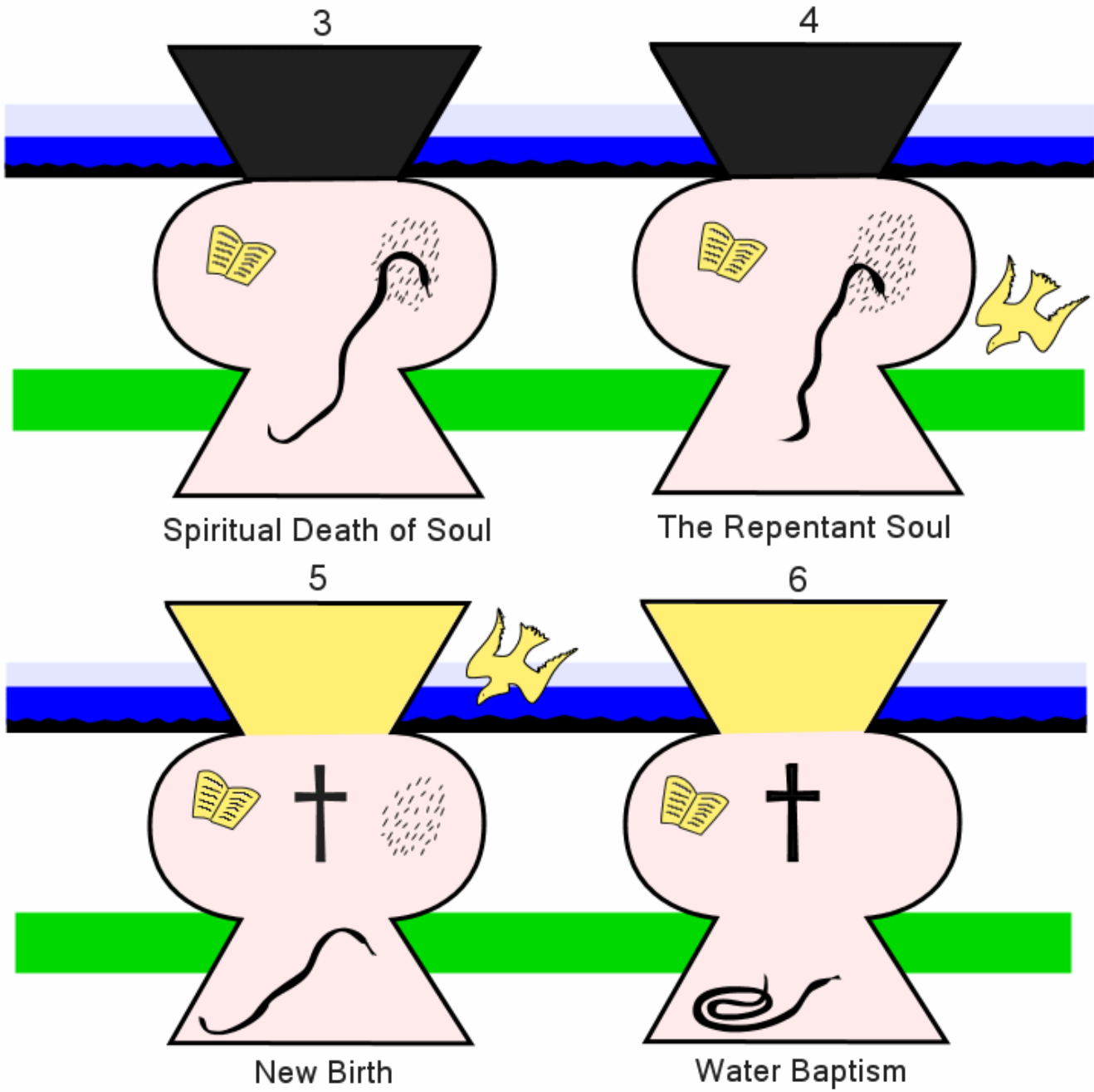
**The Cross represents Calvary.**

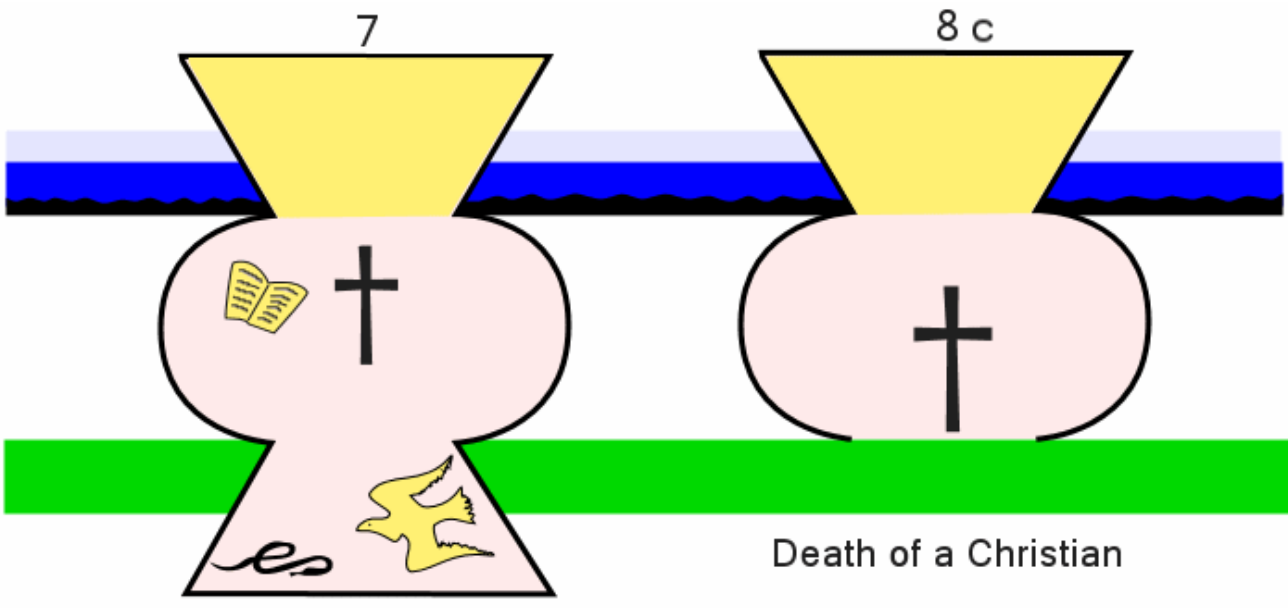
**The Black Line represents the first Heaven, the home of Satan.**

**The Black Colouring represents that which is dead to God.**

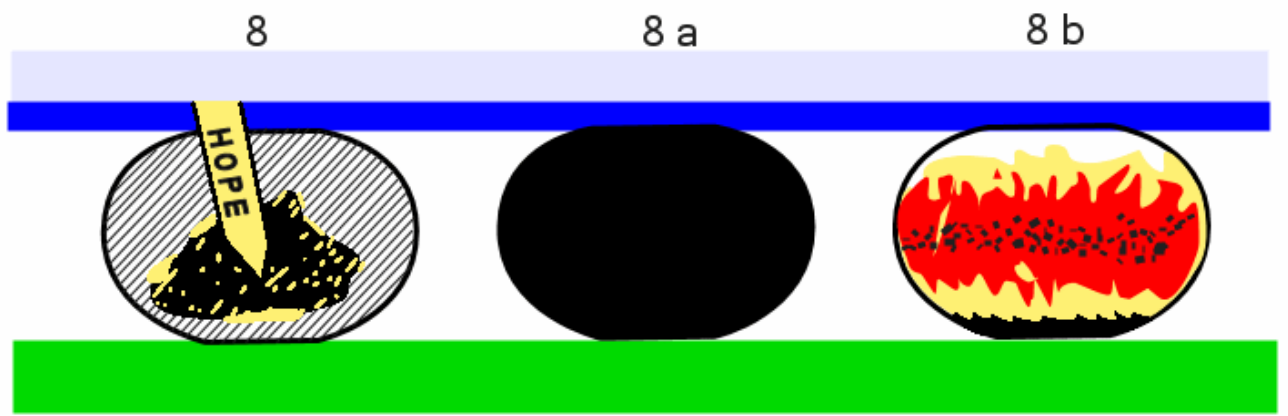
**The Gold Colouring represents that which belongs to the Sons of God.**







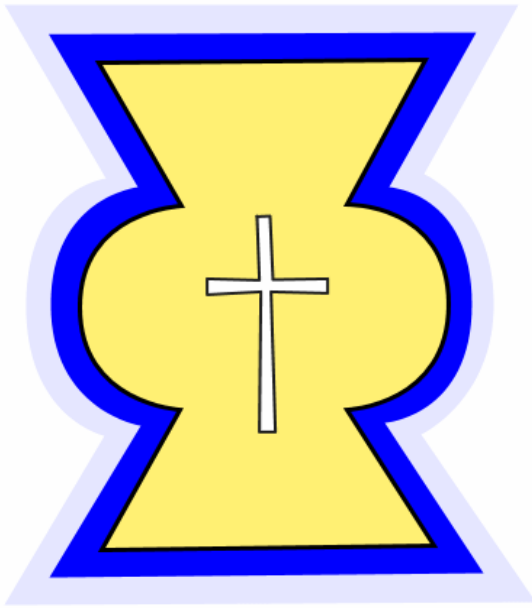
The Spirit filled Christian



Death of O.T. Saint

Death of Ignorant

Death of God's enemies



The Resurrection  
of a Son of God.

### Introduction.

New converts to Christianity are spoken of in the Bible as babes in Christ, with hearts full of desire for understanding, and minds equally full of problems and questions. Peter (1Pet 2v2) tells us that what they need is the sincere milk of the Word, if they are to grow to a healthy maturity. When they are grown up there is solid food for them too; but until then they need milk and not meat.

Many young Christians have suffered life-long spiritual indigestion or the diseases that spring from malnutrition owing to a wrong diet in their early days. Those who are ignorant of the Scriptures can be misled by any teacher with strong personality, and need to acquire for themselves that full assurance of understanding of which St. Paul speaks. (Col 2v2, Heb 10v22)

It is of the first importance therefore to know what is meant by the milk of the Word; and our Father has left us in no doubt on this matter, but has detailed it for us in Heb 5v11 to 6v2.

The Foundation Truths, the A.B.C. of Christianity, are seven in number, Repentance from dead works, Faith towards God, Baptism in Water, Baptism in Spirit, the Laying on of hands, Resurrection of the dead, Eternal Judgment. Only after he has learnt the truth in these simple matters is the Christian baby ready to consider the harder problems and deeper wisdom of God's Revelation.

These studies are designed primarily therefore to lead the new convert to those passages of the Bible in which these matters are most simply handled, that he may see for himself the Scriptural basis of his faith, and be fully persuaded in his own mind. In the hour of battle a man cannot stand upon another's teaching, but only upon those parts of the Truth that he has made his own.

It will soon become apparent to him that these Foundation Truths show the steps by which His Heavenly Father plans to change a "man born of woman," who was rightly at home on this earth, into a mature "Son of God" who longs for His Heavenly home and destiny.

I am indeed grateful to Mr. George Newsholme (Editor of Redemption Tidings), who has not only read the manuscript, but has also written the preface and helped in the final form of this booklet. My hearty thanks are also due to Miss E. F. Dodgson, who patiently typed and retyped the manuscript, and to my wife for the designs of the diagrams. May the Lord be able to use it to His own refreshment, Prov 25v13, and to the blessing of His people.

### Chapter I: Repentance From Dead Works.

The first Foundation Truth contains the arresting phrase "Dead works," which is aptly illustrated by our Lord's words, "Let

the dead bury their dead," or St. Paul's phrase, "... is dead while she liveth." Fully to understand these words we need to consider the birth and constitution of a "man born of woman." (Luke 9v60, 1Tim 5v6)

### **The First Birth.**

He is tripartite; body, soul and spirit. His body comes from his parents, his spirit comes from God, and his soul, i.e., himself, is the result of this union of body and spirit, a new individual without experience of any kind, but good because made by God Himself. Man is a soul, he possesses a spirit and a body, the former whereby he can contact the spirit world, and the latter with which to enter and appreciate the material world. The soul, if it loses its body, is dead to this world; if it loses its spirit, it is dead to God and the Heavenly world. If it loses both, it is dead to both worlds, conscious only of the isolation and hopeless darkness of death. Gen 2v7—margin "lives," Num 16v22, Isaiah 57v16, Eccles 12v7, 1Thess 5v23, Matt 11v11, Heb 4v12, John 3v6, 1Cor 2v10-16, Job 10v21-22, Heb 2v15, Luke 12v5.

Every child therefore that is born into this world is alive to God through the spirit which He has given it, and alive to this world through the body which it has inherited through its parents. Its spirit is, of course, perfect like all God's works; but its flesh, coming down ultimately from Adam, is imperfect, and liable in varying degrees to desires which are sinful.

These desires, however, are not in the soul of the baby but in its flesh, and therefore this "sin in the flesh" is in the Bible phrase "Dead," i.e., harmless, and the child itself is alive to God through its spirit with which He has endowed it. So that looking at young children, our Lord said that of such was the Kingdom of Heaven; and exhorted us to become like them; which He could hardly have done if their souls had been as a matter of fact incapable of goodness, totally depraved, and fit only for eternal punishment, as so many Christians have thought they ought to believe! God's mercies are over all His Works, and the child of even the wickedest parents is not born without the gracious gift of spirit from the Creator.

Every baby then is born alive to God and well pleasing to Him, and receives grace from God through its own spirit, which God has given it, and its Guardian Angel whom God has appointed over it.

**NB:** The phrase "Original Sin," which, like that other phrase "born in sin," is not scriptural, would be shorn of its misleading implications if it were changed into the Scriptural language "Dead sin in the flesh." Every theory of "Original sin" which locates the effect of Adam's sin in the soul of his descendants, instead of in their flesh, or implies that the child is born without grace from God or in any way "Dead to God" is to be unhesitatingly rejected.

The first diagram therefore shows the condition in which all "men born of women" come into the world. (Rom 7v8-8v3, Mark 10v14, Matt 18v1-10, Psalm 51v5, Job 14v1-4, Job 15v14) See Diagram 1—Man born of Woman.

### **Note on various erroneous doctrines.**

There are several erroneous teachings about the fall of man, which crept into the Church at a very early date and should be noted at this point; since not only have they led to wrong practices, but they have also clouded the minds of men and dimmed the glory of God, presenting such a picture of Him that, while men could still fear Him as the Almighty, they could neither respect His justice nor discover His love.

The soul of a baby is not hopelessly corrupt because of Adam's sin; it is its flesh only which is tainted; its soul and spirit are pure, being made by God. Mark 10v14, Isaiah 57v3-7,16, Eccles 7v29, 12v7, Num 16v22.

A child is not born dead in sin, alienated from God and without knowledge of Him. It is the sin which is dead; the child is alive. Rom 1v19-21, Acts 17v27, Matt 18v3-5, Rom 7v8-9.

God a) does not impute the sin of Adam to his children, nor b) does He impute the righteousness of Christ to a Christian.

a) In Ezek 18, God clearly teaches that a man dies for his own sin, not his father's; and that it would be wholly unrighteous to blame one man for the sin of another. (2Chron 25v3-4)

b) Neither is the righteousness of Christ imputed to anyone; it is Christ's death, which is imputed, suffered on our behalf. The moral perfection of Christ cannot be imputed to anyone; but it is imparted as we obey Him. Each man will receive the reward of his own deeds. (2Cor 3v18, 5v10)

**NB:** The Greek word dikaiosune has two meanings: a) Justification when brought to trial by the Law; this can take place in two ways;

1) The evidence shows you not guilty; and you are discharged;

2) The evidence shows you guilty, but you, or someone else, pay the penalty. Thus the convict who has done his time is "justified" and no longer a convict: it is libellous to speak of him as such! (b) A moral character, which deserves praise



because, so far from breaking the Law, it goes the "second mile."

**Diagram 2a** Is the condition of the sinner when saved; he is "freed from the Law." But God wants him to live so that he becomes, **diagram 2b** and is "saved with glory." (2Tim 2v10, 1Pet 1v17, Heb 2v10)

It is not true that God is angry with us, for our "fallen nature," and would be justified in condemning us to Hell for it. Out of this slander upon the justice of God has arisen the erroneous practice of Infant Baptism, which is an attempt to counter the supposed danger by means of Baptismal regeneration. If it were true that we were so born that sin is inevitable, not only would repentance be impossible, but we should have a perfect excuse for our sin, and could not possibly feel guilty. Historically and practically the doctrine that sin is inevitable always leads to this very frame of mind, an acquiescence in it as a regrettable necessity: *humanum est errare!* God, of course, could not and does not, condemn us for what we cannot avoid; neither could men repent of actions which were forced upon them by their nature. They could only grieve over the fact that they were so badly created: and for that they would of necessity blame, not themselves, but their Creator. Gen 18v23-25, Rom 3v5-6, Rom 5v13.

**NB1:** The fact that all men do as a matter of fact sin is not due to some taint of "original" sin in their nature which makes sin inevitable; but as the Bible says, to the fact that "all like sheep go astray." It is the herd instinct and the fear of standing alone which operates so powerfully. We are to confess Christ before men.

Sin is not due to some flaw in the soul, but simply to the possession of free will. Both Adam and Eve sinned, though from different motives, in spite of the fact that they were created completely perfect in body, soul and spirit. Lucifer also sinned, though perfect in all his ways from the Creation. Perfection of creation is no safeguard against sin! (Eccles 7v29, Ezek 28v12-15, Isaiah 53v6, Gen 2v5-25)

Neither is perfection of surroundings a preventative. The first sins both in Heaven and Earth were committed under ideal conditions.

**NB2:** Even perfect flesh, such as Adam and Eve possessed, was endowed by God with desires, which unless curbed by the soul would lead it to sin. The realisation that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasant to look at is put first in the motives that led to Eve's sin! The stronger the bodily instinct, the greater the danger of misuse. The strongest and most lovely of all physical instincts implanted by God, the sexual, is also the most dangerous unless ruled by the soul. The perfect flesh of the perfect man contained within it the possibility of temptation and sin just as inevitably as did the fallen flesh of Adam! The only safety of the most perfect flesh lies in its control by a wise and loving soul. (Gen 3v6, Matt 4v2-4, Matt 26v41, 1Cor 9v27)

**NB3:** While it is true that Cain and Abel came into the world with smaller opportunities than Adam and Eve, since God no longer visited them intimately in the garden, it is also true (a) that God did not again ask so high a standard and (b) that Enoch walked with God and that Noah pleased Him. It is true that the fall of Adam brought the whole race down to a lower level of possibilities; it is also true that the lower level was capable of achievement, and that God could still be pleased with men. From Adam justification was no longer by works but by faith; and the rite of blood-sacrifice for sin was well known from Abel, who was the first of a long line of men who have pleased God by their faith. (Acts 10v35, Ezek 14v14, 2Chron 20v7, Heb 11v1-40, Hab 2v4)

"As in Adam all die even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1Cor 15v22), does not refer to our souls, but to our bodies. If it did refer to our souls, it would be a powerful argument for Universalism! Adam died physically not because he sinned, but because God drove him from the Tree of Life; otherwise in spite of his sin he would have lived for ever. For the same reason all men suffer physical death. Hence all, including the wicked, will be raised from death by Christ. The death of this resurrection body in the Lake of Fire, which is the second time a man loses his body, i.e., his second death, will be for a man's own unrepented and hence unforgivable sin: and will be eternal, leaving the soul in hopeless impotence and anguish. (Acts 24v15, John 5v28-29, Rev 20v11-15, Rom 2v1-9, Mark 9v43-50, Gen 3v22-24)

### **Moral Law.**

There comes a time, however, when moral law enters into the soul of a child, either from instruction in God's Word, or in the ordinary course of nature. When this has happened, and the child begins to pass moral judgment upon others, then sin in the flesh, which has hitherto been dead and harmless, comes alive, and proceeds to entice and try to deceive the soul, as in the Garden of Eden. Rom 7v9-11, 1Cor 15v56, James 1v14-15, Rom 4v15, Rom 5v13, Rom 2v1-16, Matt 7v1-5. See Diagram 2—The Moral Struggle.

### **Note on Temptation.**

It is essential to realise that temptation is not sin. God did not intend Adam and Eve to live without temptation; since it is only by resisting it that frail innocence can develop into strong purity, and learn not only to love good but also to hate

evil. Accordingly Satan was allowed to enter Eden; Job was left in his hand "without cause," the Israelites were led through that great and terrible wilderness, Jesus was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil; the disciples were handed over to be sifted as wheat.

The surest way to throw a maid into the arms of her lover is to speak against him! Every instinct of protection and loyalty rises up in passionate rejection of the imputation. So should it have been with Adam and Eve in the garden when Satan slandered their friend and Creator. They should have risen up in defence of Him they loved, clung the closer for the attack, and conceived such a hatred for Satan that he would no longer have dared to enter their garden. Such, no doubt, was the design of the Almighty, but it was frustrated by the folly and disloyalty of the perfect creatures, Adam and Eve! Eve allowed herself to be deceived by Satan's innuendoes, and Adam put his wife's companionship before his God's; as many another man has done, since the first one said, "I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come." It was God's greatest gift which brought about the downfall of the perfect man! Solomon, the wisest man, owed his downfall to his inability to use the gifts of God aright. It was Lucifer's wisdom and ability, the gifts of God, which fed the pride which caused his ruin. Every blessing, indeed, from God has in itself the seeds of temptation: and history is full of men whose heart was lifted up to rebellion by the very gifts, which should have made them grateful. (2Chron 18v1, 2Chron 26v16, 32v25)

Temptation is not sin; the hour of fiercest temptation can be the hour of greatest purity. By allowing us to inherit from our parents a body from which temptation is inevitable, God has not been unfair to us, but has given us the opportunity by resisting such temptation, of establishing ourselves for ever in His love and service. When God gave men and angels freewill He made it possible for them to disobey any command He might impose and to embark on a life of selfishness instead of love. Hence temptation was possible in Heaven before sin occurred. (Ezek 28v11-15.)

The fact that we are tempted, however severely, whether by the flesh, the world, or the Devil, is not accepted by God as an excuse for sinning. We are indeed to welcome, though not to invite, temptation, albeit with fear and trembling humility, for the overcoming of temptation is the royal road to the Throne of God. (James 1v2-4,12-15, Heb 2v18, 4v15, Luke 22v28-32, 1Pet 1v6-7, Gen 3, Deut 8v2-3,15-16, Matt 4v1-11, Job, chapters 1 and 2, Gal 6v1, 1Cor 10v13)

It is obvious that temptation and sin are permanent possibilities of a "free will"; by which we mean that a man can choose his own course, whether it be good or evil, even if he lacks the power to put it into action. The whole aim of God is therefore to do away with sin, not by excluding temptation but by making the soul immune to it; as the body becomes immune to disease not by elimination of bacilli but by the setting up of a sufficient resistance to them (Heb 1v9). Only the man who hates evil is safe against temptation. Therefore God has allowed evil great liberty in this world, that by awful experience of its effects, its deceitful promises might be exposed, and mankind might learn to dread it above all things and to achieve an iron determination never to commit it. (Luke 15v17, Heb 1v9, Psalm 119v97-104, Heb 12v4)

#### **Note on Conscience.**

Conscience is not the voice of God, neither is it necessarily pleasing to God or according to His Law. It is that standard of conduct which a man lays down for his neighbour, to which he is himself accountable. This standard is formed by a man (a) out of his own heart in automatic reaction to his neighbour's acts, e.g., the last six of the ten commandments are the involuntary response of human nature to the selfishness of another which threatens its happiness "Thou shalt not steal" pours out of the lips of the man who is being robbed: "thou shalt not commit adultery" is the cry of the man whose wife is unfaithful: "thou shalt not covet" is the instinctive thought in the heart of the man who sees his neighbour eyeing his poultry too lovingly! (b) Out of the opinions of the society in which he lives. (c) Out of any revelation which he may have received of God. By this and by this alone will he be judged. (Rom 2v1-16, 5v13, 14v5, Luke 12v47-48, James 4v17, 1Cor 4v4, Acts 26v9, Matt 7v1-5, Titus 1v15, 1Tim 4v2)

#### **Life or death.**

It is the peculiar glory of Jesus, which He shares with no other, that though tempted in all points like as we are yet He never yielded to the solicitations of sin, from whatever quarter they might come. Wherefore for this reason God has given Him the Name which is above every name. (John 8v46, Luke 4v1-13, 22v28, Heb 2v14-18, 4v14-15, 5v7-10, Phil 2v5-11)

It has been the tragedy of the human race on the contrary, that like sheep we have all turned to our own way and gone astray; so that, instead of growing strong in character by continuous and successful struggle against temptation, we have become the weak slaves of sin, and found out that the soul that sinneth it shall die. Let it be noted that only a living soul can die; a dead soul is already dead. Hence the salvation of God finds us in the condition of diagram 3, not from compulsion but of choice. The tragedy of Eden is continually repeated, so that each soul having once turned aside finds itself a captive, cut off from God by the death of the spirit; and able, and at first at any rate contented, only to live in the world of sense through its body. The whole life of such a person is described in the vivid phrase "dead works" or the life of a man dead to God.

There is a short story by H. G. Wells entitled "The Country of the Blind," which is an apt illustration of this condition. In this tale, a man with eyes strays into the kingdom of The Blind and is taken captive. The fact that he can see, however, is not a help to him but a hindrance, since it rouses the jealousy and dislike of the blind, who prefer to think that no such thing as sight exists. In the end they will allow him to live in their midst only upon the condition that they may put his eyes out and make him as one of themselves. So would the world put out the Christian's eyes, and pull him down into their chosen darkness. (John 3v19, Rom 1v18-21, Isaiah 53v6, Luke 9v60, John 8v31-34, Rom 1v18-32, 5v12, 6v12-16, 7v9-11, Gal 5v15-16, Eph 2v1-3, 1Tim 5v6, Ezek 18v4, James 1v14-15) See Diagram 3—Death of a Soul.

#### **Note on Death of the Spirit.**

Be it noted that a dead spirit is not an annihilated or non-existent spirit, but one which no longer performs the duty for which it was intended, that is, to contact God. A "dead spirit" though unable any longer to contact God, can yet get into touch with other dead spirits, both angels and demons, which inhabit the first Heaven and the earth: viz., the black line in the diagrams. (Eph 2v2, 6v12, 2Cor 4v4, 1Cor 10v19-21, Isaiah 8v19, 1Sam 28, 2Kings 21v6, 1Tim 4v1, 1John 4v1-3)

#### **Repentance.**

The consideration of the phrase "dead works" has made it clear that man's estrangement from God is due in each case to his own deliberate act.

He who hides his action from his fellow man whom he can see, hides it also from the righteous God whom he cannot see; and comforts himself for having done so by some protective covering, e.g., "There is no God," or "God doth not see," "You can't expect to be too good while in the flesh," or even "God doesn't mind sin so long as you are saved."

The modern sinner hides himself from the true God as definitely as did Adam and Eve; and the various religions of the world have as their motive the desire to pretend that there is no righteous God who has revealed Himself to us, but only gods who leave us free to do evil. (Psalm 14v1, 36v1, 50v21, Eccles 7v16, Rom 1v23, 2Cor 4v4)

It is clear then that, until he is willing to retrace that step and come into relationship with God again, even God cannot help him. This willingness to change his attitude towards God is called repentance; and, since nothing can be done without it, all God's efforts are lovingly turned to bringing it about. The Holy Spirit uses in each case the most appropriate means to appeal to the heart of the one with whom He is dealing. It may be fear of judgment, fear of consequences, dreadful experiences of an ungodly life, revelation of the love of God in sending His Son to die for sinners, experience of His power in signs and wonders, the hope of eternal life instead of the fear of death. The variety of the means He uses is as great as that of the hearts with which He has to deal, but the end is always the same, to persuade the ungodly to be willing to come into contact with a living God, to be reconciled to the One they have distrusted. (John 16v8, Mark 1v15, Acts 9v32-35, 8v6-8, 16v27-30, 17v30-31, 2v37, Luke 11v31-32, 13v1-9, Rom 5v8, John 3v16)

**NB1:** God does give space for repentance, but does not wait beyond the appointed time. (Gen 6v1-7, Luke 13v1-9, Rev 2v21, Heb 12v17, 6v4-8, 10v26-30, Rom 2v1-11, Dan 4v27-31, Jonah 3v4, Jer 18v7-10, 2Chron 36v14-16, Eccles 8v11)

**NB2:** Repentance always leads to action. (Jonah 3, Luke 3v8, Acts 2v38, Luke 15v17-19, 19v8-9)

It includes hatred of sin, sorrow for those we have wronged, and a desire to put things right; remorse is sorrow for oneself, because one's sin has been exposed and must be paid for. (Matt 27v3-5, 2Sam 17v23)

Thus the first Foundation Truth is illustrated by—Diagram 4—The Repentant Soul.

## **Chapter II: Faith Towards God.**

### **The New Birth.**

As soon as the Holy Spirit sees that the soul is willing to believe the truth about God, He enables it to do so by begetting it a new spirit. Spiritual things are only discerned by spirit, and therefore the Lord told Nicodemus that what he needed was not teaching, but a living spirit. The body and spirit might be compared to a couple of radio sets for receiving and transmitting, the one tuned into the seen world, the other to the unseen: the soul being entirely dependent upon them for contact with either world. A room may be filled with all kinds of music, plays, talks from all over the world: yet its occupants are in complete ignorance of the fact, since they have never possessed or even heard of a wireless set! So it is with both spiritual and natural things. The world is full of sounds, but this one is ignorant of them as he was born deaf: in a similar way, heaven is shut to the man whose spirit is dead, since he has lost that part which alone can receive impressions from the spiritual world; and his one overwhelming need is that this part should be restored, i.e., born again, so that once more he may be in contact. (John 3v5, 1Cor 2v14)

The more the radio is used the wider the knowledge of the outside world. There are those who might be said to live at their radio: we are expected likewise to live in the spirit! Some radios have a wider range and more perfect reception than others: so the spirit of Christ is more sensitive than the spirit of a servant and opens to us a much wider range of understanding of spiritual realities. (Rom 8v15)

**NB1:** It is the spirit which is born again, not the soul; the soul, which has already lived in the human family, is adopted into the Royal Family of God, and has to learn how to live in its new surroundings. (John 3v1-8, Eph 1v5, 4v11-16, Rom 6v15-23, Gal 4v6, 2Pet 1v4, 1Tim 3v15, 2Cor 3v18)

**NB2:** That, which a Son of God receives at his new birth, is not the Holy Spirit Himself, but that which is born of Him, holy spirit. The Holy Spirit Himself is normally given through the laying on of the hands of one in whose body He has taken up His abode, and this happens after the new birth. The Holy Spirit is a person; the holy spirit, which He gives at the new birth, is a thing, just as the body, which the parents give, is a thing, not a person. (John 3v6, Acts 8v17, 9v17, 19v6, Eph 1v13 "after")

So the Apostles received holy spirit and were born again on the night of the Resurrection. After that they were continually in the Temple praising and blessing God. It was, however, not until the day of Pentecost that they received the Holy Spirit Himself, who immediately manifested His presence in a miraculous fashion. Much confusion has arisen through the failure to differentiate between the Person and the thing. Since there are no capital letters or other ways of distinguishing between them in the original MSS., every translator is free to use his own judgment in the matter, and so mistakes have been made. (John 20v22, Acts 2v4, Luke 24:53)

All Christians then have that which the Holy Spirit begets, and all Christians have also the Holy Spirit Himself "with them," for it was He who brought them to repentance and begat them again. It is, however, those who are baptised in the Spirit who have Him "in them." (Rom 8v9, John 14v17, Acts 19v2-6.)

The body of every Son of God is a temple of the Holy Ghost: but that temple is empty until the Spirit enters it, of which entry there is always a clear sign. Even as the Tabernacle and Temple were first prepared and built, and after that manifestly filled with the glory of God. (1Cor 3v16-17, 6v19, Exodus 40v33-34, 1Kings 8v10-11, Mal 3v1)

### **The Gift of God.**

Faith is therefore the gift of God, because it is the result of the new spirit, which is born; just as hearing is the result of an ear, or sight of an eye. A man believes because he has been given a living spirit; and because he has such a spirit he cannot help believing, even if for some selfish reason he may wish to do so. Only by spiritual suicide can he kill this spirit and become "twice dead." In such cases he knows what he has done and lives in apprehension of fiery judgment (1Pet 1v23-2v2, Eph 2v8-10, Heb 6v4-8, 10v26-29, Jude 12)

It is essential that faith should be the gift of God and not a human ability. Were it not so, a man might be discouraged by the thought that he had always found faith difficult, and was in this way handicapped: but, since it is the gift of God, all men may have it, for God gives it freely to all who will accept it. Indeed, men whose thoughts have been far from God have found themselves suddenly believing in Christ so that to their great surprise the whole course of their lives has been changed. God has made it possible for the most difficult and unlikely soul to believe, by giving him spirit, the source of faith, that through which the unseen is apprehended. The soul by itself is not in touch with spiritual things: but as soon as its spirit is quickened by God, the soul finds itself believing in what before seemed to it foolishness. (1Cor 2v10-16.)

### **The Food of Faith.**

The food of faith is the Word of God. Without regular feeding, the spirit grows weakly and eventually dies, just as the body cannot remain alive without its proper food. Christian weakness is due generally, not to inherent inability or wickedness, but simply to malnutrition or positive starvation. This God-given food rightly used, is sufficient to ensure spiritual victory on earth, and to give us our inheritance in heaven. Like the body, the spirit needs not only food but also exercise. This exercise is most naturally taken in prayer. A spirit, which is fed by the Word, soon grows strong enough to engage in prayer and to exercise spiritual gifts. (Matt 4v4, 2Tim 3v14-17, 1Tim 4v13-16, Deut 8v3, 1Pet 2v1-3, Acts 20v32, Jer 15v16, John 6v26-63, Job 23v12, Ezek 2v8-3v3)

### **The Fight of Faith.**

The fight of faith is allowed by God to bring us to a state of strength and purity. Faith, the gift of God, brings justification; tried faith covers us with glory. (Job, chapters 1 and 2, James 1v3,12, 1Pet 1v7, Luke 22v28-29, 1Tim 6v12, 2Tim 4v7, Eph 6v12, Matt 4v1-11)

### **The Rest of Faith.**

The effect of such a tried faith is peace of mind, and the ability to depend not upon ourselves, but upon God. (Heb 3v13-4v11, Rom 5v1-11, 1Pet 1v21)

### **Life in the food.**

There is no lesson more vital to the young convert than the realisation of his dependence upon the Bread which came down from Heaven. Babies grow, not because of their own health or strength, but simply because they are fed. The life is in the food. The Christian is entirely dependent upon his living bread. (Cf. Psalm 1)

**NB1:** The New Birth is wholly a gracious act of God, and is not the result of any action on man's part. It is not the consequence, but the cause of faith. (John 1v13, James 1v18, 1Pet 1v3, Eph 2v8-10, cf. Luke 6v10)

This living faith, given by God through the New Birth, is what God counts as justification. It is of the heart, and not just the intellect; and includes:

(a) An understanding and grateful acceptance of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, so that we believe as He did about sin and its consequences and atonement; we are His brethren, like-minded on these vital subjects. (Isaiah 53, Luke 24v25-28,44-47, Rom 3v21, 5v21, 10v9-10, Gal 3v1-15, 1Pet 1v17-21)

(b) Actions, which proceed naturally from it. (Matt 3v8, Luke 19v8, James 2v14-26, Mark 16v16, Acts 2v38, 8v36-38, 10v47-48, 19v18-19, Rom 1v5, 16v26, Gal 5v6, 2Cor 4v13, Heb 11)

**NB2:** The New Birth does not put the believer back into the position in which he was born. Then he was "born of woman" with the spirit of a servant of God, looking upon God as his Creator and Lord, and upon this earth as his natural habitat. At death he expected to go to Hades, an experience which he dreaded, since he was cut off from God's presence for a season through the loss of his spirit; but his hope was a resurrection to life upon the earth at the last day, when God should restore all things. He was in fact of the earth earthy, for God had created Adam and Eve to live for ever upon this earth through the Tree of Life.

At the New Birth, however, he becomes a child of God with the same spirit of Sonship that Christ has. Earth is no longer his habitat, but Heaven. At the death of his body, since he retains his spirit, he goes, not to Hades, but to Paradise and the presence of God; and at the resurrection he will receive a body fitted for life, not on the earth, but in Heaven. His fellowship is no longer with man born of woman, but through the help of the Holy Spirit of God, with his Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the rest of the Royal Family of God in Heaven and earth. Although the New Birth is an experience which is highly individualistic, yet the effect of it is to place this lonely person into a family in which he should grow to maturity. (Rom 8v9-15, John 8v35, Heb 11v40, 2v14-15, 2Tim 1v10, Matt 11v11, Luke 16v19-31, 2Kings 20v1-3 (contrast Phil 2v21-23, Acts 7v55-59), Rev 5v9-11, Acts 3v21, John 11v24-26, Job 10v21-22, 19v25-27, Ezek 37v11-14, Dan 12v2, Heb 12v22-24, Phil 3v17-21, Col 3v1-4, 1John 1v3, Matt 12v46-50, 23v9) See Diagram 5—The New Birth

### **Chapter III: Baptism In Water.**

Baptism in water, as a divine ordinance connected with repentance and forgiveness of sins, was already known to Israel through John the Baptist; he announced it as a preparation for the coming Messiah, Who should baptise in the Holy Ghost, and also open the Kingdom of Heaven. (Matt 3v1-12, Mark 1v1-8, Luke 3v1-17, John 1v26,27,33)

Christian Baptism, however, had an even deeper meaning added to it after the death and resurrection of Christ.

**a)** It is the way appointed by God whereby we wash away in water the sins which God has forgiven through the blood of Jesus, and receive a glorious consciousness of complete cleansing from the past. (Eph 1v7, Rev 7v14, Acts 22v16, 1Pet 3v21, Mark 16v16, Titus 3v5, Rev 1v5 (R.V.), Heb 10v22, Psalm 103v12)

**b)** It is also an act, which typifies the death and burial of the old worldly unbeliever and the rising up of a new spiritual believer to live in a new and holy fellowship, that is, that of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is the birth of a sanctification which is to grow to perfection. (Matt 28v19, Rom 6v1-11, 1v17, Col 2v12, 3v1-4, 1John 1v1-3, 2Cor 7v1, 3v18, Heb 12v6-14, John 1v16)

**NB1:** It is a definite command of both Christ and His Apostles. (Mark 16v16, Matt 28v19, Acts 2v38, 10v48)

**NB2:** Being associated with salvation and the washing away of sins, it was also treated as a matter, not of choice, but of urgency. (Acts 2v41, 8v36, 16v33, 9v18, 22v16, Mark 16v16)

**NB3:** The Christian is freed from sin, but not from temptation. (John 15v3, 8v31, Rom 6v1-8:4, 1Cor 10v1-13,

James 1v2-4)

**NB4:** Christian Baptism, being in the Name of the Spirit, as well as of the Father and the Son, must include some instruction about the Spirit of God, and so paves the way for the next Foundation Truth, the Baptism in the Spirit. (Matt 28v19) See Diagram 6—Water Baptism

#### **Chapter IV: The Baptism In The Spirit.**

The Baptism in the Spirit is a phrase used in Scripture to describe the experience wherein the Holy Spirit enters the Temple of God, i.e., the body of a Son of God. The Holy Spirit, who brought the sinner to repentance and begat him again into the family of God, desires a still closer union, whereby He that was "with us" now enters "into us." As an evidence that He has entered the believer's body, He begins to use the most unruly part of it, i.e., the tongue, to speak in a language of which the believer is ignorant; thus making it manifest that there are now two occupants of the one body.

The Baptism of the Spirit is spoken of by John Baptist and Christ as a vital element in the work of Salvation He came to procure. (John 1v29-33, 7v37-39, 16v7-15, 14v17, 2v21, Luke 24v49, Acts 1v4-8, 2v3-21, 10v44-48, 11v15-17, 19v1-6, Mark 16v17, 1Cor 3v16, 6v19, 2Cor 6v16.)

The actual Baptism in the Spirit is, however, only the initial experience of a fellowship, which is to be eternal; and the initial evidence is meant to be followed by further manifestations of the Spirit's presence. The New Testament Church is a society of the Sons of God, in whose bodies dwells the same Holy Spirit of God, manifesting His Almighty presence by the various miraculous Gifts of the Spirit. (1Cor 12v1-14v40)

The Church, the present earthly Body of Christ, who is its head, is therefore to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, even as was Christ's own earthly body, so that the will of God may continue to be done by the Spirit of God in the Sons of God. (John 14v16-26, 15v26, 2Cor 3v17-18, Acts 4v31, 5v3,32, 7v51,52, 8v29,39, 13v2. etc.). See Diagram 7—The Spirit-filled Christian

**NB1:** In the Old Covenant it was the Holy Spirit who laid hold of the chosen Servants of God, even against their desire, that they might perform the task allotted to them. The instances of Moses, Amos, Jonah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel spring to the mind.

In the New Covenant the privilege is opened to all the Sons of God at their own desire. (Exodus 3 & 4, Jer 1v4-7, Ezek 3v14, Jonah, Amos 7v10-15, John 7v39, Acts 2v38-39, 5v32, Gal 4v6)

**NB2:** The Holy Spirit comes as Comforter, Guide, Teacher, Co-Worker and Lord. We are to please Him, therefore, and not to cause Him grief. The great essential for all who seek the Baptism in the Spirit is a determination to obey Him when He has entered. Failure to do so, and continuous stubbornness, will lead to the disaster which overtook Saul. (1Sam 16v14, Josh 5v13, Eph 2v22, 4v30, Heb 6v3-8, 10v26-31, 1Tim 1v19)

**NB3:** The Baptism in the Spirit is not a means whereby the believer is sanctified; it is the means whereby the already sanctified believer is enabled to do the miraculous works of God, by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God. (Acts 1v8, Luke 24v49, 1Cor 12-14, John 5v19-30, Luke 4v14, Matt 12:28)

**NB4:** Sanctification is the effect of the Word of God on the obedient hearer. As the true state of affairs enters the believer's heart, he is more and more powerfully drawn not only to forsake sin, but also to throw himself heart and soul into his Master's business. For sanctification is not the cultivation of one's own soul, which leads to Pharisaism, but the whole-hearted interest in the souls of others. (Luke 15v25-30, Isaiah 65v1-5, John 8v31-2, 15v3, 17v17, Eph 5v26)

#### **Chapter V: The Laying On Of Hands.**

The teaching of Scripture is that spirit is a divine substance which can come direct from Heaven, or be imparted by physical contact with one in whom the Spirit of God is. As such a substance it is capable of having a physical effect upon the material substance of which the world is composed; so that a house can be shaken by it, or a new eye formed.

It is also clear that spirit is subdivided into different types, even as light is composed of different colours. So that, when Jacob was blessing the sons of Joseph, it mattered which hand was placed upon which boy, since the blessings were different, and came through different hands. (Gen 48v13-19.) So also the "divisions of spirit" of Heb 2v4 refer to this difference; each separate kind of spirit carrying in itself the blessing that was to be given. The same thought is given in "the seven spirits of God" of Rev 1v4.

The Laying on of Hands, i.e., physical contact—even of the whole body in the raising of the dead—was the usual way whereby spirit was imparted, though at times the unction was so great that even without actual contact those near a

spirit-filled person would receive it. Even inanimate objects could be so impregnated with spirit as to convey it to a person at a distance. (Acts 8v18, 9v12-17, 5v15, 19v12, 20v10, Matt 14v36, Mark 5v27-30, 2Kings 13v21, 1Kings 17v21, 2Kings 4v34-35)

**The following are typical of the blessings imparted by the Laying on of Hands:**

The Baptism in the Spirit and the Healing of the Body. (Acts 9v17, 8v18, 19v6, 28v8, Mark 16v18)

The spirit of Wisdom. (Deut 34v9)

An unspecified gift. (1Tim 4v14, 2Tim 1v6)

A future career. (Gen 48v13-19)

The impartation of spirit through the Laying on of Hands means that the blesser is the poorer and the blessed the richer for the transaction (Luke 5v17, 6v12-19, 8v46), and therefore the blesser needs a continual refilling if he is to continue imparting. Hence, the Lord's habit of retiring for prayer in the midst of such ministry, e.g., Luke 5v16 (Greek—"kept retiring in the desert places and praying").

In all these matters we have the example of our Lord, who laid hands not only upon the sick (Mark 1v40-41), but also upon the babies (Mark 10v13-16).

While it is true and scriptural that spiritual blessing is imparted through the Laying on of Hands, it is equally true that God could and did dispense with any such medium when it so pleased Him, e.g., Acts 1v2-4, 10v44-45, John 4v50, Matt 8v8-13, John 11v43.

Since spirit in all its varieties can therefore be imparted through physical contact, it is clear that the Laying on of Hands for such a gracious purpose is indeed one of the Foundation Truths, to be not only understood, but also put into practice. Here again, as in everything pertaining to God, the safeguard against misuse is an honest heart.

By the act of the Laying of Hands you cannot impart what is not in you; and if you attempt to do so the result will be failure and disappointment. Matt 7v22 makes it clear that many will claim to have served God in the spirit who never knew Him. It is for this reason that care is necessary in all things pertaining to the spirit life; just as Israel needed to be watchful in Canaan (Josh 8v7,9,14). It was because of the dangers that awaited them in Canaan that the people refused to go over. Many Christians have been kept from a full Pentecostal experience by the same motive. They are unable to trust the Lord to see them through the undoubted dangers, and prefer to play for safety. (Num 13 & 14)

**Chapter VI: The Resurrection Of The Dead.**

Belief in the Resurrection of the body is implicit in all Bible history. It lay at the very root of the Patriarchal and Jewish theology. The promises of God, which had no fulfilment in the life time of those who believed them, could only be received and enjoyed after a resurrection from the dead; without it they were null and void.

This belief runs all through the Old Testament like a golden thread. Abraham believed in the resurrection of Isaac, the Patriarchs died in this hope; Elijah and Elisha saw the dead raised to life before their eyes; Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and Job all spoke of it with confidence. It was the only hope of Martha in the hour of Lazarus' death. (Heb 11v9-21, 1Kings 17v22, 2Kings 4v34, Job 19v25-27, Isaiah 26v19, Ezek 37v1-14, Dan 12v2, John 11v24)

Belief in the resurrection of the body was also the centre of our Lord's life. He spoke repeatedly and confidently of His own death and resurrection, and of what He would do afterwards. It was lack of this faith in His disciples, which so bitterly disappointed Him, and was responsible for their own collapse.

Their own teaching after the Ascension of the Lord centred round His Death and Resurrection and physical return. The whole Christian position depended entirely upon its truth. For, as St. Paul said, if in this life only we have hope in Christ then we are miserable indeed. Faith to raise the dead persisted in the Apostolic Church, and the last book in the Bible ends with the plain vision of a Universal Resurrection of all the dead of all the ages. It is the only doctrine which can give meaning to a Creation, which relentlessly slides into the darkness of frustration and death. (Luke 9v22-45, 24v25-27,36-47, Mark 16v14, Acts 2v22-36, 4v33, 17v32, 26v18-23, 9v36-42, 20v9-12, Rom 8v19-25 (compare Ecclesiastes), 1Cor 15, Rev 20v13)

There was, however, in the Bible a clear development of revelation concerning the resurrection of the dead. The original design of God, foiled by the Fall, was that man should live for ever upon a perfect earth, their bodies being sustained in health by eating of the Tree of Life continually. It is evident that the Tree contained elements which maintained the body

in perfect condition. (Gen 3v22, Ezek 47v12, Rev 22v2) It was the action of God in cutting off the human race from this perfect food, which resulted in the universal death of the body. Nothing short, of this diet will restore earthly bodies to their original health. (Gen 3v22, 1Cor 15v22, Rom 5v12-14)

The Bible speaks of the death of the body as an unmitigated evil. It is the greatest and last enemy of the human race. Not until its final defeat will perfect victory be enjoyed. (1Cor 15v22-28, Rev 20v14) Hades (Greek) or Sheol (Hebrew) was the name of the place to which the souls of those who lost their bodies went. It had two sides to it, as the Lord showed in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, and between those two sides was a great gulf fixed. (Isaiah 14v9, Ezek 32v17-32, Luke 16:19-31)

**a)** In the one division were the believers in God. The darkness of their experience was relieved by their faith in the resurrection at the Last Day; so that they might be said to rest in hope, together with Abraham the Father of the believing. Yet dread even of this softened experience kept the Old Testament saints all their lifetime in bondage, and made the hour of death highly unwelcome, since the loss of their spirit cut them off from God, and the loss of their body cut them off from the world. At this Resurrection they would enter into the enjoyment of the promises of God in Palestine during the Millennium. (Heb 2v15, Matt 4v16, Job 10v20-22, 2Kings 20v1-3 (contrast Phil 1v21-23), Luke 1v79, 16v19-23, Psalm 16v9-11, Isaiah 26v19, Ezek 37v1-14, Dan 12v2 (compare Ezek 44v13))

**b)** In the other division were:

**1)** The ignorant dead, who in the darkness of the disembodied state had no ray of hope of any escape from their miserable condition. The final resurrection will come to them as a wholly unexpected shock.

**2)** The enemies of God whose hearts are filled with expectation of fiery judgment and punishment. (Psalm 73v18-19, Ezek 32v17-32, Mark 9v43-48 (compare Matt 8v29), Matt 25v41, Jude 6 & 7, 2Pet 2v4-9, Heb 10v27)

**See Diagrams 8, 8a and 8b**

Through Jesus Christ, however, came a mighty revelation, and also a great change in these matters.

**a)** He revealed that against those who believed in Him the gates of Hades would not prevail at the death of their body. Since they retained their spirit at death they would not be cut off from the presence of God, but, on the contrary, would enjoy the happiness of Paradise in the spirit, instead of entering the darkness of Hades. He brought life and immortality to light. (John 11v21-26, 8v35-36,39-40,50-52, Matt 16v18, Luke 23v43, Phil 1v21, Acts 7v55-60, 2Tim 1v10, 2Cor 12v1-4.) See Diagram 8c

**b)** He also revealed that unlike the Old Testament saints, who looked for an earthly resurrection in an earthly body in which they would enjoy earthly happiness, the Sons of God were called to mount up into Heaven and rule with Christ over the universe, and so would need Heavenly bodies like His. (John 14v2-3, Matt 24v31,47, Heb 3v1, Eph 1v18, 4v1, 1Cor 15v35-54, 1John 3:1-3) See Diagram 9—The Resurrection of a Son of God

**c)** The Millennium, therefore, or 1,000 years of Christ's reign over this earth with a rod of iron, was to begin with a double resurrection:

**1)** That of Israel in earthly bodies to live in Palestine.

**2)** That of the Royal Family in Heavenly bodies to reign over this earth from the Heavenly Places. (Rev 20v4-6, Job 19v25-27, Isaiah 26v19, Ezek 37v1-14, 44v9-16, Dan 12v2, Phil 3v10-21, Luke 20v35, John 6v40, 1Cor 15v23-24, 1John 3v2)

**d)** After the Millennium was over and the last revolt had failed, and after Heaven and earth had passed away, would come the final resurrection of all the dead of all the ages, and after that the Last Judgment, in order that those whose names were written in the Book of Life might enter into the eternity of Peace in the new earth, and those whose names were not found therein might enter into the torment of hell for the same everlasting period of the Ages of the Ages. (Rev 20v11-21, John 5v28-29.)

**e)** This final resurrection of the dead and Last Judgment upon the Sea of Glass would be followed by, as it were, a glorious resurrection of the old Heaven and earth into the glory of the New Heaven, the New Jerusalem and the New Earth, in which would be fulfilled the promise of Rev 21v4-5.

**Note on Resurrection.**

A study of 1Cor 15v35-50 brings out the following points:



That, whereas our present earthly bodies may entirely mislead our neighbours about the state of our souls, our resurrection bodies will correspond to our souls, and so will differ in glory.

That recognition, therefore, will be not solely of the body but more essentially of the personality, e.g., the distorted body of a hunchback will give way to the glorious form of a Son of God. Peter knew that he had been with Moses and Elijah, but he had not recognised their bodies! (Luke 9v33)

**NB:** Our Lord's resurrection body was for the purposes of recognition different from His ascended and glorified body, as shown in Rev 1v13-17.

## **Chapter VII: Eternal Judgement.**

God having created the Universe, is also responsible for its well-being. He is, therefore, the judge of all His creatures who possess a moral nature.

He has revealed that this present Creation will pass away and be replaced by a New Heaven and New Earth. There is also in the eternal State to be a Lake of Fire, which was not part of the original creation. (Gen 1v1, Isaiah 65v17, Matt 24v35, Rev 20v11-21v8)

While God, as Judge, is constantly passing judgments upon His creatures, e.g., at the Flood or Nineveh, yet these judgments are temporary and may be revised or revoked, as justice or mercy dictate. There are, however, before the eternal state begins two inexorable judgments which must be universally passed:

**a)** The Judgment of whether a person is to exist eternally in the Kingdom of God or in the Lake of Fire.

**b)** The Judgment of where in that vast Kingdom of the New Heaven and Earth each one whose name is in the Book of Life is to be placed; whether in Heaven or Earth, and in what position in either. These Judgments, once passed, are unalterable. (Gen 6v7, Jonah 1v2, Jer 18v7,10, Matt 11v21-24, Rev 20v11-15, Mark 16v16, Luke 19v11-27, Heb 12v17)

Originally Heaven was created for Angels and earth for men; but the passage of time and the intrusion of sin have brought about modifications in the original structure. The number of those who dwelt in Heaven and shared in its government has been greatly depleted by the rebellion of Satan and his Angels. God has revealed that it is not His intention to create more Angels to take their places; but, instead, to choose from amongst men those who might become His Sons by adoption, and hold a place higher than that ever offered to Angels, so that Jesus Christ would not be ashamed to call them brethren. (Rev 12v7-9, 21v7, Heb 2v5-18)

Every Christian, being begotten again by the Spirit of God, has this Heavenly calling by right of inheritance; it is his natural development from a babe in Christ to a full-grown Son of God. Yet it is an inheritance which has to be won, and may be forfeited by incompetence; for God cannot put responsibility and honour upon those who are manifestly unable to bear it. (Eph 1v5-11, 4v13, Rom 8v14-19, Phil 3v13-21, Heb 3v1)

The gift of God to His children is their eternal life, and the only qualification for this is faith in Christ, however slight; but God is leading many Sons to glory, if they will come His Way. Glory is something which cannot be given, it must be won. It is a faith, which has stood the trials of life victoriously, an overcoming faith, which will alone be found to praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. There is the possibility of being ashamed from Him at His coming because we have been disobedient or idle or lukewarm. (Heb 2v10, 12v17, 1Pet 1v7, 2Tim 4v6-8, James 1v12, Rev 3v16, 1John 2v28)

The headmaster of a school may give all the pupils a holiday, but he cannot give all the first prize, or, indeed, any prize at all. It is the essence of a prize that its winner has accomplished some feat which has marked him out from his brethren. He has written a better essay or run a faster race than the others, and so has gained a position of honour. The whole value of the prize is that it is the badge of achievement. Glory is that feeling of respect that rises in the minds of men when they hear of what you have done. Even Christ was moved to admiration of the believing centurion and the poor widow woman. (Matt 8v10, Luke 21v3-4)

So far as a Christian is concerned the first of these Judgments, that is, of Life or Death, is passed at his new birth; he then has eternal life, and nothing and nobody can deprive him of it: for God will not allow anything too powerful for him to come against him. So long, therefore, as he continues to believe in Christ he is justified by faith and a member of God's Kingdom. (John 5v24, 10v27-29, 1Cor 10v13, Rom 4v5, 5v1, 1Pet 1v5)

It is possible that he himself may throw away the gift that was his, and commit spiritual suicide. But this will need the most determined effort and continuous rebellion on his part, and be as unnatural as is physical suicide. There is, of course, nothing that can ever take away from man his freedom of choice; there is a backsliding which knows no repentance, a final shipwreck of faith. (James 5v20, 2Pet 2v20-22, Jude 12, 1Tim 1v19, 6v9, Heb 6v6, 10v26,

1John 5v16-17, Phil 3v18,19, 1Chron 10v13,14)

**NB:** There are two touchstones by which every theological dogma may be tested. The first, that God is Love (1John 4v16); the second, that man's will is free, though not necessarily his actions (Luke 13v34, Gal 5v17)

Rom 7 gives us a vivid picture of a man whose will is set upon righteousness, but whose actions are forced upon him by habitual sin in the flesh. The drunkard, the drug addict are obvious examples of this pitiful condition.

And, on the other hand, the old lag in the cell gives us an illustration of the exact opposite. Here we have a man whose will is all for evil, but whose actions are forced into a blameless mould of stone breaking or oakum picking, such as a saint might copy!

Men have always feared the responsibility which attaches to free will, and longed to believe that God can do something which will relieve us from the burden. Yet the truth remains that although God is Love and will secure us from all outside aggression or internal decay, yet even He is not master of men's wills but only of their actions. Were He so, all would be saved; for He is not willing that any should perish: but the decision of salvation or destruction is man's own decision; and his only eternal security lies in his eternal determination to obey God. It is man's spirit, not his soul, which is born again. His soul, adopted out of his earthly family and introduced into his heavenly family, may yet hanker after the old home and bring God to a dreadful decision. For God having saved a people out of Egypt, after destroyed them that believed not, and they knew God's breach of promise. It is unfortunately true that there are those who by their own choice and with determination have repeated their original transgression, and are therefore twice dead. (Heb 10v26) For the soul that once received a living spirit from the Almighty can also kill it, and again plunge into the darkness from which it once emerged. (2Pet 2v20-22, Jude v5-12, Num 14v34, Heb 3v12-4v2)

On the other hand, while the Christian is sure of Eternal Life, he is not sure of glory. The reward of the Christian is to be allowed to share with His Lord in the Eternal government of His Kingdom; in a word the faithful servant is, as always, rewarded by more work and higher responsibility!

The Judgment of Christians for position in the Kingdom will take place at the Lord's return before the Millennium. All who appear thereat are assured of life in the Kingdom; it is only their position in the Kingdom that is at stake. Full accounts are given of this Judgment that no one may have any misunderstanding in the matter. Verdicts will range from "Well done good and faithful servant" to "Thou wicked servant," from being entrusted with all that belongs to God, to being deprived of what is rightfully one's own, from joy in the Lord's Presence, to being bound hand and foot and cast out of it. Those Christians who have proved by their lives on earth that they are unfit to rule over it, will have to wait in darkness till they can be found a place upon the New Earth, where maybe some faithful servant of the Old Testament will find himself exalted to take his inheritance amongst the Brethren and to rule over him for his good. The Lord has clearly spoken of the weeping and gnashing of teeth amongst those of His children, who, too late, find that they have forfeited the blessing they despised, and must content themselves with second best for Eternity. (Cf. Ezek 44v10-14.)

It is madness to imagine that because we are Sons of God we shall automatically inherit the Government: to forget the "if" of Rom 8v17. We may be Sons who cause shame, who cannot be rightfully entrusted with even the slightest responsibility upon earth, whose lives cause shame to the Family, and are a stumbling block to the world. The greater the responsibility the higher the standard!

The Biblical illustration is the contrast between Abraham sharing God's secrets upon the mountain top, and Lot drinking himself drunk in a lonely cave; both saved, but worlds between them! (Gen 18v17, 19v30) When an Apostle runs his hardest, we may well determine to do our best! (1Cor 9v24-27, Phil 3v10-15) The rationale of this Judgment of the Sons of God by the Son of God is that the Government of the earth during the Millennium is to be in the hands of Christ and His Brethren, who will take the place of Satan and his Angels, who will have been cast out of their thrones in the heavenlies. It is necessary, therefore, for this Judgment to precede the setting up of the Millennial Kingdom. (Matt 25v14-30, Luke 12v31-48, 16v1-12, 19v11-27, Rom 8v17, 1Cor 3v10-15, 2Cor 5v9-10, Heb 2v3, 12v16,17,23, Rev 3v11, Prov 17v2, 29v21)

### **The Great White Throne.**

There remains, however, the final Judgment Throne of God at the close of the Millennium, at which will appear all the dead of all the ages, including Angels and demons as well as men. Here again, the first question to be decided is that of Life or Death. Will one be in the Kingdom or in the Lake of Fire? And therefore the Book of Life is opened. (Rev 20v11-15, Jude v6, 2Pet 2v4)

**NB:** The present course of events upon this earth is most deceptive to the natural mind. God in His mercy, though He condemns instantly every work of evil, does not immediately execute His sentence, but waits to see if His forbearance will lead the sinner to repentance. Unfortunately, so hard are the hearts of many sinners that this very forbearance only

emboldens them in their wickedness, as was the case with Pharaoh, who was hardened by God's repeated forgiveness, till he lost all fear of God's justice. God's children are often perplexed when they see the wicked apparently unscathed, and themselves chastened! Calvary, however, has shown us in one glaring example God's real estimate of sin. The soul that sinneth it shall die, and Christ died therefore for the doomed. God's wrath is indeed mounting up steadily, till it shall be revealed at the Day of the Lord and the Great White Throne. (Psalm 73, Eccles 8v11, Isaiah 26v10, Rom 2v4-9, 9v17,18,22, Rev 6v16-17)

It has often been hastily assumed that all who appear at this Judgment are lost; but there is, of course, no scripture to support this, and a moment's reflection will show that it cannot possibly be so; for at this Judgment will appear those who have been born during the Millennium as well as those who have either rejected or never heard of God's salvation, and the great assembly of Angels and demons who have been waiting for the execution of sentence uttered long ago. It will, indeed, be a mixed company. The Book simply says, "And if any man was not found written in the Book of Life, he was cast into the Lake of Fire," and in Rev 21v8 it gives a description of the characters of such. (Matt 25v41, 2Pet 2v4, Jude 6)

It is a scene of unimaginable solemnity. Here upon the brink of eternity are gathered a vast concourse of beings to hear a verdict, which will carry with it their eternal fate. The Judgment, we are told, will be in the hands of the Royal Family, every member of which will have passed through the temptations of life and know the infirmities of human nature. At their head will be the Son of God, who took our nature upon Him that He might be qualified to perform this very duty. The Judgment will be in the hands of Him, who is not willing that any should perish. (1Cor 6v2-3, Dan 7v22, Rev 20v4, John 5v27)

Why then in face of this loving mercy of God, will there be any who throughout eternity will know no alleviation of their pain? Eternal punishment is not the retribution for the sins that men have committed in the past—it is neither vindictive nor remedial nor punitive. It is, however, the only safeguard against the sins which the finally unrepentant intend to go on committing for eternity if left at liberty. Eternal punishment is God's answer to eternal sin: and the responsibility for it lies, not with God, but with the soul that is set upon sin, scorns mercy, and would gladly destroy the happiness of others for his own base ends. (Acts 17v31, 1Tim 2v4, 2Pet 3v9, Mark 3v29 (R.V.))

The Lake of Fire is the second death: i.e., it is the second time a man loses his body. The first time was because God had taken away the Tree of Life after Adam's sin: the second time is because of his own sin. On both occasions it is torment; the first time temporary, the second time eternal. God cannot prevent a free will desiring to do evil, but He can and will prevent it doing it. This He will do by depriving them of their bodies, without which they can do nothing. The ruin and anguish of those in Hell is irremediable and eternal, and rests solely upon the truth that it is impossible to renew them to repentance, and so make them fit to live with others.

It is as if a father had given his son a penknife that with it he might be enabled to do all sorts of needful things, only to find that instead the boy is cutting things up just to suit himself, and spoiling other people's property. That boy could, if he refused to listen to admonition and warning and continued in his folly, force his father to take away the knife, lest others should be inconvenienced. A razor is a good thing for shaving; but when used for cutting throats it is always confiscated! The Lord pointed out that disembodiment was a ceaseless torment allowing of no rest; so that even a swine's body was better than none, allowing its tenants to do at least one more act of senseless destruction. (Rev 20v14, 21v8, Gen 3v22-24, Heb 6v6, 10v26, Dan 7v11, Luke 16v19-31, Matt 10v28, Luke 8v32,33, 11v24)

**NB:** It is perhaps worth pointing out here that the parable of Dives and Lazarus is a physical picture of the suffering or peace of the souls of the departed. Dives' body was not actually being burned: it was in the grave where it had been buried: nor was Lazarus actually reclining on Abraham's bosom. That was the ordinary Jewish description of the destiny of the believing dead, i.e., with faithful Abraham awaiting the resurrection in faith.

Hades was the place of departed souls not of dead bodies. In the same way the bodies of those destroyed by the Lord at His coming will lie in the Valley of Gehenna: their souls will be in Hades, just as our Lord's body was in the tomb while His soul was suffering the pains of death in Hades. (Isaiah 66v24, Luke 16v22, Acts 2v24-31, John 11v24)

The torment of Hell will not in any sense be vindictive; God will not needlessly afflict even the wicked, nor add to their pain any unnecessary suffering. The awful truth is that their endless pain will be absolutely unavoidable, and spring from the fact that never again will they be free to do anything: since all they desire to do is evil. They will spend eternity in fruitless remorse and hatred of God and each other and the whole creation; yet in the mercy of God not able to inflict physical torment even on each other. Their souls wrapped round in endless lying pride they will refuse to admit their own guilty folly and will instead throw the blame for their awful condition upon a long-suffering Judge, whose love and mercy they spurn and whose every act they treat with suspicion and hatred. To come to the place where you cannot even trust the Almighty, and see a trap in His every word, and throw a doubt upon His every promise, is the last darkness of despair, from which there is no deliverance.

It has been said that not only must justice be done, it must also appear to be done; lest there should be any possibility of doubt about the righteousness of it. There are always those who feel that surely punishment will bring repentance. God has lovingly safeguarded us against this by leaving Satan in prison for the Millennium and then allowing him to come out. We shall then see that he is at once at his old ways of life in hatred and destruction. Hell then is the painful duty, which the unrepentant force upon a long-suffering God. They are hardened, not softened, by forbearance, and His only choice is either to abandon the righteous to the tender mercies of the wicked, or else to bring the wicked to a full stop. He has in His love for the righteous chosen the latter step. (Rev 20v7-9, 19v1-3, Rom 2v4-6, Eccles 8v11, Exodus 4v21)

It is often said that this end would be equally achieved by the annihilation of the wicked. In the first place, the language of Scripture will not allow of such an interpretation. It is torment, not just the smoke of it, which is everlasting. In the second place, the very severity of the penalty will doubtless frighten into the sanity of repentance countless numbers, who would cheerfully have had their fling at the expense of others, if there had been no retribution to be feared. The fear of the Lord may not be the last attitude of wisdom, but it is often the beginning. In the third place, there will likely be many who will be eternally safe because the smoke of Hell, continually ascending in their sight, will play its part in the steeling of their determination to obey God. For the saved will include not only those saved with glory, but also those who are scarcely saved, and only brought to repentance with the greatest difficulty. In the vast Kingdom of God will be vessels to honour, but also to dishonour; yet in the Kingdom. God will save into Eternal Life everyone who can by any manner of means be induced to turn from evil and do good.

Finally, and most important of all, it is the very fact that man is eternal that gives him his importance, and makes him different from the animals. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. Let him think of himself as the mere creature of a day, and you prevent him from thinking highly of himself. The evolutionist who tells man that he is but the short-lived head of an animal creation must not be surprised if men live like animals. It is the very fact that man is eternal which gives him dignity, rescues him from the frustration of death, and allows him to live in hope and eternal purpose: the Christian is saved by hope, and in the light of eternity pulls himself together as one whose actions matter, and will have eternal consequences. Deprive man of eternity, and you have but a dying animal. (Rev 20v10, 14v10-11, Isaiah 66v24, 1Pet 4v18, 2Pet 3v9, Jude 23, 2Tim 2v20-21, John 15v22-25, Ezek 18v23)

**NB1:** It is essential to remember that all who will be in Hell will be there because they hate God without any cause. They would spoil the happiness of Eternity if they could, and they cannot be induced to repent and receive a free pardon and Eternal life. It will be the unreasonable hardness of their own heart, not of God's, which will be responsible for their fearful condition. Yet God will make use of them as an eternal warning to the righteous.

**NB2:** If it be objected that it had been better for God not to have created at all, with His foreknowledge that the result of so doing would be the creation of Hell as well as Heaven, the answer is:

- a) That He is in no sense responsible for Hell; it is an unwanted addendum forced upon Him by the wicked,
- b) That it would be most unfair to deprive the righteous of their happiness, just because some elected to play the fool and preferred misery to happiness, without a cause.

What amazing joy it will be to know that a happy eternity in a glorious place with a loving God and kindly companions is finally assured! No wonder that those who believe the promises of God are exhorted to shout upon their beds! True emotion is the inevitable effect upon the soul of facts. The greater the facts, the greater the emotion. No emotion can be too great in the face of the greatest of all facts, Eternal Life in the Kingdom of God.

### **The Justice of God.**

Finally God has laid down in His Book certain lines which He always follows in Judgment. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

- 1) Matt 11v21-24. God will take into account at that day not only what one did, but what one would have done under happier circumstances. Cp. Matt 10v15, 1Sam 30v21-25.
- 2) John 15:22-25. There is a real sense in which men have not sin until they see and hate God. It is the person who knows it all and yet falls away, who is utterly hopeless. Heb 6v4-8, 10v26-31, 2Peter 2v20-22.
- 3) Matt 10v41-42. A man will be credited with doing the thing with which he sympathised though he had no opportunity himself. It is the intents of the heart which count with God. Cp. Matt 20v6-7.
- 4) Matt 25v31-46. Love for and kindness to any Son of God, will be counted as love and kindness to the unknown Son of God. Cp. Matt 10v40, 18v5.

**5)** Rom 2v11. God is no respecter of persons. All will be treated with scrupulous fairness and generosity. There will be no one in Heaven or Earth through their own righteousness, but all solely through the forgiving mercy of God, who is rich in pity. Cp. James 2v1.

**6)** 1Cor 3v13. Quality, not quantity is God's criterion. Cp. Mark 12v41-44, Luke 16v10.

### **Chapter VIII: The Cross Of The Lord.**

The faith whereby the Old Testament saints were justified varied greatly in its content. They had to believe whatever revelation God had made to them. Noah believed the Flood was coming, Abram believed that he was to have a seed; Rahab believed that Jericho would be taken.

The faith whereby a Son of God is justified has however always the same object; it is faith in the death of Jesus as an atonement for sin, and in the resurrection of Jesus as an evidence of God's acceptance of His sacrifice.

This faith is capable of great expansion as the Christian baby grows to maturity. It may begin as a very personal blessing; it will grow to be an event of universal significance. (Rom 3v21-26, 4v23-5v11, 10v9) The central reason for Calvary was that the Law of God might be established in all its awful majesty. The whole success of the Creation depended upon the voluntary obedience of God's creatures to His Law, the Law of Love and Liberty. Anyone who broke the law of unselfishness, and wished to embark upon a life of self-pleasing, could at any time upset the whole loving plan. Therefore, because of the exceedingly dangerous nature of sin, that is, disobedience, God laid down the law that "the soul that sinneth it shall die," because it is too dangerous to be left at large. Indeed, the whole happiness of Eternity will rest upon the unceasing obedience of all in it. (Gen 2v17, Jer 31v30, Ezek 18v4)

The fearful nature of sin, therefore, and its awful consequences had to be burnt in upon every conscience. To do this and so ensure the prosperity of the Ages of the Ages God has taken two steps:

**a)** He has allowed one sin to work itself out to its bitter end, so that all may see and understand the misery of a world in which evil is allowed. (Rom 5v12-21, Isaiah 14v12-13, Ezek 28v15, Gen 3v6)

**b)** He has satisfied the righteous demands of His Law that the death of a sinner is the inevitable result of his sin by sacrificing, not sinners, but their sinless Creator, to establish the inexorability of His Law's decree. No one will enter the Kingdom who has not understood the horrible danger of sin, and made clear to the Almighty his intention never to commit it. By the Cross all hope of escaping the punishment of sin is taken away (no sinner can hope to get away with unrepentant sin). The Law is the custodian of the happiness of Society. Contempt of it brings its inevitable reward. To forgive the sinner without establishing the Majesty of the Law would encourage sin, and render justice impossible. (Isaiah 42v21, Psalm 138v2, Rom 3v21)

### **The Leprosy of Sin. Leviticus 13.**

#### **The plague of sin is:**

**a)** That successful selfishness at the expense of others tempts them to play the same game, and so fills the earth with violence, and leads to the final triumph of the most unscrupulous, and the servitude of the righteous. (Gen 6v11, Rev 13v3-4)

**b)** That the risks of living with those who will take advantage of one are so great as ultimately to force a man into a similar line of evil conduct for mere self preservation. The righteous make themselves the prey of the wicked. (Isaiah 59v15, James 5v6)

**c)** That it provokes retaliation from those who are wronged and plants a root of bitterness whose fruit grows more and more bitter with the passage of time. The wheel of nature, when once it has started rolling, is not too easily stopped. Ishmael still despises Isaac, and Esau hates Jacob! (James 3v6)

**d)** That when unchecked it advances from evil to evil, until at last there is no part of the soul which is not infected with a perfect selfishness, which knows no repentance and has no regrets, but finds its satisfaction in the torture and misery of others, and in a self-advancement which rises upon the slaughter of its rivals, and plunges its possessor into a ceaseless apprehension of retaliation from its victims. It is the same tree which bears Athaliah and Herod, Nero and Hitler! (Gen 6v5, Prov 4v14-17, Micah 7v1-6)

Meditation upon these awful truths must lead, however, to an ever-increasing understanding of the Love both of God the Father, who laid our sins upon His own Son; and of His Son who delighted to do the Father's will and set us free. This is not the legal but the personal side of Calvary, and reveals to us not simply the inflexible righteousness of God, but also

His tender love for each one of His creatures. (John 3v16, Gal 2v20, Rom 5v8)

These two great truths, **1)** that the wages of sin is death, **2)** that God has out of love given His own Son to carry our sins in His own body on the tree, were in the mind of God before the Creation; and the revelation of them was given through the prophets of Israel.

Yet although they were plainly stated in the Old Testament, no one believed them or understood them till Jesus came. He believed, but He could not get even His Apostles to agree with Him till after His death and resurrection. They had no fear of punishment for sin; nor any desire that Jesus should die for their Sins. Indeed, they did what they could to prevent Him doing so. They were quarrelling about the positions they would hold in His Kingdom, when the King was realising that unless He died for them they would not be able even to enter that Kingdom. It was His post-resurrection ministry, which explained to them the victory of Calvary. Before that they refused to consider or discuss His death and resurrection; after that, this was the centre of their message, as it has been the centre of the family life ever since. (Rom 6v23, Rev 11v18, 1Pet 1v20, Isaiah 53v11, 1Cor 1v23, Luke 24v25,44,45, 9v45)

The world has always hated such truth; it seems to lay upon them an insupportable burden. Their thought is that free will carries with it liberty to do as they please; and not, as is the truth, liberty to keep the law of God. It has always been the dream of the world that in some way or other universal selfishness could lead to universal happiness; whereas the truth is that universal happiness is the fruit of universal obedience to the Law of Love.

They hated Jesus, therefore, who pointed out this truth, and laid upon man, not God, the responsibility for the world's prosperity. It is the work, however, of all the Sons of God to preach this simple but unwelcome truth, that the happiness of Heaven will depend upon man's obedience and not upon God's power. They, too, must take up daily their cross with all the explanation of it which God has given; that all men may clearly grasp that selfishness will bar them from Heaven and plunge them into Hell; that only Christ could avert from them the doom that is pronounced upon disobedience; that God loves them like His own soul, but that even He can do nothing for them except they turn from sin; that one sin in its outworking is bound to defile and wreck the peace and happiness of a whole society, whether in Heaven or upon earth.

**So the study of the Foundation Truths has drawn to its close, leaving us safe in the everlasting arms of the Creator and Redeemer. Continued study will only serve to enlarge our love of God and give us the full assurance of understanding of His heart and mind.**

#### **Appendix VIII: The Mystery Of Iniquity And The Mystery Of God.**

There is something which is called 'The mystery of God', which is only ended when the Lord returns at the seventh trumpet. Rev 10v7, Eph 3v9,10, 3v9-11, Rom 16v25,26. There is also a reference to 'the mystery of iniquity' which was already working in Paul's day, but was hindered from completion by God until He was ready to allow it. The word 'mystery' does not mean mysterious, but simply a secret hidden from the outsider but revealed to the initiated, e.g. the secret teaching of Freemasons, which is only known to them. Thus both God and Satan have plans which are hidden from the man in the street, but are revealed to their own children. The Christian, of course, knows the truth, but the ordinary Spiritist is deceived by his master. Only a few know the deep things of Satan. Luke 10v24, 1Peter 1v10-12, John 15v14,15, Rev 1v1, 2v24, 2Thess 2v7.

#### **The Mystery of God.**

The world does not credit God with any plan at all. To them it all seems a meaningless jumble without any particular purpose. Indeed, the world conceives of God as a fool who can't see His own kingdom. As a matter of fact, however, the intention of God is to put both Heaven and Earth under the rule of His Son Jesus and His bride (i.e. the Church), and to fulfil upon the earth the promise made to Abraham and his seed, Israel, that they should inherit the earth. The inhabited earth to come is not again to be put under angels, but under Christ and His brethren who overcame. Heb 2v5-13, Rom 8v12-39, Luke 19v11-27, Rev 21v7. There must therefore be begotten, educated and tested, a sufficiently large number of overcoming Sons to take the place of the present world rulers, i.e. Satan's angels, now in the first heaven but later to be cast out upon the earth, and finally into Hell. Dan 10v13-21, Rev 12v7-9, Matt 25v41, 1Cor 9v24-27, 12v31, Eph 6v12, 2Tim 4v8, James 1v12, 1Peter 5v1-4.

Now this depends not upon God but upon His children. If the Church was faithful, then the time would have been shortened, but unfortunately there have been centuries where the Gospel has hardly ever been preached at all, so hardly any overcomers have arisen as kings and priests. Therefore, the length of this period, though known to God, was not revealed to His sons lest they should be tempted to grow slack and say, 'the time is not yet,' or forget that the length of the interval depended on their exertions, and that they would hasten or retard the day of Christ or lose a crown through carelessness. 2Peter 3v12, Rev 3v11. When, however, the Lord knows that the requisite numbers of overcomers is to hand, then He will stand aside and allow Satan to proceed with His plan. 2Thess 2v6-12.

The Mystery of Satan. 2Thess 2v7, Rev 2v24.

Satan and his angels are already doomed to Hell for the ages of ages (because of their impenitence and wickedness) and therefore have no hope of success, or of establishing any successful kingdom upon earth. However, being filled with a murderous hatred of God and man, they desire to damage them as much as possible before their own final ruin. Therefore, during the last seven years of this age they will stage a kind of mock kingdom of Heaven upon earth, a Devilish parody of God's Millennial kingdom, even using God's city and Temple for this purpose. God will allow Satan to do this fearful thing for the following reasons amongst others.

a) To show mankind the madness of preferring Satan to Jesus, and thus bring them to repentance and a willingness to accept Jesus as Lord. This folly has wrecked the human race since Eden, but this fearful experience will bring to an end to Satan's power of deception during the Millennium, his mask will be torn off and he will be seen for what he is, the enemy of man. Gen 2 all, Acts 3v14, Rev 13v7,10,15, John 8v44.

b) To show the Jews the madness of rejecting their Messiah, and so bring them to a willingness to accept Jesus as Lord.

c) To break the pride of the Gentiles by giving them an opportunity one by one, and finally all combined, to govern the world according to their own ideas so that any hope of happiness apart from God may be finally shattered by their own failure. This will make them willing to accept God's plan of learning about Him from the despised Jews. Zech 8v23. Following Antichrist will result in the complete collapse of society and bring the earth to the brink of destruction, from which Christ will deliver them at the last moment, so that the few remaining Jews and Gentiles will enter into the Millennium broken and shocked by the judgement of God. Zech 12 all, Isaiah 13v9-16. As were Noah and his family when they saw the ruin caused by the flood and obliged, and at any rate happy, to submit to the iron rule of Christ and His Brethren. Psalm 2 all, Rev 12v5, 2v27, 19v15.

Thus God will use this last plan of Satan to break the pride of man, and when this is accomplished will imprison Him until He has again need of him to test the inhabitants of the Millennial earth. The human race as a whole will have had an experience similar to that of the prodigal son, and will return to God only after the terrible experience of trusting the Devil, having learned to obey God by the things they have suffered. It is of first importance to remember that against God Satan has absolutely no power. No evil being, demon or man can do anything other than what God permits. 2Chron 18v18-22, Job 1v12, Matt 8v31, Psalm 76v10. Satan is wholly a tool in the hands of God to punish the wicked, to correct the righteous, 1Tim 1v20, 1Cor 5v5, to bring glory to the Sons of God, Eph 6v10-20, Job.1 and 2. James 1v12, to test the true character of everyone. Rev 20v7,10, Matt 4v1. Against us Satan only has the power that is given to him by God. Job.1 all. Against God he is helpless. Rev 20v1-3. God alone knows the length of this period of waiting, Matt 24v36, Mark 13v32, Acts 1v7, but God's children will know when the last seven years, and the Great Tribulation begins. Matt 24v15-22, Dan 9v27, 2Thess 2v1-12.

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