



A Kingdom

Not Made With Hands

by Randolph Dunn

A Kingdom Not made With Hands

Introduction

Man was created an eternal righteous being in God's image, not His exact likeness. *"He, God, has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end."* (Eccl 3:13) God prepared a Paradise for them and instructed them to maintain Eden, to be fruitful and multiply and NOT to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil for by doing they would die. It is unknown how long they lived there, but sometime later they ate of the fruit of the tree, consequently God removed them from Eden. It is believed this is when time began as Adam and Eve could no longer eat of the tree of life and live forever.

Many years later God instructed righteous Abraham to go to a place He had prepared for him and his descendants, one of which would bless the world. It was over 400 years before Abraham's descendants, the Israelites, arrived in the land promised to Abraham. While there they were looking for a redeemer that could forgive sins. if they obeyed Him.

By action of the Holy Spirit God came to live on earth as a human to become the only sin offering and *"to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."* (John 14:3)

Following Jesus' death by crucifixion and His resurrection, He returned to Heaven and on Pentecost Day *"pour(ed) out my Spirit on all people ... everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"* (Acts 2:17, 21) not just the Jews. Christ's apostles proclaimed the Good News - forgiveness of sin and salvation is now available to all mankind who put their trust and obedience in Christ by dying to sin and being buried into His blood, immersion in water - baptism. God then raises these obedient forgiven people from their burial putting them in a kingdom not made by hands. You must study God's word for your salvation, and not "rely" on interpretations by others; e.g., BibleWay Publishing, commentaries, priest, pastors or preachers. (Phil 2:13)

"When the Son of Man comes ... He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'" (Matt 25:31-34)



BibleWay Publishing grants permission to reproduce for non-commercial purposes lessons in their entirety without change or charge.

Randolph Dunn, Publisher - Roberto Santiago, Editor

Website: thebiblewayonline.com

Contact us at info.BiblewayPublishing@gmail.com

November 2021

Chapter 1

God's Promise

Adam and Eve were separated from their loving father and creator, but God had a plan for bringing man back into that perfect relationship. He told the serpent, Satan the deceiver and father of lies, "*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."* (Genesis 3:15)

Comment "Crush your head" Christ's atoning sacrifice and resurrection put an end to eternal death by providing for forgiveness. Victory over sin and death, Satan's hold on man, to all who call on Christ through faith, belief and baptism into Him death. "Strike his heel (of the offspring of woman)" is the attempt to take Jesus' life by crucifixion.

Later following Cain's unacceptable offering, God again warned of the consequences of man's rebellious actions, "*If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.*" (Genesis 4:7)

Comment: Cain did not listen to God's warning. He sinned even more by killing his brother Abel. The consequences of his actions resulted in him becoming a wanderer or fugitive.

During the days of Noah, we read "*The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.*" (Genesis 6:5)

Comment: God removed all evil before him by destroying by water all people living upon the earth, except righteous Noah and his family.

God revealed to Abraham his thoughts about Sodom and Gomorrah. "*And the LORD said, 'Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know.'* ... *Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. So, He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.*" (Genesis 18:20-21 and 19:24-25)

Comment: God heard their outcry indicated God is aware of everything going on among the people of the earth. In this case He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with all their wicked people. These events show that God does not tolerate wickedness, disobedience or sin and will take action against those who practice such, but not always immediately.

From Adam and Eve through Judas, Jesus' betrayer, sin prevailed as it does today. Paul through the Holy Spirit said "*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" ... "*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" (Romans 3:23; 6:23)

"*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*" (John 3:16)

"*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*" (2 Peter 3:9)

Questions

1. Referring to Satan woman's offspring would crush his head.
True ___ False ___
2. If you do not do what is right sin is present.

True ___ False ___

3. Sin originates within man's heart.

True ___ False ___

4. God hears man's cry against evil.

True ___ False ___

5. All people sin.

True ___ False ___

Chapter 2

The Gift of God – Jesus, The Person

Promises concerning God's Gift

There are many prophecies concerning Jesus in the Old Testament but what were the possibilities of making just 25 predictions about someone who was to be born many years later and having these predictions come true? Dr. Hawley O. Taylor has provided this answer: "Regarding these n cases of events foretold for Israel's Messiah who was to come, if the chances of success were even in the case of each one, that is p (probability) equals n in every case, then the overall probability that all n events would find their fulfillment in one person would be p^n equals $(1/2)^n$. Thus, there would be but one chance in 2^n (33 million, where n equals 25) of all these foretold events coming true if they were mere guesses. Now a glance at these prophecies concerning Christ reveals that they do not all have an even chance of success, for in some instances it is highly improbable that the event could occur at all (as for a child to be born without a human father). A very conservative compromise would be p equals 1/5; and the overall probability for the n prophecies coming true would be p^n equals $(1/5)^n$ or one chance out of a thousand trillion if n equals 25. (Modern Science and Christian Faith, p. 178) Even if the prophecy regarding the virgin birth be excluded, the number remains astronomically large. Too large to assume that this accidentally happened! Twenty-five prophecies concerning Christ and their fulfillment, from Modern Science and Christian Faith, pp. 179-183.

- a. Following Adam and Eve's disobedience God told Satan *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."* (Gen 3:15)
- b. Years after the flood God call Abraham to leave Ur of the Chaldees and go to the land of Canaan stating *"I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; ... and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you"* (Gen 12:2-3) and later God made the same promise to both Isaac and Jacob.

Prophecies concerning God's Gift

Some Specific Prophecies

- a. Daniel interpreting King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue of gold, silver, iron and clay stated - *"And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed."* (Daniel 2:44)
- b. Isaiah said, *"Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel."* (Isa 7:13-14)
- c. *"God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary."* (Luke 1:26-28; 35)
- d. *"The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most-High will overshadow you. So, the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God'". ... "and to Joseph the angel said 'The virgin (Mary) will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel'-which means, 'God with us.'"* (Matt 1:23)
- e. God proclaimed (to Mary and Joseph) before Jesus' birth that He would be called *"the Son of the Most-High."* (Luke 1:32)

God intentionally emptied Himself of His divine nature, left Heaven, became flesh and lived among His created beings.

Birth of Jesus

“His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’” (Matthew 1:18-21)

“All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel - which means, God with us.’” (Matthew 1:23)

The environment into which Jesus was born was a closed society, a people who considered themselves superior to all other people. They were Jews and took great pride in being the Children of Abraham, God’s chosen people. ‘*Abraham is our father*’ (John 8:38). They had immense hatred of the Samaritans as they considered them to be half-breeds, Jews who had forsaken the Law of Moses during the period of Babylonian captivity. Their hatred was so great they would go out of their way to keep from setting foot in the land of the Samaritans. Roman occupiers were no different and any Jew who associated with “those occupiers” was a “sinner;” e. g., Matthew, the tax collector.

They were also legalistic of the highest degree. They made sure they fulfilled the letter of the law, not necessarily the intent, in order to earn God’s promises. For instance, Moses required them to tithe, give a tenth. To make certain they gave the tenth but no more, they counted the seeds of plants to give a tenth and only a tenth.

Rome required the Jews to carry a soldier’s load for one mile. So, the Jews put down markers to make sure they went no farther. Remember Jesus stated that if someone forced you to go one mile; go with him two. (Matthew 5:41)

Into this culture came the Messiah, The Anointed One, the Christ. The Jews believed that when He came, He would restore the earthly kingdom of Israel to its ‘God given right’ to power and honor. Their Messiah would be the King of the Jews and rule like David.

What First Century Writers Said

Jesus

“The Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.” (John 5:37-39)

The Apostle Peter

Christians wear the name of Christ because Christ is their Lord, Teacher, Guide, Savior, Redeemer, Model, High Priest, Hope, Sacrifice for sin and much, much more. The rock-solid foundation for our faith is the truth of Peter’s confession - *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* (Matthew 16:16) Jesus is real and the Bible is true. All that needs to be known about Jesus is found in the Bible. All of human history revolves around Him. Jesus is the central character of the human drama. It is not surprising that the history of the world is divided into two spans of time: before Christ (BC) and after Christ (AD).

The Apostle John

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might

believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.” (John 1:1-13)

“All this was done that anyone who received him, those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.” (John 1:12-13)
“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

John the Baptizer

“He (John) cries out, saying, 'This was he of whom I said, He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' From the fullness of his grace, we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.” (John 1:15-18)

“The next day John (John the Baptist) saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” (John 1:29-30)

The Roman Governor, Pilate

“Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’ ‘Is that your own idea,’ Jesus asked, ‘or did others talk to you about me?’ ‘Am I a Jew?’ Pilate replied. ‘It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?’ Jesus said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.’ ‘You are a king, then!’ said Pilate. Jesus answered, ‘You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.’ ‘What is truth?’ Pilate asked.” (John 18:33-38)

Jews Insisted

“‘We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.’ When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace. ‘Where do you come from?’ he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. ‘Do you refuse to speak to me?’ Pilate said. ‘Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?’ Jesus answered, ‘You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore, the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.’” (John 19:7-11)

Jesus' Prayer

“Jesus looked toward heaven and prayed Father; the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted Him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.” (John 17:1-5)

The eunuch said to Phillip

“And he answered and said, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’” (Acts 8:37)

Thallus

Matthew states *“They had crucified him ... and sitting down, they kept watch over him there ... from the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land.” (Matthew 27:35-36; 45-46)*

Mark put it this way *“At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour.”* (Mark 15:33)

Thallus, a Samaritan-born historian who lived and worked in Rome about AD 52, quoted by Julius Africanus, a Christian chronographer of the late second century. ¹ “Thallus, in the third book of his histories, explains away this darkness as an eclipse of the sun.” Africanus stated his objection to the report arguing that an eclipse of the sun cannot occur during the full moon, as was the case when Jesus died at Passover time. The force of the reference to Thallus is that the circumstances of Jesus' death were known and discussed in the Imperial City as early as the middle of the first century. The fact of Jesus' crucifixion must have been fairly well known by that time, to the extent that unbelievers like Thallus thought it necessary to explain the matter of the darkness as a natural phenomenon. ... Ironically, Thallus' efforts have been turned into the mainstream of historical proof for Jesus and for the reliability of Mark's account of the darkness at his death.” ²

Mara Bar-Serapion

“A manuscript in the British Museum preserves the text of a letter sent to his son by a Syrian named Mara Bar-Serapion. The father illustrated the folly of persecuting wise men like Socrates, Pythagoras, and the wise king of the Jews, which the context obviously shows to be Jesus. ‘What advantage did the Athenians gain from putting Socrates to death? Famine and plague came upon them as a judgment for their crime. What advantage did the men of Samos gain from burning Pythagoras? In a moment their land was covered with sand. What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their king? It was just after that that their kingdom was abolished. God justly avenged these three wise men: the Athenians died of hunger; the Samians were overwhelmed by the seas; the Jews, ruined and driven from their land, live in complete dispersion. ... Nor did the wise King die for good; he lived on in the teaching which He had given.’” ³

Cornelius Tacitus

A Roman historian living from about AD 50 to AD 100 wrote regarding Nero's fire. "Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus." ⁴

Plinius Secundus

A Roman governor in AD 112 wrote to Emperor Trajan "They [Christians] were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang an anthem to Christ as God, and bound themselves by a solemn oath not to commit any wicked deed ... after which it was their custom to separate, and then meet again to partake of food, but food of an ordinary kind." ⁵

Seutonius

An annalist and court official of the Imperial House during the reign of Hadrian wrote about AD 120 in the Life of Claudius. "As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he (Claudius) expelled them from Rome."⁶ Edward C. Wharton then states "The reason for the fame of this quotation is due to the fact that Luke, some sixty years earlier, had recorded this same incident as the reason for the apostle Paul yoking up with a Christian Jewish couple named Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:1-2). Again, the mention of Christ in the historical context is observed in extra-biblical literature." ⁷

Flavius Josephus

Josephus has an interesting observation. "There arose about this time Jesus, a wise man, if indeed we should call him a man; for he was a doer of marvelous deeds, a teacher of men who receive the truth with pleasure. He won over many Jews and also many Greeks. This man was the Messiah. And when Pilate had condemned him to the cross at the instigation of our own leaders, those who had loved him from the first did not cease. For he appeared to them on the third day alive again, as the prophets had predicted and said many other wonderful things about him. And even now the race of Christians, so named after him, has not yet died out." ⁸

Early Jewish and Gentile Writers

The following quote from F. F. Bruce summarizes this very clearly. “Whatever else may be thought of the evidence from early Jewish and Gentile writers...it does at least establish, for those who refuse the witness of Christian writings, the historical character of Jesus himself. Some writers may toy with the fancy of a 'Christ-myth,' but they do not do so on the ground of historical evidence. The historicity of Christ is as axiomatic [self-evident] for an unbiased historian as the historicity of Julius Caesar. It is not historians who propagate the ‘Christ-myth’ theories.”⁹

Footnotes

1. F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents*, Eerdmens, p. 113.
2. Edward C. Wharton, *Christianity: A Clear Case of History* Howard p. 7.
3. British Museum Syriac Mss., F. F. Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament*, p. 31.
4. *The Annals and the Histories*, 15:44. From *Britannica Great Books*, Vol. 15, p. 168.
5. *Epistles*, 10:96.
6. *Life of Claudius*, 25:4
7. Edward C. Wharton, *Christianity: A Clear Case of History*, Howard p. 11.
8. *Antiquities*, 18,3. 3.
9. F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents*. P. 119. cited by Edward C. Wharton in his book *Christianity: A Clear Case of History*

Words and Actions about God’s Gift

When Jesus was baptized, immersed, by John in the Jordan river, the heavens opened: “*And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, ‘You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.’*” (Luke 3:22)

“*The devil said to him, ‘If (forasmuch as or since) you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.’*” (Luke 4:3)

“*In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.’ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah. A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’*” (Matt 3:1-3)

John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “*Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*” (John 1:29-30)

“*As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’*” (Matt 3:16-17)

“*The tempter (Satan) came to him and said, ‘If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.’*” (Matt 4:3)

“*The woman (Samaritan woman) said, ‘I know that Messiah’ (called Christ) ‘is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.’ Then Jesus declared, ‘I who speak to you am he.’*” (John 4:25-26)

For several years Jesus taught as one having authority confirming His message by miracles, signs and wonders such as causing the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk and raising the dead to life again.

“*Jesus asked his disciples “‘But what about you?’ he asked ‘Who do you say I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus replied, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’*” (Matthew 16:15-19)

Comment: “On this rock” - the fact that Jesus was and is the Son of God is the foundation of “My Church.”

Comment: “Hades” is the temporary residence of souls of the dead. Death will not overcome Christ’s Church.

He was more specific about the time His Kingdom would come for *“he said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.’”* (Mark 9:1)

Comment: Christ would be establishing his church during the lifetime of some of his hearers.

He then intentionally gave his life as the sin-offering, a sacrifice, to atone for man’s sin by allowing the Roman government to crucify him. They buried him in a secure grave with guards to prevent the theft of his physical body. But God, the Father, raised Him the third day before his body decayed, conquering death and the grave.

“About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’-which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ When some of those standing there heard this, they said, ‘He’s calling Elijah.’ Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, ‘Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.’ And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.” (Matt 27:46-50)

“His disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.’ Thomas said to him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” (John 20:26-28)

Some forty days later His return to Heaven was witnessed by the apostles. The Holy Spirit was sent to guide them in preaching and recording the Gospel, the power of God unto salvation. Initially many Jews and later many Gentiles acknowledged Jesus as God, the Christ (the Anointed One). Many witnesses in Judea, Galilee and Samaria who lived while He lived and taught, testified of His coming back to life (resurrection) and His return to Heaven (ascension).

The Foundation of “My Church”

“It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He (Jesus) is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.’ Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:10-12)

“Who (Jesus of Nazareth), being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” (Philippians 2:6-7)

Comment: God, the Son, chose to become a physical body of flesh in the form of Jesus to live among men and face temptations, trials and rejection by the very beings he created. This topic is discussed in [The Man Who Was God](#) by BibleWay Publishing.

Christ is the foundation of the church. Ephesians 2:20: *“having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone”*; 1 Corinthians 3:11: *“For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* and 2 Timothy 2:19: *“Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, The Lord knows those who are His.”*

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power

and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come – the everlasting age. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.” (Ephesians 1:18-23)

Following Jesus' ascension to heaven the apostles returned to Jerusalem as He had commanded them. Many Jews were gathered in Jerusalem, because it was Pentecost. *“And when the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. **And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit** and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.” (Acts 2:1-4)*

The sound of rushing wind brought a great crowd to the assembled apostles. Peter and the other apostles seized the opportunity to remind them of what they and their religious leaders had done, stating, *“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.’ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off (all people) - for all whom the Lord our God will call.’” (Acts 2:36-39)*

Comment: “Repentance” is not a mere feeling; it has not the uncertainty of moods and sentiments. It is not a simple change in the weather of the soul. It is a distinct alteration of the focus of the intelligence; it carries with it a movement of the will; in short, it is a revolution in the very ground of the man's being.” (Al Maxey in Reflection)

Comment: “Baptized” was transliterated from the Greek word baptizo meaning to submerge, dip, plunge under. Baptizo should not be confused with the Greek words; rantizo, meaning to sprinkle or with the Greek word cheo meaning to pour over.

“This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:11-12)

Many Jews on Pentecost Day, realizing their sinful condition, put their trust in Christ by calling upon God to forgive them by being immersed in water (baptism) into Christ's death after which God raised them from their burial in water and added them to His disciples thereby establishing His body of forgiven sinners, His church.

*“So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were **added that day about three thousand souls.** And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” (Acts 2:41-42)*

“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, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:46-47)

James, addressing those IN Christ, stated: *“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” (James 1:12-15)*

Comment: Knowing there are consequences for sin, you and I need to be forgiven, redeemed, reconciled and brought

back into a righteous relationship with God. Those who are forgiven and reconciled are put into the Kingdom not made by hands. Following this reconciliation to God's relationship one must grow into God's likeness They had in the beginning by studying Christ message, the Bible.

"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death." (2 Corinthians 7:10)

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10)

"For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation." (Romans 5:10-11)

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:17-19)

Comment: "A new creation" is a spiritual creation of forgiven sinners made priest to serve God. The first creation, physical man, was made from earth's elements. This new creation is made from God's grace, and man's faith, trust and obedience.

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." ... "After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: 'Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.'" (John 16:33, 17:1-4)

Since Jesus is God's gift of eternal life, what must one do to accept this gift? On Pentecost Day, 40 days following Jesus' return to Heaven, Peter answered this question and the Spirit was poured out on all men. *"God had promised him (David) on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear." (Acts 2:30-33)*

"Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.' When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.'" ... "Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day." (Acts 2:36-38, 41)

"They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:46-47)

There are many examples of others who accepted Christ by dying to sin, being buried (immersed in water) into Christ death,

raised by God as new spiritual beings and put in Christ's Body and in fellowship with God.

1. Ethiopian eunuch – Acts 8
2. Samaritans – Acts 8
3. Saul of Tarsus – Acts 9
4. Cornelius – Acts 10
5. People in many in cities of Philippi, Ephesus, Corinth and Rome.

Questions

1. There is only one prophecy about Jesus.
True ___ False ___
2. God intentionally emptied Himself of deity to become human and live among His creation.
True ___ False ___
3. There are no non-Christian historians who wrote about Jesus.
True ___ False ___
4. John, the Baptist, acknowledged that Jesus was God who could take away man's sins.
True ___ False ___
5. The foundation of the Church Christ built was
 - a. ___ The Jews
 - b. ___ Peter
 - c. ___ Jesus as God in flesh
 - d. ___ His church has not been established

Chapter 3

How Does One Get in the Kingdom Today?

Hear

- Diligently read and study what Christ taught and the apostles preached - for Christ is the Words of life.

Understand

- All men are sinful, having disobeyed God's righteous commands.
- I have sinned and am not living according to God's commands.
- My sins will result in my eternal death.
- I must be forgiven to have eternal life with God.
- Christ, the sin offering that atones, is the only way for me to be forgiven of all my sins.

Believe that Christ is God who wants to forgive

- Jesus was and is God who came to earth in flesh as Jesus of Nazareth and lived among men.
- Jesus willingly gave His physical life being crucified - the perfect sacrifice to forgive man of his sins.
- He was buried, rose from the grave on the third day and appeared to hundreds of his disciples.
- He ascended back to heaven to be with the Father.

Repent

- Change my life from sin and disobedience to trust and obedience.

Confess

- Acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God and be committed to Him (belief).

Die

- Put to death my old, sinful, worldly life.

Be Buried

- Since your sinful life died, it must be buried in Christ's death by immersion in water, baptism.

Receive

- Following your death to sin and burial into Christ death, God resurrects you into a new spiritual being, gives you the Holy Spirit and puts you into Christ Body, the church He established.

Live

- Continue to live steadfast and obedient to Christ, the blood sacrifice that forgives sin and will continue to cleanse all who live in obedience through faith and trust from a contrite heart. IN Christ you are as a servant and priest to do God's will.

The Decision is Yours!

Questions

None

Chapter 4

Assembling to Encourage and Edify

The Bible does not provide specific instructions for the frequency of or the location for assembling together. Jesus in talking with the Samaritan woman (John 4) was explicit that in the future worship was not about location.

The meetings of the early church were marked by every member functioning, spontaneity, freedom, vibrancy, and open participation. "The first-century church was a fluid gathering, not a static ritual. And it was often unpredictable, unlike the (our) contemporary (institutional) church service (worship service)." (Pagan Christianity?, Frank Barna and George Viola pg. 50)

They met in temple courts, public places, and in Christians' homes. With the onset of persecution by the Jews and Romans the temple courts and Solomon's colonnade ceased to be available. Therefore, they began assembling together in homes and other available sites.

Scripture referring to Christians assembling (coming together):

- For a whole year they met with the church and taught a great many people. (Acts 11:26)
- Many were gathered together praying (Acts 12:12)
- Gathered the church together they reported (Acts 14:27)
- Gathered the multitude together - delivered letter (Acts 15:30)
- The disciples came together to break bread (Acts 20:7)
- When you gather together ... deliver one to Satan (1 Cor. 5:4-5)
- If the whole church comes together in one place (1 Cor. 14:23)
- When you come together to eat (1 Corinthians 14:34)
- Sing to one another (Ephesians 5:12)
- In the presence of all rebuke sinning elders (1 Timothy 5:20)

1 Corinthians

"Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. 2 For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. 3 On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. 4 The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. 5 Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up." (1-5)

"Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? 7 If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played? 8 And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? 9 So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air. 10 There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, 11 but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner (barbarian in some translations) to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me. 12 So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church." (6-12)

Comment: “Tongue” – *gloóssais* - the language used by a particular people in distinction from that of other nations.

“Barbarian” – *barbarous* - any foreigner ignorant of the Greek language and culture, whether mental or moral.

“Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. 15 What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. 16 Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say “Amen” to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? 17 For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up. 18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 19 Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.” (13-19)

“Brothers (brethren in some versions) do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. 21 In the Law it is written, “By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord.” 22 Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. 23 If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all (each one in some translations) speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? 24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, 25 the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.” (20-25)

- “brothers” – *adelphos*, - male and female – brethren
- “if” – *eán* – indicating some degree of uncertainty not a specified time or place.
- “whole church” – Christians met in private houses in several communities within a city so they came together for the purpose of encouraging faithfulness in the midst of persecution.
- “all / each one” — an all-inclusive term, either men or women

“What then, brothers)? When you come together (assemble together in some translations), each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. 27 If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. 28 But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. 29 Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh (pass judgment in some translations) what is said. 30 If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. 31 For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, 32 and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. 33 For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, 34 the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. 35 If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.” (26-35)

- “when” – used of things which one assumes will occur but the time is uncertain.
- “prophets” – in both the Old and New Testaments there were women prophets
- “weigh” – to make a distinction, discriminate, distinguish, judge
- “women” – *gunáikes* - a single or married woman in the context “of ask your husband” it means wife.

“Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? 37 If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. 38 If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. 39 So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. 40 But all things should be done decently and in order (some versions orderly manner; or sequential).” (36-40)

Begin comments on “The Assembly in Corinth”

- The Christian body has different functions, so everyone is not expected to do the same thing if Christ’s Church is to grow. It is the Christian Body including the preacher and shepherds that should determine their needs.
- The purpose of assembling together was to encourage Christians to remain faithful and do good works. While together they sang, instructed, gave revelations and spoke in other languages through interpreters.
- Men or women speakers who were not able to be understood because an interpreter was not present, were to keep quiet.
- Chaos was caused by all praying, speaking or singing at the same time, thus visitors would conclude “you are out of your mind” and prevent God’s message from being heard.

- Allowing everyone to speak, pray or sing one at a time is respectful to God and fellow Christians.
- The Greek word *gunaikos* translated as women means any female of any age, whether a virgin, married, divorced or widow.
- Since Paul's instruction was for the women to ask their husband at home, then women by context means wives. Paul's instructions would not apply to unmarried, abandoned, divorced or widowed Christian women or those whose husbands were non-Christian..
- The key is to respect whoever is teaching whether man or woman.
- As the law, Torah, says appears to refer to synagogue rules and traditions.
- One example of a first century assembly was Corinth. Their action of all speaking at the same time and self-importance by believing my actions are more important than your actions were criticized by Paul. But participation by all Christians, man or woman, in an orderly fashion was encouraged.
- Since their assemblies were marked by disrespect, chaos and confusion. To correct this problem Paul wrote:
 1. Speakers were to be silent if their language could not be understood and no one available to interpret.
 2. Speakers were to take turns, one following another, while addressing the assembly as God is not a God of confusion.
 3. Wives of speakers were to show respect to their husband by not questioning them in public but to seek clarification in the privacy of their home.
 4. Let all things be done decently and in order (one following the other, sequential) does NOT mean there must be an established order or ritual without any extemporaneous activity just not at the same time.
 5. The current day "Worship Service" does not appear in the Bible. However, when the Saints assembled to edify each other, they certainly worshipped, but not a formal assembly or liturgy. **End of comments of "The Assembly in Corinth"**

*"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but **exhorting one another**, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."* (Heb. 10:24 - 25)

Comment: "Forsaking" is intentionally choosing to cease assembling with other Christians resulting in no encouragement. The emphasis clearly was to assemble together, to be knowledgeable of one another's difficulties and concerns, and to encourage fellow Christians to live faithfully and do works that glorify God and are beneficial to others. Causes of for ceasing to assembly together are innumerable; possibly – attitudes of superiority, fear of persecution, self-centered unloving members, controlling personalities, being ignored, and not fitting in economically or socially. This should not be so among Christians.

*"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but **exhorting one another**, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."* (Hebrews 10:24 - 25)

Questions

1. The bible does not give specific instructions for the frequency or location for assembling together.
True ___ False ___
2. The Hebrew writer stated the purpose of assembling together was
 - a. ___ Conduct a worship service
 - b. ___ Exhort one another
 - c. ___ Did not write about assembling together
3. Paul wrote "let all things be done for edification."
True ___ False ___
4. The assembled Corinthian church was instructed to
 - a. ___ Respect others and allow them to speak without speaking while they were speaking
 - b. ___ Allow other to speak if others could understand their language
 - c. ___ Respect their husband who was speaking by waiting to request an explanation till they got home
5. Was Ignatius' statement that nothing should be done without the bishop's, shepherd's, approval biblical?
True ___ False ___

Chapter 5

Oneness - Unity - Fellowship

Now immediately following Pentecost Christians (Jews and proselytes) were one, united In Christ, undoubtedly the unity mentioned in Christ's prayer in John 17.

"All the believers were together and had everything in common [They were united as one in Christ and in Fellowship with God and man]. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need [love of brethren]. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together [breaking bread] with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people." (Acts 2:44-47)

Later after many other Jews believed and obeyed, we see they were still united in love for one another:

"All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need." (Acts 4:32-35)

But it would not always be this way, in a short time, perhaps within weeks or months unity begins to fade, the Grecian Christian widows were ignored. They were Jews but not from Judah, not Hebrew speaking Jews:

"In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food." (Acts 6:1)

The solution to the problem of caring for the Grecian widows was much easier to resolve than maintaining unity and fellowship among all those in Christ.

Fellowship is from the Greek word *koinoonia*, communion in Latin.

- The Thayer Greek Lexicon defines *koinooia* as the share which one has in anything, participation; contact, fellowship, intimacy.
- Strong's Exhaustive Concordance stated that Fellowship is association, community, communion, joint participation, contact. # NT:2842
- Wikipedia, referencing the American Heritage Dictionary, defines it as sharing in common, comradely.
- Easton's Bible Dictionary has fellowship defined as mutual affection, enjoyment of his presence.
- *Koinoonia* is also translated eleven times as fellowship, seven times as communion and one time as distribution.

Fellowship could be expressed as – a non-sexual intimate relationship based upon love, which is the nature of God.

This is the relationship in which God created man and the way man originally lived with God before he sinned. The great two commands of Matthew 22 are the fulfillment of the creation fellowship.

"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:36-40)

In Fellowship

We are not in fellowship because we walk in peace, but we walk in peace because we are in fellowship. Fellowship does not require approval or support of the opinion or acts of another. Equality of spiritual knowledge is not the foundation for

fellowship. Fellowship is unity of the Spirit. Unity is based upon community not conformity. (adapted from Our Heritage of Unity and Fellowship, Cecil Hook)

It is noted that Christ's Church is a body of those called out of sin into righteousness by the forgiveness of sins. *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" ... "All those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need."* (Acts 2:42, 44-45)

"We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own free will, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us." (2 Corinthians 8:1-5)

"At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings." (Romans 15:25-28)

"There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet." (Acts 4:34-37)

Not in Fellowship

"But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.'" (Acts 5: 1-4)

"I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat." (1 Cor 5:9-11)

Timothy *"...come to me quickly, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me."* (2 Tim 4:9-10)

Removal from Fellowship

To the church in Ephesus *"But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent."* (Revelation 2:4-5)

Comment: "You have abandoned" is an individual action which occurs when one ceases to love Christ. While "Remove your lampstand" is done by God to those who refuse to repent and return; not by His servants.

"I also received a report of scandalous sex within your church family, a kind that wouldn't be tolerated even outside the church: One of your men is sleeping with his stepmother." ... "When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord." ... "I have written you in my letter not to associate with

sexually immoral people— not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.” (1 Cor 5:1-2, 4—5, 9-11)

Comment “Eat” Greek sunesthíein meaning to eat with a companion, one with whom you have a close and personal relationship. However, Christ’s assembly of servants can withhold the common sharing of their personal relationship for the purpose of bringing one from a lifestyle that leads to eternal death. They are not to force a personal understanding of some scripture others.

Differences in understanding, as in the eating of meat sacrificed to idols as in the Corinthian church, may be the result from lack of knowledge, intellectual ability endowed by their creator; pre-Christian background or their lack of spiritual growth and maturity. Neither you or them are to force personal understanding upon other parties.

Consider a hypothetical situation

In AD 76 you began a 6-month Bible study. Over a hundred prospective students show up, most were just curious but 25 signed up for the class. They were from all walks of life as depicted in the table below.

Thief	Swindler
Murderer	Miser (greedy and covetous)
Prostitute	Foul mouthed person
Liar	Dead beat (owes everyone)
Drug addict	Dishonest tax collector
Drunkard	Divorced and remarried
Homosexual	Living together but not married
Roman soldier	Pagan priest
Gossip	Sorcerer
Slanderer	Blasphemer
Rapists	Atheist
Slave trader	Jew

As their teacher you knew:

- The gospel is Christ the atoning sacrifice, burial, resurrection and ascension of Christ they will be taught.
- What it means to believe – not just the acknowledgement.
- What action one must take to be in Christ.

By the end of the study all had given themselves over to Christ and were added to His Body. Are they in fellowship with Christ, each other and the other Christians? YES!

After two or perhaps three years one of the students desired to renew the fellowship, they had during the six-month study and scheduled a reunion. They requested that you address their gathering. As you might expect some could not attend. One had died and another had been put to death by Roman authorities.

Some different understandings of those attending are listed below:

1. One had returned to his former **homosexual way** of life
2. Two were assembling where more than one container for the “fruit the vine” was used that some considered contrary to scriptures and that the bread must not be broken before the prayer of thanks.
3. One reported that his brother was so disabled they thought he could not be **immersed** so they poured water over him.

4. Two had come to the conclusion that **holy hands** must be raised unto God when praying.
5. One divorced his wife even though she had not done anything to break their marriage covenant.
6. One thought it unnecessary to assemble together due to possibility of persecution.
7. One Christian talented in music, sang several solo songs during the assembly for the purpose of praising God and edify all present.
8. Several assemblies took the Lord's Supper during the week in addition to Sundays.

As their teacher, they asked you to discuss unity in Christ. Specifically, how Christians with such diverse personal interpretations of the Bible could remain united. Are they all still united in Christ and in their fellowship with each other? Are any of these personal interpretations binding on others or are they just a diversity of opinion?

Christians have been taught incorrectly to approach the Bible generally in one of eight ways by looking for verses that will:

- a. Inspire you.
- b. Tell you what God has promised so you can confess it in faith therefore, obligating God to do what you want.
- c. Tell you what God commands you to do.
- d. Allow you to quote them to "scare the devil out of his wits" or resist him in the hour of temptation.
- e. Prove your particular doctrine so you can "slice and dice" your theological sparring partner.
- f. Help you control or correct others.
- g. "Preach" well and make good "sermon" material.
- h. Suddenly "appear" when flipping the Bible randomly.

Therefore, people generally do not consider it necessary to go to the Bible in an attempt to determine the validity of their teachings and statements. When they study they used the "**proof text method**," which dates back to the 1590's. A group of men called Protestant Scholastics took the teachings of the Reformers and systemized them according to the rules of Aristotelian logic. They held that not only is the scripture the word of God, but every part of it is the Word of God in and of itself - irrespective of context. Tertullian (ca. 150-225) taught that "anything not taught in the Bible could not be practiced." Luther espoused -- "What is not *against* Scripture is *for* Scripture, and Scripture *for it*." Zwingli maintained that *anything* "not enjoined or taught in the New Testament should be unconditionally *rejected*" and others taught anything not forbidden could be practiced. These opposing views cannot logically be valid.

Those studying their Bible are seemingly unaware of the negative influence of culture. Because of training and education, people tend to accept whatever a respected Bible scholar's commentary, priest's, pastor's or preacher's state as biblical. The following examples should help explain the difference in God being silent, requiring, or restricting on some teaching.

1. Make yourself an ark of gopher (cypress) wood ... now Noah did everything just as God commanded him. (Genesis 7:14, 22) What would be wrong by using oak? It is not what **God specified** so Noah built an ark of the wood God specified. No other kind could be used.
2. The Lord spoke to Moses ... he (Aaron) is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the Lord ... Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense and they offered unauthorized, or strange, fire before the Lord contrary to His commandment. (Leviticus 16:12, 10:1) Why were Nadab & Abihu condemned? They put ordinary fire in their censers and laid incense on it **contrary to the specified fire**. **God specified** fire for the censers was to come from the altar before the Lord.
3. Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him to "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ... From Troas we put out to sea and sailed ... we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. (Acts 16:9, 11-12) Paul could have gone to Macedonia some way other than sailing. But he chose to sail. **God did not specify how to go** [Bible was silent] so any mode of transportation was permitted and none was prohibited. **But he was required to go**.
4. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved (Mark 16:15). Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on his name (Acts 22:16). Peter stated "baptism now saves you." Baptism is an appeal to God for forgiveness (1 Peter 3:21). Why should or should not infants or children be baptized? Infant baptism has been practiced for years. Radical reformers and

Restorationists rejected infant baptism as **not authorized** in the Bible. God specified whoever believes (commits to Him) and pleads to God for forgiveness were to be baptized.

Methods of Interpretating

Specificity [command]

Any specified action related to the topic, either requires or prohibits, all other action.

Silence

When the Bible is silent about a subject it neither requires nor prohibits an action. Therefore, it allows one to come to a reasonable and responsible understanding, which may vary by one's knowledge and intellectual abilities. Thus, different understandings may exist among those in Christ but one's understanding must not be forced upon another. They must remain private interpretations.

Necessary Inference

A necessary inference would require Christians everywhere and at all times to comply. Someone's judgment has established a practice or procedure equivalent to a command of Christ based on their personal interpretation. The question then becomes who is authorized to decide for others what inference is necessary.

A New Testament example of inference is one's conclusion that eating meat sacrificed to idols is worshipping the idol, therefore a sin. If it is a necessary inference, then it would be a sin for a Christian to eat even though in their heart, they considered the idol nothing while giving thanks to God for all His Blessings.

Inference

An inference is one's personal interpretation about a teaching and must never be forced upon others to remain in your fellowship.

Expediency

Procedures or practices while not explicitly prohibited or required are considered permissible because they are instrumental to the execution of some other clear biblical command.

Example

Examples in the Bible that show actions of an individual or an assembly of Christians are generally confined to one location rather than universal. They are actions and practices based upon their understanding of some Bible teaching, not commands.

One needs to know how to use these interpretation methods to be able to properly understand scripture regarding beliefs, practices and procedures.

1. Examine all scripture relating to the procedure or practice
2. Determine
 - a. Is the belief, procedure or practice **specified** [commanded]? If so, then all other things relating to it are excluded. For instance, God specified that gopher wood was to be used in the construction of the ark. So, all other wood was excluded.
 - b. If nothing was mentioned [**silent**] then reasonable and responsible options are available. For instance, Paul could choose to sail, walk or ride to Macedonia. He chose to sail.
 - c. Every example must be analyzed to determine if they agree with or explain a specified command.
 - i. If it does, it is not the example but the command that is must be followed.
 - ii. If it does not relate to or explain a command, individuals or congregations have an option whether to follow or refrain from following the example.
 - iii. If it is contrary to a command, then it is detrimental to the body, if followed.

If something is specified, then all Christians everywhere, at all times and in various cultures and societies must comply. God has spoken. Man must obey. But if it is not specified then reasonable and responsible personal judgments are allowed but not binding upon others.

In the years following the apostolic era (after 100 AD) the writings of the “church fathers” begin following their own opinions based upon a faulty conclusion about Bible silence which neither requires nor prohibits an action. Over the years their teachings and practices became so bad or corrupt that Catholic Bible scholars rejected the practices and teachings of the Catholic Church at the risk of life and livelihood. Some wanted only to reform some of the worst practices rather than a complete return to the Bible for all teachings and practices.

The Apostles’ warnings

The apostles warned about the time when people would turn away from sound doctrine and follow their own desires. This was evident by John’s letters to the churches of Asia.

James warns of the dangers of teaching when one believes he has all, complete and perfect knowledge and understanding of God’s will. He reminds them that they are not perfect as all stumble and that their incorrect teachings will affect one’s entire course of life.

“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble in many ways, and if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body ... but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.” (James 3:1-3; 8-10)

Some within their close-knit community were attempting to draw people unto themselves not Christ. So, Paul warned the Ephesian elders to be on guard and watch for those intent on the destruction of the flock (wolves). Even today some attempt to convert people to “their church” rather than teach Christ and allow the gospel convert them to Christ.

“Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you (as if or pretending to be Christians) and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number (elders) men will arise and distort the truth (by teaching their interpretations) in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard (as a good sentential!)” (Acts 20:28-31)

Paul instructed Titus *“For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.” (Titus 1:10-11)*

Comment: “There are many” professing to be Christians but insist one must also follow Moses.

“There were also false prophets during the Covenant given by God through Moses) among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you (teachers during the New Covenant as all truth has come). They (spiritual wolves with their personal interpretations) will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them [probably the Gnostic belief that Jesus was not human only a phantom therefore nullifying His atoning sacrifice] — bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed (desire for fame and/or fortune) these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up (their personal necessary inferences and interpretations).” (2 Peter 2:1-3)

Questions

1. Does oneness in Christ mean agreement in personal understanding and interpretations when the Bible has no instruction?
Yes ___ No ___

2. Are personal opinions and interpretations binding on all Christians everywhere?
Yes ___ No ___
3. When the Bible does not say anything about a topic it
 - a. ___ Requires some action
 - b. ___ Prohibits some action
4. Christians are in fellowship with God and men when they disagree about personal understanding.
Yes ___ No ___
5. There are no false teachings today
Yes ___ No ___

Chapter 6

Christ's Body of Forgiven Sinners

"This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:11-12)

Those called out from a sinful life into a holy and righteous life through obedience to Christ are the church Christ built, the Kingdom not made by hands. They strive to live a life following Christ, the righteous one - who had no sin, because without holiness no one will see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:14)

"All those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need." (Acts 2:44-45)

"The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together, assembled, in Solomon's Colonnade. No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number" (Acts 5:12-15). "So, the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith." (Acts 6:7)

But things changed as the leaders of the Jews who had rejected Jesus and His miracles by crucifying Him now turned against His people, that body of obedient disciples referred to as His Church. *"... On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria."* (Acts 8:1)

"But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison." (Acts 8:3) This persecution resulted in even greater growth as *"Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went."* (Acts 8:4)

Comment: "The church" is a body of people not inanimate objects such as buildings. Therefore, the church was already in existence prior to this persecution. "Those who had been scattered" were individual Christian – no mention of a preacher. Later, Phillip, the evangelist, went there.

"Paul, previously known as Saul, was now preaching the Gospel in Antioch. "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' So, after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off." (Acts 13:2-3)

"From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia" (Acts 13:13a). "On the next Sabbath almost the

whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying. Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: 'We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us: 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth'' [from Isaiah 49:6]. *"When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord."* (Acts 13:44-48a)

"At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Gentiles believed" (Acts 14:1). On this and several other trips they proclaimed the gospel in many cities, Lystra, Debre, Lycaonia, Corinth, Ephesus, Athens, Phillipi and eventually Rome, the Imperial city, where "For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 28:30-31)

Everywhere Paul went he preached Jesus death and resurrection, the Gospel - the good news. It is this Gospel that Paul said *"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."* (Romans 1:16)

It is of grave importance that those in Christ proclaim Christ for mankind to know what Christ instructs them to do to receive the gift of forgiveness and salvation. God adds, those called out of a life of sin who put their trust in Christ and obeyed His commands through faith based upon knowledge, to Christ's Body as forgiven and saved spiritual beings.

God created man, a physical living being with the ability of choice. God placed man in the Garden of Eden with the instruction to tend it (work), not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil (obey), and to be fruitful and multiply (reproduce). After Christ's resurrection spiritual beings are created by obedience to Christ's Gospel and given similar instructions. If you love me you will keep my commands, do good to all men and reproduce new Christians by teaching Christ's Gospel.

God is the source of all life and all sinners are under the curse of eternal death. The only way to remove the curse and to return to the original relationship with God is to be reconciled to Him. When the recognition of the need to be reconciled to God causes one's attitude to change to a desire to do whatever it takes to receive forgiveness, then one will unashamedly acknowledge that Jesus Christ is God. *"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."* (Romans 10:9-10) *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9)

This recognition comes from hearing and understanding the Gospel of Christ and putting their trust in Christ as the sin sacrifice. With their change in attitude and the desire to be forgiven, one needs to repent, change from sin and rebellion to righteousness and trust, confess their sinfulness and acknowledge to all that Jesus is God, the Christ. From conviction and obedience, one is united to Him in His death following a burial through water baptism and resurrection as a new creation. This is stated in Romans 6:3-7 *"Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin because anyone who has died has been freed from sin."*

Comment: All people who hear the Gospel have a choice to make. Will that choice be for Christ or for the world?
Those who accept His call and obey will be IN CHRIST.

Questions

1. The stone the Jews rejected was
 - a. ___ Peter
 - b. ___ Christ
 - c. ___ Saul (Paul)

2. The church Christ built is
 - a. ___ A building to worship in
 - b. ___ People obedient to Christ
 - c. ___ Church has not been built

3. Christians scattered due to persecution
 - a. ___ Waited for Philip to come and preach
 - b. ___ Proclaimed Christ to those they came in contact with
 - c. ___ Hired a pulpit preacher

4. God is the source of all life and all sinners are under the curse of eternal death.
Yes ___ No ___

5. How is one buried with Christ in order to be raised (resurrected) to a new life?
 - a. ___ It is not necessary to be buried with Christ
 - b. ___ Pour water over head
 - c. ___ Sprinkle water over body
 - d. ___ Be immersed in water

Chapter 7

What Does It Mean to Be in Christ?

“He, Christ, was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.” (John 1:2-4)

“He predestined us (Christians) to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment – to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.” (Ephesians 1:5-10)

Comment: “Predestined us” means God determined in advance that “through” or “in Christ” one will be adopted by Him as a son.

When one obeys the message of the crucified and resurrected Christ, the Gospel, they become a cleansed, forgiven and redeemed new creation, added to the Body of Christ, His Church. They are now in Christ and *“In him (Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.” (Ephesians 1:7)*

“For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So, from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who

reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” (2 Corinthians 5:14-19)

Comment: “If anyone is in Christ” makes it clear that not all are in Christ. So, God does not save everyone.

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ. For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.” (Colossians 2:8-12)

*“Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died – more than that, who was raised to life, is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is **IN Christ Jesus our Lord.**” (Romans 8:34-39)*

“My little children (those in Christ), I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous One, and he himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins.” (1 John 2:1-2)

So, What Must One Do to be in Him, to be in Christ?

1. Obtain an understanding of Christ's Gospel.
2. Recognize that there is sin and unrighteousness in their life.
3. Decide to change from living sinful life to living a godly life.
4. Trust that God through Christ can forgive sins.
5. Acknowledge, confess, that Jesus as God came in the flesh to earth to become the sacrifice that atones for sin.
6. Obey Christ's message of redemption of forgiveness by:
 - a. Dying to sin - changing from sin to righteousness.
 - b. Being buried into His death by immersion in water, baptism.
 - c. Being resurrected from their burial into a new righteous spiritual being.
 - d. Becoming a functioning part of Christ's Body.
 - e. Remembering His sin offering, crucifixion and resurrection.
 - f. Continuing to live in the teachings of Christ and the Apostles.

This community of changed people are to grow, mature and perform functions needed by Christ Body. He did not build an unorganized group of people without direction. He called these forgiven people His body, having many functions and compared it to the human body. Each member has a function to perform in His Body. But Jesus is the head of that organism giving it direction. (Ephesians 5:23)

Questions

1. In Christ we have redemption through Christ blood, atoning sacrifice.
Yes ___ No ___
2. God determined in advance to adopt forgiven people through Jesus.
Yes ___ No ___

3. Since anyone who God has put in Christ is a new creation, then those not put in Christ are not a new creation.
Yes ___ No ___
4. What can separate one from love of Christ:
 - a. ___ Persecution
 - b. ___ Famine
 - c. ___ Sword
 - d. ___ Nothing
5. Obedience to Christ message of redemption requires
 - a. ___ Dying to sin
 - b. ___ Being buried into Christ death through immersion in water
 - c. ___ Being resurrected into a new righteous spiritual being
 - d. ___ Becoming a functioning part of His Body
 - e. ___ All the above

Chapter 8

Christian Relationships

“So, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:1-5)

Comment: “Same mind” having the same purpose, not the same opinion in all things.

Paul explains to the Ephesians Christian, men and women, how they were to live righteously in a pre-evil world (Ephesians 4-5). They were to avoid:

- a) *porneía* – all sexual relationships other than between husband and wife – fornication; physical act.
- b) *akatharsía* – a term broader than *porneía*, as it includes physical and mental acts; e.g., vulgar words, sexual humor, trash talk and filthy minds.
- c) *pleonexía* – all-inclusive term covetousness, never satisfied, always wanting more; e.g., power, fame, sexual pleasure, or the material things of life. For example, *“The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” (Genesis 6:5)*

Paul addresses actions and activities of Ephesian Christian men and women in or outside the assembly. *“Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery (extreme indulgence in sensuality), but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual ¹ songs, ² singing ³ and making melody ⁴ to the Lord with all your heart, ⁵ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (Eph 5:15-22)*

Comment: Paul encourages righteous living, being filled with The Spirit. The actions of their daily life are obviously different from others as they are filled with happiness as shown by the actions of addressing one another in psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, singing and making melody in a heart unstained by one’s daily life. In Christ everyone is to put others first and let Christ rule their hearts and lives. They were not to insist everyone accept their opinion/interpretation.

*“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made ... This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth ... I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands (unstained by sin) without anger or quarreling; likewise, also that **women should adorn themselves** in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but **with what is proper for women who profess godliness**—with good works. Let a woman learn ⁶ quietly ⁷ with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach ⁸ or to exercise authority ⁹ over a man (to rule a husband - YLT; have dominion over a man – ASV); rather, she is to remain quiet (ESV). (1 Timothy 2:1, 3-4, 8-12)*

Comment: Paul shows the objective is for Christian men and women to proclaim the gospel of Christ. This requires prayer and righteous living by those teaching so that what is taught is heard as well as observed. Christians are not to be angry, quarrelsome, but to seek what is best for others. They are to be different from the world in which they live. Their lives are to be open books to be read. It is difficult for anyone to hear the message when the messenger does not live by the message.

Comment: Women’s appearance in public reflects her values. Does she reflect godliness or godlessness? In the Greek/Roman culture a woman’s hair was a very erotic area of her body. Being adorned with “braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire” called attention to her wealth and sensuality and “not proper for women who profess godliness.”

Comment: “If you desire to be one of the faithful and to please the Lord, O wife, do not add adornments to your beauty, in order to please other men. Do not wear fine embroidery, garments, or shoes, to entice those who are allured by such things. It may be that you do not do these wicked things for the purpose of sinning yourself – but only for the sake of adornment and beauty. Nevertheless, you still will not escape future punishment for having compelled another to look so close at you as to lust after you.” (*Apostolic Constitutions (compiled c. 390, E), 7,375- A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, David W. Bercot, Editor, Henderson Publishers*)

Comment: Women’s teaching is not to be a lecture as one having authority but meek, gentle and preferring one another showing her respect.

Comment: Women’s is not to attempt to dominate her husband because of her leading role in yielding to Satan in the Garden.

“About this (probably Jesus’ obedience) we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you, (Christians), have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the basic principles of the oracles of God.” (Hebrews 5:11-12)

God placed the responsibility of teaching the Gospel to the lost to all Christians, men and women not to a few evangelists who devote the life to evangelizing. Christians to whom the Hebrew writer is addressing were slack in their teaching responsibilities. They were immature in their knowledge and with little a desire to teach.

The context of these passages focuses on the message one sends by the way they conduct their lives and relationships – calm, godly and simple lives, preferring others over self, not demanding of others, not calling attention to their knowledge, wealth or position but in all actions respecting others whether poor or wealthy, Jew or pagan, man or woman. Thus, Christian men and women will be known by their righteous lives and by their appearance and demeanor in public by not calling attention to the sexual and sensual but to the spiritual. Their teachings will reflect their humility and respectfulness. Their righteous living and a united family based on love will be displayed in all relationships with others.

Comment: On the surface there appears to be an inconsistency as 1 Timothy which prohibits teaching by women and Hebrews 5:11 requiring all, men and women, to be teachers. Teaching when translated from didaskaloi or didasico refers to the lecture method a didactic discourse by one in authority. Heb 5:12

In Acts 20:7 in Troas held a discussion from the Greek word dielégeto¹⁰ with the Christians assembled, both men and women. The King James Bible mistranslated dielégeto as preached, however, preach is from the Greek kerusso or keerux meaning herald or proclaim.

Comment: Preaching as practiced today is neither proclaiming Christ to the lost nor discussing Christ's teachings with the assembled Christians. It is a lecture - sermon by a trained professional speaker as one in authority, didasico. This type preaching is not mentioned in the Bible, except when Christ taught with authority.

Footnotes:

Pneumatikaís - Strong's NT#:4152 - non-carnal (Strong's) relating to the human spirit, or rational soul, as the part of man which is akin to God (Thayer's).

² Oodaís - Strong's NT#:5603 - a chant or "ode" more specifically, a Hebrew cantillation [chanting of readings from the Hebrew Bible in synagogue services].

³ Ádontes - Strong's NT#:103 - the lyrical emotion of a devout and grateful soul.

⁴ Psállontes - Strong's NT#:5567 - to touch or strike the chord, to twang the strings of a musical instrument so that they gently vibrate; to sing a hymn, to celebrate the praises of God in song (Thayer's Greek Lexicon).

⁵ Kardía - Strong's NT#:2588 - a) seat and center of all physical and spiritual life; b) the soul or mind, the seat of the thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affections, purposes, endeavors; c) the understanding, the seat of intelligence; of the soul as the seat of the sensibilities, affections, emotions, desires, appetites, passions (Thayer's Greek Lexicon).

⁶ Manthanoo - Strong's NT#:3129 - to increase one's knowledge, possibly habitually

⁷ Heesuchia - Strong's NT#:2271 - quietness, not excessive eagerness or aggressiveness

⁸ Didasko - Strong's NT#:1321 International Standard Bible - to teach:

a.) to deliver a didactic discourse more formal monologues where there may not be direct personal and verbal participation

b.) to hold a discourse with others in order to instruct them, the interlocutory method, the interplay of the ideas and words between pupils and teachers. Ability and fitness for the work are required

⁹ Authentéin - Strong's NT#:831- Vine's Expository Dictionary - to exercise authority on one's own account, to domineer over

¹⁰ Dielégeto - Strong's NT#:1256 meaning discoursing (discussing), an interaction between the speaker and the listeners, as preached, meaning lecture or sermon.

Relationship among Christians

"I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life." (Philippians 4:2-3)

Comment: These women helped Paul in teaching the gospel. Like many men and women today, Euodia and Syntyche needed to be reminded that Christ's gospel is greater than the individual and that unity is required for effectiveness in reaching those outside Christ while encouraging Christians to be faithful to their calling.

Relationships between husband and wife

"Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives— when they see your respectful and pure conduct." Peter and Paul are addressing the actions and attitude of Christians as they live daily among the saved and the perishing." (1 Peter 3:1-5)

Comment: Husbands and wives are joined together in marriage, a covenant relationship, living and working together united as one being. Each is to love the other better than self. When this is present all significant situations or problems will be discussed in a calm loving environment doing what is considered best for the eternal well-being of each member of the family. All discussions leading up to or following the decision must not be:

- a. contentious,
- b. an exercise to prove who is right,
- c. a relationship of ruler and servant

- d. the wife challenging the responsibility or authority of the husband by some defiant action.
- e. the husband and/or wife is focused on fulfilling their wants and desires

“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands’, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church.” (Ephesians 5:22-29)

Comment: Husbands and wives are to nourish and cherish each other as they are united as one. Their honor and respect must always show their love of Christ even if one spouse is not a believer for, they may be won to Christ by their spouse’s actions. Submission does not eliminate family discussions of wife’s preferences without any attempt by her to be the one in charge. She is to yield to the head of the family even when she disagrees so long as it did not violate her relationship with God. Love, the desire to please, is greater than submission so where love is present submission is easier.

“Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.” (Colossians 3:18-19)

Comment: How can a husband love as Christ loved and be harsh toward his wife in word or action? Respect for each other must be of the highest order. Husbands and wives wrangling over settled matters to ‘get my way’ is very damaging to the marriage relationship, to the training of children and not in God’s likeness.

Paul stated that the submitting by Christian wives to their husbands’ decision is the way Christians submit to Christ; e.g., *“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” (Luke 22:42)*

Comment: Christ made a request to “His loving Father. The Father’s decision was what was best for His creation. Out of love and respect for His Father Christ yielded and submitted to do “the Father’s will.”

Christians are fully assured of Christ’s love, knowing that He always chooses what is best. So, also the Christian husband’s decision must be whatever is best for the family.

Relationships with Widows

Improper Treatment of Widows

“Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows’ houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.” (Mark 12:38-40)

“Beware of the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and love to be greeted in the marketplaces and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely.” (Luke 20:46-47)

Comment: “Devour” take advantage of a defenseless widow. Thayer states devour is to exploit, strip one of his goods.

“In those days, as the number of the disciples was growing larger and larger, a complaint was made by the Hellenistic Jews against the Hebraic Jews that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food.” (Act 6:1)

Comment: There appeared to be a lack of respect of Hellenistic widows by Hebrew Christians.

Responsibility of their Family

“Honor widows who are truly widows. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God.” (1 Timothy 5:3-4)

Comment: Put your faith into practice by caring for their own family.

“She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach. But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (infidel).” ... “If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, let her care for them. Let the church not be burdened, so that it may care for those who are truly widows.” (1 Timothy 5:5-8, 16)

Comment: “If any believing women” appears to exclude believing men who has widowed relatives. However, all Christians, man or woman, are expected to take care of them. (James 1:27) Perhaps the man should provide resources, so as not to burden the church. The enrolled widows would perform the caring for function, thereby avoiding any impropriety of a male relative “caring for” widows in his family or extended family.

Comment: Give respect to widows but allow the children and grandchildren and other family members to grow as servants.

Responsibility of Church

This is how we have come to know love: The Messiah gave his life for us. We, too, ought to give our lives for our brothers.” (1 John 3:16)

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” (James 1:27)

Comment: “Religion” is from Greek word threeskeia meaning external worship. (Thayer's Greek Lexicon) Thus, requiring some action.

Comment: “Look after” or visit means to inspect, examine with the eyes, to look upon in order to help or to benefit. (Thayer's Lexicon) At the time the KJV was translated the word “visit” meant to go to a needy person determine and provide for their needs.

Comment: The only restriction placed upon the church, as a body or individually, was that widows must be in affliction, (distress, straits, oppression, tribulation. (Thayer’s Lexicon)

Comment: ‘Widows in their affliction’ does not restriction one’s action due to previous material status of the widow.

“She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives.” (1 Timothy 5:5)

Comment: “Truly a widow” is one who:

- a. Has no family of any kind.
- b. Has a non-Christian family that will not provide for her care – perhaps because she is a Christian.
- c. Is not one that is capable but makes no attempt to provide for her own needs.
- d. Has a Christian family who can but refuses take care of her needs. They are worse than infidels (unbelievers) and the church Body needs to take action to correct them.

Comment: “A widow left all alone” is impoverished, without sufficient resources to provide for the necessities of life.

“No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds. As for younger widows, do not put them on such a list. For when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ, they want to marry. Thus, they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge. Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to. So, I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander. Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan. If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need.” (1 Timothy 5:9-16)

Begin Widow Comments

- Some Bibles say “One husband” which could mean married only once. But probably means not a polygamist.
- When the church takes a widow into their number to provide for her needs she perform function(s) for the church:
 - a. Functions to be performed is not specified.
 - b. Places for performing these functions are not identified.
 - c. Needs may be met by giving food or money to purchase needs.
- Widows are enrolled, taken into the number, registered:
 - a. For some type of work; e.g., men enrolled in the army.
 - b. Their work for the church does not have to be done in a “church building” as there were none then.
 - c. The church was still to care for destitute widows not enrolled – see James 1:27.
- Not less than sixty years of age:
 - a. During the First Century women who reached the age of 60 would, on average, die between their 60th and 70th birthdays. (revealedrome.com/2012/06/ancient-rome-daily-life-women-age.html#sthash.UtTBSy9R.dpuf)
 - b. The desire for sexual relations generally waned during their last few years of one’s life.
 - c. Destitute younger widows under 60 are still to be cared for by the church but not enrolled as they were expected to marry and not fulfill the task for which they were enrolled.
- Wife of one husband – could mean:
 - a. Only married once.
 - b. Re-married following a divorce that terminated by sexual immorality (fornication) or by adultery; i.e., breaking marriage covenant other than sexual immorality by her husband.
 - c. Re-married if marriage terminated by death of husband.
 - d. Married to only one man at a time- not a polygamist.
- Reputation for good works:
 - a. Community knows and respects her because she helps others by her good works.
 - b. Widows not being involved in serving and doing good works while married would not be expected to do so after becoming widowed.
- Brought up children:
 - a. The experience of female parenting.
 - b. This criterion could be met by parenting orphan children even if no biological child.
 - c. Caring for children on an occasional basis does not carry the responsibility of child rearing.
- Shown hospitality:
 - a. To receive favorably, give ear to, embrace, make one's own, approve, not to reject, to take upon oneself, sustain, bear and endure (Thayer Lexicon).
 - b. Appears to relate to individuals who are not friends or relative.
- Washed the feet of the saints:

- a. Welcomed traveling Christians by taking care of their traveling needs and making them comfortable.
- b. To take on the role of a servant.
- Cared for the afflicted:
 - a. Oppressively afflict. (Bible Hub)
 - b. Possibly beaten slave, parent of rebellious child or friend or relative, deserted wife, one persecuted because of faith, an orphan or unwanted child left to defend for self.
- Devoted herself to every good work:
 - a. The widow's actions before becoming a widow clearly shows she was God's servant.
 - b. One should expect her servant activities would continue and that she would not become a busybody, idler or gossip after her being taken into their number.

End Widow Comments

"To the unmarried and the widows, I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion." (1 Corinthians 7:8-9)

Comment: "The unmarried" are those never married, once married but not married now - widows or divorcees. Those put away without a certificate of divorce are still married.

Comment: Excessive time provides the opportunity to develop laziness and become idle, which often results in gossiping and minding everyone's business, a busybody.

Comment: Because of strong sexual desires young widows should marry.

"Whoever has earthly possessions and notices a brother (fellow Christian) in need and yet withholds his compassion from him, how can the love of God be present in him? Little children, we must stop expressing love merely by our words and manner of speech; we must love also in action and in truth." (1 John 3:17-18)

Comment: John addresses the Christian family both men and women in need of necessities of life are to be assisted. Brother is often an inclusive term being either male or female sometimes translated as brethren.

In the parable recorded in Luke 10 often referred to as the parable of the Good Samaritan is a comparison between living by law, the Old Covenant, and living by love, the New Covenant. The Samaritan had love, compassion, on the one robbed and beaten, recognized his needs and took care of them. Whereas following their tradition and law the priest and Levite, religious leaders of the Jews, ignored him and his needs. In the New Covenant of grace love for the destitute, especially widows, is expected.

Conclusion

If a widow is unable to care for herself, it is the responsibility of her family and near relatives; to see to her needs. Those without family or those whose family is either unable or refuse to provide for their needs are to be taken care of by individual Christians and the church body. Christian destitute widows' needs are to be met before other widows.

Christians are to have compassion for those known to be lacking in the necessities of life; e.g., the Gentile Christians sent relief to Hebrew Christians in Jerusalem.

Destitute widows prior to widowhood who by their actions had a reputation of doing good and living pleasing to God, can be employed by the church. The Bible is silent regarding the functions needed by the Body. It could have been helping those suffering but not destitute, teaching non-Christian women the Gospel, teaching younger women how to treat their husbands and children with love and respect and to encourage them to do good works.

All Christians

“As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. -- But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellences of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:4-5; 9)

“Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.” (1 Peter 3:8)

All Christians whether male or female are servants to do the will of God which is to be faithful, do good works and to teach the gospel. Unity of mind among those in Christ is not the same as complete agreement. There is still room for differences in understanding, opinion and interpretation on a teaching (doctrine). To be united in Christ there must be agreement of what constitutes the gospel and being in Christ – Jesus was God in human form, His atoning sacrifice, burial and resurrection “the power of God unto salvation” and how God adds one into Christ’s Body. Unity does not include agreement on personal opinion and interpretation which is never to be a test of fellowship.

Questions

1. Does singleness of mind mean
 - a. ___ Having the same purpose by becoming like Christ
 - b. ___ Agreement in personal opinions and interpretations
2. Women who dress to call attention and entice men to their sensual nature **do not** profess godliness.
Yes ___ No ___
3. Some Christians who have become weak in faith need to be taught the basic principles again.
Yes ___ No ___
4. Relationship among Christians is to give respect to other Christians as Christ and His gospel is greater than the individual.
Yes ___ no ___
5. Taking care of widows and others in need is the responsibility of the family.
Yes --- No ___

Chapter 9

Forbearance

There must be forbearance, tolerance, mercy, longsuffering, patience, in doctrine (teaching) and opinion **but NOT the gospel**. The Gospel is the way unto salvation whereas the inspired apostles’ doctrine is the way unto godly living while taking the Good News to “all the world.” Christians are to never cease evangelizing.

- a. Forbearance does not require one to surrender any truth.
- b. Private or personal opinions should be expressed openly for discussion but never made a test of fellowship.
- c. Unity is achievable only upon the basis of belief that Jesus is the Christ and obedience to His gospel - His death, burial and resurrection - by immersion into His death.
- d. Christians can differ about a lot of things and still be one.
- e. When one in Christ abandons Christ and ceases to trust in Him. He is no longer in fellowship with Christ.

Thomas Campbell chided the attendees to the Mahoning Baptist Association that they could not withhold fellowship from one belonging to Christ because their personal opinions were different. ¹

Alexander Campbell in an address caused concern about unity. John Rogers and others of Kentucky wrote to him expressing their regrets over his remarks stating the unity movement would never divide if: ²

1. No one should surrender any truth.
2. No one should be asked to give up opinions held but to make sure he holds them as private and not make them a test of communion.
3. Unite on the basis of belief in the one fact (Jesus is the Christ) and obedience to the one act (immersion). Nothing else. Opinions, deductions, interpretations or speculations about scripture cannot be made a test of fellowship. We can differ about a lot of things and still be one.
4. In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty and in all things love.

Comment: At some point those out of Christ must turn to God repent by altering their life's course and put their trust in God through obedience. However, when one in Christ abandons Christ and ceases to trust in Him, they are no longer in fellowship with Christ.

Raccoon John Smith identified the Gospel as a system of facts, commands, and promises, and insisted that no deduction or inference drawn from them, however logical or true, forms any part of the gospel. **Opinions about the gospel are not part of the gospel** and therefore cannot be held as threat over those who deny them. One should surrender any opinion for sake of unity but **never** give up one fact, command, or promise. ²

Demanding a personal opinion be made a test of fellowship causes strife and division.

Summary of Forbearance

In all congregations there are many differing opinions. Some Christians remain silent while others are vocal. Some in expressing their opinion(s), whether unintentional or intentional, appear to cast doubts about the integrity of those who differ with them. Statements such as 'my belief is straight from of the Bible' or 'the Bible states' indicate an attitude of superiority of knowledge and understanding. They consider their opinion as 'scriptural' and their brother's not. These statements leave the impression that their brother is ignorant, not spiritual or a false teacher. It is equivalent to 'speaking evil of'. This ought not to be. It does not display God's love. All in Christ are his servants and his priests to serve God. No one is more important than another because of the function they perform or opinion they hold. Love of brethren must prevail.

Footnotes:

¹ Restoring New Testament Christianity, Adron Doran p. 44

² Our Heritage of Unity and Fellowship, Leroy Garrett and Carl Ketcherside, pgs. 38-40

Questions

1. There must be tolerance, mercy and longsuffering in opinion. But never in the Christ the redeemer.
Yes --- No ___
2. Unity is achievable only in belief in Christ Jesus and obedience to His Gospel.
Yes --- No ___
3. Opinions, deductions, interpretations or speculations about the scriptures cannot be a test of fellowship.
Yes --- No ___
4. Demanding others accept another opinion or interpretation causes strife and division
Yes --- No ___
5. All people in Christ are priest to serve – servants.
Yes --- No ___

Christian Discipline Reprove, Rebuke and Exhort

The church established by Christ, also referred to as the Body of Christ, has many parts each performing different functions. It is a living organism not an organization or building. Like the human body sometimes the members of Christ Body do not perform as desired. For His Body to be healthy occasionally disciplinary action may be necessary. Most of the time this action is minor, a few times it is major but seldom radical.

There appear to be four types of treatment for the ailments of the spiritual body depending of situations.

Brothers having different understanding of apostolic teaching

"Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that 'all of us possess knowledge.' This "knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up. If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, he is known by God. Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that 'an idol has no real existence,' and that "there is no God but one." For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth-as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"- yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. "However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so, by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died. Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble." (1 Corinthians 8:1-13)

Brother sinning against brother

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." (Matthew 18:15-18)

Comment: There was sin present. Fellowship and relationship between brothers is strained and in need of restoration. The offended brother is to go to the offender, face to face, not - send a letter, someone else, an e-mail, phone call or text message. They need to meet face to face and to resolve the situation.

When one-on-one does not produce repentance and restoration then other Christians must become involved. Two or three Christians respected by the whole congregation should go with the offended, brother to discuss his situation (Matthew 18:16). They must not be a “buddy” of either the offending or offended brother. In the unlikely event this action does not result in repentance and reconciliation, radical action by the entire Body of Saints must be taken as his everlasting life is at stake.

As a last resort the whole congregation need to confront him in person, not by letter, e-mail, text message, tweet, phone call or public announcement. It is not the elders' problem it is the whole congregation's problem and all are to be involved. (Matthew 18:17)

Brother living a sinful and ungodly life

"I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people- not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler-not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you." (1 Corinthians 5:9-13)

Comment: This lifestyle choice has severe consequences as a brother is living an ungodly life that leads to eternal destruction if he does not change his way of living and return to his redeemer and loving Father.

Comment: God's people are to correct their brethren sometimes in what may appear to be extreme punishment. 1 Corinthians 5 states "Purge, cleanse, out the old leaven" (vs 7) "not to keep company, not associate, with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of:" (vs 11)

- Immorality (fornication) - Sexual relations with someone other than a spouse whether heterosexual or homosexual, married or unmarried.
- Covetousness - One who takes advantage of another for unjust gain. This can occur among elderly, youth, men or women. – "I want it and I will do whatever it takes to get it."
- Idolatry - Putting things or activities ahead of God; e.g., self-indulgence.
- Reviling; slanderer, gossiping.
- Drunkenness - Lack of self-control, under the influence of alcohol (or drugs).
- Wickedness (extortioners) - Laziness or inactivity by one capable of caring for self while obtaining another's possessions by deceit, trickery, undue force, power, or intimidation.
- Disorderly - Offensive conduct.
- Divisive - One willing to fight and divide in order to get their way. It must be what 'I' want or understand regardless of the consequences. Thus, believing one's interpretation is the correct and only valid interpretation causes divisions.

What does "not associate with" or keep company with entail? Is it shunning, not speaking to, not giving aid to, prohibit from assembling with, not eating or sleeping with family and the ceasing of close companionship? The purpose of discipline is to cause a change, a return to God and reconciliation with His Body. So, no association of any kind prevents communication thus defeating the purpose of disciplinary action. Stopping all close companionship; such as, not eating the communal meal, agape meal, when the Lord's Supper was observed, is the intended action.

Brother who wanders from the truth

"My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins." (James 5:19-20)

Comment: There is always hope that a wayward brother will repent and return to Christ and be re-united with his Christian brethren.

For *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives."* (1 John 6:9-10)

Comment: This brother was in process of moving away from Christ. He was wandering from the truth, Christ. It is worth noting that some "Christians" referred to as Gnostics denied that Jesus was God in the flesh or human so no atoning sacrifice, sin offering.

Questions

1. The purpose of confronting a sinning brother is to show you're your love and concern in an effort to make him aware of his salvation situation.
Yes --- No ___
2. When a relationship between brethren is strained, they need to meet face to face to discuss their differences.
Yes --- No ___
3. One's lifestyle is a choice with severe consequences if living ungodly lives
Yes --- No ___
4. When one confesses his sin with his hearts desire to be reunited with Christ, Christ is just and faithful to forgive.
Yes --- No ___
5. The responsibility for church discipline belongs to:
 - a. ___ Preacher, pastor, priest
 - b. ___ Every Christian

Chapter 11

Re-United with Christ

When a Christian yields to temptation and returns to their former sinful way of life and later desires to be reconciled to God, what action does God require of him? Does God require penance, physical punishment, some financial penalty or baptism again? Must a Christian desiring to be reconciled to God restore to the one sinned against all the wrong they have done? Does the Bible proscribe a restoration course of action to be followed by the wayward Christian and for the local assembly of Christians when one is reconciled and re-united with Christ?

The reconciling process must begin with the recognition of one's rebellious state and with a desire to be reconciled to God and to anyone harmed by their sin. But desire alone is not enough; there must be a change in attitude, heart, mind and their inner being. They must communicate their desire to be forgiven and restored to the one(s) to whom they seek reconciliation - God and man. The parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32 appears to explain this process. God is always open to repentance and reconciliation. However, this is not necessarily true with all who claim to be in Christ even though they are to forgive as Christ forgave them.

All of us are faced with some type of sin that, if not cleansed by the blood of Christ, will separate us from our Lord and Savior. James expressed our problem of yielding to temptation stating *"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death."* (James 1:13-15)

The Apostle Paul stated that all mankind suffers from the sin problem stating: *"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation [atonement] by his blood, to be received by faith."* (Romans 3:23-24) Then a little later he wrote: *"... the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 6:21-23)

God's children through the ages have had the sin problem. The Children of Israel, the race God chose to bring Christ, the Messiah, into the world were constantly rebelling against Him thus committing spiritual adultery by worshipping the idol gods of the nations near them, thereby breaking their covenant relationship with Him. But every time they turned from their

sin of rebellion, repented of their sins by tearing down their idol false gods and returning to Jehovah with a penitent and contrite heart, He forgave.

David, a man after God's own heart, is an example of an individual sinning against both God and man when he committed adultery and then murder in an attempt to cover up his sin. When the prophet Nathan confronted David, David's heart, his inner being, was filled with grief, his attitude changed stating "I have sinned against the Lord." He returned and repented. God forgave.

Demas was a companion of Paul's on one of his missionary trips as he sent his regards to the Colossian church (Colossians 4:14). Later Paul stated "*Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted, forsaken, abandoned me.*" (2 Timothy 4:10)

In the New Testament we read that Simon, the sorcerer or magician, of Samaria requested to purchase God's gift. Peter forcefully explained his sinful situation to him stating; "*May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.*" And Simon answered, "*Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.*" (Acts 8:20-24)

In 1 Corinthians 5 we read of a Christian brother involved in a sexually immoral situation not even tolerated by the pagan Gentiles. Paul told the Corinthian disciples to deliver him to Satan in order he would become aware and acknowledge his sin so that his spirit (soul) might be saved. In 2 Corinthians 2:6-9 Paul is concerned that the Christian delivered to Satan, who had repented did not feel he was accepted by the Corinthian Christians "The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him."

Comment: Repentance is "Not a mere feeling; it has not the uncertainty of moods and sentiments. It is not a simple change in the weather of the soul. It is a distinct alteration of the focus of the intelligence; it carries with it a movement of the will; in short, it is a revolution in the very ground of the man's being." *The Pulpit Commentary*, vol. 18, p. 66 quoted in REFLECTIONS #515 Al Maxey, January 3, 2012

Perhaps the Bible expresses it better: when Paul stated "*now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done.*" (2 Corinthians 7:9-11)

Comment: Repentance produces an action, a change in one's life course from worldliness to godliness.

James tells Christians to "*Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*" (James 5:16)

Comment: One is to confess to the one sinned against, either God or man or both. Scripture does not say confess "I have sinned" but confess "your sins."

John, the aged apostle, wrote in Revelation 1 to the churches of Asia telling them that unless they repented God would take action against them. Their salvation was not guaranteed for they needed to repent and return to God.

Comment: There may be more scriptures on the need to repent and return to Christ; all require a change in attitude. When a rebellious child of God become aware of his or her sinful situation, turns his or her life from its sinful course toward one pleasing to God, prays earnestly for God's forgiveness, then God forgives. "*If we claim to have fellowship*

with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” (1 John 1:6-7)

Comment: They are not to be regarded as second-class Christians who are not allowed to serve. For who but Christ has authority over His servants? They are to assemble with other Christians who are to help and encourage them to live faithfully to God. They have returned to their former forgiven state and are to perform functions needed by the Body. Leaders and brethren must not consider them less necessary or less important as all have sinned, repented and returned at some point during their Christian life. In fact, they must assist them in becoming workers in the Kingdom.

Questions

1. When a Christian returns from a sinful life, God requires
 - a. ___ Penance
 - b. ___ Physical or monetary punishment
 - c. ___ Re-baptism
 - d. ___ Him to pray – requesting God’s forgiveness
2. Everyone has sinned
Yes --- No ___
3. To be reunited to Christ one’s heart, inner-being, must be aware of and change from their sinful life.
Yes --- No ___

Repentance is not just a feeling but a change in how one lives their life.
4. Yes --- No ___
5. One who has returned to Christ has been forgiven and is return to being God’s priest and servant.
Yes --- No ___

Chapter 12

The End of Time

For Bible believers everywhere, somewhere in the back of our minds there looms thoughts and questions about the end, the day when Jesus will come back and everything that is on this earth, as we know it, will shut down. The questions begin to multiply. When is that going to be? What's going to happen? Will the earth continue? Will it be destroyed? What will happen to our bodies? What about the dead? The questions go on and on and on. Those questions are spurred periodically by our subconscious to our conscious by volatile world events, and by "end of time" prognosticators.

When is Time Going to End?

We all want to know when. Is it going to be today? Is it going to be tomorrow? Will it be 100 years? 1000 years? When is Jesus coming back and when will time--as we know it--end?

There are many theories. You can go back in history and see where there have been vain attempts to try to predict the end of time. For example, if you look back to William Miller, a figure associated with the founding of Seventh-Day Adventist religion, he predicted the date of Christ's Second coming as being somewhere between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. He prepared all of his camps for that Second Coming and the end of time and nothing happened. He assumed he had miscalculated the date so he re-figured. This time it was going to be October 22, 1844, but again nothing happened. I don't really need to tell you the rest of that, do I?

In an effort to advance his movement, Charles Russell, the founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, advanced the notion that

Jesus was going to return in 1874. But again, the wait was in vain.

In the 1980's an author brought in a great deal of money for potentially projecting the date of the rapture. Then when he missed that date, he put it a little bit farther ahead. All of that has come and gone as well. Let me make a couple of statements about those predictions--recent or long ago. All of those predictions stem from a handful of verses, some of which are found in the first half of Matthew 24, which was not spoken by Jesus about the end of time but the destruction of Jerusalem. Some come from apocalyptic literature. That's vivid literature filled with imagery (some in the Old Testament, some from the book of Revelation). Most of the time, pulled out of context from verses not meant to apply to the end of time.

In fact, if you study the Bible with any scrutiny at all, you realize that the predictions are pure folly because "The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night." (2 Peter 3:10) Listen to the words of Jesus from the last part of Matthew 24, "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven nor the Son, but only the Father."

The point is when anyone informs the world that he or she has suddenly discovered the time of the Lord's Second Coming, they immediately reveal themselves as a false prophet. Because the day of the Lord will come like a "thief in the night".

What is not going to happen

We don't know when. There has been such a proliferation of propaganda concerning what's going to happen when the end of time occurs. Let's go to the Bible to find out what is not going to happen when Jesus comes again.

1. Not set up a Kingdom

One of the more popular theories regarding the last days is the fact that Jesus will come and establish some kind of utopian 1,000-year reign, during which time there will be peace and prosperity all across the earth. According to this theory, which is called the Millennial Theory, the temple of the Jews is going to be rebuilt, temple worship will be restored, Jesus will rule from David's throne for 1,000 years, and he will evangelize the world from that throne.

The doctrine has its roots all the way back to C. L. Schofield and some others, but frankly, it's not Biblical. Oh, it's true there is a kingdom and there are also Biblical prophecies about the Messiah sitting on David's throne, but the Bible teaches these prophecies have already been fulfilled. The Messiah has come and he has already established his kingdom. In fact, here is an inspired interpretation of those very prophecies. It is found in Acts 2:29-33 when Peter preached the first sermon about Christ on Pentecost Day.

"Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear."

Peter said this prophecy about Jesus was fulfilled when he was resurrected. Right now, he is seated on his throne, and the kingdom is under his charge now. All the prophecies about the kingdom reign are fulfilled in the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus. Speaking of Jesus, Colossians 1:13 states "*For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.*" The same is true in 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, "*But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the first-fruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.*" It just says the same thing; Jesus is reigning over his kingdom now.

Comment: "Brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves" clearly shows the Kingdom, Christ Church, had been

established at this time.

2. No 1000-Year Reign

"Where do they get the idea about the 1,000-year reign?" That comes from Revelation 20. If we begin to take every image and symbol and number from Revelation literally, we will be the most confused people on the face of the earth. Written apocalyptically, the number 1,000 is a symbol. Ten (a number of completeness) cubed, which represents further completeness. That 1,000-year reign represents the last days of the Christian age, and we are living in that right now. It's the 1,000-year reign. So, don't misunderstand. God is not coming again to set up a kingdom, the kingdom is here.

3. No Special Favor on the Jews

This is a spin-off to the Millennial Theory, it's a premillennial idea that Jesus' Second Coming will be just before that 1,000-year reign. The concept is the Jews will be saved during that 1,000-year period of evangelism and they will be instruments of Christ to evangelize the rest of mankind, those still lost up to that point. During that time, the Jews will supposedly come from all over the earth to their homeland of Palestine when Christ will bestow special favor on them. Christ will then begin to reign over all man. If there is one thing the Bible makes abundantly clear in the New Testament, it is that the time of any nation or race of people receiving special favor from God has long since past. It is never to be revived, and not to be resurrected.

When Peter was instructed by God in Acts 10 to go to Cornelius and open the doors of the kingdom to the Gentiles, Peter did as he was told (with some coaxing). But here's the conclusion he reached in Acts 10:34-35: Then Peter began to speak, *"I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism, but accepts men from every nation who fear Him and do what is right."*

If there was any question about God coming to bestow special favoritism on the Jews, or anybody else, Paul answered that *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."* (Galatians 3:28-29) The time has long since passed where God will bestow special favoritism on a race of people.

4. No Rapture

Almost everyone has heard the "rapture theory", that one day, there is going to be an evacuation--that really will be more like a vaporization -- of all the Christians on earth. Suddenly, they are just going to disappear. Then after the rapture, supposedly, there will come some seven-year period of tribulation, then 1,000-year reign, and then you know the rest of it from what we have just discussed.

"Where did that idea come from?" That concept goes all the way back to James Brooks in the latter part of the 19th century. It comes from two great passages: 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-55. In both of those passages, Paul speaks of the dead being raised then the living being caught in the air, given a new incorruptible body to live with through eternity. In those passages there is no indication that life on earth is going to go on as usual; that all of those who are not saved are going to keep doing their thing. To the contrary, Philippians 2:10-11 says, "Every knee is going to bow, every tongue is going to confess." Matthew 25:34-46 tells us that when Jesus appears again, that is going to be followed immediately by a great judgment scene, not some rapturous disappearance of the saints. That is not found in the Bible.

What Will Happen

Let the Word of God tell us in passages that deal with the Second Coming of Jesus what will happen at the end of time.

1. The Lord will appear [a spectacular thing]

"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, and the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God..." (2 Thessalonians 4:16a) Every human being living on the face of the earth, whenever that day is, will hear that trumpet and our attention will be suddenly captured on a moment's notice.

2. The dead will be raised

"The dead in Christ will be raised first." (2 Thessalonians 4:16b) That is corroborated in I Corinthians 15:52 "in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable." When Jesus comes again, the graves are going to be emptied, all of those that we have known.

3. The living are going to be changed

"Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep (i.e., die), but we will all be changed - in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality." (1 Corinthians 15:51)

These first three are all going to happen practically simultaneously:

- a) A trumpet will sound
- b) The voice of the archangel
- c) The dead will come out of the graves, and the living at that time will be caught in the air with them. Therefore, all of humanity, from the beginning of time, will be caught up in the air with Christ himself. It is going to be something, isn't it?

4. A Great Separation—Judgment

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left." (Matthew 25:31)

5. Inheritance for the Righteous

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'" (Matthew 25:34)

6. Sentence Pronounced on the Disobedient

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" (Matthew 25:41)

John writes (having seen that revelation), *"And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and the books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books."* (Revelation 20:12)

7. The destruction of the earth

"The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare." (2 Peter 3:10)

- (1) Aerial or atmospheric heavens, as "birds of heaven" or "clouds of heaven"
- (2) Sidereal heavens, the region of the "sun," "moon," and "stars"

This earth is not going to continue for another 1,000 years after Jesus returns. Jesus is not coming to set up a kingdom. He's going to deliver the kingdom that is already his to the Father after the judgment. Those of us who are part of that kingdom live forever with the Father for eternity.

Conclusion

I realize that when one talks about the end of time and the Second Coming of Jesus, it is a fearful thing for many people. It

is not meant to be for those in Christ. We've been reading from it two or three times in the lesson. But in 2 Thessalonians 4:18 "...encourage one another with these words." Oh, if you are in Christ, it is going to be the greatest day that ever happened. It will be the most beautiful day you've ever seen, and the sound of the shout and the trumpet will be the most beautiful things your ears have ever heard if you are a Christian. That is what's going to happen at the end of time. The question is "**Are you ready?**" Amazing Grace Lesson # 1015, Steve Flatt

No Questions

International Bible Knowledge Institute

Name _____ Address _____ _____ City State Zip	Return answer form to instructor or <u>email to</u> IBK.Institute@gmail.com : _____ Instructor: _____
--	--

A Kingdom Not Made With Hands

Lesson 1 **God's Promise**

1. T. F.
2. T. F.
3. T. F.
4. T. F.
5. T. F.

Lesson 2 **The Gift of God – Jesus, The Person**

1. T. F.
2. T. F.
3. T. F.
4. T. F.
5. A. B. C. D.

Lesson 3 **How Does One Get in the Kingdom Today?**

1. No Questions

Lesson 4 **Assembling to Encourage and Edify**

1. T. F.
2. A. B. C.
3. T. F.
4. A. B.
5. T. F.

Lesson 5 **Oneness - Unity - Fellowship**

1. T. F.
2. T. F.
3. A. B.
4. T. F.
5. T. F.

Lesson 6 **Christ's Body of Forgiven Sinners**

1. A. B. C.
2. A. B. C.
3. A. B. C.
4. T. F.
5. A. B. C. D.

Lesson 7 What Does It Mean to Be in Christ?

1. T. F.
2. T. F.
3. T. F.
4. A. B. C. D.
5. A. B. C. D. E.

Lesson 8 Christian Relationships

1. A. B.
2. T. F.
3. T. F.
4. T. F.

5. T. F.

Lesson 9 Forbearance

1. T. F.
2. T. F.
3. T. F.
4. T. F.
5. T. F.

Lesson 10 Christian Discipline -Reprove, Rebuke and Exhort

1. T. F.
2. T. F.
3. T. F.
4. T. F.

5. A. B.

Lesson 11 Re-United with Christ

1. A. B. C. D.
2. T. F.
3. T. F.
4. T. F.
5. T. F.

Lesson 12 The End of Time

1. No Questions

