

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for your interest in Christian ministry. We hope this material will help you to serve the Lord more effectively. Please remember to be like the noble Bereans. **“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so (Acts 17:11.)**

The Scriptures teach that the Kingdom of God is different from earthly kingdoms:

“The Kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth” (Lk. 22:25-27.)

Jesus came to serve. He gave us an example that we should follow. Spiritual people are restoring others in a spirit of meekness (Gal. 6:1-2.) The Kingdom of God is so different from earthly kingdoms, that you must be born again in order to see it (John 3:3.) When you receive Jesus Christ into your heart you are a “new creation.” Old things pass away, and everything

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becomes new (II Cor. 5:17.) Becoming a Christian, is like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly. We go through a “metamorphosis.” This is precisely the word used in Rom. 12::2, and I Cor. 3:18, to describe what happens to a sinner who is converted to Jesus Christ.

If you are a Christian, the Scriptures quoted in this book will have special meaning for you. Please prayerfully consider:

“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart (Jer. 29:13.)

“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3.)

“But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ” (II Cor. 3:14.)

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

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27.)

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“But a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers” (John 10:5.)

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (I Cor. 2:14.)

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God “ (Rom. 8:14.)

“For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (I Thess. 2:13.)

“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, even as it is with you (II Thess. 3:1.)

“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Col. 1:9.)

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“But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him (I John 2:27.)

“Consider what I say; and the Lord shall give thee understanding in all things” (II Tim. 2:7.)

A WORD OF CAUTION

God, and His angels, want to help you understand the Bible. The devil and his angels want to bring confusion and error. Please consider these scriptures also:

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God” (I Jn. 4:1.)

“Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (II Cor. 11:14.)

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from every appearance of evil” (I Thess. 5:21-22.)

“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teacher among you” (II Pet. 2:1.)

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“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch, that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matt. 24:24.)

“Take heed that ye be not deceived” (Lk. 21:8)

“See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16.)

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THE NATURE OF GOD

- God is a Spirit (John 4:24; 2 Cor. 3:17)
- There was none before Him and there will be none after Him (Is. 43:10.)
- There is none beside Him (Deut. 4:35; Is. 44:6.)
- There is none like Him (Ex. 8:14; Deut. 33:26; 2 Sam. 7:22; Is. 46:5, 9; Jer. 10:6.)
- He is the only One who is good (Matt. 19:17.)
- He fills the heaven and earth (I Ki. 8:27; Jer. 23:24.)
- He is Invisible (Job 23:8,9; John 1:18; 5:27; Col. 1:15; I Tim. 1:17.)
- He is Light (Is. 60:19; Ja. 1:27; I John 1:5.)
- He is Love (I John 4:8, 16.)
- He is Incorruptible (Rom. 1:23.)
- He is eternal (Deut. 33:27; Ps. 90:2; Rev. 4:8-10.)
- He is immortal (I Tim. 1:17; 6:16.)
- He is almighty (Gen. 17:1; Ex. 6:3.)
- He knows everything (Ps. 139:1-6.)
- He is everywhere (Ps. 139:7-10.)
- He is perfect (Matt. 5:48.)
- He is holy (Ps. 99:9; Is. 5:16.)
- He is glorious (Ex. 15:11; Ps. 145:5.)
- He is just (Deut. 32:4, Is. 45:21.)
- He is true (Jer. 10:10; John 17:3.)
- He is upright (Ps. 25:8; 92:15.)
- He is righteous (Ezra 9:15; Ps. 145:17.)

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- He is good (Ps. 25:8; 119:68.)
- He is great (2 Chron 2:5; Ps. 86:10.)
- He is gracious (Ex. 34:6; Ps. 116:5.)
- He is faithful (I Cor. 10:13; I Pet. 4:19.)
- He is merciful (Ex. 34:6-7; Ps. 86:5.)
- He is compassionate (2 Ki. 13:23.)
- He is jealous (Ex. 20:5; 34:14; Josh. 24:19; Nah. 1:2.)
- He is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29.)

God not only knows your name, and where you live, He has even numbered the hairs of your head (Matt. 10:30.) Please consider these inspired words:

O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known *me*. Thou knowest my down sitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted *with* all my ways. For *there is* not a word in my tongue, *but*, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. *Such* knowledge *is* too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot *attain* unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. *If* I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me;

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even the night shall be light about me. Yea the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light *are* both alike *to thee*. For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvellous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, *and* curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all *my members* were written, *which* in continuance were fashioned, when *as yet there was* none of them. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! *If* I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.

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JESUS IS GOD

The people of the world have sought for God in every generation (Acts 17:27) One reason we do so, is that God has placed a god shaped vacuum in every human heart (Eccl. 3:11.) Though God is not far from any one of us, most people have no idea what He is like. The pagans, for example, pictured God by means of crude images and idols. In their ignorance, they did not know God. Even the Jewish people did not have a clear concept of God. This is why they crucified Jesus. The Law had only a "shadow" of good things to come, and not substance (Heb. 10:1.) God is substance and not a shadow (Ja. 1:17.) No one can have an accurate view of God, or anyone else, from a shadow. Shadows are ever changing, but God is never changing.

Therefore, God determined to manifest Himself to mankind in the person of Jesus Christ. Understanding this is essential to discipleship. We cannot accurately understand or follow a God whom we cannot see. Jesus made God visible. He came to leave us an example that we should follow in His steps (I Pet. 2:21.) John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, explained the miracle of the incarnation in these words:

"No man hath seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18.)

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The word "declared," means to "make known." Jesus came to explain God, or make Him known. He is God manifest in the flesh (I Tim. 3:16.) Jesus is also called the "Word" of God (John 1:1.) A word is a vehicle of communication. Jesus, therefore, became the vehicle by which God communicates His nature to His people. Jesus revealed and explained God. In Jesus dwells all the fulness of the Godhead in a body, and you are complete in Him (Col. 2:9-10.) The very essence of Christianity involves the realization that God became flesh and dwelt among us. His name is "Emmanuel," which means, "God with us."

This point is so important that it needs to be demonstrated in greater detail. No man can follow God, without following Jesus. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and no man can come unto the Father except by Him (John 14:6.) There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man, Christ Jesus (I Tim. 2:5.) Note that everything which the Bible represents as pertaining to the nature of God, is also attributed to Jesus.

Consider:

- Both are the great "I Am" (Ex. 3:14, John 8:58)
- Both are the "First and the Last" (Is. 44:6, Rev. 1:11)
- Both are "Lord of Lords" (Deut. 10:17, Rev. 17:14)

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- Both fill the heavens and the earth (Jer. 23:24, Eph. 1:20-23)
- Both do not change (Mal. 3:6, Heb. 13:8)
- Both are Creators (Gen. 1:1, Col. 1:16)
- Both are Judges (Rev. 20:12, II Cor. 5:10)
- Both are to be worshiped (Matt. 4:10, Rev. 5:12-14)
- Etc.

Truly, Jesus is **"God manifest in the flesh"** (I Tim. 3:16)

God is faithful and merciful. He proved this to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He is the very personification of love. It is the ultimate joy to surrender to this kind of a God. We have a God who loves little children. We have a God who has compassion on the sick. We have a God who is willing to save to the uttermost all who come unto Him by faith. Nevertheless, we must remind you again, there is no way to avoid or evade total surrender. Jesus said:

"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Lk. 14:33.)

Our commitment to Christ is to be so all encompassing and complete, that it is like taking up a cross. It is like "dying to self" so that Christ might live in us (Gal. 2:20.)

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FOLLOW ME

"Follow Me!" was the principal command which Jesus gave to His disciples. Jesus obtained His first disciples at Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing. John identified Jesus as the "Lamb of God," and two of his disciples heard him speak, and **"they followed Jesus"** (John 1:37.)

"The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, follow me" (John 1:45.)

"And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him" (Matt. 4:18-19.)

"And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, follow me. And he arose and followed him" (Matt. 9:9.)

"Then said Jesus unto His disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24.)

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"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27.)

"If any man serve me, let him follow me . . ." (John 12:26.)

Etc.

There are 77 references in the Gospels to following Jesus. Only once did Jesus say to follow someone else. The single exception is found in Mark 14:13. In this passage, Jesus sent two of His disciples into Jerusalem to make provisions for the Passover. Note, that he did not give them an address, or a map, he gave them a guide to follow:

"And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples?" (Mark 14:13-14)

It is much easier to follow someone, than to follow directions. A man carrying a pitcher of water would be easy to find, for this normally was considered as women's work. Once discovered, it would be a simple matter for the disciples to follow him to the appropriate place.

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There was something refreshing and simple about the words of Jesus. He spoke differently than did the scribes. Anyone who wanted to could follow Him.

BOTH EASY AND HARD

Following Jesus was both easy and hard. It was easy from the standpoint that all someone had to do was keep him in sight. It was hard because it required self denial.

In order to follow Jesus, the disciples had to "deny themselves." Peter, for example, was a fisherman. He also had a family. He undoubtedly had a hobby, or something which he did for recreation. Following Jesus required that he place the Lord's will before his own.

Peter once said:

"Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting" (Lk. 18:28-30.)

After the resurrection, Peter and other of the disciples, went fishing. Jesus appeared to them on the shore, and instructed them where to throw the net. Because of His

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guidance, they caught one hundred fifty three big fish without breaking the net.

It was on this occasion, before a fire, that Jesus challenged Peter to confess Him three times. (A short time before, also by a fire, Peter had denied Him three times.) Jesus said: **"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" (John 21:16.)** What did Jesus mean by "these?" Some have suggested that when Jesus spoke these words He beckoned with His hand. Nearby were those objects of earthly sentiment to which Peter had once dedicated his life. Did Peter love Jesus more than he loved his boat, and his net, and his profession? Three times Peter confessed that he loved Jesus. Each time, in response, Jesus admonished him to take care of His sheep. Then Jesus said to Peter, **"Follow me!"** These words assume a new significance when it is remembered that they came from the resurrected Christ who would soon return to heaven.

Peter, like so many of us, wanted to know what someone else was supposed to do. He turned to John and said: **"And what shall this man do?"** Jesus said: **"If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me" (John 21:22.)**

It is a common temptation for us to take our eyes off Jesus and focus on someone else. It does not matter what

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someone else does, or does not do, we are to follow Jesus. We are to concentrate on what Jesus leads us to do.

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THE HOLY SPIRIT

● It is obvious that the disciples followed Jesus while He was with them upon the earth.

● It is equally obvious that Jesus went away to a place where they could not follow. He said: "**Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now . . .**" (John 13:36.)

● Jesus, however, promised to come back to His disciples as a Spirit and continue to guide them. This is a central theme of His message to them in the upper room the night before He died, He was not going to leave them like orphans. He was going to come back to be with them. (John 13:31 - 16:33, etc.)

● The book of Acts begins by affirming that the Gospels only record what Jesus "began" to do and teach (Acts 1:1.) Luke's inspired history contains the continuation of Christ's ministry by means of the Holy Spirit.

● Jesus specifically commanded His Apostles not to depart from Jerusalem until they have received the promise of the Father (Acts 1:4.) Luke wrote:

"And being assembled together with them,

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commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me . . . but ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:4,8.)

■ The book of Acts is a record of the way that the Holy Spirit guided the Apostles.

The Holy Spirit also bears the characteristics of God.

- He is Eternal - Heb. 9:14
- He creates - Job 33:4, Ps. 104:30.
- He knows what God knows - I Cor. 2:11.
- He has the power of God - Luke 1:35; Acts 1:8; Micah 3:8.
- He is everywhere - Ps. 139:7-10.
- He gives life - Rom. 8:11, John 6:63
- He inspired the prophets - 2 Pet. 1:21.
- He works miracles - I Cor. 12:9-11.
- He speaks - I Tim. 4:1; Rev. 2:7.
- He teaches - John 14:26; I Cor. 2:13.
- He searches and reveals - I Cor. 2:10.
- He leads and forbids - Acts 16:6,7.
- He can be grieved - Eph. 4:30

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- He can be resisted - Acts 7:51.
- He can be lied to - Acts 5:3.
- Those who despise Him will be punished - Heb. 10:29.

CHRIST IN YOU

In Old Testament times, God is represented as separate from man. When Moses, for example, was in the presence of God, his face would glow. When he left the presence of God, the glory, would fade (II Cor. 3:13.)

The Tabernacle anticipated a transition to the New Testament. It featured a portable altar. This was, perhaps, the first such altar in the world. Man no longer had to go great distances to worship. The Tabernacle was in their midst. God was dwelling in the midst of His people.

The genius of the New Covenant, however, is far more wonderful than this. Now, God does not dwell in the midst of a nation, he dwells personally in every believer. Now, our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19.) Now, the glory of God need never fade from our face. Now, we don't have to go to a special place to worship. Now, we can worship God wherever we are, for true worship is in spirit and in truth. This message is so radical and revolutionary that no eye had seen it, no ear had heard it, and it had never entered into the heart of man (I Cor.2:9.) Angels desired to look into this matter but were not permitted to do so (I Pet.2:12.) The principalities and powers

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in heavenly places observe with amazement the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10.)

Jesus alluded to our perennial source of power in His conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well:

"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:13-14.)

Later, He spoke about it again at the Feast of Tabernacles:

"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)" (John 7:38-39.)

"Christ in you," is not a peripheral issue. This is the hope of Glory (Col. 1:27.) This is the way that God provides us with Eternal Life.

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out

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of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do *them*.” (Ez. 36:26-27)

BLESSINGS IN CHRIST

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared from them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (I Cor. 2:9-10.)

- Redemption is in Jesus Christ - Rom. 3:24.
- We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ - Rom. 5:1
- We are alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord - Rom. 6:11.
- Eternal life is through Jesus Christ our Lord - Rom. 6:23.
- There is no condemnation in Christ Jesus - Rom. 8:1.
- In Christ we are free from the law of sin and death - Rom. 8:2.
- In Christ we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ - Rom. 8:17.
- Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus - Rom. 8:39.

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- We are sanctified in Christ Jesus - I Cor. 1:2.
- God gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ - I Cor. 15:57.
- We always triumph in Christ - 2 Cor. 2:14.
- In Christ we are new creatures - 2 Cor. 5:17.
- We have liberty in Christ Jesus - Gal. 2:4.
- Through Christ we receive the blessings of Abraham - Gal. 3:14.
- In Christ all people can become one - Gal. 3:28.
- All spiritual blessings are in Christ - Eph. 1:3.
- Christians sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus - Eph. 2:6.
- In Christ we come near to God - Eph. 2:13.
- We rejoice in Christ Jesus - Phil. 3:3.
- Every man will be presented perfect in Christ Jesus - Col. 1:28.
- Our work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope is in Christ - I Thess. 1:3.
- The dead in Christ shall rise first - I Thess. 4:16.
- In Christ there is exceeding abundant grace with faith and love - I Tim. 1:14.
- Salvation with eternal glory is in Christ - 2 Tim. 2:10.

WARNINGS ABOUT LEAVING CHRIST

Heb. 6:4-6 For *it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and*

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were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put *him* to an open shame.”

Heb. 10:28-31 “ He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Gal. 5:4 “ Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.”

2 Pet. 2: 20 - 22 “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known *it*, to

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turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog *is* turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

TO THE CHURCH AT EPHEBUS

Rev. 2:5 “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.”

TO THE CHURCH AT PERGAMOS

Rev. 2:16 “Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”

TO THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA

Rev. 2:20-23 “Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great

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tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”

TO THE CHURCH AT SARDIS

Rev. 3:3 “Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”

TO THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA

Rev. 3:15-19 “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”

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- NO ONE MAN MAKE YOU LEAVE CHRIST - (See Rom. 8:35-39)
- YOU CAN, HOWEVER, DO SO IF YOU CHOOSE TO DO SO!
- BECAUSE OF THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WE ARE OPTIMISTIC

Phil. 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:”

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”

(1 Jn. 4:11.)

THERE IS NO CONDEMNATION IN CHRIST

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus . . .” Rom. 8:1

We were sinners before we became Christians:

“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Rom. 3:23

Even though we are born again, we still continue to make mistakes:

I John 1:8 - 2:2 “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.”

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”
(I Jn. 4:11.)

How then, can there be “no condemnation” in Christ?

God began giving us an answer to this question in the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve sinned they were no longer able to stand in the presence of God without a covering. Therefore God made coats of skins and clothed them (Gen. 3:21.)

God wanted us to know that we needed a “covering” to appear in His presence.

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

This beautiful teaching about approaching God is illustrated by the Ark of the Covenant. Instructions regarding the Ark of the Covenant are first found in Exodus 25:10-22.)

The Old Covenant was the Ten Commandments. They were written on two tablets of stone (See Deut. 4:13.) The box, or “ark” was called the Ark of the Covenant because it contained the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments were also called the “Law” (Ex. 24:12.)

The Law was not given to save, but to make us aware of our sins. Consider:

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”
(I Jn. 4:11.)

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Rom. 3:19-20 “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.”

THE CHERUBIM

Cherubim are first mentioned in the Bible in connection with the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden and God placed Cherubim at the gate of the Garden to keep them away from the Tree of Life.

Gen. 3:24 “So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”

God gave instructions for Cherubim to be on top of the Ark of the Covenant. These Cherubim were facing each other with their wings outstretched over the Ark. They could not, however, see the Law because it was “covered.” The “covering” was made of gold, and sprinkled with blood. It was called “The Mercy Seat.” On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”

(I Jn. 4:11.)

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enter into the Holy Place and sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat (Lev. 16:14-15.) The Hebrew word for Atonement means “to cover.”

Jesus is our covering. He is our “Mercy Seat.” No one can keep us from the Tree of Life because our sins are covered.

When Mary came to the tomb of Jesus, she stooped down and looked inside. There she saw two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet where the body of Jesus had lain. Jesus is our Mercy Seat!

John wrote that Christians should not sin (I John 2:1.) If we do sin, however, he promised that we have Jesus Christ as an “Advocate.” An Advocate is someone who pleads for another. Jesus, however is not only our Advocate, He is also our Propitiation. This is the same word translated as “Mercy Seat” in Ex. 25:17

SINS ARE NOT IMPUTED TO CHRISTIANS

David was a sinner:

- He lied to Ahimelech the priest (I Sam. 21:2.)
- This lie caused many innocent people to die (I Sam. 22:17-22.)
- He ate the show bread, which was not lawful (I Sam. 21:3-7, Matt. 12:4.)

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”

(I Jn. 4:11.)

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- He lied to Achish (I Sam. 27:8-12.)
- He committed adultery with Bathsheba (II Sam. 11:1-5.)
- He had Uriah the Hittite killed (II Sam. 11:14-25.)
- He numbered Israel (II Sam. 24:10.)
- Etc.

DAVID UNDERSTOOD THAT GOD COULD COVER HIS SINS! HE WROTE:

Ps. 32:1-2 “Blessed *is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.*”

These words are quoted by Paul in Romans 4:6-8:

“Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”

David was happy and blessed, not because he never sinned, but because His sins were “covered.”

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”

(I Jn. 4:11.)

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AS LONG AS YOU ARE IN CHRIST YOUR SINS ARE COVERED TOO!

THERE IS NO CONDEMNATION TO THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS!

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”

(I Jn. 4:11.)

THE GOSPEL

The word “gospel” means “good news.” It is defined by Paul in these words:

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: (I Cor. 15:1-4)

The “good news” is that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, according to the Scriptures. The facts about Jesus were written by the prophets centuries before they came to pass.

Note that the apostles made constant reference to the resurrection of Jesus

Acts 1:22 Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

Acts 2:24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed

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(I Jn. 4:11.)

the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

Acts 2:31-32 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

Acts 3:15 And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.

Acts 3:26 Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

Acts 4:2 Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

Acts 4:10 Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

Acts 5:30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree.

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(I Jn. 4:11.)

Acts 10:40 Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;

Acts 13:23 Of this man's seed hath God according to *his* promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:

Acts 13:30 But God raised him from the dead:

Acts 13:33-34 God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, *now* no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.

Acts 13:37 But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption.

Acts 17:18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.

Acts 17:31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance

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(I Jn. 4:11.)

unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Acts 23:6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men *and* brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.

Acts 24:15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

Acts 24:21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.

Etc.

THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION IS AVAILABLE TO ALL BELIEVERS

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being

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(I Jn. 4:11.)

enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. (Eph. 1:15-23)

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”

(1 Jn. 4:11.)

THE OLD COVENANT

It is important for every Christian to understand the difference between the Old Covenant, and the New Covenant.

The Bible makes reference to many covenants. Such as: The covenant with Adam (Hos. 6:7.) The covenant with Noah (Gen. 9:9,) The covenant with Abram (Gen. 15:18,) The covenant of circumcision (Acts 7:8,) The covenant of the day and night (Jer. 33:20,) The covenant with David (Jer. 33:21,) etc.

When the Scriptures, however, speak of the “new covenant,” and the “old covenant,” it is a comparison between Christianity and Judaism. These two approaches to God are so different that they cannot be combined. Attempting to do so would be like putting new wine in old skins, or new cloth in an old garment (Matt. 9:16-17.)

The Scriptures teach that the Old Covenant was the Ten Commandments.

Please consider:

- Moses received a covenant while he was on Mt. Horeb (Deut 5:2.)
- This covenant was called the Ten Commandments, and written on two tablets of stone (Deut. 4:13.)
- Once the Ten Commandments were completed, God

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- added no more to them (Deut. 5:22.)
- The Ten Commandments were kept in a receptacle which was called the “Ark of the Covenant” (Nu. 10:33.)
- The Ark of the Covenant was usually kept in the Tabernacle, or Temple (I Ki. 8:6.)
- This covenant was made when God brought His people out of Egypt (Jer. 31:32.)
- This covenant was like Hagar and Ishmael and produced bondage (Gal. 4:24.)
- God found fault with the Old Covenant (Heb. 8:7-8.)
- God decided to write a New Covenant (Heb. 8:8-13.)

LEGALISM HAS CAUSED MUCH OF THE DIVISION IN CHRISTIANITY TODAY!

Remember, the Old Testament was like Hagar and Ishmael (Gal. 4:24.) Ishmael was described by God as a **“wild man.”** Then the Scriptures continue: **“his hand will be against every man, and ever man’s hand against him . . .” (Gen. 16:12.)** Ishmael would always be in the midst of controversy.

This is the way the Ten Commandments are. They too have always been a source of controversy. Take, for example, the commandment: **“Thou shalt not kill” (Ex. 20:13.)** What does this commandment mean? Is it wrong to kill animals and birds? Millions of people in India would say “yes..” They believe it is wrong to kill any living creature. Is it wrong to enlist in the

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army and kill in defense of your country? Is it wrong to be a policeman and kill a criminal who is killing others.? Is it wrong to kill someone to defend your family? Is it wrong to kill someone to protect your possessions? Is it every “lawful” to kill anyone for any reason? If so, what is that reason?

God found fault with the Old Covenant, which was written in stone, and decided to write a New Covenant in the minds and hearts of believers! The Old Covenant tried to stop murder by law. The New Covenant would succeed in stopping murder by giving a new nature to the people of God. We are not “conformed,” we are “transformed.”

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”

(I Jn. 4:11.)

THE NEW COVENANT

“ . . . Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth, and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away” (Heb. 8:8-13.)

Those who are born again experience the New Covenant:

- They become new creatures (II Cor. 5:17.)
- Their sins and iniquities are remembered no more (Heb. 8:12.)
- God writes His laws on their minds and hearts (Heb. 8:10.)

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- They have the mind of Christ (I Cor. 2:16.)
- They are not “conformed” by law, but “transformed “ by their new minds (Rom. 12:2.)
- They are justified without the deeds of the Law (Rom. 3:28.)
- Their bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19.)
- They can worship God in spirit and in truth at any time and any place (John 4:24.)

The Old Covenant unified the Hebrew people as a nation. The ark, which contained this covenant, was in the center of their camp when they slept. It went before them when they traveled. No matter where they lived, they returned to this ark to worship.

The New Covenant also unifies the people of God as a nation. Those who are born again are described as: **“A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession”** (I Pet. 2:9.)

The New Covenant (or testament) became effective after Christ died:

“For where a testament is, there must also of necessity by the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth” (Heb. 9:16-17.)

*“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”
(I Jn. 4:11.)*

MEMBERS OF HIS BODY

Every person who becomes a Christian also becomes a member of the Body of Christ, which is the Church (Col. 1:18.)

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free: and have been made to drink into one Spirit” (I Cor. 12:13.)

There are, of course, different members in the Body of Christ, just as there are different members in your body. Every member of the body is designed by God to do a special work. You have a special gift, or ability, and so do all believers. It is the desire of God that every member of His Body minister.

“For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work . . .” (Mk. 13:34.)

“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Rom. 12:4-5.)

“Every man has his proper gift of God . . .” (I Cor.

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7:7.)

“But now God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him (I Cor. 12:18.)

“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Eph. 4:7.)

“From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love (Eph. 4:16.)

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same (I Pet. 4:10.)

Etc.

It is the will of God that every member of His Body minister. It is better to get one hundred people working, than to try and do the work of one hundred people.

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”

(I Jn. 4:11.)

ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES

All truths are equally true, but not all truths are equally important. Your ministry will certainly be more pleasing to God if you have the same priorities that Jesus did.

A lawyer once asked Jesus, **“Which is the great commandment in the law?”** There were, of course, Ten Commandments written in stone. In addition to these, there were also over six hundred other commandments in the Law of Moses. Jesus answer:

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thysoul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt. 22:37-40.)

Love is the most important teaching in all the Bible. Please consider the following verses as they relate to the priorities of the Apostles:

“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets (Matt. 7:12.)

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(I Jn. 4:11.)

“By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35.)

“Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law” (Rom. 13:8.)

“And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (I Cor. 13:13.)

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Gal. 5:14.)

“And above all these things put on love which is the bond of perfectness” (Col. 3:14.)

“If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well” (Ja. 2:8.)

“And above all things have fervent love among yourselves; for love shall cover the multitude of sins” (I Pet. 4:8.)

“For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another” (I John 3:11.)

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”

(I Jn. 4:11.)

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 John 4:7-8.)

THE CHURCH

Every living thing needs an environment to survive. Before God created a fish, for example, he had to have water for the fish to live in, and food for it to eat. This is true of every living thing. It is also true of the Christian, who is “a new creation.” God has provided the church for those who are born again. It is God’s special environment where we can develop and grow.

The Bible word for church refers to people. It is an “assembly” where people gather to worship Jesus. The early church first assembled in the Jewish Temple (Acts 2:46.) They also met in houses (See Acts 8:3; Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; Philemon 2, etc.) It is important to remember that the Church of Jesus Christ is people.

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”

(1 Jn. 4:11.)

Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22.)

The church in Jerusalem continued steadfastly in “**the apostles’ teaching, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers**” (Acts 2:42.)

JESUS IN THE MIDST OF THE ASSEMBLY

Jesus said: **“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20.)**

There is a spiritual aspect to worship which non-Christian people cannot see. Remember that the church is an assembly of people. It is not a physical building made of stones, or wood. Even if only two or three are gathered together, Jesus has promised to be there in our midst. Christian worship not only involves fellowship with Jesus, but also with a host of other spiritual realities. Consider :

“Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things that of

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”

(1 Jn. 4:11.)

Abel” (Heb. 12:22-24.)

“Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Lk. 15:10.)

Meeting to worship Jesus is a magnificent spiritual experience.. It is by means of the church that the manifold wisdom of God is manifest unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places (Eph. 3:18.) Here are a few principles for you to prayerfully consider. Christian worship is to:

- Emphasize love (John 13:35, I Cor. 13:)
- Be decent and in order (I Cor. 14:26)
- Allow gifted people to minister (I Cor. 14:26-40)
- Provide edification, exhortation, and comfort (I Cor. 14:3.)
- Not discriminate against the poor (Ja. 2:1-10.)
- Follow peace and edification (Rom. 14:19.)

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warm them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men (I Thess. 5:14.)

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”

(I Jn. 4:11.)

THE SEVENTH DAY, AND THE FIRST DAY

Jewish people worshiped God on the seventh day of the week, or Saturday. This day was also known as the “Sabbath” which means “rest.” Christians worshiped God on the first day of the week, or Sunday. This day is also called “The Lord’s Day” (Rev. 1:10.) These days of worship became a source of controversy and division in the early church, but it should not be so among us.

THE SABBATH

The first time the Scriptures refer to man observing the seventh day as a day of rest is in Ex. 16:23. The children of Israel had just escaped from Egypt and were in the wilderness. God sent them food from heaven called “manna,” and commanded them to gather only as much as they could eat each day. If they gathered more than they could eat, it “bred worms and stank,” (Ex. 16:20.)

On the sixth day, however, they could gather twice as much and the food did not spoil. Moses said:

This is that which the LORD hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that

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(I Jn. 4:11.)

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which ye will bake *to day*, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. (Exodus 16:23-24)

A few days later, Moses received the Ten Commandments. The fourth commandment was:

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates: For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. (Exodus 20:8-11)

The Sabbath, as well as all other aspects of Jewish law, was to be enforced without mercy.

Six days may work be done; but in the seventh *is* the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth *any* work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. (Exodus 31:15)

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”

(1 Jn. 4:11.)

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When the children of Israel found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath, they put him in jail until the Lord told them what to do with him.

And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. (Nu. 15:35)

The Jews also observed other days of rest, other than the seventh day. For example, the first and last days of certain feasts were also days of rest (Lev. 23:7-8, 39) The Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement were also days of rest (Lev. 23:23-32, etc.)

JESUS AND THE SABBATH

For the law was given by Moses, *but* grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)

The difference between the Law of Moses and Christianity is so distinct that the two cannot be combined. To attempt to do so would be like trying to put new wine in old skins, or new cloth in an old garment (Matt. 9:16-17) Jesus brought “grace and truth.” Jesus taught His disciples that He was “**Lord of the Sabbath**” (Matt. 12:8.) He taught them that “**The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath**”

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”

(1 Jn. 4:11.)

MANUAL FOR LEADERS

(Mark 2:27.) Here are some things which Jesus and His disciples did on the Sabbath.

- They plucked ears of corn and ate them (Matt. 12:1-8)
- Jesus healed a man with a withered hand (Matt. 12:13.)
- He healed a woman who had been sick for eighteen years (Luke 13:12.)
- He healed a man with the dropsy (Luke 14:4.)
- He healed a man that had been sick for thirty-eight years (John 5:8)
- He healed a blind man (John 9:14.)
- Etc.

The healing in John 5: provides insight into the way that Jesus challenged the Law of the Sabbath. Jesus went into the midst of a multitude of sick and impotent people, but only healed one. Even though Jesus knew it was the Sabbath, he commanded the man to take up his bed and walk. The Scriptures record:

Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God. (John 5:18.)

It seems that the Jews were correct in their understanding of what had happened.

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”

(I Jn. 4:11.)

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1. Jesus had broken the Sabbath.
2. Jesus claimed to be equal with God.

Since Jesus IS God, He has the right to do whatever He wants to do on the Sabbath!

THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

A brief review of the following Scriptures will help you to understand why Christians meet to worship on the first day of the week.

JESUS WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK:

In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.(Matt. 28:1)

And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. (Mark 16:2)

Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. (Luke 24:1)

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”

(I Jn. 4:11.)

MANUAL FOR LEADERS

The first *day* of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. (John 20:1)

JESUS APPEARED ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

Luke 24:1 states that Jesus was raised from the dead on the first day of the week. Luke 24:13 states that on the “**same day**” two men were walking to the village of Emmaus. On that same day Jesus appeared to them and taught them from the Scriptures about Himself (Luke 24:27.)

It was also on the first day of the week that Jesus appeared to Mary (John 20:11-18.) to Simon (Luke 24:34.; and to a group of women (Matt. 28:9,)

John records that Jesus appeared to all of His disciples but Thomas on the first day of the week:

Then the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you. (John 20:19)

The Scriptures teach that “after eight days” Jesus appeared again, and Thomas was present (John 20:26-29) This

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(1 Jn. 4:11.)

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means that a week had gone by and Jesus again appeared to His disciples on the first day of the week.

THE CHURCH WAS STARTED ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

The church began on the Day of Pentecost. The word “Pentecost” means “fifty.” The day of the feast was determined by beginning with the Sabbath of the Passover, and counting seven Sabbaths complete. On the next day, the fiftieth day, was the Feast of Pentecost. The day after the Sabbath, of course, is the first day of the week.

And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD. (Lev. 23:15-16)

The Jews believed that Pentecost was also the day that Moses received the Law on Mt. Sinai.

The first converts to Jesus were Jewish. They not only rested on the Sabbath, but continued to worship in the temple, and observe Jewish Feasts. For several years after the church began, the Gospel was preached to none but Jews only (Acts

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”

(1 Jn. 4:11.)

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11:19.) Even the Jewish Christians, however, met on the first day of the week to worship Jesus. They were assembled on this day when Jesus first appeared to them, and they continued to assemble on this day.

COMMUNION AND PREACHING WERE ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. (Acts 20:7)

OFFERINGS WERE RECEIVED ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. (I Cor. 16:1-2)

It is obvious from these Scriptures, and also from church history, that the Christians met regularly for worship on the first day of the week.

AN IMPORTANT MEETING IN JERUSALEM

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”
(I Jn. 4:11.)

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Peter, as you know, was directed by God to preach to Gentiles (Acts 10:) These new converts, who were not Jewish, did not circumcise their sons, rest on the Sabbath, or keep other Jewish traditions. There was a great dispute over this matter at Antioch (Acts 15:1-2) and they decided to go up to Jerusalem to the Apostles and elders about this question.

The Holy Spirit guided them to a decision that brought unity (Acts 15:28-29) There were only four necessary things:

- To abstain from things offered to idols
- From blood
- From things strangled
- And from fornication

The Jewish Christians could continue to rest on the Sabbath, and observe other Jewish customs. **THEY COULD NOT, HOWEVER, REQUIRE ANYONE ELSE TO DO SO.**

Paul, for example, circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:3) Titus, however, who was a Greek, could not be compelled to be circumcised (Gal. 2:3.) **“For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, no uncircumcision,; but faith which worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6.)**

Paul knew that we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ, and not by keeping Jewish laws. Nevertheless, Paul kept the

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(I Jn. 4:11.)

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Jewish Law that he might win his Jewish brothers to Jesus Christ (I Cor. 9:20.) Jewish Christians had a right to continue in Jewish traditions, if they wanted to, but they could not compel others to do so. (See Acts 21:15-25.)

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ. (Col. 2:16-17)

A GOOD EXAMPLE FROM ROME

Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, *but* not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day *alike*. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

"If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another"

(I Jn. 4:11.)

MANUAL FOR LEADERS

(Rom. 14:1-7)

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ *is* acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. (Rom. 14:17-19)

"If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another"

(I Jn. 4:11.)

BAPTISM

The word “baptism” is a Greek word which means to “dip” or “immerse.” The idea is found many times in the Bible. Naaman, for example, was commanded to dip himself seven times in the Jordan River to be cleansed of leprosy (II Ki. 5:14.) The Jewish priests washed themselves in a large pool before entering into the Temple (II Chron. 4:6.) A person cleansed of leprosy was to wash himself in water before being allowed back into the camp (Lev. 14:8.) Those who touched any unclean thing were required to wash their flesh with water (Lev. 22:6,) etc.

John the Baptist came preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4.) As we have said, the idea of dipping in water and cleansing, was nothing new to the devout Jew. A great many people received John’s baptism. **“And there went out to him, Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins” (Matt. 3:5-6.)**

Jesus himself was baptized by John. **“John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he**

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(I Jn. 4:11.)

were baptized, came up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matt. 3:14-17.)

It was also said that **“ . . . Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples) (John 4:1-2.)**

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

Christian baptism is unique in a number of ways.

- The Jews dipped themselves many times, but Christians are only baptized once (Eph. 4:5.)
- Christian baptism is the only commandment given in the name of (by the authority of) the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18-20.)
- It is to be done until the end of the world (Matt. 28:20.)
- It is associated with the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Pet. 3:21.)
- It is associated with receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 5:32; 19:1-7.)
- It is associated with putting on Christ (Gal. 27.)
- It is associated with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (Rom. 6:1-11.)

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(I Jn. 4:11.)

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- It should be a source of unity among believers (I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:4-6.)
- The examples of baptism in the book of Acts indicate that people were baptized at the same time they confessed their faith in Christ.
- 3,000 on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41.)
- Simon the Sorcerer (Acts 8:13.)
- The Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:38.)
- Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:18; 22:16.)
- Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:48.)
- Lydia and her household (Acts 16:15.)
- The Philippian Jailer and his household (Acts 16:33.)
- Crispus, his household, and other Corinthians (Acts 18:8>)
- Twelve disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19:5.)

WHO MAY BE BAPTIZED?

Anyone can be baptized who confesses their faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 8:37,) and repents of their sins (Acts 2:38.)

WHO MAY BAPTIZE?

Any Christian can baptize. The important thing is that believers are baptized, not who does the baptizing. Consider, for example, Paul at Corinth. All the Corinthians were baptized, just as Jesus commanded (I Cor. 12:13.) Paul however, thanked

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God that he had only baptized a few of them (I Cor. 1:13-17.) All believers are commanded to be baptized, but it doesn't matter who does it.

BAPTISM SHOULD NEVER BE A SOURCE OF DIVISION

It is the plan of God to unite all the universe in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:10.) As we have mentioned before, “one baptism” is something we can have in common. It doesn't matter whether we are rich, or poor, slave, or free, we have all become one in the Body of Jesus Christ.

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”

(I Jn. 4:11.)

THE LORD'S SUPPER

"Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf." I Cor. 10:16-17 (NIV)

It was a common practice in the early church to partake of a loaf, and a cup, in memory of Jesus. While this practice is mentioned several times in Scripture, the expression "Lord's Supper," is only found once (I Cor. 11:20.) The Lord's Supper is also called a "participation," or "communion" (I Cor. 10:16,) In the book of Acts it is known as the "breaking of bread" (Acts 20:7.) Observing the Lord's Supper was apparently so obvious and simple, that the practice continued for over twenty years without written instructions. Teaching about the Lord's Supper is included in the Bible, because the Corinthians had corrupted it. Their error provided Paul with an opportunity to teach important lessons. The Holy Spirit inspired him to write these words:

"In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there

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(I Jn. 4:11.)

are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not! For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we

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will not be condemned with the world. So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions." I Corinthians 11:17-34 (NIV)

"The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." Heb. 4:12 (NIV)

The Word of God is inspired. Man's comments about the Word of God are not. Please keep this in mind as you consider the following.

I Cor. 11:17

"In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good."

Their observance of the Lord's Supper was so bad, it did more harm than good.

vs. 18

"In the first place, I hear when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it."

"If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another"

(I Jn. 4:11.)

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There is only "One Body" (Eph. 4:4.) The Church of Jesus Christ is supposed to be "one," but the Corinthians were divided. Division in the Body of Christ is a serious problem. Jesus said: **"All men shall know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35.)** Jesus prayed that all His disciples would be "one," as He and the Father were one (John 17:21.) He associated this unity with world evangelism. He wanted us to be "one," so that the world would believe. The unity of believers, therefore, is not an insignificant issue. It is the very heart of God's plan. It is the principal prayer of Jesus for His Church. God has planned to unite all believers in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:10.) Anyone that divides believers does not have the Holy Spirit (Jude 19.)

vs. 19

"No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval."

A living body needs some way to get rid of poison. The Body of Christ is no exception. Divisive people are like poison in the Body of Christ. They are characterized by **"hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy . . . (Gal. 5:19.)** Those filled with the Holy Spirit are known by **"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control . . . "** (Gal. 5:22-23.) Those who are approved love one another and cling to Jesus. Those who are not approved will not love one

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another. Their lack of love will be obvious. They will exalt something else, or someone other than Jesus. **"God is not a God of disorder but of peace" (I Cor. 14:33.)**

vss. 20 - 21

"When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk."

It was a common practice for the early Christians to eat together (Acts 2:42-47; 20:7-11; II Pet. 2:13; Jude 12, etc.) Remember, Jesus instituted the "Lord's Supper," at a meal. The early church sometimes observed the Lord's Supper at a meal too. These meals were called "love feasts" (Jude 12.) The Corinthians, however, came together to eat without love. Consequently, the Lord did not recognize their supper as His Supper. When they came together, the rich had too much to eat, and the poor didn't have enough.

vs. 22

"Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!"

The early church usually met in homes. Priscilla and

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(I Jn. 4:11.)

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Aquila, for example, had a church in their house (Rom. 16:5.) When the church assembled in their house, they were obligated to be kind and courteous to everyone. We are to treat others, the same way we want to be treated (see James. 2:1-11.)

vss. 23-26

"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

This same story is repeated three times in the Gospels (Matt. 26:17-35; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-38.) Paul did not receive this teaching, however, from Matthew, Mark, and Luke. He received it directly from the Lord (Gal. 1:11-12.) Having received it from the Lord, he passed in on to the Corinthians.

The Lord's Supper was instituted the night before Jesus died on the cross. The sacrifice of Jesus is the most important event that has ever taken place. We must never forget it! The Jewish priests offered sacrifices every day that could never take away sin. Jesus offered one sacrifice that cleansed forever

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(I Jn. 4:11.)

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those who are sanctified (Heb. 10:11-14.) He did not want His followers to forget what He had done. Therefore He gave them this memorial as a way to continually remember His Body, and His Blood.

vs. 27

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.

Nobody is "worthy" to take the Lord's Supper. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23.) It is possible, however, for sinful people to partake of this Supper in a "worthy manner." Eating the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner is a sin against the body and blood of the Lord. The true meaning of this Supper can be lost and destroyed by selfishness and division.

vs. 28

A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.

Only you can decide if you should partake of the Lord's Supper. It is a personal decision that cannot be made by anyone else, or for anyone else.

vs. 29

"If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another"

(I Jn. 4:11.)

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For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

The "Body of the Lord" was sacrificed on the cross for our sins. We must never partake of the Lord's Supper without remembering that. Christians however, also are the "Body of the Lord." The Scriptures teach: **"Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body . . ." (I Cor. 10:16.)** Or consider these words: **"The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body . . ." (I Cor. 12:12-13.)**

Jesus is the Head of His Body, which is the church (Col. 1:18) The Corinthians discriminated against their fellow Christians, which was a sin against the Body of Christ. Those who eat the Lord's Supper without recognizing the Body of Christ, bring judgment upon themselves.

vs. 30

That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.

Sin affects us both spiritually and physically. The corruption of the Lord's Supper brought spiritual sickness and death. It is also possible that it brought physical sickness and

"If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another"

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death. (See Acts 5:3-11; 13:11-12, etc.)

vs. 31

But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.

Self discipline is a pleasant alternative to spiritual suicide. Correcting ourselves than being condemned by God.

vs. 32

When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

"The Lord disciplines those he loves" (Heb. 12:6.)

Just as a loving father disciplines his children, the Lord disciplines His children. ". . . **no discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it**" (Heb. 12:11.)

The chastening of the Lord keeps us from being condemned with the world.

vss. 33 - 34

So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in

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(1 Jn. 4:11.)

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judgment. And when I come I will give further directions.

The observance of the Lord's Supper involves loving care and consideration of others. On the night Jesus instituted this supper, he also washed His disciples feet (John 13:2-17.) He gave them an example! His Kingdom would be different from worldly kingdoms. In the world, people become great by dominating one another. In the Kingdom of Christ, people become great by serving others (Luke 22:24-27.) In humility, we are to consider others better than ourselves (Phil. 2:3.) If someone cannot wait to eat, he should eat something at home. We must treat all of our brethren kindly!

Paul promised to give further directions when he came to Corinth.

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS!

1. Why eat the Lord's Supper?

Jesus told us to! This is reason enough for the child of God. There are, of course, many other reasons to do so too. In some way, for example, partaking of the loaf and cup, enable us to participate in the body and blood of Jesus:

"Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give

"If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another"

(1 Jn. 4:11.)

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thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not he bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf" (I Cor. 10:16-17.)

Today there are millions of believers around the world. Most of these believers are isolated from their brethren by circumstances beyond their control. No matter where these Christians meet, however, they can be one in the breaking of bread. The Lord's Supper provides a sense of communion and unity with the whole church in the whole world.

2. Who may serve the Lord's Supper?

Every Christian is a priest:

"You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ . . . But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (I Peter 2:5,9.)

Every Christian has the right to serve the Lord's Supper!

3. Who may partake of the Lord's Supper?

"If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another"

(I Jn. 4:11.)

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Anyone who belongs to Jesus can partake of His Supper. Since it is the Lord's Supper, He is the one who invites people to partake. Jesus invites all who are weary and burdened to come unto Him for rest (Matt. 11:28-30.) He promises that those who come will never be driven away (John 6:37.) We are to examine ourselves, not others, before partaking of the Lord's Supper.

4. Where is the Lord's Supper to be served?

There was a time when the people of God had to journey to Jerusalem to worship. Jesus did away with all this! He said that true worshipers would worship Him in "spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24.) The Lord's Supper can therefore be observed anywhere someone worships Jesus in spirit and in truth.

5. How many have to be present to observe the Lord's Supper?

Jesus promised that **"Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matt. 18:20.)** It is not necessary to have a large crowd to take the Lord's Supper. Sometimes those who have been imprisoned for Christ, have had to observe the Lord's Supper all by themselves.

6. What kind of bread is to be used?

"If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another"

(I Jn. 4:11.)

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Jesus instituted this supper at the Passover. No leavened bread was allowed at this feast. Therefore, Jesus broke unleavened bread. This bread was made from barley or wheat. In many parts of the world, however, people do not grow barley or wheat. Over a billion people, for example, live in China. Most of these people have never seen barley or wheat. They eat rice. It is still possible for them, however, to observe the Lord's Supper. The attitude of the heart is more important than the kind of bread which is used.

7. What kind of drink is to be used?

Jesus instituted His Supper with the "fruit of the vine" (Matt. 26:29, Mark 14:25, and Luke 22:18.) This was grape juice. Again, however, millions of people have no access to grape juice. This, of course, does not keep them from communing with Christ. As long as people have something to eat, and something to drink, they can remember the death of Christ until He comes again.

8. When is the Lord's Supper to be observed?

The early church did so at least every week. In fact, this seems to be the primary purpose for their assembly. Acts 20:7 states that they came together on the first day of the week to "break bread." The first day of the week, as you know, is Sunday. Some feel that the church in Jerusalem took

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(I Jn. 4:11.)

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communion every day (Acts 2:46.) The Scriptures teach: **"Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (I Cor. 11:26.)**

9. Why are there warnings associated with the Lord's Supper?

God is a jealous God! He will not tolerate those who trivialize His truth, or trample the blood of His beloved Son. Those who eat and drink the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner bring condemnation upon themselves (I Cor. 11:29.)

10. How can I be sure I am observing the Lord's Supper in the right way?

The answer to this question is to simply focus on Jesus. No matter how hard we try, we will still make mistakes. Even if we could do everything we were told to do, we would still be unworthy servants (Lk. 17:10.) The secret to salvation is not our righteousness, but His.

Consider this example from Hebrew history. The people of God were being bitten by poisonous snakes (Numbers 21:6-9.) Many of them died. God commanded Moses to make a serpent of bronze, and lift it above the people. Everyone who looked on this serpent, lived. Jesus said:

"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so

"If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another"

(I Jn. 4:11.)

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the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. 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. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him (John 3:14-17.)

Those who keep their eyes on Jesus have nothing to fear from the Lord's Supper, or anything else!

PLEASE DON'T ALLOW THE DEVIL TO DIVIDE THE BODY OF CHRIST!

The Lord may have had many reasons to institute His Supper. One reason, however, was to promote unity among all the members of His Body. The church began in Jerusalem, but was soon scattered by persecution. The fact that all believers were breaking bread on the same day, gave them a sense of oneness. No matter where they lived, they came together on the first day of the week to break bread. Wherever they were they would always have something to eat, and something to drink. Consequently, they could always remember Jesus as He instructed them.

The Devil, however, has twisted this beautiful memorial into a tool of division. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper to unite us, and the Devil has deceived us into dividing over it.

"If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another"

(1 Jn. 4:11.)

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The Scriptures teach us to examine ourselves when we partake of the Lord's Supper. There will always be other people, in other places, who do it differently. We are to judge ourselves, not them.

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Loves does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails . . ." (1 Cor. 13:4-8.)

"If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another"

(1 Jn. 4:11.)

THE CHASTENING OF THE LORD

“My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we know much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live. For they verily for a few days chasteneth us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yeildeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:5-11.)

Every family needs discipline. So does the Family of God. The word “disciple” and the word “discipline” are associated. Every disciple of Jesus needs discipline. The purpose of discipline, or chastening, is positive. It should always be designed to help, and not to hinder. (See II Cor. 10:8; 13:18, etc.)

Here are some Scriptures for you to consider.

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”
(I Jn. 4:11.)

WHEN SOMEONE TRESPASSES AGAINST YOU

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. 16 But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. 17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican” (Matt. 18:15-17.)

WHEN SOMEONE IN THE CHURCH COMMITS FORNICATION

“Fornication” is a general word which refers to any kind of sexual immorality. Here are Paul’s instructions regarding a fornicator in the Church at Corinth.

But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.

“ It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father’s wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from

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among you. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, *concerning* him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Your glorying *is* not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth. I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (I Cor. 5:1-13.)

INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING DISORDERLY PEOPLE

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”

(I Jn. 4:11.)

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IN THE CHURCH

The Church in Thessalonica had lazy people, who would not work. These people were to be treated differently than those who were sexually immoral. Immoral people were to be “delivered unto Satan,” or “put away.” Lazy people are to be left alone. We are to “withdraw” from them.

Consider this Scripture:

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you: Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that

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man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed (II Thess. 3:6-14.)

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

“Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:10.)

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:1-2.)

“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men” (I Thess. 5:14-15.)

“Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (Rom. 14:19.)

“Do all things without murmuring and disputings” (Phil. 2:14.)

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WEDDINGS

- The Bible does not tell how to conduct a wedding.
- It does teach, however, to do everything decently, and in order (I Cor. 15:40.)
- It does teach us to be submissive to civil government (Rom. 13:1-2.)
- The relationship of husband and wife is like Christ and the church (Eph. 5::31-32.)
- The first marriage was between Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:23-24.)
- The last marriage will be between Christ and His church (Rev. 19:7-9.)
- Those who do not understand marriage, cannot understand the church.
- Those who do not understand the church, cannot understand marriage.

Please consider these similarities between Adam, and Jesus. Both were created in the image of God. Both were given dominion over the earth. Both begat a race of people. Adam begat a physical race. Jesus begat a spiritual race. Both are described in Scripture as bridegrooms. Adam’s side was opened when God created his bride. Jesus’ side was opened when God created His bride. Adam is called in Rom. 5:14 a “figure” of Him who was to come. Adam was a figure of

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Christ. Adam is called the “First Adam,” and Jesus is called the “Last Adam (I Cor. 15:45.)

The Scriptures teach that Adam “knew” his wife and she conceived and bare Cain. “To know,” means that Adam became intimate with his wife so that a new life was produced. In a spiritual sense, we also have a new life when we come to “know” Jesus. God designed the institution of marriage to teach us about new life in Christ and His Church.

WHO CAN GET MARRIED?

Marriage is a voluntary relationship between a man and a woman. It is not just a physical relationship, but a spiritual and emotional union as well. No one can be forced into marriage, just as no one can be forced to become a Christian.

The Scriptures teach that believers are not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (II Cor. 6:14.) This forbids the marriage of Christians to non-Christians, as well as other inappropriate relationships with non-believers. If a man dies, his widow is free to remarry, but only in the Lord (I Cor. 7:39.)

ASKING GOD FOR WISDOM

“If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that

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giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. “For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (Ja. 1:5-8.)

Jesus once helped a Samaritan woman who had been married five times, and was living with a man to whom she was not married (John 4:17-18,) You too will meet people like this as you minister for Jesus. When you are faced with a problem about marriage, first consult the Word of God. It is a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path (Ps. 119:105.) please pray to God for wisdom. Do not hesitate to seek the advice of spiritual leaders whom you respect. Do not do anything that violates your conscience. Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin (Rom. 14:23.) We are to let the “peace of Christ rule in our hearts (Col. 3:15.) We should not do anything about which we do not have peace.

THE WEDDING CEREMONY

Since the Bible does not provide us with a wedding ceremony, we are free to plan one which meets the needs of everyone concerned.. As we mentioned before, every effort should be made to conform to the laws of the land, as well as the laws of God.

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Here are a few suggestions:

- Begin with prayer
- Welcome those who have come, and thank them for their prayers, gifts, and help.
- If the parents of the bride and groom are present, they can be introduced.
- Sometimes, as a part of the service, parents are asked to express their approval of the marriage.
- Present what the Scriptures teach about marriage.
- Challenge the husband with his responsibilities.
- Challenge the wife with her responsibilities.
- Both husband and wife should promise to be faithful to each other, and to God.
- The pastor pronounces them husband and wife.
- Conclude with prayer.

SOME SCRIPTURES FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

Gen. 2:18-25 - the first marriage.

Song of Solomon - a book about the love of husband and wife.

Matt. 19:1-12 - Some teaching of Jesus about marriage

John 2:1-11 - Jesus' first miracle performed at a wedding

I Cor. 7: - Instructions about marriage to the Corinthians

Eph. 5:21-33 - Instructions about marriage to the Ephesians

Col. 3:17-21 - Instructions to husbands, wives, and children

I Tim. 5:1-16 - Instructions to Timothy

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Titus 2:1-8 - Instructions to Titus

I Pet. 3:1-7 - Instructions to husbands and wives

I Cor. 13: - A chapter about love

These are only suggestions. You are free to plan a wedding as God leads. Please prayerfully plan every wedding, for what we teach about husbands and wives is also about Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:32.)

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FUNERALS

The word “funeral” is not found in the Bible. It was common, however, for godly people to mourn the death of their loved ones, and to treat their bodies with great respect..

- Abraham mourned the death of Sarah (Gen. 23:2.) He purchased a place to bury her for four hundred shekels of silver (Gen. 23:15-20.)
- When Abraham died his sons, Ishmael and Isaac buried him with his wife (Gen. 25:8-10.)
- When Isaac died his sons Esau and Jacob buried him (Gen. 35:29.)
- When Jacob died the Egyptians took 40 days to embalm him, and they mourned for him for 70 days. After this they took his body to Canaan to bury him with Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 50:1-13.)
- When Joseph died he made them promise to bury his bones in the land of Canaan (Gen. 50:24-26; Josh. 24:32.)
- The body of Jesus was buried with great reverence (John 19:38-42.)
- The body of Stephen was buried with great lamentation (Acts 8:2.)
- Etc.

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Since the Bible does not give specific instructions on how we are to bury our dead, we have freedom to do whatever is appropriate.

Here are some suggestions which may help if you are called upon to help in a time of death.

OUR SERVICES ARE NOT FOR THE DEAD

“As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement” (Heb. 9:27.)

When a person dies, they are in the hands of a just a merciful God. A funeral service does not change their eternal destiny. Jesus told the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31.) The rich man died and went to a place of torment. Lazarus died and went to a place of reward. Jesus quoted Abraham as saying **“Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence” (Lk. 16:26.)** The Bible does not mention prayers for the dead. What we say at a funeral does not save, or condemn the dead person. God is the Judge! The funeral service is for the living, not for the dead.

There are several practical reasons for a funeral, or memorial service.

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1. Christian people believe in the resurrection of the dead.

This resurrection is both for the “just, and the unjust” (Acts 24:15.) We treat the bodies of our loved ones with respect, because we believe they are going to be raised from the dead.

2. It provides comfort for those who mourn.

Christians experience sorrow at the death of a loved one, but we do not sorrow like those without hope (I Thess. 4:13.) We are specifically told to “comfort one another” (I Thess. 4:18,.) and to “weep with them that weep” (Rom. 12:15.)

3. It gives family, friends, and the church, and opportunity to help.

When someone dies it often leaves the family in need of help. The family may need money, or food, or help with the crops. They may need advice in facing difficult decisions. Helping the fatherless and widows is described in Scripture as “pure religion” (Ja. 1:27.)

4. It provides an opportunity to preach the gospel.

There are unsaved people at almost every funeral. Sometimes people have received Christ at funeral services.

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5. It reminds everyone that someday we will also die.

PRAY TO GOD FOR WISDOM

Remember, God has promised to give wisdom to those who ask for it in faith (Ja. 1:5.) God may lead you to give new life and meaning to an old funeral tradition. He may lead you to change tradition and do something new. Whatever we do, however, should always be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him (Col. 3:17.)

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(I Jn. 4:11.)

THE CLERGY

It is important for you to understand what the Bible says about the word "clergy." Today, many people use this word to refer to men who are ordained for religious service, such as ministers, priests, etc. This is not the way the word is used in the Bible.

The word "clergy" comes from the Greek word "kleros." It means "to cast lots, or choose by lot." After Judas fell away, for example, two men were put forward to take his place. They cast lots to determine which one God had chosen, and the "lot" fell on Matthias (Acts 1:26.) The word translated as "lot" in this passage is the Greek word "kleros." The New Testament Scriptures, as you know, were originally written in the Greek language

During the Age of Moses, God chose only the sons of Aaron to serve as priests. Today, however, every Christian is a priest (1 Peter 2:5-9.) Peter told the elders not to "**Lord it over God's heritage**" (1 Pet. 5:3.) The word translated as "heritage" in this passage is the Greek word "kleros" or "clergy." All God's people are His chosen ones today. All God's people are "clergy."

The word "laity" comes from the Greek word "laos," which means "people." The Bible does not make a distinction between "clergy" and "laity." The people of the God are His

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clergy, and His clergy are His people.

Here is a brief overview of what the Bible says about the priesthood.

THE AGE OF THE PATRIARCHS

The word "patriarch" refers to rule by fathers. In the infancy of the world, the fathers served as prophet, priest, and king. For example, Abram was a patriarch. God spoke to him, therefore he was a prophet. Abram built altars and made sacrifices, therefore he was also a priest. But Abram was also a king. He could command his household to go to war, or even sacrifice his son on an altar without asking anybody. Thus we see that Abram, the patriarch, was prophet, priest, and king.

Upon the death of the patriarch, these responsibilities were assumed by the firstborn son. Throughout the age of the Patriarchs, the firstborn son assumed the role of priest upon the death of his father. Esau despised his birthright. Therefore he is called "profane," or "irreligious" (Heb. 12:16.)

THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD

In the third month after the children of Israel were delivered from Egyptian bondage, they came into the wilderness of Sinai. At this time God expressed His desire to make His

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people into a Kingdom of Priests.

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Ex. 19:5-6.)

The time, however, for a "kingdom of priests" had not yet arrived. Neither was Israel "an holy nation." In a few short days Israel would be naked before a golden calf in an idolatrous orgy. The people needed a schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ and thus prepare them for the ministry of priesthood. Therefore God ordained the tribe of Levi to serve as priests until the fulness of time would come. The Scriptures state explicitly that the Levites were to take the place of the firstborn.

"And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the firstborn that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be mine . . ." (Nu. 3:12.)

The same truth is repeated in Nu. 3:41; 3:45; 8:16, etc. The Levitical Priesthood was not the ultimate aim of God, but it was a necessary step toward that goal. At a future time, the ministry of Jesus would create that long awaited "kingdom of priests, and holy nation."

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Not all Levites, however, could serve as priests. This privilege was reserved for an exclusive elite from the family of Aaron. Aaron, of course, was a Levite. He, and his sons were set apart by a special service of consecration (Lev. 8:) They were commanded to wear special clothing (Ex 28:1-43.) In addition to these genealogical restrictions, no one could serve as a Levitical priest who had any physical deformity (Lev. 21:18-21.) No priest was allowed to shave the edges of his beard, or make any cuttings on his flesh (Lev. 21:5.) Neither could he marry a widow, divorcee, nor prostitute (Lev. 21:7,13,14 etc.)

The Levitical priesthood was a temporary, but still an integral part of worship during the Mosaic Dispensation.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

As we said before, God expressed His desire that His people be a "kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" in the days of Moses (Ex. 19:6.) This grand design became reality in the days of Jesus. Jesus was born in the "fulness of time." Jesus made the priesthood of believers possible! Jesus said to the Samaritan woman:

"The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: For the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in

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truth" (John 4:23-24.)

True worship was, and is, in "spirit" and in "truth." True worshipers do not have to journey to Jerusalem, or anywhere else, to worship God. Every true believer is a priest and can worship at any time and any place. This truth is repeated often in Scripture.

"Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 2:5.)

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (I Pet. 2:9.)

"And hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father" (Rev. 1:6.)

"And hast made us unto our God kings and priests": (Rev. 5:10.)

Etc.

When Jesus died, the veil of the Temple was rent, and the Holy of Holies became accessible to all believers. In fact, the

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Scriptures encourage us to enter boldly into the holiest by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10:19-20.)

EVERY BELIEVER IS TO MINISTER

A special priesthood, with special garments, was not the ultimate aim of God. God wanted to create a spiritual kingdom that would be like a body. This kingdom became a reality in the church of Jesus Christ. Christ is the Head, and every believer is a member of this Body. The gifts God gave this body were designed to equip every member for ministering.

"And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ . . ." (Eph. 4:11-12.)

As we have said, there was no distinction between clergy, and laity. Every Christian was to minister for the building up of the Body.

- Every Christian preached Christ (Acts 8:4.)
- Every man was given a measure of faith (Rom. 12:3.)
- Every man received a gift (I Pet. 4:10.)
- Everyone was given a work (Mk. 13:34)
- Every branch was to bear fruit (John 15:2.)
- Everyone was given talents according to his ability

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(Matt. 25:15.)

- Everyone was given grace (Eph. 4:7.)
- Everyone contributed according to his ability (Acts 11:29.)
- Everyone is to please his neighbor for his own good (Rom. 15:2.)
- Every man's work will be made manifest (I Cor. 3:13.)
- Every man will give account of himself to God (Rom. 14:12.)
- Etc.

Philip Schaff speaks to this point in his HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, Vol. II, page 124.

"In the apostolic church preaching and teaching were not confined to a particular class, but every convert could proclaim the gospel to unbelievers, and every Christian who had the gift could pray and teach and exhort in the congregation. The New Testament knows no spiritual aristocracy or nobility, but calls all believers 'saints,' though many fell far short of their vocation. Nor does it recognize a special priesthood, as well as universal kingship of believers. It does this in a far deeper and larger sense than the Old; in a sense too, which even to this day is not yet fully realized. The entire body of Christians is called 'clergy' (kleroi,) a peculiar people, a heritage of God."

CHURCH HISTORY

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The people of God did not immediately lose their privileges as priests of God. This tragic loss came gradually over many years.

Philip Schaff, the historian, states that a preacher named Tertullian (A.D. 160-220) was the first to claim special priestly privileges for the Christian ministry. He still claimed, however, to believe in the priesthood of all believers. During the third century the term "priest" was applied directly to Christian ministers. A special, elite class of priests was emerging, and the people of God were losing their privileges to minister.

Jesus spent most of His time with the common people (Mk. 12:37.) He chose common folk as His apostles. By means of the Holy Spirit, these common people were empowered to do uncommon things. They were not "officers" in an organization. They were members of a Living Body.

Unfortunately, the spiritual Body of Christ was becoming a carnal organization. At the same time, a special "clergy" was developing which would reverse the plan of God. They would proclaim themselves priests, and deny to common people their privilege ministering.

The fourth general council at Carthage (A.D. 398,) prohibited "laymen" from teaching in the presence of "clergymen" without their consent.

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The fourth canon of Nice directed that a bishop should be instituted and consecrated by at least three bishops of the province. Chrysostom lamented that bishops were not chosen because of their spiritual fitness, but because of "noble birth, or great wealth, or consanguinity and friendship." Consequently, the priesthood became increasingly degenerate. By the time of Sergius III (A.D. 904) the priests were said to be ruled by harlots. This period of history is called the "pornocracy" and lasted until A.D. 963.)

The Council of Florence (A.D. 1439,) formally sanctioned seven sacraments. They were: baptism, confirmation, extreme unction, the Lord's Supper, penance, marriage, and ordination. The priest was an integral part of every sacrament. The people of God were again in bondage to a priesthood. They were taught that the priest stood between them and God. Consequently, they needed the priest in order to be saved. Since, in their eyes, he held the power of salvation and damnation, he was called "Reverend." This indicates that he was feared by the people. For the record, the word "reverend" is only found once in the Bible (Ps. 111:9.) In this passage we are informed that God **"sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is His name."** God is to be revered, not man!

During the Dark Ages, the people of God were dominated by an ungodly priesthood. That is one reason why

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the age was so dark. John Foxe documents the death of thousands of believers in his book, CHRISTIAN MARTYRS OF THE WORLD. One famous martyr was William Tyndale. He was strangled and burned at the stake on October 6, 1536. His was killed for the "crime" of translating the Bible into the English language.

THE REFORMATION

The "Dark Ages" ended with the "Reformation." Surely God was involved in this period of enlightenment. While Martin Luther is generally given credit for leading the reformation, he was only one of many that God used. John Wyclif, for example, is known as the "Morning Star of the Reformation." He was the first man to translate the Bible into the English language. Wyclif wanted the Bible to be in the hands of the common man, a concept that was greatly opposed by the clergy of his day. Wyclif died December 31, 1384, almost one hundred years before Martin Luther was born. Though he died a natural death, he was later condemned as a heretic. His bones were dug up and burned forty-four years after his death, and his ashes were cast into the River swift.

Jesus has never been a Shepherd without sheep, or a King without subjects. In every age He has directed the lives of His people, and orchestrated human history. He is still doing so today!

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The Reformation certainly started the pendulum going back in the right direction, but the task has not yet been completed. The concept of the priesthood of all believers is still an undiscovered truth for many people. In Luther's day a movement was born to "protest" against the excesses of the clergy. Unfortunately, most Protestant churches still maintained an unbiblical distinction between clergy and laity.

GOD STILL WANTS US TO HONOR OUR SPIRITUAL LEADERS

Though the Scriptures do not make a distinction between "clergy" and "laity," it is, nevertheless, important to honor our spiritual leaders. Please consider these Scriptures:

- **"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation" (Heb. 13:7.)**
- **"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17.)**
- **"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and**

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doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, the laborer is worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (1 Tim. 5:17-20.)

- **"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Gal. 6:6.)**
- **(Regarding Epaphroditus) "Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me" (Phil. 2:29-30.)**
- **Etc.**

While it is important to honor our spiritual leaders, we can do so without dividing the Body of Christ into "clergy" and "laity." Such distinctions are contrary to the genius of Christianity and were never made by Christ, or His Apostles. The New Testament Scriptures never make a distinction between clergy and laity!

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

"If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another"
(1 Jn. 4:11.)

MANUAL FOR LEADERS

God is the Great "I Am." He is "now," or eternally present in every generation.

Today God is accomplishing many miraculous things around the world. Millions in Eastern Europe and Russia are accepting Christ. Some believe the greatest revival of all time is taking place in Communist China. Similar movements are springing up in other Asian countries, Africa, Latin America, etc. Many, if not most, of these gifted Christian leaders around the world are common people, just like the original Twelve Apostles. Yet God is using them in a mighty way.

The Body of Christ is most powerful when every member is ministering. THAT INCLUDES YOU! For we, being many, **"Are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another"** (Rom. 12:5.) Please prayerfully consider that God may be calling you to some special work for His glory.

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MANUAL FOR LEADERS

SPIRITUAL LEADERS

Jesus warned His disciples about false leaders. He said:

Matt. 15:14 Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

It is important for the church to have spiritual leaders. Paul and Barnabas, for example, ordained elders in every church. These men were mature Christians who would set a good example for others.

Acts 14:23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

At a later time, when Paul was on his way to Jerusalem, he stopped at Miletus and called for the elders of the church at Ephesus. When he arrived he told them:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (Acts 20:28)

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These “elders” were also known as “bishops” or “overseers.” They were also told to “feed” or “pastor” the church of God which He had purchased with His own blood.

These men met high spiritual qualifications. Consider these inspired instructions from Paul to Titus.

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. (Titus 1:5-9)

Paul wrote similar instructions to Timothy:

This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a

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brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil. (I Tim. 3:1-7)

Similar qualifications are also given for deacons. The word “deacon” means “servant.”

Likewise *must* the deacons *be* grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being *found* blameless. Even so *must their wives be* grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus. (I Tim. 3:8-13)

OLDER WOMEN AND WIDOWS

Paul wrote to Titus that the older women were to teach the younger women:

“If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another”

(I Jn. 4:11.)

MANUAL FOR LEADERS

But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that *they be* in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, *To be* discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. (Titus 2:1-5)

He wrote these instructions to Timothy about widows:

Rebuke not an elder, but intreat *him* as a father; *and* the younger men as brethren; The elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity. Honour widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God. Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day. But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. And these things give in charge, that they may be blameless. But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of

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one man, Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work. But the younger widows refuse: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry; Having damnation, because they have cast off their first faith. And withal they learn *to be* idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not. I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully. For some are already turned aside after Satan. If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed. (I Tim. 5:1-16)

WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO OUR SPIRITUAL
LEADERS

We are to remember them and imitate their faith.:

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of *their* conversation. (Heb. 13:7)

We are to obey them:

"If God so loved us; we ought also to love one another"

(I Jn. 4:11.)

MANUAL FOR LEADERS

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you. (Heb. 13:17)

We are to count them worthy of double honor:

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer *is* worthy of his reward. Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. (I Tim. 5:17-20)

They are to be paid:

Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown

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unto you spiritual things, *is it* a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? (I Cor. 9:7-11)

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TEACHING FAITHFUL PEOPLE

“And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (II Tim. 2:2.)

Timothy was not just to teach, he was to teach “faithful” people. Faithful people would be good stewards of the Gospel. They would teach others also.

The early church grew rapidly because everyone preached the word. When the church was scattered by persecution, after the death of Stephen, the Scriptures teach: **“Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word” (Acts 8:4.)**

Please prayerfully consider these statements of Scripture about the growth of the early church.

- The first sermon produced 3,000 converts (Acts 2:41.)
- Soon the church numbered about 5,000 men (Acts 4:4.)
- Then multitudes of both men and women were added (Acts 5:14.)
- Then a great company of the priests became obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7.)
- Soon everyone in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:10.)

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- Paul fully preached the Gospel from Jerusalem to Illyricum (Rom. 15:19.)
- Paul wrote to the Colossians that the Gospel had been preached to the whole creation (Col. 1:23.)

CONSIDER THIS REMARKABLE ILLUSTRATION

Let us suppose, by way of illustration, that you were the only Christian on earth. Let us also suppose that it took you one year to make your first convert.

The population of the world had increased by millions during that year, and you were further from evangelizing the world than when you started.

If each of you were “faithful,” however. And if each of you had the same limited success in evangelism, at the end of the second year there would be four Christians. Even at this “slow” rate, the whole world could easily be evangelized in only 33 years if each Christian was “faithful.”

At the end of the first year the number of Christians would be 2

Year 2 - 4

Year 3 - 8

Year 4 - 16

Year 5 - 32

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Year 6 - 64
Year 7 - 128
Year 8 - 256
Year 9 - 512
Year 10 - 1024
Year 11 - 2048
Year 12 - 4,096
Year 13 - 8,192
Year 14 - 16,384
Year 15 - 32,768
Year 16 - 65,536
Year 17 - 131,072
Year 18 - 262,144
Year 19 - 524,288
Year 20 - 1,048,576
Year 21 - 2,097,152
Year 22 - 4,194,304
Year 23 - 8,388,608
Year 24 - 16,777,216
Year 25 - 33,554,432
Year 26 - 67,108,864
Year 27 - 134,217,728
Year 28 - 268,435,456
Year 29 - 536,870,912
Year 30 - 1,073,741,824
Year 31 - 2,147,483,648
Year 32 - 4,294,967,296

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Year 33 - 8,589,934,592

World population, as you know, is not nearly eight billion. In this example, you would have won only 33 people to Christ, in 33 years, and everyone else would have won less. Yet, even in this example, the whole world could be won to Christ in only 33 years.

This is what is possible when we teach “faithful” people who are able to teach others also!

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