# Teacher *Summit*

FBCN 2026

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# Discipleship and Multiplication: Expanding the Kingdom of God

## Learning Objectives or Outcomes

- After participating in this class, attendees should be able to explain biblical principles of Christian multiplication.
- After participating in this class, attendees should be able to define and describe the biblical model for discipleship, established in 2 Timothy 2:2.
- After participating in this class, attendees should be able to compare and discuss methods of Christian discipleship.

## Class Outline

I. Defining Discipleship
II. Discipleship as Obedience
III. Discipleship as Multiplication
IV. Various Methods of Discipleship

## Introduction

Evangelism is only half of our responsibility as believers. The second half of our job is to disciple new believers. Jesus commanded all of his followers to make disciples in the same way that he has commanded each of us to share the gospel. One does not disciple by accident. We can influence others without purpose, but we cannot disciple others without intent. Discipleship is an intentional act. In the same way that Paul mentored and discipled Timothy, we are called to disciple those who we lead to salvation.

Take time at the end of class, if time allows, to answer questions!

Discipleship is God's plan to expand his Kingdom as seen throughout the whole Bible. Scripture is filled with examples of intentional and purposeful discipleship. Moses raised up Joshua as a leader, Elijah discipled Elisha, Jesus had twelve followers, and Paul mentored Timothy.

## I. Defining Discipleship –

Discipleship is helping others follow Jesus and become more like Jesus. Discipleship does not only include what we say or what we tell people, but also how we live our lives.

The Apostle Paul spent his life bringing the gospel to the Gentiles. He is an example of one who always followed up his evangelistic ministry with purposeful discipleship of those new believers. Paul took the next step of mentoring and encouraging new believers in their new walk with Christ.

A disciple is a believer. A disciple has placed saving faith in Christ as Lord and Savior. All believers are disciples of Jesus Christ. And as a follower and disciple of Christ, there should be no separation between being a Christian and being a disciple. To be saved is to be a disciple, and to be a disciple is to be saved.

As we follow after Jesus, we are called to be discipled and to disciple others. You should have individuals in your life who are pouring into you and teaching you to be more like Jesus. You are also to disciple others. To make a disciple is to train someone to be like you. This does not mean you are trying to force someone to be exactly the same as you. Instead, to train someone to be like you is to help them develop the Christlike qualities that you have.

You might have a special place in the life of a young believer, especially if you are the one who led them to faith in Christ. You can have influence and insight into their life. You are able to train them in the practice of evangelism, and you can help them to grow in their relationship with Christ.

Imitation does not mean trying to be exactly like someone else, but it does mean learning qualities and characteristics from someone else that we want to reproduce in our own lives.

"The church is not trying to make Christian clones who share the same haircuts, mannerisms, language, and clothing styles, as if they came off a Christian assembly line. Leaders need to allow for individuality and obvious differences. While impersonation tries to be someone else, imitation focuses on learning characteristics from someone else. Characteristics, not clothing, haircuts and phraseology, need to be imitated and reproduced."[1]

1 Corinthians 11:1 says, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ."[2] Paul was in a very special position to disciple those in Corinth, to teach them doctrine, and to help them grow in their faith. He trained the church to be like him as he attempted to live like Christ.

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[1] Bill Hull, *The Disciple Making Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1990), 139.

[2] Unless otherwise specified, all Bible references are to the English Standard Version (ESV) (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2008).

"To glorify God by being like Jesus should be our consuming passion that helps fuel our ambition. But we need flesh-and-blood role models, too. Paul knew he could provide that for the Corinthians. But who is providing that for you? Are you providing that for anyone else?"[3]

Who are you discipling? And who are you being discipled by?

We need people in our lives who help us become more like them as they grow in their relationship with Jesus. We also need to be like Paul. We should be developing others so that they might become like us as we become more like Christ. We should only be discipling others to be as we are if we are daily becoming more like Jesus.

Paul was not trying to create identical copies of himself in the Corinthian church. Instead, through his life and teachings, he was a model of character that the new believers needed to imitate to become more like Christ. We should imitate the lives of others who are like Christ, and we should be influencing new believers to develop the Christlike qualities and character that we are continually growing in.

## II. Discipleship is Obedience –

Discipleship is not just something that believers are expected to do. We are actually commanded to disciple others.

The gospel of Matthew records some of the final words of the resurrected Christ. Last words are important. You carry someone's final words with you for the remainder of your life. We should pay great attention to what Jesus communicated with his final words. Matthew 28:18-20 says,

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

"The church is commanded to *make* disciples of all nations (v.19). "Go" implies that the church, as a company of believers, is to be active and aggressive in winning the lost... Every born-again believer is commissioned to go with the gospel and evangelize the world... We are not to win them and then forget them; rather, we are to win them and establish them in the faith. Thus Paul did not merely preach the saving gospel; he also organized his converts into churches. He instructed them, cared for them, and visited and revisited them again and again.... we must also teach those whom we have won to Christ to obey their Lord and Master Jesus Christ, and grow in grace and knowledge of Him."[4]

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[3] Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in 1 Corinthians,* Christ-Centered Exposition, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2023), 216.

[4] Porter L. Barrington, Notes on Matthew, *The Christian Life Bible* (New King James Version, Nashville/Camden/New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985), 982.

Jesus commanded believers to go. We are to go and evangelize. And we are to go and make disciples. The important first step is evangelism. You cannot make a disciple of someone without them first experiencing salvation in Christ Jesus. But our work is not finished with evangelism. Discipleship is a necessary second step that naturally follows evangelism.

### III. Discipleship is Multiplication –

In his word, God has provided a pattern for discipleship. 2 Timothy 2:1-3 says,

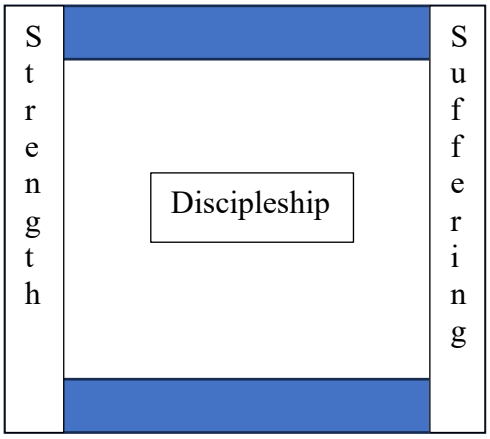
"You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, **2** and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. **3** Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus."

- Verse 1 reveals how we are to disciple others. A believer is to find strength in Jesus Christ. Apart from Christ, you can do nothing. In John 15:5, Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."

- Verse 2 is the biblical method for multiplication. A faithful believer is to pass down what he or she has learned to an individual who will continue to pass on that knowledge to other believers.

- Verse 3 reveals the life of a Christian disciple. Disciples and disciple-makers will endure hardship. The believer will face suffering as a soldier in a spiritual war.

Strength and suffering surround discipleship.

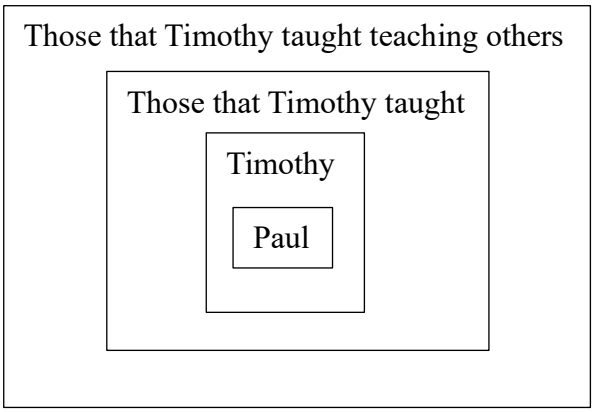



Discipleship is God's plan for reaching the world and expanding His Kingdom. We are invited to be part of His plan to reach the lost as ambassadors of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:20 says, "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

2 Timothy 2 identifies four generations involved in the disciple making process. Paul's intentional discipleship did not end with Timothy but influenced several generations of believers.

i. Paul discipled Timothy.
ii. Timothy discipled faithful believers.
iii. Faithful believers discipled others.

Through purposeful discipleship of one believer, we can influence and encourage generations and generations of Christ-followers.

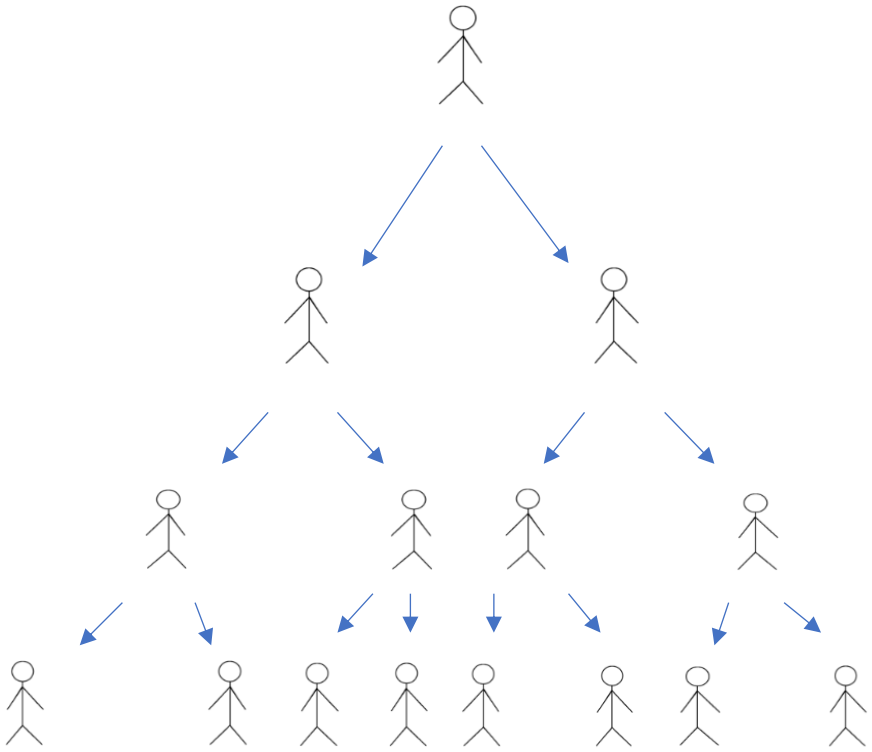



Evangelism and discipleship will only take place during our time on earth. We only have this life to evangelize and make disciples. We should be active in passing down what God has revealed to us to those that he has put in our lives. Hebrews 12:1-2 says,

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **2** looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

The Christian life is a race. We follow those who have already faithfully gone to be with Jesus. Those who have gone before have passed on responsibility for us to carry the weight of. Like those before us, we also must pass on the faith and elements of Christian doctrine to those we raise up in discipleship.

The following illustration demonstrates that discipleship is influential in the lives of many. As we disciple one, we really disciple many.



The biblical pattern of discipleship may start with having influence in the life of one person, but it should extend throughout many generations.

## IV. Various Methods of Discipleship –

How do we do discipleship? How do we fulfill our responsibility to pass on right teachings to those who will come after us?

This class will consider two methods of discipleship. Both methods are biblical.

1. We can disciple called individuals with the "Timothy" model.
2. We can disciple the masses by caring for new Christians.

Both methods are important. Jesus demonstrated both in his own ministry on earth. He lovingly cared for the crowds, and he spent personal time with those he called to be his disciples.

### i. Discipling Timothies –

This first method is especially suited for those called to ministry. To disciple a Timothy, you will be raising up a disciple who will model you in ministry.

This sort of personal discipleship and mentorship is drawn from the biblical example of the relationship between Paul and Timothy. Though Paul founded many churches, he intentionally taught Timothy how to model his own life in church ministry. Their relationship was so strong that Paul considered Timothy his own son in the faith.

We see this intentional and purposeful individual discipleship in the ministry of Christ. Jesus poured his life into twelve disciples and taught them to make other disciples. Forty-six different times in the Gospels, we see Jesus spending time alone with the twelve, teaching them. Jesus called each of them to the ministry that He had begun. Matthew 4:19 says, "And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." A disciple is someone who is committed to the ministry and mission of Jesus. Jesus picked twelve. But even within those twelve, Jesus especially poured himself into an inner circle of three men: Peter, James, and John.

Timothies are individuals who would follow you in the ministry and focus on the mission of Jesus.

Discipling a Timothy should go beyond everyday conversation. A disciple-maker should share their life with their Timothy.

A Timothy needs to see and learn from you in several areas of life:

- How you study your Bible.
- How you memorize Scripture.
- How you pray.
- How you lead your family spiritually.
- How you prepare a message or sermon.
- How you love people, treat people, and care for people.
- How you evangelize and reach the lost for Christ.

"When it is all boiled down, those of us who are seeking to train people must be prepared to have them follow us, even as we follow Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). We are the exhibit (Phil. 3:17f.; 1 Thess. 2:7, 8; 2 Tim. 1:13). They will do those things which they hear and see in us (Phil. 4:9). Given time, it is possible through this kind of leadership to impart our way of living to those who are constantly with us."[5]

Only through intentional time together can we pass on our way of living to those who seek to imitate us in the ministry to which we have been called.

You cannot disciple every single person as a Timothy. Discipling Timothies requires intense devotion. Jesus had twelve men that he taught, but he specifically and individually discipled three. In imitation of Christ, you should pick between two and six individuals that you can spend this purposeful and intentional time with.

But you cannot just pick anyone. There are some specific qualities that you should consider when selecting an individual to disciple in this way.

- *Available* – Are they available? Do they have the time for this personal discipleship?
- *Faithful* – Will they follow-through on their commitments?
- *Teachable* – Do they already think they know everything, or will they learn from you?
- *Reliable* – Will they show up? Will they be honest?

[5] Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming R. Revell, 1963), 76.

One of the most important things that you should teach your Timothy is how to disciple others as you continue to intentionally disciple them. In imitation of Paul and Timothy, your intentional discipleship of one Timothy should influence several generations beyond you.

ii. Caring for New Christians –

Another method of discipleship involves mass teaching and training. This method is purposely caring for new believers. You do not have to be the pastor or head of a church to help disciple new followers of Jesus.

You cannot personally disciple every single church member or new believer in the same way that you intentionally disciple Timothies. So how can you disciple a large multitude of people?

Throughout the four Gospels, one reads of Jesus discipling the multitudes or the masses 17 different times.

One of the best means of discipling the masses is by holding meetings with those who have recently become new believers. Within the church, this can be achieved with a New Converts Class. Whether you hold a New Converts Class or intentional meetings with new believers, you are able to set aside time to provide discipleship for the masses.

A class or meeting could be held for however long it is needed. In however many weeks or days, you can help new believers to mature in their faith. With such a class, you could teach on several different topics to help new believers grow in doctrinal knowledge and understanding of the Christian life.

What topics could you teach in a meeting or class like this?

- The Nature of God.
- Salvation.
- Assurance of Salvation.
- Baptism.
- Church.
- The Bible.
- Prayer.
- Walking in the Holy Spirit.
- Witnessing and Evangelizing.
- Memorizing Scripture.
- Giving.

Paul not only engaged in individual discipleship with individuals like Timothy and Titus. He also participated in discipleship of the masses. He was not able to have a close relationship with every single member of the many churches that he founded, but he still acted as a model for how new believers could grow to become more like Christ. Through his letters and epistles, he provided instruction and teaching of the various topics mentioned above.

Your Timothies can be involved in the discipleship of new believers. Even through holding a New Converts Class or organizing meetings, you may not have the ability to personally disciple each and every person that is saved and that you are responsible for discipling. Your Timothies can help you with this. Allow them to meet with some of the new believers. Split the work. Take a Timothy with you to train them in follow-up among new followers of Christ. With help and continued training, you can truly disciple many. In accepting help, do not forsake your calling and turn over the whole of your responsibility to disciple for others to fulfill.

Conclusion –

There are certainly more ways to intentionally teach and train others. But through the Timothy method and meeting with new believers, discipleship can be accomplished in both the individual setting and among multitudes of new believers. Personally invest your time in raising up believers to be more like Christ. Find someone to continue investing in you. Through purposeful discipleship, God expands his Kingdom.

Works Cited

Akin, Daniel L. *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 Corinthians.* Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2023.

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# Basic Bible Doctrine

*Blake Western*

# Basic Bible Doctrine

Blake Western

Doctrine refers to what we believe. It is like the foundation for a house or like the skeleton for the body. Without it the house would fall and the body could not move. What we believe determines how we will behave. Therefore, when we talk about doctrine, we are talking about the fundamentals of the Christian faith. It is something vitally important. We must know what we believe and teach it to the people in our churches.

## THE DOCTRINE OF THE BIBLE

### The Definition

The Bible is a collection of 66 books. There are 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. These 66 books were written by different men over a period of hundreds of years. They did not talk to each other and decide which books they would write. They were led of the Holy Spirit to write. The Holy Spirit used each person's personality but guided them as to what they should write. 2 Pe. 1:21"For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." Each book reflects the writing style of the man but is the Word of God because the Holy Spirit directed what they wrote.

The Bible is the Word of God. Over and over we hear the words, "Thus says the Lord..." It is God's written revelation to us. In 2 Ti. 3:16 we read "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God..." The entire Bible is the Word of God. We are not to add to it or to take from it. It communicates with people from every age and culture. And when we read it, we feel that it was written just for us.

### The Unity

Although there are different kinds of literature in the Bible there is one story. There is perfect unity. In the Bible we find history, poetry, proverbs, and prophecies. Yet all of these blend into one story. It is the story of the living God revealing himself to sinful man. It is the story of redemption. In the Old Testament we see many types and figures which pointed to Christ. In the New Testament we see those types and figures fulfilled in Christ.

This is a miracle in itself that men separated by so many hundreds of years and living in different cultures would write one story and all they wrote would fit perfectly together. It is a miracle that

they would write without contradiction and error. But, the reason they did so, was that the Holy Spirit oversaw and led them.

**The Proof**

How do we know that the Bible is the Word of God? There are other books which claim to have God as their author. The reason we know is because of the fulfilled prophecies. The Bible proves itself. There are detailed prophecies written hundreds of years apart which have been fulfilled exactly. A good illustration of this is the life of Jesus. Hundreds of years before he was born the prophets wrote where he would be born, that he would be virgin born, that he would be rejected, die a terrible death, and be raised from the dead. It even prophesied that not a bone would be broken, that he would be sold for 30 pieces of silver. All of these and more were fulfilled.

Jesus respected the Word of God and spoke with authority concerning it. Never did he contradict it. He used it when confronting the Devil. He said over and over, "It is written..." On one occasion Jesus said "Heaven and earth will pass away but my word shall not pass away."

The early churches looked at the claims of different books and they recognized these 66 books as the Word of God. And through the hundreds of years of church history these are the books which the church stands upon and believes.

**The Purpose**

The Bible is a map, a light, food, and a weapon for the Christian. It is sweeter than honey and better than gold. It is God's promise to us. It is the standard for our faith and practice. What we believe about the Bible will largely determine what else we believe. It is the foundation for all our doctrines.

The Bible is God's revelation to us. It is where we can meet God. When Jesus prayed for his disciples, he said, "Sanctify them through your truth; your word is truth." The Bible is a revelation of the truth. It reveals all that we need to know about God while we live here.

The Bible was given to bring us to God. That purpose is stated this way in Jn. 20:31 "But these things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

The Bible is a sign pointing us to Jesus. There we hear the voice of God saying, "Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world." Now we need to be clear about this. We do not worship the Bible. We worship the God of whom the Bible speaks. The Bible is not a magical book. It is a map to lead us to Christ.

The Bible is to guide us in our faith journey. It is a weapon for us to use in spiritual combat. It is food for us to feast upon. Notice the words in 2 Ti. 3:16 "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

Let us now sum up what we believe about the Bible. It is the Word of God. It is without error. It is one story told in 66 books. The fulfilled prophecies show clearly that it is the Word of God. The purpose of the Bible is to reveal God, to bring us to God, and to guide us through life's journey.

# THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

When we talk about God, we are talking about someone who is far greater than our feeble minds can understand. Even the things which God has revealed about himself are much greater than finite people like us can fully grasp. This is the reason that we will always be learning more about God. Even in Heaven we will continue to make new discoveries about Him. Faber spoke of “God of a Thousand Attributes." And A. W. Tozer said there must be many attributes that God has not yet revealed about himself. We can think of an attribute as a characteristic of God, or something that is true concerning God.

This is what Wayne Gruden said about God. “The difference between God's being and ours is more than the difference between the sun and a candle, more than the difference between the ocean and a raindrop, more than the difference between the arctic ice cap and a snowflake, more than the difference between the universe and the room we are sitting in: God's being is qualitatively different. No limitation or imperfection in creation should be projected onto our thought of God. He is the Creator; all elsed is creaturely. All else can pass away in an instant; he necessarily exists forever."

This is the way Psalm 145:4 puts it, “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable." Isaiah asks this question which answers itself, “To whom will you compare me?" Is. 40:35. And the obvious answer is that we can compare him to no one else. There is no one like him.

Theology books usually divide God's attributes into the incommunicable and the communicable. That means the attributes that God alone has and the attributes that we share in to some extent. But even then, the things like love and faithfulness he far exceeds any that are in us. So, let's consider first the attributes which God alone has.

## Incommunicable Attributes

### *1. The Trinity*

The Bible makes it clear that God is both one and yet there are three persons in the Trinity. What do we mean when we speak of the Trinity? We mean that God is One God in three persons. Maybe it will help to discuss what we do not mean. We do not mean that God appears in a different role in history...one time as the Father and another time as the Son and another time as the Spirit. No, each person is God from eternity and always. We do not mean that there are three separate Gods. That would be akin to polytheism.

First, let's notice what the Bible says about the unity of God. In Deut. 6:4 we read, “The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your souls and with all your strength." This truth is emphasized throughout the Bible. It is the bed-rock of the

faith in the Old Testament. It is the clear teaching in the 10 commandments where it says, “You shall have no other gods before me."

Second, the Bible also teaches that there are three persons in the Trinity. In the baptismal formula Jesus said to baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. “Name" is singular but three persons are mentioned. Matt. 28:18-20. We see an illustration of this when Jesus was baptized. The Father spoke from Heaven, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" and the Spirit descended from heaven like a dove. We see it in the benediction given in 2 Cor. 13:14 “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." It is seen in Paul's letter to the Ephesians 2:21-” where he speaks of the three.

We cannot fully understand or explain this, but it is what God has revealed about himself. We have to remember that God is far greater than us. How can a tiilY ant understand fully a man? But we are both created things. The difference between God and man is far greater. The great Christian hymns speak of the Trinity such as "Holy, Holy, Holy" in words such as these "God in three persons, blessed Trinity."

### *2. Self-Existence*

God has always existed. He is not dependent upon anyone or anything. Man has a birth and depends upon other people. But there has never been a time when God did not exist. He existed before there was ever a universe. He was complete. His name implies this. When Moses asked God's name, the Lord told him "I am that I am." God has always been and he will always be.

### *3. Eternal.*

There is no beginning and no ending for God. He is called the first and the last. God does not have a birthday. It is difficult for us to think about this because the things which we see with our eyes have a beginning. But God is the eternal God. The passage in Isaiah that I referred to earlier says "The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary and his understanding no one can fathom." Is. 40:28. Over and over in the Bible it says that God is everlasting.

This does not mean that God is old in the way we think of old. He is sometimes depicted as a very old man. Rather we should always think of the Youthfulness of God. He is the One who gives life, sustains life. His energy never subsides. He is always the same. He lives in a different dimension to us. To God one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like a day.

### *4. Spirit.*

Jesus told the Samaritan woman that God is Spirit. We may think that would mean God is hazy or indefinite. But it is just the opposite. The One who created this vast universe and gives to us life must be more personal, more definite, more real than anything we see or touch. C. S. Lewis said it well, "Unless the origin of all other things were itself concrete and individual, nothing else could be so; for there is no conceivable means whereby what is abstract or general could itself produce concrete reality." He goes on to say "He is the opaque centre of all existences, the thing that simply and entirely is, the fountain of facthood."

### *5. Infinite*

God is unlimited. He is totally unlike us in this way. We are limited in many different ways. We are limited by our bodies, by the places where we live, by the things we have, by our abilities, and sometimes by our health. But there are no such limitations upon the living God. This should help us when we pray. We do not pray to someone with limited resources. There are no famines in his person, no health crises, no depressions. God is full of life. He alone is enough for us and for everyone. He is never limited in what he can do.

### *6. Omnipresent*

This follows from what we have been talking about. God is not limited in his presence. He is present everywhere or we could say that everything is present to God. God is not limited by any place. It might be in the far distances of space but that would not shut him out. It is expressed this way in Ps. 139:7-8 "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there." In Jer. 23:24 we see his omnipresence in two questions, "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? Says the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? Says the Lord." Whatever place, whatever time, whatever situation, God is there.

### *7. Omniscient*

There is no limitation upon God's knowledge. He sees everything completely. He knows all the things of the past, the present, and even the future. There are no surprises for God. He knows our thoughts before we think them, our words before we say them, our actions before we do them. He sees us in our mother's womb according to Psalm 139. This is so different to our knowledge. We only know a few things. And the knowledge of man is constantly increasing.

We learn many things. God does not learn. He knows the beginning from the end. He knows all things at once. This should encourage us to trust Him. So many people who would advise us have very limited knowledge. But God knows perfectly. The Bibles tells us that the hairs of our head are all numbered and he knows when a sparrow falls.

### *8. Omnipotent*

In the Old Testament God is often called Almighty. God can do all things. There is no limit to his power. By this we mean that God can do all things consistent with his character. God will never violate his character. The Bible assures us that God can do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Ep. 3:20. There are many impossibilities when it comes to man. Some things we cannot do because of physical weakness. Some things we cannot do because of mental limitations. But none of these things limit God. The Bible says, "With God there is nothing impossible." Luke 1:37.

### *9. Unchangeable*

God does not change with time. The Bible assures us that God is the same whatever the situation. This gives us great assurance concerning the promises of God in the Bible. We know that those promises will be kept. The One who made those promises does not change his mind. That is often what happens with people. We change our mind from one day to another. But God does not. His love for you will not change. His Holiness will not change. His knowledge and power will not change. This is God's promise in Malachi 3:6 "For I am the Lord, I change not...."

God does not go on vacation. He does not take absences. He is always available, always the same. He is the same as in Old Testament times, the same as in New Testament times.

## Communicable Attributes

These are sometimes called the moral attributes. They are attributes that we share but there is this big difference. With God these communicable attributes are unlimited and complete. There is nothing lacking in these characteristics with God.

### *1. Holiness*

God is holy. Isaiah cried out in Isaiah 6 "Holy, Holy, Holy." In Lev. 20:7 we read, "Be you holy, for I am holy." Holiness means that God is separate from us. He is different to us. And he is pure in all he says and does. There is no defect, no darkness in him. The Greek gods did bad things just like other men. But the God revealed in the Bible is holy. This means that God will not just excuse sin and say, it doesn't matter. It means that we cannot go into his presence without the holiness of Christ. And one day we will be made perfectly holy so we can be in his presence forever. The Bible speaks of the beauty of holiness. Think of the difference in a clear, unpolluted mountain stream and a dirty river when man throws in waste and the river is dirty and stinks. One way the Bible describes God's holiness is to say, "God is light."

### *2. Love*

In 1 John we read that God is love. This does not mean that love is God but love is one of the attributes of God. The bible makes it clear that God has always been loving. In Jeremiah it says that his love is from everlasting to everlasting. This is the way that God is. He is a God of love. We see that perfect love in the Trinity. A good description of love is found in 1Cor. L3. God does not fall in love. He is always loving. There is nothing we can to make him love us. Because he loves us already. What we need to do is to recognize his love and rest in the knowledge of his love. God loves us just as much now as he will when we are with him in Heaven.

### *3. Joy*

This is often not in the list of God's attributes. But, I believe it should be. God is the source of all joy. It comes from him. Sometimes we think that God has a wrinkled brow and is not happy. We may picture a sour face. Such is not the case. In 1Ti. 1:"it says "According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God..." Blessed mean happy, joyful. Is it difficult for you to think of a happy God. It says there is joy in heaven when a sinner repents and comes home. When we see the worship in Heaven, it is a picture of joy. The Psalmist said that there are pleasures forevermore there. Yes, God is the most joyful person we will ever know.

### *4. Beautiful*

God is beautiful. Think of all the beautiful things that God has created. Thousands of beautiful birds, thousands of beautiful butterflies each with a different pattern on the wings. Thousands of beautiful things in nature. And the one who created these things must be far more beautiful. One way the Bible expressed God's beauty is by the word "glory." He is called the God of glory. God manifests his glory with a shining light. When God guided the children of Israel in the wilderness he guided them with a cloud in the daytime and a pillar of fire at night. When God appeared it was often with blinding light. In the New Testament Paul met Christ on the way to Damascus and his eyes were blinded for some time because of the brightness of the light. If you love beauty, want beauty, then you must want the most beautiful one of all, the Lord himself.

### *5. Faithful*

God is faithful. That is taught clearly in the Old Testament in the making of covenants. For instance, Jonathan and David made a covenant. It means that one would always be there for the other. And after Jonathan's death David took Mephibosheth into his palace to eat with him. It is a total commitment to another person. The Old Testament word for this faithfulness is often translated "loving-kindness." I like the words in Hebrews 13:5 "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." In the Amplified Translation it makes it even stronger because it reads, "I will not, I will not, I will not in any degree leave you helpless, nor forsake nor let you down, (relax my hold on you) Assuredly not!" God is faithful all the time. We can depend on him however difficult things may seem.

### *6. Wise*

God is wise. He knows what is best for us. He knows what is best for the world. Not only does he have knowledge of all things but he knows how to use that knowledge to achieve his purposes. Often times we find teachers here who know a lot but they are not wise. They use their knowledge to harm people or do not know how to give their knowledge to others. The Bible assures us that all things work together for good to those to know God, to those called according to his purpose. God is wise and able to fit all things together for our good and for his glory. Ps. 104:24 "0 Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all: the earth is full of your riches."

### *7. Wrath*

Sometime this attribute is neglected. We must not think about someone having an angry fit like a little child who does not get what he wants. Rather, this is righteous anger directed toward traitors and their sin. We must remember that God is holy. To come into his presence with sin would be like a bug flying into the sun. It would be burned up. God does not and will not tolerate sin. Sin is striking against God. This is really the explanation for Hell. God's love is not a wishy-washy love but it is a righteous love.

### *8. Goodness*

The Bible says, "You are good and do good." The Bible also says that God is good to all people. Even the wicked enjoy God's goodness. He sends the rain on the just and the unjust. Even people who deny God's existence enjoy many of his blessings as they live on the earth. Gruden defines goodness in this way. "The goodness of God means that God is the final standard of good, and that all that God is and does is worthy of approval." In a message by Malcolm Smith on a tape he says "Good means generous, an infinite giving. There is a bubbling delight in God. The ultimate generosity." He also says, "Goodness is a person."

There are many other attributes that we could discuss. But what God has revealed about himself is sufficient for us now. We have an exciting life to look forward to as we walk with the living God and learn more and more about Him.

# THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

Some of the greatest music has been written about Christ. Some of the greatest literature has been written about him. Many people have died for him. And millions of people live for Christ today. The Bible says that "Christ is all and in all." Col. 3:" He is the second person of the Trinity. We believe that he is fully God and fully man in one person. We believe that he is the Savior and that he is Lord of all. We believe that he is the only way of salvation.

Long ago Samuel Rutherford spoke of the glory of Christ in his way. Put the beauty of ten thousand thousand worlds of paradises like the garden of Eden in one; put all trees, all flowers, all smells, all colours, all tastes, all joys, all sweetness, all loveliness in one, O what a fair and excellent things would that be! And yet it would be less to that fair and dearest Well-Beloved, Christ, than one drop of rain to the whole seas, rivers, lakes, and fountains often thousand worlds. O but Christ is heaven's wonder, and earth's wonder!"

## The Identity of Christ

### *1. The Names of Christ.*

A name tells us about a person. That was especially true in Bible times. Jesus has many names which tell us who he is. Christ means "anointed one" or Messiah. This refers to the Old Testament promises that had been given through the ages. Christ fulfilled those promises. He is the anointed one. Jesus means Savior. That is why Jesus came...to save people from their sins. He is also called Lord. This name is often used of God in the Old Testament. At times all three names are used together. The Lord Jesus Christ.

There are many other names also. In Isaiah 9:6 he is called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." In the New Testament he is called "the bright and morning star." He is called the Lamb of God, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Another of his names is Emmanuel which means "God with us." All of these names reveal his identity. The only person who is both God and man.

### *2. The Words of Christ*

What Jesus said reveal his identity. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." "I am the bread of Life." "I am the good Shepherd." "I am the way, the truth, and the life." In Rev. 22:13 Jesus said "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the end." Jesus is clearly saying that he is God. In Isaiah we find Jehovah saying that he is the first and the last. Jesus uses the same expression about himself.

As different people have pointed out, either Jesus is who he said he was or he is the most deceived man in history. Either he is who he said he was or he is a liar. This is the most

important question that we will ever answer, “Who is Jesus?" The answer we find in Jesus' names and in what Jesus said is that he is God incarnate.

### *3. The Testimony of Paul*

What is so significant about Paul's testimony? He had been opposed strongly to Christ and tried to wipe out Christians. Then he met Christ on the Damascus Road where he heard the voice of Christ saying, "Why are you persecuting me?" Paul's life was changed with this encounter with the living Christ and he began to preach the Christ whom he had opposed so much. This is what Paul said about Jesus, "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Col. 2:9 The things he once valued he now counted as trash. This is what he said, “What is more, I consider everything a toss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord for whose sake I have lost all things." Phil. 3:8

## The Uniqueness of Christ

### *1. The Incarnation.*

Jesus' birth was unique in human history. There has never been another birth like his. This was the Christ of eternity, the Christ who has always been with the Father and the Spirit, coming to earth. And the way he was born was unique. He was born without a human father. The angel told Mary how it would happen. The Holy Spirit was bringing about this miracle. We call this the virgin birth. When people saw this baby, there was nothing that would make them think he was an unusual child. He cried like other babies and had to be fed. J. Sidlow Baxter calls the incarnation "a development surpassing all else even throughout eternity. It was a development greater than the calling forth of the whole universe from nothing. The One whom we now know as the second Member of the ever-blessed Three-in-One became Man!"

### *2. His Ministry*

Jesus' ministry was unique. What Jesus taught surprised men. He pointed to the heart as man's problem and not just his conduct. He said that out of the heart came the many sins that trouble people. He talked a lot about love and said that we must love even our enemies. And Jesus taught by the way he lived. There were no contradictions between what Jesus said and did. But the people who heard him could only say, "Never man taught like this man." They could only say, "We have never seen anything like this." The book of Mark uses the word, "amazed" or "astonished" to describe the reactions of people to what Jesus said and did.

What Jesus did certainly surprised people. There had been many prophets but none had done what Jesus did. Jesus healed people not to put on a show but because he loved people and genuinely cared. He even refused to do miracles before Herod just to satisfy his curiosity. He refused to use his power to feed himself when he was hungry and when he was hanging on the cross. Never had people seen a man with such singularity of purpose. He came to do his Father's

will. The more they saw the more they knew Jesus was unique. They knew he was God in the flesh.

### *3. His Death*

His death also shows his uniqueness; Jesus came to die. From the very beginning the shadow of the cross fell across his pathway. He was the Lamb of God. He came to be the sacrifice for our sins. To do that he must live a perfect life as the Second Adam. His righteousness must be perfectly acceptable to God. Across Adam's record was written, "failure." On the record of Christ was written, "Perfection." There was nothing Jesus could have done better than he did. He fulfilled all the requirements of the law. There was no blemish in his motives or his actions, no blemish in his thoughts or his desires. In the terrible death that he died, all the sin of the world was placed upon him. The unusual happenings in nature, the darkness, the earthquake, and the opening of the graves all pointed to the unusual death. One of the soldiers standing by recognized it by saying, "Surely he was the Son of God." No one took the life of Jesus from him. He gave his life for us. And his mission was completed. In victory he cried, "It is finished" meaning that he paid the price for our salvation in full.

### *4. His Resurrection*

Nothing points to his uniqueness more than his resurrection from the dead. On the third day Jesus came forth from that tomb. He conquered man's greatest enemy. There were many eye-witnesses of his resurrected body. Some of them doubted until they saw him with their own eyes. One of them was Thomas who said that he would not believe unless he could see for himself and put his hands into the wounds of Jesus. When Jesus appeared, he said to Thomas "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." John 20:27

The resurrection of Christ was the proof of who he said he was. Paul wrote in Romans 1:4 "and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead." This was the compelling message of the apostles....that Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead. My favorite African Christian song is the one which says, "There's no one, there's no one like Jesus, There's no one, there's no one like Jesus...." And that is so true. Jesus is unique. No one can do what he does. No one can say what he says. No one can love as he loves. No one can save as he saves. And no one can take his place. For He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

## The Influence of Christ

### *1. In History*

All history is divided according to his birth. The calendar is a testimony of his influence. If we were to remove the influence of Christ from history, we would remove much of the education. It was this Great Teacher who inspired many to start the great educational institutions of the past. If we were to remove his influence, many of the great hospitals and the Red Cross would be non-existent. If we were to remove his influence from music, how barren would be the musical selections for the symphony orchestras. Some of the greatest music was written by men like Handel and Mozart. If we were to remove his influence from literature, many of the shelves of the libraries would be empty because many of the great novels and other books received their inspiration from him. If we were to remove his influence from architecture, the world would be much poorer. It is hard to find an area in which Christ has not impacted life. Some of the greatest leaders of the past were followers of Jesus Christ. And those leaders have come from all the different continents of earth.

### *2. Today*

And today the influence of Christ continues. Why is this? Because he is a living Savior whom we can know personally. We can fellowship with him today and live in his power and love. He promised his disciples, "Lo, I am with you always even to the end of the age." In Hebrews 13:8 we read, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever." He is the changeless Christ who is active today. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said this about Jesus "You may look at Christ a thousand times, and you shall have, if you please, a thousand different aspects of his beauty." G. Campbell Morgan said "He is unchanged in the fact of his perpetual freshness, so that no soul has ever found it to be monotonous to walk with Him or talk with Him or think of Him or sing of Him; He is perpetually breaking in upon the soul with new surprises, in some amazing and lightning flash, or as the freshness of a morning in the springtime."

And today multitudes of people are meeting the living Christ. And their lives are forever changed from despair to hope, from death to life, from sadness to joy. Yes, when we speak of Christ, we must speak of the Christ ofToday.

### *3. The Future*

Someone has said that history is his story. But we can also say that the Future is his story. What we see around us, what we hear may be very disturbing today. But the forces of evil will not have the last word. Jesus is the mighty Conqueror. And the future belongs to Him. His victory will be manifest in surprising and wonderful ways in the future. Therefore, as Christians we look forward to the future because we know the One who holds the future. And He is the same One

who holds our present, Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever. Our tomorrows will all lead to him and be with him. The One who holds the Keys is Jesus. In his vision John saw the risen Christ and this is what he heard, "I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades." Rev. 1:19.

The second person of the Trinity is far greater than our greatest words can express, far greater than our greatest musicians can sing, far greater than anything we can show. He is the great "I am." He is all we could ever hope for, all we will ever need. He is everything we will need for today and tomorrow. We can only bow and worship such a wonderful Lord. We can only sing his praises forever more. We can only teach and preach his Gospel that others will know him. To Him be the Glory now and evermore.

# THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The third member of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit. We could call Him the quiet member of the Trinity in that His work is not to call attention to himself but to exalt and point to Christ. Oftentimes we are not aware that he is working. His working is quiet and patient. He is called the Spirit of truth and the Comforter. He points to the truth and teaches the truth to us. Jesus said before his departure that he would send another comforter. Another means not different in kind but another of the same. In other words, He would send the Spirit to continue his work. He would be a Comforter like Jesus. You will remember that one of Jesus' names was Counselor. The Holy Spirit would come alongside the Christian to give strength and guide Ius.

## The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

### *1. The Holy Spirit has always been present*

The Holy Spirit has always been present. He is the third person of the Trinity. Therefore He has all the attributes of God. He is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. Whatever we say about the nature of God we can say about the Holy Spirit. In the creation we see the Spirit's presence and activity. It says, “and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." Gen. 1:2 A symbol that is often used for the Spirit in the Old Testament is the wind. The wind is powerful or it may be very quiet yet we cannot see it. It is important to know that the Holy Spirit was active and working in Old Testament times.

### *2. The Holy Spirit empowered chosen people*

The Holy Spirit's activity was not as noticeable as in the New Testament. Jesus talked about sending the Holy Spirit. He said on one occasion that the Holy Spirit was not yet given. Just as Jesus' activity in the Old Testament is hidden to some extent and then he was born at Bethlehem; so the Holy Spirit's activity in the Old Testament is not seen as much but then he came in mighty power at Pentecost. Just as Jesus came in the fullness of time, so the Holy Spirit came at the right time in salvation's story. In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit empowered certain believers for special tasks. This expression is used several times ((and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him." The Spirit came upon Gideon, upon David, upon Saul, and upon Samson. We can say then that the Holy Spirit was not given to every believer in the way he is now.

## The Person of the Holy Spirit

### *1. Mistakes concerning His person*

It is a mistake to refer to the Spirit as it. The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal object. He is a real person. We see this clearly in these verses in the Gospel of John. John 14:16-17,15:26-27,John 16:7-15. The things mentioned in these verses can only be done by a person. We know him and he lives within us. He testifies, He guides, He speaks, and He teaches. In other passages we learn that we can grieve him. All of these are things which only a person can do. We should never use “it" when we speak of the Holy Spirit. We would not think of calling another human being “it" and we should never use such a word when speaking of the Holy Spirit. He is alive and does what only a living person can do.

It is also incorrect to refer to the Holy Spirit as an influence. He is not some ethereal gas floating in the air. He is not just the influence that God exerts upon men. He is a living person, divine and worthy of our worship. To worship an inanimate object would be idolatry. But it is proper for us to worship God the Spirit. The benediction in 2 Cor. 13:14 clearly speaks of the Spirit as a person. “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." You do not talk about the fellowship of an influence or an inanimate object.

## The Church and the Holy Spirit

### *1. The Power*

As we think about the Power of the Holy Spirit, we should recognize two erroneous ways the church has responded to the Holy Spirit. The first is excessive attention to the Holy Spirit. This often occurs when people magnify certain gifts or works of the Holy Spirit and forget that the primary work of the Holy Spirit is not to call attention to Himself but to magnify Jesus. We can be so consumed with seeking the power of the Holy Spirit that we fail to witness and preach as we should.

Maybe the worst thing that churches do is to ignore the Holy Spirit. To attend some churches you would think there were only two persons in the Trinity. The Holy Spirit can be ignored. And that is tragic because he is the power source, the life source, the guide source for the church. Without the Holy Spirit the church is just another social organization. It may be doing good things but there is no power. Notice the words in Acts 1:9 "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you ..." The book of Acts would more properly be called the Acts of the Holy Spirit. There we see the power of the Holy Spirit manifested. What happened at Pentecost? About 3 thousand people were saved. When the Spirit came, there was a violent wind and tongues of fire. Peter pointed to the prophecy which said "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Acts. 1:17. The last days mentioned here was the time from Pentecost until now.

### *2. The Purpose*

The Holy Spirit gives gifts to believers to equip them for service in the church. These gifts are not given for our selfish pleasure but to build up the church. There are two or three lists of gifts mentioned in the New Testament. Ro. 13:6-8. 1 Cor. 12:7-", Ep. 4:". That does not mean that these are all the gifts and it does not mean that every Christian will have every gift. That is made clear in 1Cor. 12:""AII these are the work ofthe one and the same Spirit, land he gives them to each one, just as he determines."

It is well at this point that we consider the baptism and filling of the Holy Spirit. When does the baptism of the Holy Spirit take place? I believe it is when we receive Christ as our Savior. Notice 1Cor. 12:13 "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body- whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free- and we were all given the one Spirit to drink." Jesus had talked about the living waters flowing from believers when the Spirit came. What many call the baptism of the Holy Spirit, would more properly be called the filling of the Holy Spirit. In Ep. 5:18 Paul says "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit." It is interesting that he uses wine as a negative illustration.

Drunk on wine, a man is controlled by the wine. As Christians we are to be controlled, filled with the Holy Spirit. And this can be repeated many times. We are baptized by the Spirit one time but there are many fillings. Sometimes Christians talk about a second work of grace. There are many works of grace and many fillings.

## The Holy Spirit and the Christian

### *1. The Holy Spirit brings us to Christ*

He convicts us of sin and points us to Christ. We are born of the Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit we would never come to Christ. He works patiently in our lives using many different events and people. We often do not realize that the Holy Spirit is working through all these different things in our lives to bring us to faith. The Holy Spirit is the midwife who delivers us at birth. He brings us into the family of God. He is the Spirit of life. How grateful we should be for the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We should ever praise Him. All the Trinity is involved in our salvation....God the Father who sent his Son, Christ Jesus who died for our sins and rose from the grave, and the Holy Spirit who brings us to Christ.

### *2. The Holy Spirit prays for us*

This should be a great encouragement to know that Jesus prays for us at the right hand of the Father and the Holy Spirit prays for us in our hearts. We often do not know how to pray. Sometimes words will not come. And even if they would, we would not know how to ask for something. But the Holy Spirit understands what we cannot express and he makes intercession

for us. Ro. 8: 26 "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness: We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express."

### 3. The Holy Spirit leads us in spiritual growth

His ministry is to make us like Jesus. The Bible is clear that goal will be reached in Heaven. But, even now, He is working to that end. Paul talked about the fruit of the Spirit. Men tend to concentrate upon the spectacular gifts but growth is slow and often unnoticed. Paul did not say fruits but fruit of the Spirit. This fruit is really a description of the character of Jesus Christ. Living in fellowship with the Spirit this is what will result. Gal. 5:22 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Fruit of the Spirit means that it is produced by the Holy Spirit.

Let us not neglect the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. We need to teach our people who the Holy Spirit is and what he does. We do not need to pray that the Holy Spirit will come because he is already present. But we need to ask for his power in our lives and for his power to be manifested in the church. He is the third person of the Trinity and He is fully God. We should Worship the Holy Spirit, depend upon Him, and be grateful for his working in our lives.

# THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION

The Bible begins by saying, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Gen. 1:1. The things around us did not just happen. They are not the result of some cosmic accident. But a Creator made the world and all the things in it and around it. If we are wrong concerning this doctrine, we will be wrong concerning the doctrine of salvation. Deny the creation and we will also deny the redemption. Another way to put it is this. Deny the Creator and you will deny the Redeemer. We believe that God is the Creator, the Creator of man, the Creator of the vast worlds in outer space, the Creator of life on the earth, in the seas, and in the air. We believe that God is the Creator of spiritual beings also such as the angels.

## An Important Distinction

### *1. God is before the creation*

It is difficult for us to imagine a time when there was nothing in existence except God. But there was such a time. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit lived in perfect love and joy. There was no need or lacking of anything in God. He did not create the world because of some need in himself. God has never been dependent upon the created universe. He is the living God always. And He has always been and will always be. Sometimes it says that God created. Sometimes it says that Christ created. Then again it says that the Spirit had a part in the creation. These are not contradictions because the One God in three persons created. Speaking of Christ as the Creator Paul said in Col. 1:17 "He is before all things."

The Hebrew word for created means "created from nothing." In other words, God brought all the creation from nothing. There was no pre-existing material such as man uses. God had no beginning. The created universe has a beginning. We must make clear this distinction.

### *2. God is different to creation*

An artist is different to the picture he paints. An author is different to the book which he writes. In the same way God is different to the creation which he makes. Some religions make no distinction between God and the created universe. They believe that God is everything. Because ofthat they worship any living thing and even think they are God. But the Bible makes it very clear that God is separate from his creation. To worship a tree or an animal,to worship something carved by man's hands, or to worship any other thing in the place of God is idolatry. This is one of the commandments. Ex. 20:3-4 "You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below."

### *3. God upholds creation*

God did not create the universe and then withdraw. Why does the sun come up each morning? Why does the earth revolve exactly year after year? Why does the rain fall? It is because there is a loving Creator who is actively involved in the things of earth. It is because of his wisdom and power that the sun continues to shine. Without him the earth and everything on the earth would fall apart. God did not create and then abandon his creation. This is made clear in Col. 1:17 "He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." In He. 1:3 it says this about Christ "sustaining all things by his powerful word." Certainly we can trust this Creator God. It would be fearful to ride in a car without a driver, to fly in a plane without a pilot, to be in a boat without pilot. But such is not the case with the universe. There is a pilot. There is a Driver. He knows all about the universe and He has wonderful plans for it.

## The Extent of Creation

### *1. God made all inanimate things*

Whether it is the cell which we can only see under a microscope or the vast reaches of outer space, God made all these things. This is amazing when you think about it. Dr. Richard Swenson said, "To count the atoms in a drop of water would require every human on earth counting one atom per second for twenty thousand years." Thomas Dubay has pointed out that "A single cell contains more information content than all thirty volumes of the Encyclopaedia Britannica taken together." Now if we really want to stretch our imagination, listen to this. "One light-year is six trillion miles. The Milky Way Galaxy is 100,000 light-years across. (That's 600,000,000,000,000,000 miles.) There are about 350,000,000,000 galaxies in the universe." That quote is from a book entitled "The Heavens Proclaim His Glory" compiled by Lisa Stilwell.

Wherever we look there are testimonies of our Creator. The high mountains point to him. The waterfalls and singing brooks point to him. The swelling oceans point to him. God is far greater than our feeble minds can grasp. It is almost like everything is screaming at us and saying, "Look how great God is!"

### *2. God made all living things*

He made invisible things such as the angels. The angels are often mentioned in the Bible. They are called "ministering spirits." God sends them on special missions. For instance, they announced the birth of Christ. They were at the tomb after Jesus' resurrection. An angel led Peter out of the prison. And they are still active today. They often appear as men and we may not recognize them as angels. In Col. 1:16 we read "For by him all things were created: thing in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him." The reference to "invisible" things would include the angels. It is probably referring to different ranks of angels when it speaks of "thrones or powers or rulers or authorities." Apparently demons are fallen angels who followed Satan in his fall.

Lucifer's fall is described in Is. 14:12-13 "How are you fallen from heaven, 0 Lucifer, son of the morning! How are you cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations! For you have said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north:" and then in verse 14 "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High."

Consider the world of living things that God made. There are said to be 35,000 varieties of orchids and 20,000 varieties of butterflies. Each of the varieties of butterflies has different colors and different shapes for the wings according to a DVS entitled Metamorphosis. But the most amazing creation of all is man. It says about man that God created him in his own image. It means that God gave to man the ability to know him and have fellowship with him. He gave man reason and a will. He made man with the capacity to experience all the things mentioned in the fruit of the Spirit. The Bible says that we will one day be like Jesus. When we look at Jesus, we see what God intended man to be.

## The Fall of Creation

### *1. The Fall of Satan*

Apparently pride led to the fall of Lucifer. He wanted to be like God. He wanted to be God, to take his place. Why is this important? Many people wonder where evil came from. We know that God did not create evil. Rather he gave a free will to the angels. And Satan and other demons chose to turn away from God. There was a great rebellion against God. And in the garden of Eden Satan tempts Adam and Eve. In the desert Satan tempted the Lord Jesus Christ.

### *2. The Fall of Man*

God created man without sin. Adam and Eve lived in fellowship with God. They walked with God in the garden. They had everything they needed. But, then Satan tempted them. He used the same lie he had fallen for. He said you will become like God. And man choosing freely sinned against God. They disobeyed God. And they began to die. They had known only life until that moment. They had known only peace until that moment. Now discord entered. They even tried to hide from God. They were afraid. There was an estrangement, a separation between them and God. Today we do not see man as God meant him to be. We see only what is left after sin has ravaged our minds and bodies. Now our bodies are weak, sickly and we face death. Our minds become twisted and cannot think as God intended them to think. To put modern man up against the first man before his sin would surprise us. Then we would see that man today is hardly the shell of the first man. This is man's tragic story repeated over and over. Sin leads to separation from God and if the direction of life is not changed to eternal separation from God.

### *3. The Fall of Creation*

Man's fall had spread throughout the creation. Like a terrible, infectious disease sin has reached out to the other parts of the earth. Paul speaks of the creation being in bondage and of its waiting for the liberation which will come when our bodies are redeemed. Now there are inhospitable floods, dangerous winter storms, volcanos that erupt with burning lava. There are wild animals that wreak havoc in village and on farms. Gene Edwards calls this "a prodigal planet." In a book called The Beginning, he imagines what happened to the earth when man sinned. "The land mass shattered into vagabond continents roaming the tempestuous seas in search of a home." He also says, "The curse soon spread to every plant and flower and tree. The beauty of the favored planet was wrenched downward to match the state of its fallen ruler." Today we do not see the earth as it was first created. We see the remnants of that creation. We do not see the earth as it will finally be when it is redeemed.

Even in a fallen creation we can see the handiwork of God. That is true of man also. Even in fallen man there are amazing testimonies of God's handiwork. If we look at the ears, the eyes, man's brain it is all amazing. Someone has pointed out that to build a computer like man's brain would fill the earth. All the created things point us to the glory of the Creator. What is said concerning the heavens is true of all the things which our Creator has made. "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands."

# THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

Because of man's fall, he began to look for a way of salvation. Adam and Eve, realizing they were naked, tried to make coverings from the fig leaves. And ever since that time, the process has been repeated over and over. The Bible says, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind, have taken us away." Is. 64:6. Jesus said that he came "to seek and to save that which is lost." Lost describes well man's condition. There are many religions in the world. All of them except for Christianity say, "Save yourself." "You must find the way." Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." As we consider the doctrine of salvation we will ask what it means to be saved and how can we be saved.

## The Basis of Salvation

### 1. The Finished Work of Christ

The basis for our salvation is what Jesus did in his life and in his death and resurrection. When He was hanging on the cross, He shouted in victory, "It is finished." literally that means "it is paid in full." It means that he paid completely the sin debt that man could not pay. It means that Jesus finished the work of salvation. The book of Hebrews emphasizes this over and over by saying that he was offered once for all. Everything necessary for our salvation was accomplished when Jesus died in our place on the cross. We cannot add anything to what he has done. There will never be the need to repeat the cross. Jesus paid the price for our salvation for all time and for every person. In He. 7:25 it says that "He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God through Him." Jesus' name means Savior. And that is what he does. Salvation is the work of God. It comes from him. It is provided by Him.

### *2. The Grace of God*

The basis for our salvation then is the grace of God. Grace means that it is unmerited favor. We do not deserve to be saved. Rather we deserve condemnation and Hell. But through the grace of Christ, God gives salvation to us. The Bibles teaches clearly that salvation is a gift. Ro. 6:23 "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our lord." We cannot work for it. We cannot buy it. We can only receive it freely as a gift. Did Paul deserve to be saved? No, he calls himself the chief of sinners. Did Peter deserve to be saved? No, just like us it was just the opposite. What does this mean then? That there is no place for any Christian to boast except in the cross of Christ? It means that Christ has done it all. And He will do everything concerning our salvation. It is all of grace now and always. The message of the Bible is this. "By grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, and not of works lest any man should boast." Ep. 2:8

## Man's Response to the Offer of Salvation

### *1. A Free Response*

God will never force us to accept his salvation. He offers the gift but we must accept it. There are some people who think everyone will be saved. But this would actually be spiritual rape. God will not make us come into his family against our will. He invites us and pleads with us. And He takes the initiative in our salvation. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin. The Lord calls us and pleads with us to come. He seeks for us like the shepherd looks for his lost sheep. It is God's desire that every person should come to him. But it is not the desire of many people to come to him. To make people come to Heaven against their will would be to make them the most miserable people in the world. Consider the last invitation of the Bible. "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life." Rev. 22:17.

### *2. A Faith Response*

How are we to respond to the offer of salvation? We repent and believe on Christ. These two things go together. Sometimes only one thing is mentioned but actually it includes the other. It is like a coin. On one side you see a face or building. On the other side something is written but it is just one coin. Repent means to turn away from something. It means a change. We cannot change ourselves but in repentance we turn away from ourselves and look to Christ. He does the changing. What does it mean to believe on Christ? It means that we trust him, that we depend upon him, that we commit ourselves to him. In other words, we respond by turning from our own way and we receive what Christ has done for us. We respond by accepting the gift of salvation for ourselves.

## Immediate Changes in Salvation

### *1. Regeneration*

When we come to Christ, we are born again. This is what Jesus talked to Nicodemus about. He said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." When we are born again, we are given new life. We enter a new relationship with God. Paul said that old thing pass away and everything becomes new. 2 Cor. 5:17. We are given new desires. We enter the family of God. Another word that is used to speak of what happens in salvation is adoption. That is closely related to what we are talking about here. We become the children of God. We are adopted into his family. And what kind of life do we have? It is eternal life. When does eternal life begin? It begins now for the Christian. It begins when we believe on Christ. John 10:28-29 "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one can snatch them out of my hand."

### *2. Forgiveness*

When we receive Christ as our Savior, we are forgiven completely. He forgives us all our sins. It is not just for the sins up until the time we believe, but for all past, present, and future sins. When Christ died on the cross, it was long before we were living. So,how many sins did he die for? All of them! This is made very clear in Co. 2:13-14 "He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross." He has done away completely with the charges against us. And Paul writes in Ro. 8 that there is now no condemnation against us and he asks,"If God be for us, who can be against us."

### *3. Justification*

Sometimes people explain "justified" as meaning "just as if I had never sinned." But, it means much more than that. It means that God not only does not hold any charges against us because of sin but he has given to us the righteousness of Jesus Christ, his Son. It means that God now accepts us as He does his only begotten Son. It means that when he looks at us, he no longer sees our sinful life but he sees the perfect righteousness of Jesus. He has taken away the filthy rags of our righteousness and given to us the righteousness of Jesus Christ. How can God justify us in this way? Because Jesus paid the penalty fully in our place. His blood is the reason for our justification. Martin Luther said, "What is it in man's arrogance that makes man think he can do anything in the world to be more sufficient than the blood of Christ?" Our sin was imputed to Christ and his righteousness was imputed to us. 2 Cor. 5:21"For he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

### *4. Sanctification*

When we come to Christ, we are immediately set apart for Christ. This is sometimes called positional sanctification. This is different to our growth in Christ which continues throughout our Christian journey on the earth. In 1Cor. 1:30 "But of him are you in Christ Jesus who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:" Christ becomes everything for us. He is all that we need and all that we will ever need. And when we come to him, we are set apart for him. Over and over Paul says that we are "in Christ." We do not lose our personalities but we are related to him as a branch to a tree, as a body part to the head, as a building to a foundation.

## Salvation in Three Tenses

### *1. As a past event*

It is proper to say that we have been saved. In testimonies people often say, "I was saved at this place on this certain day." And that is all true. There should be a place and time when we come to Christ and receive his salvation. If we are not sure that this has ever taken place, we should make sure by making a clear decision to receive Christ as our Savior and Lord. If we only talk about salvation in the past, it can indicate a serious problem in one's spiritual life. We would think it strange if a grown man only talked about the time he was born. Much has happened since that time and something is abnormal if we only live in the past. It is very important. A birth is necessary but that is not all.

### *2. As a present reality*

We can also say, "I am being saved. I have trusted Christ but I am also growing in my knowledge of Christ today." We have this command in 2 Pe. 3:18 "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Coming to Christ and being born again is essential but that is not the end of the road. It is just the beginning. We are to live daily in fellowship with Christ. We are to be filled with the Spirit and serve in the name of Christ. Now it is not always easy to measure growth because it is very slow. There are no shortcuts to spiritual growth just as there are no shortcuts to physical growth. But healthy children grow. And it is the same for the Christian.

### *3. As a future certainty*

Not only have we been saved, not only are we being saved, but we shall be saved. The work of salvation is not yet complete. God is still at work in our lives. We are still growing. What will we look like when God is finished? The Bible says that we will be like Jesus. I John 3:3 "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Paul assures us that the One who has begun a good work in us will complete it. Artists sometimes cannot complete a portrait but there will be no unfinished work concerning God's children. Charles Haddon Spurgeon pointed out how surprised we will be when we see each other in glory, in the likeness of Jesus.

When we think about salvation, our hearts should rejoice in praise to God. It is all because of what he has done. What kind of love would reach down to save unworthy sinners? But that is what God did in his grace. Grace is the beginning of the story and all in between. It is all of his grace. Therefore, it is all to his glory. Whether we look at what Christ did in the past, whether we look at what Christ is doing today, whether we look at what Christ will do tomorrow we can only say. To Him be all the glory!

# THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Churches are found in large cities but sometimes in isolated country areas. Churches are found in houses where only a few people meet. Churches are found in prisons. Churches are found in places where the meetings of believers cannot be detected such as caves or in forests. Churches have many different names and traditions. What we must know about the church is that is not man's idea. It comes from Christ. This is what Jesus said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matt. 16:18.

The church is called the body of Christ. It is called a building or a temple. Paul even refers to the church as the Israel of God. The church then is not a new idea. It is not a change in God's plans. It is what He has planned from the beginning. It is a called out group of people. .

## The Definition of a Church

### *1. Local churches*

It goes without saying that a church is not a building. A church may have a building or not. Buildings do not define the church. We often speak in that way. But a church is the people, not the building. A church is a body of baptized believers who meet to worship and minister in the name of Christ. Usually the word, "church," refers to a local body of believers. For instance, Paul speaks of the church at Ephesus or the church at Corinth. It is also used sometimes of more than one church in a region as when Paul speaks concerning "The churches in the province of Asia..." Most of the time a church is referring to a meeting of local believers in Christ.

### *2. The universal church*

In what sense do we speak of a universal church? It is used to describe the believers of all churches and ages of time. In other words, it is used in a general sense. Paul uses it in this way in Ep. 5:25 when he says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her." Here he is not speaking of any one church but the church in a collective sense.

This leads us to think about the unity of the church. There is often disunity among local churches. There are often long held traditions or points of doctrine about which there is disagreement. Having said that, we must remember that there can be unity even with many differences of opinion. In a family this is true. The family members do not agree about everything but there is unity in their love for each other. We should never compromise essential doctrine just for the sake of unity. How could there be unity and fellowship with another church if they denied Jesus' death for our sins and his resurrection from the dead? How could there be unity if they taught a salvation by works and not by grace? Even with our differences there can be unity when we know and worship the same Lord Jesus Christ.

## The Purpose of the Church

### *1. Worship*

The basic purpose of believers meeting together is to worship the Lord. Can we not worship by ourselves? Of course we can. But the Bible encourages us to worship together. We meet to sing, pray, and hear the Word of God. All the way through the Old Testament and on through the New Testament, we find believers meeting in corporate worship. The Bible says that "He dwells in the praises of his people."

### *2. Teaching*

This simply means the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. We meet to listen to the voice of God through the Word of God. We learn things together that we would never learn alone. In Hebrews we are warned "not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together." We need the food and drink that we receive as the Word of God is expounded.

As we hear God's Word, we are strengthened and challenged in our Christian walk. A spark by itself will soon die out but many together will become a fire.

### *3. Ministry*

What did Jesus say about his purpose in coming? He said that he came to serve and not to be served. The church is the body of Christ. He said that the world would know us because we love one another. We see examples of the churches ministering in the New Testament. When there was physical need, they sent offerings. The church at Phillippi sent more than once aid to help Paul. "For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need." Phil. 4:16. The church is all about love and showing that love to a lost world.

### *4. Evangelism*

The purpose of the church is to declare the good news of Jesus Christ. Jesus told us to go into all the world and take the Gospel. That mission is stated in this way in 1Pe. 2: 9 "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." If we only meet to worship and study but do not share the Gospel with others, we have failed in our purpose as a church. The church is to be a light-house pointing others to the safe harbor in Christ.

## The Ordinances of the Church

### *1. Baptism*

Baptism is a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a picture of the Gospel. There is no magical power in the water. Water cannot wash away our sins. Only the blood of Christ can cleanse our hearts. But after a profession of faith in Christ, we are commanded to be baptized. It is also a public confession of our faith in Christ. We believe in a regenerate membership. Only those old enough to trust Christ as Savior and Lord should be baptized. Baptism not only pictures the Gospel but is a picture of the believers turning from the old life to a new life in Christ.

### *2. The Lord's Supper*

The Lord's Supper is also a symbol. It has no magical power. Jesus said, "As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death until he come." 1Cor. “:26. How often should we observe the Lord's Supper? Some churches observe it once a month, some every three months. And some observe it every week. Each church should pray and ask for the Lord's direction. It should not become an empty ritual but should be a meaningful symbol.

## The Officers of the Church

### 1. *Pastors*

The word which describes a pastor means a shepherd. Jesus called himself the Good Shepherd. The work of a shepherd is to lead the sheep. The pastor is not a dictator. But he is a servant who leads his people to worship and serve the Lord. It is evident from reading the New Testament that the primary responsibility of the pastor is to preach the Word of God. The pastor is supposed to lead by the example in his home and in his personal life. The pastor is not the head of the church. Christ alone is the head. The pastor is a servant of the Lord and a servant to lead the Lord's people.

### *2. Deacons*

Deacons were chosen to minister to the members of the church. They were to take care of the physical needs of the widows so the pastor would have more time to preach the Word of God. The idea of a servant is also closely related to the work of the deacons. The deacons are not called to run the church. They are chosen to serve the church. The Bible gives the qualifications for deacons. They are to be mature in their faith, be exemplary leaders in their families, and have a consistent life of faith in Christ.

## The Future of the Church

### *1. Trials*

The New Testament churches faced many trials. In the book of Acts those persecutions are described. In the book of Revelation we hear about other trials that the churches in Asia were facing. Today churches are under attack also. This should not surprise us. Jesus said that in the world we would have tribulation. When Paul spoke his farewell words to the church at Ephesus, he said he knew that wolves would enter the church and try to destroy it. The spiritual warfare continues today. Sometimes the trials are so severe that churches must go underground. They must meet in secret. But the trials are not occasions for defeat or discouragement. They are not the end of the story.

### *2. Triumph*

The forces of evil will not prevail against the church. We have Jesus' promise concerning this. He said that the gates of Hell would not prevail. In the last book of the Bible we find that the church which has suffered so much in the world, will finally be the church triumphant. The battered and bruised body of the church will be with the Victorious Head forever. Here below we suffer losses. Bad things happen to many churches. Sometimes the members are scattered. Sometimes the members are imprisoned and even killed. These are terrible things but they cannot defeat the church for whom Christ gave his own blood. The church will prevail. The church will celebrate with the Victorious Captain of our salvation.

Does the church matter in the modern world? Indeed it does. Take the church away and there would soon be no preaching of the Gospel. All the New Testament shows the importance of the churches and the church's mission. The churches must ever be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ. We have no right to try to alter the Gospel or the way of salvation. It is rather our privilege and responsibility to be faithful to the Word of God. Christ is the foundation upon which the church is based. He is the Head of the church. And He is the way into the church. Christ must be the center of the church.

# THE DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

There will be a climax to history. That Climax will take place when Jesus comes the second time. When he comes, there will be a resurrection. There will be a resurrection of both the saved and the lost. The next major event will be the judgment. We believe that the saved will live forever in Heaven but the lost will live forever in Hell, the place prepared for the devil and his angels. All history is moving toward this climax. As Christians, we know the end of the story. And the end of the story should fill our hearts with delight and expectation.

## The Second Coming of Christ

### *1. He is coming certainly*

We do not know the time of his coming. Jesus said that he did not know. Anytime that people set dates, we can be sure that they do not know. What we do know is that he is coming. This is what Jesus said, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also maybe where I am." John 14:3. At the ascension of Christ into heaven, two angels spoke these words, "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:11. We believe then in the certainty of Christ's second coming but we do not know the time.

### *2. He is coming personally*

The same Jesus who walked this earth for the three years of his public ministry is coming again. This is not referring to a spiritual coming for people when they die or to special visions which people think they see of Jesus. Jesus himself is coming again. He is coming as certainly as he came the first time. Before the Sanhedrin shortly before his crucifixion, Jesus said this, "In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." Matt. 26:64. "Son of Man" was Jesus favorite expression for himself. And here he speaks of his coming again. This has always been the belief and hope of the church.

### *3. He is coming victoriously*

When Jesus came the first time, he came humbly and was born in a manger. When he comes the second time, He is coming in glory. The Bible says that every eye will see him. This is how his second coming is described in Mark 13:26 "At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory." When God manifested his presence in the Old Testament he often appeared in light. When Jesus was transfigured, "his face shone like the sun." Jesus' victory will be seen in his coming and it will be manifested then and in the last events which follow.

## The Resurrection

### *1. It is bodily*

The resurrection refers to the body. Some people think it only refers to the spirit. Jesus told his disciples to look at him and see that he was not a ghost or spirit. He rose bodily from the grave. And his resurrection is the pattern for ours. When Paul talks about the resurrection in 1Cor. 15, there can be no doubt that he is talking about the body. In Romans 8 it speaks of the "redemption of the body." Salvation includes not just the soul but the body as well. This body of weakness is going to be changed.

### *2. It is universal*

All the dead, saved and unsaved, will be raised. We do not know much about the bodies that unsaved people will receive but we know they will be resurrected. The Bible emphasizes that whether we have died or are still living, our bodies will be changed in the same way. It will happen in a moment,in the twinkling of an eye. Many will have died hundreds of years ago but they will be raised. No one will be forgotten. This is what Jesus said, "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are intheir graves will hear his voice and come out- those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned." John 5:28

### *3. It is glorious*

It is hard for us to imagine the glory of the resurrection body. Paul said that he "will transform our lowly bodies to that they will be like his glorious body." Phil. 3:21. In the lengthy discussion of our resurrection bodies in I Cor. 15 we find a similar statement in verse 43 "It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory." Not only will our bodies be changed but there will be an inward transformation also. Joni Eareckson Tada said that the things she is most looking forward to is the inner change when she will no longer be selfish. Now our bodies are weak and we struggle against sin, but then the struggle will be over. In the resurrection body there will be no pull and no place for sin.

## The Judgment

### *1. A time of manifestation*

The judgment will show clearly who are the children of God. There are sometimes false professors here. But then God's children will be shown for all to see. That is what we read in I Jn. 3: 1-3 that the world does not know us now just as it didn't know Jesus. But when Jesus comes again we will be manifested. And the judgment will make that clear. There is a difference of opinion among Christians as to whether there is one final judgment or also a judgment separate called the judgment seat of Christ. Wayne Gruden; a theologian suggests that they may well be part of the same. However that may be the judgment will manifest God's children.

### *2. A time of evaluation*

The judgment is a time of evaluation for how we lived here on earth. The wicked will be judged by their works. Their works will show the choices they made to reject Christ throughout their lives. Jesus talked about the judgment when he returns. And he says that many will be surprised. Believers will be surprised. And unbelievers will be surprised. Things long forgotten, things which seemed to be of no consequence will be remembered. Christ is the Judge and how we treated him will be seen.

### *3. A time of declaration*

The judgment will declare God's righteousness. Everyone will see that God is righteous in his judgments and all that he does. There will be no complaints against his judgment. Only God is able to see all of a person's life from beginning to ending. He sees not only what we do but what we think. Not only what we said but why we said it. Long ago this question was asked in the book of Genesis, "Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?" This will be a final judgment. There will be no appeals because this is the Supreme Court.

## Hell

### *1. Separation from all that is good*

Hell is a place of separation. It is a place of utter loneliness because God's presence will not be manifest there as it is now. Here even the wicked enjoy many good things from God. And even in a world of rebellion there are many blessings and good things. But Hell is the absence of all that is good. C. S. Lewis depicts Hell as a place where everyone is moving farther and farther from each other. Jesus told about a rich man who died and went to Hell. He was told there was a great gulf of separation between him and Abraham's bosom.

### *2. Fruition of unbelief*

Hell is the harvest of a life of unbelief. The Bible says that "the wages of sin is death." Hell is the place of final death but it is a living death. Some people think that the lost are simply annihilated but such is not the case. They go away to everlasting destruction. The same term which speaks of everlasting life is used to speak of everlasting destruction. Hell is a real place. We should not think that it is a place where God tortures people. Rather, it is the result of man's choosing to live without God. God desires all people to come to himself but many people do not want to live with him. So there must be someplace where such people can live. It is called "the second death." It is a death that has no end.

### *3. Hopelessness beyond remedy*

As long as man has hope, he can manage but Hell is the place of total despair. No one ever leaves that place. There is no hope for liberation, no hope for salvation there. Some people think man will have a second chance but the Bible does not teach it. Without Christ today man lives in hopelessness. But the hopelessness of the present life is magnified many times in Hell. It is the place of memories. I think people will remember all the times they rejected Christ. They will remember all the times God spoke and they refused to listen. Hell will be only despair. How could it be otherwise? It is the finality of life without Christ.

## Heaven

### *1. Joy of ceaseless fellowship*

Heaven is a place of joy. In Psalm 16:”are these words, "In your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures forevermore." There is always something to interrupt our fellowship on death. Death breaks up families. And there are goodbyes to friends. Here many activities and things interfere with our fellowship with Christ. But Heaven is a place of reunion and ceaseless fellowship. The most wonderful things about Heaven will be the presence of God. We will see Christ face to face. We will always be conscious of his presence. We will be with him forever. There will be nothing to separate. And our fellowship with other believers will be full and complete.

### *2. Joy of endless discovery*

One of the joys of life is learning and discovery. Little children discover new things and surprising things in their backyard. As Christians we will continue to grow spiritually and learn through the ages of eternity. We will never learn all about our wonderful Lord. But that will ever be our delight. And how much there will be to discover in the vast reaches of God's creation. Man is still making discoveries on this small earth. Think what discoveries we could make in yet unknown worlds of God's choosing.

### *3. Joy of fulfilling service*

Do you think Heaven will be a boring place? We will not be sitting around doing nothing. The Bible says "his servants shall serve him." God gives us work to do here. And there will be many things to do there. When Jesus told the parable about the talents, to the faithful men he gave them greater responsibilities. This is what the man said to the faithful servants," Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness1" Matt. 25:21. Many of the things which you enjoyed on earth, you may continue to do there. Many things which you wanted to do but could not, you may be able to do there. And there may be many things which we never dreamed about, that will be given for us to do.

### *4. Joy of eternal life*

Eternal life begins here but it will come to fruition there. The life we have experienced here will seem life the shadows when we get to Heaven. There we will say, "Now we are really living." To describe life in Heaven the Bible uses many negatives. There will be no tears, no sorrow, no death. All these things are pointing to something that we can hardly imagine now. It will be life and then more life. We will be eternally young there. There will be no walkers or canes, no hospitals. Doctors and nurses will have more important work to do there. There will be no caskets, no cemeteries. And undertakers will also have service related to life there.

### *5. Joy of boundless love*

Jonathan Edwards spoke of Heaven as a "world of love." Imagine living in a place where everyone loved, loved as Jesus loved. Not only will love one another perfectly but we will experience all the time God's boundless love. We will always know that we are loved. No one will feel any rejection. We will all accept one another. The things which divide us here will all be gone. Race will not divide. Churches will not divide. We will all be one in Christ. There will always be more and more of God's love to enjoy.

We believe "the best is yet to come." Christ is coming again. And for the Christian the most wonderful things lie in our future. And for the lost person the worst things lie in their future. We know who holds the future. The future is in God's hands.



# *The Essentials of Evangelism – Sharing a Complete Gospel Presentation*

*National Missionary Conference Curriculum*
*Tier 1*

God uses many methods to reach the lost with His gospel, but the primary method that He employs is the spoken word of believers. God's plan to multiply His Kingdom involves those who have already found redemption through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20 says,

> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: **19** that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. **20** We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.[1]

Prior to salvation, every person is an ambassador of death, spreading corruption by sinful acts and self-satisfaction. After salvation in Christ, a believer is transformed into an ambassador of life, responsible for spreading the message of reconciliation.

Romans 10:14-15 says,

"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? **15** And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

How can the lost make a profession of faith without hearing the gospel? How can the lost hear the gospel unless someone preaches the good news? The task that every believer has been called to is to live as an ambassador of Christ. How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel!

An ambassador is sent to a foreign people on behalf of a leader. The ambassador does not go with their own message, but they carry the message of their leader. We are not sent to share whatever we want with those who do not know Jesus. We have been sent with the gospel as it has been revealed to us in Scripture.

Galatians 1:6-9 says,

> I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— **7** which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. **8** But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! **9** As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!

[1] Unless otherwise specified, all Bible references are to the *New International Version* (NIV) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

We are called to share the gospel without deviation from what has been taught directly from Scripture. How do we share a complete and accurate gospel? Let's consider those specific aspects that must be included as we offer the gospel to those who do not know Jesus. When presenting the gospel, you may not always have time to explain each of these aspects in depth but should not miss any important specifics by glossing over them too quickly.

## I. The Creation Account –

There is only one God. He is the only God who is supreme in power and authority. He is sovereign over all things, more powerful than any man-made deity or crafted idol. In the beginning, only God existed. In the beginning, God created all things – everything in heaven and everything on earth. By His power, God spoke and all things were made. In 6 days, God made the moon, stars, the sun, dry land, sprawling oceans, plants, and animals.

God even made spiritual beings called angels, made to worship and serve Him in the heavenly realm. The pinnacle of His creation was humanity. Genesis 1:27 says, "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

God made man in His own likeness, set apart from the rest of Creation to bear His image and glory. God placed man in a beautiful garden with an abundance of all that they needed and commanded them to rule and care for the world. Genesis 1:28 says, "God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Man was given dominion over the world to steward what God had created.

Psalm 8:5-8 says, "You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. [6] You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: [7] all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, [8] the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas."

Following His work of creation, God looked at all He had made and saw that it was good. Genesis 1:31 says, "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day."

## II. The Entrance of Sin –

In the garden, God only gave man one command to obey. Genesis 1:16-17 says, "And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; **[17]** but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." God created woman to live with man in the garden. As they obeyed this command, they enjoyed fellowship with their Creator and with one another.

One of the angels of God was beautiful in appearance. He grew prideful and wanted to be worshipped as only God is to be worshipped. This angel, whom we call Satan, rebelled

against the Creator God as a third of the angels in heaven followed his leadership. God cast Satan and those that rebelled against Him out of heaven.

These angels, which we now call demons, still continue in their rebellion against the Most High God.

One day, as the first man and woman were walking in the midst of the garden, Satan approached them, appearing in the form of a serpent. Twisting the words of God, Satan asked, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" (Genesis 3:1) He continued, "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. **5** "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4-5).

Genesis 3:6 says, "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it."

Man and woman disobeyed God and ate of the fruit that they were commanded not to eat of. Disobeying the commands of God is sin.

Immediately after disobeying God, Adam and Eve experienced the disgrace of their act as they recognized their nakedness. Genesis 3:7 says, "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves."

Because of their disobedience, man was cast out of the garden and their relationship with God was broken. Genesis 3:23 says, "So the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken."

Sin is an offense against God. God is holy, just, and perfect. He must punish sin. He must punish disobedience for it is just and right for Him to do so. Romans 6:23a says, "the wages of sin is death." The cost of sin is death which is separation from our Creator and Sustainer. When we sin, we break fellowship with our Maker. Beyond this life, man will face eternal separation from the Most High God as a just punishment for sinful action.

Impacted by the initial disobedience of our first parents, every generation is inclined towards sin from the moment of conception. Romans 3:23 says that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Every person sins because every person is born with a heart of rebellion, an inability to obey, and a propensity for self-satisfaction.

Even those who do not know the written law of God commit sin as they disobey their Creator because the Most High has written His commands upon the hearts of men. Romans 2:14-15 says,

> (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. **15** They

show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.)

Morality is internalized. We all bear a conscience. And as a product of our sinful action, every human being is separated from God and faces the consequence of eternal death.

### III. The Foundation for Redemption –

God did not make man for us to experience eternal separation from Him. As time went on, the number of people on earth grew. God gave mankind written commands that matched what He had already authored on their hearts. He gave a series of 10 commandments – which included commands such as "do not have other gods," "do not lie," "do not steal," and "do not murder."

Ultimately, though God had written His commands down, there was no one who could perfectly obey all of His commands. Man continued to disobey the Most High. Because the punishment for sin is death, blood must be spilt for the forgiveness of sins. Hebrews 9:22 says, "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

In grace and mercy, God established a system for man to sacrifice an animal as a substitute – to bear the punishment for sin that man deserved. The substitute animal had to be flawless and without blemish.

Man continued to sin. Every time that man sinned, he would have to sacrifice an animal. The sacrificial system only provided temporary appeasement of sin, but not permanent forgiveness.

### IV. The Sending of Jesus Christ –

God provided a permanent solution to our sin and shame by sending His Son, Jesus. Jesus grew up to be a powerful miracle worker and a wise teacher.

One time, Jesus was on a boat with His followers. As they sailed, a large storm appeared, rocking the ship back and forth. Jesus had fallen asleep, but His followers felt great fear. Mark 4:38-39 says, "Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" **39** He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm."

When Jesus and His followers crossed to the other side of the lake, they encountered a man with many demons inside him. Mark 5:4-5 describes the demon-possessed man, "For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. **5** Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones." By His authority as the Son of God, Jesus cast the demon out and healed the man.

Another time, Jesus was teaching to a crowd of over 5,000 people. It was late in the day, and the people began to grow hungry. Jesus' followers were able to gather five loaves of bread and two fish. Matthew 14:19-20 says, "And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people. **20** They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over." By His power, Jesus multiplied food to provide for the people.

One day, a large crowd gathered to hear Jesus teach. Jesus stood within a home as the crowd gathered at the doorway. A group of men tried to approach Jesus, carrying their paralyzed friend on a mat. Luke 5:19-20 says, "When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. **20** When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." Jesus not only forgave the man of his sins but healed him of his paralysis. Luke 5:24-25 says, "So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." **25** Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God." As the Son of God, Jesus offered both healing and forgiveness of iniquity.

## V. The Provision of Jesus Christ –

Jesus lived a perfect life. He never sinned and displayed perfect obedience to all of the commands of God.

Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Jesus had many followers, but there were also those who disliked Jesus and what He taught. Jesus angered the religious leaders of the day because He pointed out the hypocrisy of their teachings. These religious leaders, spurred by Satan, grew angry against Jesus and sought to kill Him. In Luke 19:10, Jesus said, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." To fulfill His purpose in coming, Jesus endured our shame as He died a terrible death on a cross.

Mark 14:65 says, "Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophesy!" And the guards took him and beat him."

Mark 15:17-19 says,

> They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. **18** And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" **19** Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him.**20** And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

A cross is formed by two wooden beams. Jesus' hands and feet were nailed to the cross and His blood was spilled.

Mark 15:24-25, 37 says,

"**24** And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would get. **25** It was nine in the morning when they crucified him.

**37** With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last."

Jesus died as a perfect sacrifice and an unblemished substitute to pay the punishment for our sins. Only by the blood of Jesus is there forgiveness of sins and not just temporary cleansing.

Jesus was dead for three days. But on the third day, He rose from the dead, showing His power even over death. Jesus' followers came to His tomb on the third day and found it empty. They instead found two angels at the tomb who appeared as men.

Luke 24:5-7 says,

> **5** In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? **6** He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: **7** 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'"

In the sacrificial system, man have to offer a sacrifice for every sin. Because of the flawless blood of Christ, the sacrificial system has been fulfilled. Jesus died one time for all sin. No new sacrifices are required because the perfect blood of Christ was spilled on our behalf.

## VI. A Personal Response –

In triumph over Satan and his forces of spiritual darkness, Jesus defeated death in dying and rose again. In John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." It is only through Christ Jesus that we can be reconciled to the Most High and forgiven of our trespasses.

We are only saved by faith and not by works. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— **9** not by works, so that no one can boast."

- A person is not saved by being baptized.
- A person is not saved by doing good works.
- A person is not saved only by attending church or practicing religious tradition.
- A person is not saved by experiencing the supernatural.

Every person must individually choose to place faith in Jesus Christ as Savior to experience His righteousness. Romans 10:9 says, "If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

## VII. Results of Salvation –

When a person places faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and confesses Him as Lord, they no longer stand as sinners separated from the Most High.

- Eternal Life - Romans 6:23 says, "the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Those who choose to place faith in Jesus will not experience death but will experience eternal life. Believers will not be reincarnated but will spend eternity in a peaceful state that is free from suffering and change. Revelation 21:1-4 describes eternity for those who believe,

> Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. **2** I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. **3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. **4** 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Those who do not choose to believe in Jesus as Savior still live in the shame of their sins and will suffer the eternal consequences. Revelation 21:8 describes the state of eternal death awaiting those who reject Jesus, "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

- Forgiveness of Sins - Romans 8:1 says, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Before His crucifixion, Jesus told a parable.

There was a man who had two sons. The younger son approached his father and demanded his inheritance. Luke 15:13-16 says,

> Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. **14** After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. **15** So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. **16** He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

The young son said, "How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! **18** I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. **19** I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants (Luke 15:17-19)."

So, he went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. **21** "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son (Luke 15:20-21)."

Luke 15:22-24 says, "**22** "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. **23** Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. **24** For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

Though each of us is like this younger son – pursuing our wants and desires. As we come to Christ in faith, each of us is completely forgiven by our Heavenly Father of our iniquity and welcomed into the family of God.

- Reconciliation with God - Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

In Christ, we attain peace with God. No longer are we separated from the Most High. John 1:12 says, "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

In shame, we were separated from our Maker. In Christ, we are restored as children of the Most High God.

**VIII. Invitation and Encouragement –**

As ambassadors of Christ, our responsibility does not end in just presenting the facts of the gospel. We are called to actually help someone place faith in Jesus and to do what is necessary for this new believer to grow in their faith.

A salvation prayer does not save anyone. It is the faith communicated by a salvation prayer that saves. We can lead people in such a prayer as a way to help them express faith in Christ Jesus.

If they want to profess faith in Jesus, you could lead them in a prayer like this:

*God, I confess that I am a sinner. I believe that Jesus is the perfect sacrifice who died for my sins and rose again from the dead. I ask you to forgive me of my sins. I confess that Jesus is the Lord of my life. From now on, I will follow you alone. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Once a person professes faith in Jesus, there are a few steps that they need to be guided in to take.

- A new believer needs to be baptized as a symbol of their new life in Christ. We can help in this by actually baptizing them or simply helping to arrange a baptism for them.

- A new believer needs to join a church for community. We can help in this by directing them to a trustworthy church (and even going with them to attend their first service) or by inviting them to our own church.

- A new believer needs to read the Word of God. If they do not have access to the Bible, we should do what we can to help them have access.

- A new believer needs discipleship. We can follow-up with them to teach basic doctrine and fundamentals of the Christian faith that can help them grow in their relationship with God.

- A new believer needs encouragement to practice repentance. Repentance should be a natural part of the Christian life as we flee from sin.

Belief in Christ does not automatically lead to monetary or physical blessings. The Prosperity Gospel is a false message that promises something outside of Scripture. We should not promise new believers that they will be physically blessed just because they have placed faith in Christ.

The gospel promises blessings far beyond what we experience in the material world.

Conclusion –

If you had a believer in your life who guided you in those first days as you navigated life as a new Christian, you knew immense blessing. As ambassadors of Christ, let us never turn to a different gospel. Let us fulfill all that we have been called to do on behalf of our King.




Christian Living (CL)

# Eternal Rewards: Storing Up Treasure in Heaven

## Learning Objectives or Outcomes

- During this class, the teacher should focus on explaining the specific qualifications for a believer to be graciously granted each specific eternal reward outlined in this class.
- After participating in this class, attendees should be able to biblically define 'treasure in heaven.'
- After participating in this class, attendees should be able to explain and describe the various crowns mentioned throughout Scripture.

## Class Outline

I. The Judgment Seat of Christ
II. Treasure in Heaven
III. Various Crowns in Scripture
IV. Other Rewards Mentioned in Scripture

## Introduction

Eternal rewards are not a concept that many have knowledge of. Scripture contains great promises of eternal rewards, but most people are not even aware these promises are in the Word of God. Despite the various trials and troubles that we may face during our time on earth, Scripture promises an eternity of blessing. The Prosperity Gospel, which teaches that belief in God or Christ leads to blessings in wealth and health for believers on earth, contains false promises that entrap many as they follow after unbiblical teaching. The concept of eternal rewards offers a greater blessing than the false hope propagated by the Prosperity Gospel. Obtained through obedience and faithful living, Scripture reveals beautiful blessings that await us in eternity.

Take time at the end of class, if time allows, to answer questions!

In the New Testament, God tells believers that to those who remain faithful to Him, there will "be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:11).[1] All faithful believers will enter into eternity.

Scripture often discusses rewards for believers who go through certain trials or act in certain ways for the Kingdom of God. The problem, though, is that many Christians will miss those rewards.

God is going to reward certain believers for the work they have done for Christ. But *not all Christians will receive rewards.*

There are at least two reasons that many might miss out on eternal rewards:

1. *Ignorance*: Many Christians do not know what the Bible says about rewards. If you ask the average Christian about rewards, they will probably express that they are just happy if they get to be in heaven! The topic of eternal rewards is not discussed much in any Christian context.

2. *Selfishness*: Many Christians will miss out on rewards because much of what they do during this life is for themselves and not for Christ. God rewards us for what we do for *Him*, not for what we do for ourselves. It would be better to do one thing for the Lord that brings His rewards rather than do a thousand things that bring rewards from men, but no reward from the Lord. Many believers need to be reminded that we do live for Christ and ought to work, in this life, for His glory.

We have to communicate what the Bible teaches about these rewards to ensure that believers do not miss out on such rewards.

## I. The Judgment Seat of Christ –

The Bible teaches that Christians will face judgment after they die. We will not be judged on the basis of whether we will have eternal life or not. Our eternal state has already been determined based on whether we have faith in Christ or not.

The judgment that Christians will face will concern the acts that we did or did not accomplish during our time on earth. The Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." This judgment, typically referred to as the Judgment Seat of Christ, is a judgment to determine if we, as believers, will receive eternal rewards.

[1] Unless otherwise specified, all Bible references are to the *New International Version* (NIV) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

1 Corinthians 3:11-15 says,

> For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. **12** Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— **13** each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. **14** If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. **15** If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

The foundation for a believer's faith is Christ Jesus. But during life, a believer will build upon this foundation with their actions. These actions will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ. If the acts that we accomplished were of no worth, then they will be disregarded and burned as wood, hay, or straw easily burns. But if we obey Christ and work for the Kingdom, accomplishing works of worth, they will withstand the fires of judgment, as gold, silver, and precious stones are able to survive flames. Right action in this life will receive rewards in eternity.

If you are a Christian, you will one day stand before Jesus at this judgment, and He will examine the work you did for Him as a believer.

What the New Testament tells us about the Judgment Seat of Christ –

> The Purpose – is to judge Christians. God is going to test every Christian's work that they do in this life. The useless works that we do are compared to wood, hay, and straw and will be burned up. Works that are done for the Lord are compared to gold, silver, and precious stones. They will endure the test, and the believer will be rewarded.
>
> The Judge – Jesus Christ will be the judge of believers and unbelievers.
>
> The Result – believers will be rewarded or will miss out on a reward based on how they lived during their time on earth.

## II. Treasure in Heaven –

Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-21, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, **20** but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Look at the main point of the verse – it is something *we are* to do. You can start laying up treasure in heaven right now! Laying up treasure in heaven begins during our time on earth.

What we do for Christ brings reward, but what we do for ourselves does not. What we do for Christ is how we are to lay up treasure in heaven.

"Treasure in heaven" means or refers to reward. We lay up treasure in heaven when we faithfully live and work for the Lord. It is not how much money we have or how talented we are that counts. The important thing is how *faithful* we are in using the gifts and the time and the money that God has given us. We are to be what Jesus calls "faithful servants." Living as faithful servants is what brings us eternal reward in heaven.

## III. Various Crowns in Scripture –

The Bible talks about many different rewards: praise from Christ, various crowns, reigning with Christ, white garments, eating of the tree of life, etc. We do not know what some of these rewards will look like, but any reward that we receive from the Lord is a wonderful and good gift from our Creator. The Bible speaks of the crowns that some Christians will receive when they get to heaven.

Two different words were used for crowns in the days that the Bible was authored. One was the crown that a king would wear. The other was a crown given to the winner of an athletic contest or game. When the Bible talks about a crown, it uses the word for the crown given to the winner of an athletic contest or game – the *winner's crown.* That crown is given to the Christian who lives and works for Christ as an eternal reward.

The New Testament speaks of five crowns and reveals how each crown is earned –

1. The Crown of Rejoicing (1 Thess. 2:19): telling other people about Christ.
2. The Crown of Glory (1 Peter 5:1-4): being a "good shepherd of the flock."
3. The Crown of Life (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10): persevering in trial.
4. The Crown of Righteousness (2 Timothy 4:6-8): looking for Christ's return.
5. The Crown of Mastery (1 Corinthians 9:24-27): victory over the flesh.

The descriptions of rewards being crowns (or as shining like stars) are symbols of rewards. We do not always know what those rewards will be. They may be beyond our understanding, and we will only know what they are when we receive them in heaven. But when the Biblical authors use symbols like *crowns*, we can know by this symbolism that these rewards are valuable and ought to be considered as precious.

### i. <u>The Crown of Rejoicing –</u>

The crown of rejoicing is earned by telling other people about Christ.

1 Thessalonians 2:19 says, "For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?"

The Christians at the church in Thessalonica were Paul's joy and "crown of boasting." Paul seems to be saying that he expects a reward – a crown – because he led this congregation to Christ. He gave them the good news that Jesus died for their sins. They believed in Christ when Paul told them about Jesus.

Philippians 4:1 talks about this same reward in the same way, "Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved." Again, Paul expects a reward, what he refers to as a crown, because he led those individuals to Christ.

In the Old Testament, this same reward is described as being for those who "lead others to righteousness" – that they will shine like the stars forever and ever (Daniel 12:3).[2] One of the things that we can do during our time on this earth to earn a reward in heaven is tell other people how they can be saved.

ii. <u>The Crown of Glory –</u>

The crown of glory is rewarded for being a good shepherd.

1 Peter 5:1-4 says, "So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:**2** shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; **3** not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. **4** And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."

Another reward that the Bible talks about is a reward for caring for other Christians. The Apostle Peter wrote to the elders of the church about this crown (elders are the pastors or leaders of the church). Peter tells them that they are to care for the members of their congregation as a shepherd cares for their flock of sheep. Peter reminds them of the great example that we have in Christ, who is our "chief Shepherd."

Peter says we are not to "lord over" or be "domineering" over those we care about. We are not to wrongly take authority or abuse authority given to us.

The promise of Scripture is that if you are a good shepherd, if you care for your people and you guide them as they walk with Jesus, then you will receive the unfading crown of glory when Christ the chief Shepherd appears again.

iii. <u>The Crown of Life –</u>

The crown of life is awarded to those who endure great trial and suffering.

James 1:12 says, "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him."

Jesus never promises that life will be easy. He never promises that Christians will not have trials or suffering. Jesus does promise us that if we persevere in trial and are approved, then we will receive a reward called the *Crown of Life*. As with many rewards, we are not sure what this reward will be. This reward could refer to merit for life here on earth *and* our future in heaven.

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[2] Daniel 12:3 says, "And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."

James tells us that when we endure trials, we will grow to be more mature in Christ (James 1:2-4). This spiritual maturity adds to our life during our time on earth and would definitely be considered a gift from God.

But this reward could be a very special eternal reward for Christians who have suffered in this life for the Lord Jesus. If your life is filled with trials and suffering and even persecution, then God says that you can "exult" in your tribulations. The word "exult" or "rejoice" used in Romans 5:3 can be translated as "leap for joy." James says that we are to count it all joy when we are in trial (James 1:2-5).

Why would we "jump for joy" when we are in trials? Because Romans 8:18 says that "the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing *with the glory* that is to be revealed to us."

We await a glory that is incomparable to the pain we feel on earth. As we face such pain, we can look ahead in joy to the reward and peace we will attain in heaven.

In the letters to the seven churches recorded in Revelation, Jesus specifically encourages one church to endure suffering and if they do, they will receive the crown of life.

Revelation 2:10 says, "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."

iv. <u>The Crown of Righteousness –</u>

The crown of righteousness is awarded to those eagerly looking for Christ's return.

2 Timothy 4:6-8 says, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. **7** I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. **8** Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing."

The Bible says that Jesus is like a Father who has been away. His children are waiting for Him. Scripture also tells us that Jesus will return. In heaven, King Jesus has a reward for those children of His who are eagerly and alertly waiting and watching for His return.

Paul was looking forward to Jesus' return and for the reward that Jesus would give him: *the crown of righteousness.* It will be awarded to all of us Christians who "love his appearing."

What does it mean to "love his appearing?" Look at what Paul said and did. He did not just sit idly by looking up at the sky, waiting for Jesus. Instead, he said that he had "fought the good fight... finished the race... and kept the faith." He worked hard, finished the work that God had given him to do, and kept believing in Christ, expecting Him to return at any time. He was

eagerly looking for Jesus to appear in His second coming. This is what we should be doing as we look for Jesus' return.

As we work for Jesus, we must realize that at any moment He may appear in the clouds and catch us up to be with Him in heaven forever (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). The return of the Lord Jesus could happen at any moment ... are you saved? Are you ready? And are you looking for His return?

v. The Crown of Mastery –

This crown is awarded to those who overcome the flesh.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 says, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. **25** Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. **26** So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. **27** But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified."

One of the hardest things for a Christian to do is to live a life of victory over sin. The Bible calls this a battle over the flesh. After we are saved, we have a choice. We can obey the old sinful nature, or we can obey the new nature that God gives us in salvation. We are constantly being faced with this choice. God tells us to keep yielding to Him so we can have victory over the old, sinful nature.

God knows how difficult it is for us to have victory over the flesh. He knows the only way that we can do it is by depending moment by moment on Him. He promises a reward to Christians who do just that. In 1 Corinthians, Paul says to not let your desires control you! Paul instructs believers that we should develop discipline. Just as the athlete disciplines himself or herself and trains to win, we are to do the same as we live for Christ.

## IV. Other Rewards Mentioned in Scripture –

The crowns as eternal rewards are only one category of rewards. The New Testament also talks about many other kinds of rewards.

i. In Persecution –

Persecution has always been part of the Church. The Bible says that "all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12). Much persecution is going on in the world today. More Christians have been killed in the 20th and 21st centuries than in any other century in history.[3]

But Jesus said, "Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! **23** Rejoice in that day, and leap

[3] "Persecuted Church Statistics," The Esther Project, http://theestherproject.com/statistics/.

for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets." (Luke 6:22-23)

If you are being persecuted and suffering for Christ, the Lord knows your problem. He knows where you are and what you are going through and He says, "leap for joy, for your reward will be great in heaven!"

ii. Love Your Enemies –

A lot of people are difficult to love. One of the most difficult persons to love is our enemy. If someone hates us and persecutes us, it is not easy to love them. We often feel that we are justified to treat them as they treat us. We are not!

We cannot ignore our enemies either. God tells us to love them. Matthew 5:44 says, "But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

Jesus said in Luke 6:35, "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil." God tells us to act in love, just as He does. In doing so, we are qualified to receive the great reward promised to those who love their enemies.

iii. In Giving –

In Matthew 6:2-4, Jesus tells us that when we give, we are to do it without having to be seen. We are not to announce it to others or boast about it. Our giving is to be in secret, between God and us. Jesus describes it as not letting "your left hand know what your right hand is doing." Jesus says that when we give in this humble, secret manner, "your Father who sees in secret will reward you." You will be rewarded for living in such a way.

It does not matter if you do not have much to give. In Mark 12:41-44, Jesus was at the Temple, watching different people give their money for offering. Many rich people were putting in large sums of money. Then a poor widow came and put in two copper coins. Jesus told the disciples that the poor widow had put in more than anyone else, because she gave out of her poverty all that she owned, while others gave out of their surplus. She gave out of what she had to live on. You can be sure that she will be rewarded for her willingness to give.

iv. In Prayer –

There is reward in praying! We have the wonderful privilege of coming into the presence of the God of the universe and talking to Him whenever we choose. But Christians often treat this privilege lightly. We neglect to pray. We go for hours, sometimes even days without talking to the Lord.

Suppose a friend said "good morning" to you when you met early in the day.

Then he was with you all day long but hardly said a word to you the rest of the day.

Would you think something was wrong?

Do you do this with the Lord Jesus? He does not do it with us. Whenever we are ready to talk to Him, He is always there ready to listen. He is always faithful, even when we are not.

God gave us this gracious privilege of prayer, and He tells us that we will be rewarded for prayer! Imagine, the God of the universe will reward us for spending time talking to Him!

He has one requirement, however, for this reward. It is the same as giving. We are not to pray to impress other people. Jesus said in Matthew 6:5, “And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.” The Lord means that the reward of the hypocrites is the approval that people give them. People look at them praying beautiful prayers and they say, "Oh, aren't they spiritual! Don't they pray beautiful prayers! They are so dedicated to the Lord!"

The Lord Jesus says this approval *is* their reward, and they will not get any other reward from Him. So, when we pray, the Lord tells us to do it in secret (Matthew 6:5-6). Of course, there are times when we pray in public or with others, but Jesus’ point in this verse is that we do not pray *just* to impress other people.

<u>Conclusion –</u>

Matthew 6:1 says that we should not practice our righteousness (the good things we do) before men to be noticed. If we do, we will have no reward from our Father in heaven. That is true in everything we do for the Lord. We are to be careful of our attitude and motive. Do we do what we do to impress people or because we love the Lord? Will you receive eternal rewards for how you obey Christ?

Works Cited

"Persecuted Church Statistics." The Esther Project. http://theestherproject.com/statistics/.