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To St. Joseph Communications Publication

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Scriptural Response to:
Biblical Evidence for Catholics by St. Joseph Communications

SCRIPTURE ALONE

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen [John 21:25].

John is not exaggerating when he says the whole world could not hold the books about Him if it all could be written. The Lord Jesus is the One who died on the cross and rose again from the dead. He is the eternal God, our Savior.

1

21:25 John explained that he had been selective rather than exhaustive in His testimony. Although selective, the truth revealed in John's gospel is sufficient to bring anyone to faith in the Messiah and Son of God (14:26; 16:13).

2

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

Paul was greatly concerned about the future. He wondered, just as we do when we approach the end of our ministry, if other men will come along who will preach and teach the Word of God. Sometimes we develop an Elijah complex. At times when I was a pastor in Los Angeles, I cried like Elijah, "Oh, Lord, I'm the only one left!" But I found out that was not true. All over the country I've seen the Lord raise up fine young preachers who are standing for the things of God. It is a real concern to us older men that there be young men who will be faithful in teaching God's Word. So Paul was admonishing Timothy to pass along the things he had been teaching him to "faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." And God will raise up men with gifts of teaching—this is the way He moves even today.

As sons of God we ought to be concerned about our Father's business. The Lord Jesus in His humanity as a boy said, "I must be about my Father's business." Well, I have become a son of God—not like the Lord Jesus, but I've become a son of God through faith in Christ. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power [the authority] to become the sons of God, even to them that [do no more nor less than] believe on his name" (John 1:12). Now that I am a son of God I am interested in my Father's business. By the way, are you interested in your Father's business? And the main business is getting out the Word of God. But we need to recognize that we need the grace of God to do the business of God—as well as in every facet of our lives as His children.

¹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:506

²MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Jn 21:25

Perhaps you are thinking that you are disappointed with yourself. If you are, that means you must have believed in yourself. You should not have. You are to walk by the grace of God—“We walk by faith and not by sight.” Or perhaps you are discouraged. If you are, that means you do not believe God’s Word and way of blessing. You really thought you could do it your way, and now you are discouraged. Or you may be saying, “I hope I can do better in the future.” Then you do expect to get some good out of the old nature! Oh, my friend, be strong in the grace of God.

3

2:2 heard from me. See notes on 1:13; cf. 3:14. During Timothy’s many years of close association with Paul (see Introduction to 1 Timothy: Author and Date), he had heard divine truth which God had revealed through the apostle. **among many witnesses.** Such as Silas, Barnabas, and Luke, and many others in the churches who could attest to the divine authenticity of Paul’s teaching—a needed reminder to Timothy in light of the many defections at Ephesus (cf. 1:15). **faithful men who will be able to teach others.** Timothy was to take the divine revelation he had learned from Paul and teach it to other faithful men—men with proven spiritual character and giftedness, who would in turn pass on those truths to another generation. From Paul to Timothy to faithful men to others encompasses 4 generations of godly leaders. That process of spiritual reproduction, which began in the early church, is to continue until the Lord returns.⁴

Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you [1 Cor. 11:2].

Up to this point he had said, “I praise you not,” but here Paul has an item of praise for them. He praises them because they have remembered him in prayer and in their giving, and they were practicing the ordinances he had taught them.

5

11:2 traditions. In the strict sense used here, a synonym for God’s Word (cf. 2 Thess. 2:15). The NT sometimes uses the word in a negative way, referring to man-made ideas or practices, especially those that conflict with Scripture (cf. Matt. 15:2–6; Gal. 1:14; Col. 2:8).⁶

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers [Acts 2:42].

³McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:464-465

⁴MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 2 Ti 2:2

⁵McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:49

⁶MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Co 11:2

I have a little booklet called the *Spiritual Fingerprints of the Visible Church*. How can you identify a real church? Notice the four marks of identification. First, *They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine*. The mark of a church is not the height of the steeple nor the sound of the bell. It is not whether the pulpit is stationed in the middle or the chancel is divided. The important issue is whether or not they hold to the apostles' doctrine. Correct doctrine was one of the fingerprints of the visible church. Secondly, *fellowship*. They were sharing the things of Christ. The third, *breaking of bread*. Breaking of bread is more than just going through the ritual of the Lord's Supper. It means being brought into a fellowship and a relationship with Christ. The fourth, *prayers*. I'm afraid in the average church today it is a little fingerprint. That is, prayer is the evident weakness of the church. Actually, the greatest asset of any church is prayer.

7

2:42 apostles' doctrine. The foundational content for the believer's spiritual growth and maturity was the Scripture, God's revealed truth, which the apostles received (*see notes on John 14:26; 15:26, 27; 16:13*) and taught faithfully. *See notes on 2 Pet. 1:19–21; 3:1, 2, 16.* **fellowship.** Lit. "partnership," or "sharing." Because Christians become partners with Jesus Christ and all other believers (1 John 1:3), it is their spiritual duty to stimulate one another to righteousness and obedience (cf. Rom. 12:10; 13:8; 15:5; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:2, 25; 5:21; Col. 3:9; 1 Thess. 4:9; Heb. 3:13; 10:24, 25; 1 Pet. 4:9, 10). **breaking of bread.** A reference to the Lord's Table, or Communion, which is mandatory for all Christians to observe (cf. 1 Cor. 11:24–29). **prayers.** Of individual believers and the church corporately (*see 1:14, 24; 4:24–31; cf. John 14:13, 14*).⁸

Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen [2 John 12–13].

In other words, John says, "I can tell it better than I can write it." David said the same thing, "... my tongue is the pen of a ready writer" (Ps. 45:1). When David began to write that wonderful forty-fifth psalm, a psalm of praise to Christ, he simply said, "I wish I could *tell* it to you. I can *say* it better than I can write it." This is the reason I love the radio ministry. I can say it lots better than I can write it.

"The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen." Apparently, they were children of a sister of this elect lady, or it was a sister church sending greetings to this lady and to the local church there.

This is a tremendous little letter, and its message ought to alert every believer today.

(For Bibliography to 2 John, see Bibliography at the end of 3 John.)

9

⁷McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:521-522

⁸MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ac 2:42

⁹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:834-835

12 paper and ink. The word “paper” refers to a papyrus sheet. One papyrus sheet could contain the whole letter of 2 John. The term “ink” means “black” and refers to a mixture of water, charcoal, and gum resin that was used to write. **face to face.** John lit. wrote “mouth to mouth.” Cf. Num. 12:8 where God spoke to Moses “mouth to mouth.” **that our joy may be full.** The blessing of hospitality is full joy (vv. 12,13). John uses this same wording in 1 John 1:4. When believers uphold the biblical standards for fellowship, the result is genuine joy among believers because the truths of the Word are maintained.¹⁰

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation [2 Pet. 1:20].

“Knowing this first.” Simon Peter says that this is the first thing we are to know. The word *knowing* is a knowledge that comes, not only from the Word of God, not only from facts that can be ascertained—if you have an honest heart, you can find out whether the facts in the Bible are accurate or not—but these are things which you can know by the Holy Spirit’s making them real to you. As I have said before, I have long since passed the stage when I wanted the Bible proved to me. When I was in college, I did want the Bible proved to me; and if I found that archaeology had dug up a spadeful of dirt somewhere that proved a fact in the Bible, I would clap my hands like a little child and shout, “Wonderful!” I don’t do that anymore. I don’t need a spadeful of turned-up dirt to prove the Bible to me. The Spirit of God Himself has made the Word of God real to my heart. I know there is a transforming power in God’s Word. I get letters from all over the world which testify to that fact. There is power in the Word of God. This is something that we can *know*, and the facts, confirmed by the Holy Spirit, make it real to us.

“No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.” What Peter is saying here is that no portion of the Scripture is to be interpreted apart from other references to the same subject. That is the reason I put up such an objection to this idea of pulling out one little verse of Scripture and building a doctrine on that one verse. If you cannot get the whole body of Scripture to confirm your doctrine, then you had better get a new doctrine, my friend.

I think a good illustration is the difference between riding in a good, solid, four-wheeled wagon and on a unicycle. If you have ever seen a person ride on that one wheel of a unicycle, you have noted that he does a lot of twisting and turning and maneuvering around to stay balanced on that one wheel. In the circus I once saw a man riding way up high on a unicycle, and all of a sudden it went out from under him, and he fell backwards. Believe me, he had a bad fall. And I thought, *Oh, how many Christians are like that today. They base what they believe on a single verse.* While it is wonderful to have one marvelous verse of Scripture, if it tells a great truth, there will be at least two or three verses and usually a whole chapter on it somewhere in the Bible. Simon Peter is telling us that no passage of Scripture should be interpreted by itself. We need to confirm it with other Scriptures.

lit. literally

¹⁰MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 2 Jn 12

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost [2 Pet. 1:21].

“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man.” Obviously he is referring to Old Testament prophecy. It didn’t come by the will of man. That is, Isaiah, for example, did not sit down saying, “I think I’ll write a book because I need some money. I’ll send it to the publisher, and he will send me an advance check, and then I’ll get royalties for it.” That is the reason some men write in our day, but that is not the way Isaiah did it. Listen to Peter: “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man.” The prophecy of Isaiah was not something that Isaiah thought up.

“But holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” “Holy men” does not mean that the writers were some super-duper saints. It means holy in the sense of being set apart for this particular office. If you are a holy Christian, it means that you are set apart for Jesus Christ. *Holy* means “to be set apart.”

“As they were moved by the Holy Ghost [Spirit]” is a delightful figure of speech. The Greek actually portrays the idea of a sailing vessel. The wind gets into those great sails, bellies them out, and moves the ship along. That is the way the Holy Spirit moved these men.

Here in California we have a yacht regatta each year. The yachts line up and start for Honolulu, Hawaii, to sail in around Diamond Head. (A man must be rich enough to own such a sailing yacht and to have the time to enter such a regatta.) Some time ago a doctor performed an operation on me one day, and the next day he was off sailing to Honolulu! When he got back, I was asking him about it. He told me that they have an extra sail which they put out when they get a good wind and that moves the boat right along. Well, this is exactly what Peter is saying in this verse of Scripture. These men who were set apart for the writing of the Scriptures were moved along by the Spirit of God.

Now let me remind you that this is Peter’s swan song, and, like Paul in his swan song, he emphasizes the importance of the Word of God for the days of apostasy. Paul said, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God . . .” (2 Tim. 3:16), and Peter is saying that the writers of Scripture were moved along by the Holy Spirit. The thought is the same. It is wonderful to see how God could take each man and use him, without changing his style or interfering with his personality, to write His Word so that His message comes across. While Paul the apostle wrote eloquent Greek, Peter the apostle—since he was a fisherman and Greek was his second language—wrote Greek that was not quite as good. Yet God used both of these men to write exactly what He wanted to say—so much so that, if God spoke out of heaven today, He would have to repeat Himself, because He already has said all that He has to say to mankind. God has gotten His Word to us through men of different personalities and different skills. For this reason I call it a man-book and a God-book.

The written Word, like the Lord Jesus, the living Word, is both human and divine. The Lord Jesus could weep at a grave, but He could also raise the dead. He could sit down at a well because He was tired and thirsty, but He could also give the water of life to a poor sinner. He could go to sleep in a boat, but He could also still the storm. He was a man, but He was God also. And the Bible is both human and divine.

Simon Peter is telling us that we have “a more sure word of prophecy.” He puts a sure rock under our feet. The Scriptures are something that we can have confidence in. No

wonder the Word of God has been attacked more than anything else. If the enemy can get rid of the foundation, he knows that the building will come crashing down.

It is sheer nonsense for a preacher to stand at a pulpit and preach a sermon showing that he does not believe that the Bible is the Word of God. That, to my judgment, is as silly as the poor fellow in the insane asylum whom a visitor saw using a pickax on the foundation at the corner of the dormitory in an attempt to destroy the foundation. The visitor, wanting to be sympathetic, asked the man with the pick, "What are you doing?"

"I'm digging away the foundation. Can't you see?"

"Yes, but don't you live in this building?"

"Of course I do, but I live upstairs."

For a preacher to discredit the Word of God is equally as insane. My friend, the Scriptures as we have them are a solid foundation on which to rest our faith.

The last time I was in Greece, I went again to the Acropolis in Athens and examined the Parthenon. I have examined it several times to make sure I am accurate in this statement: there are not two parallel lines in the place, nor is there a straight line. If you go to one end and look down, you will see that it comes up to a hump in the middle and then goes back down. The Greeks had learned that the human eye never sees anything straight which is straight. This, I believe, is the reason God says that we are to walk by faith and not by sight. We can't trust our own eyes nor our own ears, but we can rest upon the Word of God.

One of the greatest proofs that the Bible is indeed the Word is fulfilled prophecy. Over one-third of the Scripture was prophetic at the time it was first written. It is not to be treated as speculation or superstition because of the fact that a great deal of it has already been literally fulfilled. As someone has well said, "Prophecy is the mold into which history is poured." Fulfilled prophecy is, to me, one of the great proofs of the accuracy of Scripture. Peter has said, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy." Since one-fourth of prophecy has been fulfilled, this means that one-fourth of one-third of the Bible is fulfilled prophecy. Man cannot guess that accurately! There were three hundred thirty prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the first coming of Christ, and all of them were literally fulfilled. No human being can guess like that.

Let me give you an example. Suppose that right now I should make a prophecy that it is going to rain tomorrow. I'd have a 50 percent chance of being right, because it either will or it won't. But suppose I add to that the prediction that it would start raining tomorrow morning at nine o'clock. That would be another uncertain element. I am no mathematician, but it seems to me that this would reduce my chance of being right by another 50 percent. Now suppose that I not only say it is going to start raining at nine o'clock but also that it will stop raining at two o'clock. According to my figuring, that would bring down my chance of being correct to 12 1/2 percent. And it would be a lot less than that if you figure it according to a twenty-four hour day. But suppose I add three hundred uncertain elements. I would not have a ghost of a chance of being accurate. Yet the Word of God hit it, my friend. It is accurate. The Bible has moved into the area of absolute impossibility, and that to me is absolute proof that it is the Word of God.

11

¹¹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:728-730

1:20 knowing this first. A call to recognize His truth as priority, namely that Scripture is not of human origin. **prophecy of Scripture.** I.e., all of Scripture. This refers primarily to all of the OT, and then by implication to all of the NT (*see notes on 3:15,16*). **private interpretation.** The Gr. word for “interpretation” has the idea of a “loosing,” as if to say no Scripture is the result of any human being privately, “untying” and “loosing” the truth. Peter’s point is not so much about how to interpret Scripture, but rather how Scripture originated, and what its source was. The false prophets untied and loosed their own ideas. But no part of God’s revelation was unveiled or revealed from a human source or out of the prophet’s unaided understanding (see v. 21).

1:21 by the will of man. As Scripture is not of human origin, neither is it the result of human will. The emphasis in the phrase is that no part of Scripture was ever at any time produced because men wanted it so. The Bible is not the product of human effort. The prophets, in fact, sometimes wrote what they could not fully understand (1 Pet. 1:10,11), but were nonetheless faithful to write what God revealed to them. **moved by the Holy Spirit.** Grammatically, this means that they were continually carried or borne along by the Spirit of God (cf. Luke 1:70; Acts 27:15,17). The Holy Spirit thus is the divine author and originator, the producer of the Scriptures. In the OT alone, the human writers refer to their writings as the words of God over 3800 times (e.g., Jer. 1:4; cf. 3:2; Rom. 3:2; 1 Cor. 2:10). Though the human writers of Scripture were active rather than passive in the process of writing Scripture, God the Holy Spirit superintended them so that, using their own individual personalities, thought processes, and vocabulary, they composed and recorded without error the exact words God wanted written. The original copies of Scripture are therefore inspired, i.e., God-breathed (cf. 2 Tim. 3:16) and inerrant, i.e., without error (John 10:34,35; 17:17; Titus 1:2). Peter defined the process of inspiration which created an inerrant original text (cf. Prov. 30:5; 1 Cor. 14:36; 1 Thess. 2:13).

12

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat [Heb. 5:12].

“Ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.” Some of them want a D.D. degree, but they don’t even know their ABCs. “First principles” is from the Greek word *stoicheion* (from which we get our English word *atom*, by the way), meaning “primary elements”—the ABCs of the Christian life. They ought to be teachers and mature saints, but instead they are still little babies needing someone to burp them.

For example, one Sunday after the morning service a church member stopped to talk to me while I was shaking hands with folk who were leaving. He said, “Dr. McGee, do you have anything against me?” I said, “No. Why do you say that?” “Well, you passed me yesterday on the street, and you didn’t speak to me.” That is baby talk. I didn’t even see that person, and it is perfect nonsense to talk like that. Someone else said, “Why

Gr. Greek

¹²MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 2 Pe 1:20

didn't the soloist sing this morning? We wanted to hear the soloist sing." Oh, my gracious, what little babies, wanting their rattles, and wanting the bottle with the nipple on it!

To these Hebrew believers the writer says, "You are such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. You are not of age; you are not full grown; you haven't reached maturation." Now a baby cannot eat meat, but an adult can enjoy milk. I will admit that a lot of saints today sit and listen to baby talk from the pulpit. It is tragic indeed that they have to endure this, but they do.

¹³

5:12 teachers. Every believer is to be a teacher (Col. 3:16; 1 Pet. 3:15; cf. Deut. 6:7; 2 Tim. 3:15). If these Hebrews had really obeyed the gospel of Christ, they would have been passing that message on to others. The Jews were instructed in the law and prided themselves because they taught the law, but had not really understood or appropriated its truths to themselves (*see notes on Rom. 2:17–23*). **oracles.** These are contained in the OT Scripture, which had laid the foundation for the gospel and had been committed into the care of the Hebrews (Rom. 3:1,2). The ABC's of the law tutored the Hebrews in order to lead them to faith in the Messiah (Gal. 3:23,24). They had also heard the NT gospel (2:2–4; 1 Pet. 4:11).

5:12,13 milk. Knowledge without obedience does not advance a person. In fact, by rejecting saving faith, the Hebrews were regressing in their understanding concerning the Messiah. They had long enough been exposed to the gospel to be teaching it to others, but were babies, too infantile and unskilled to comprehend, let alone teach, the truth of God.

¹⁴

FAITH ALONE

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins [Heb. 10:26].

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! Simon Peter said, "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Pet. 2:21). The warning is to the Hebrew believers because many of them were continuing to go to the temple and some were actually offering sacrifices there. They were keeping up a front, pretending that they were still under the Mosaic Law. In so doing they also were making it clear that the sacrifice of Christ was meaningless to them. Since the animal sacrifices prefigured Christ's sacrifice, now that Christ had died on the cross, all of that was fulfilled. Therefore, what before had been done in obedience to God's command, now has become willful sin. To continue to offer blood sacrifices which had been fulfilled by Christ was a frightful, terrible thing. They were acting as if the temple sacrifices were going on forever. The writer to the Hebrews is telling them that they cannot look to the

¹³McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:542

¹⁴MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Heb 5:12

temple any more, because there is no longer a sacrifice for sin. If a person rejects the truth of Christ's death for sin, there is no other sacrifice for sin available, and there is no other way to come to God. They are to look to Christ now rather than to the temple. If they refuse to do this, there is nothing left for them but judgment. The Word of God is very expressive in this connection.

"If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth." This means to *go on* sinning wilfully by offering the sacrifices. It is an attitude toward the Word of God which God calls willful rebellion. There is no more sacrifice in the Old Testament or the New Testament for presumptuous sins.

15

10:26–39 *See notes on 6:1–8.* This warning passage deals with the sin of apostasy, an intentional falling away, or defection. Apostates are those who move toward Christ, hear and understand His gospel, and are on the verge of saving belief, but then rebel and turn away. This warning against apostasy is one of the most serious warnings in all of Scripture. Not all of the Hebrews would respond to the gentle invitation of vv. 19–25. Some were already beyond response.

10:26 we. The author is speaking rhetorically. In v. 39, he excludes himself and genuine believers from this category. **sin wilfully.** The Gr. term carries the idea of deliberate intention that is habitual. The sin is rejecting Christ deliberately. These are not isolated acts. According to the Mosaic legislation, such acts of deliberate, premeditated sin required exclusion from the congregation of Israel (cf. Num. 15:30,31) and from its worship (cf. Ex. 21:14). Such sins also excluded the individual from sanctuary in the cities of refuge (cf. Deut. 19:11–13). **knowledge.** The Gr. term denotes specific knowledge, not general spiritual knowledge (cf. 6:4; cf. 1 Tim. 2:4). Though the knowledge was not defective or incomplete, the application of the knowledge was certainly flawed. Judas Iscariot is a good example of a disciple who had no lack of knowledge, but lacked faith and became the arch-apostate. **no longer.** *See note on 6:6.* The apostate is beyond salvation because he has rejected the only sacrifice that can cleanse him from sin and bring him into God's presence. To turn away from that sacrifice leaves him with no saving alternative. This is parallel to Matt. 12:31 (*see note there*).

16

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? [Luke 6:31–46]. The minister of a church who is seeking popularity does not dare mention sin. Some use the gyration of psychoanalysis to explain away the exceeding sinfulness of sin. It is called a relic of a theological jungle. Sin is not a crime against God, according to many modern preachers. They are afraid to say that God hates sin and that Jehovah is a Man of War.

To be right in God's sight you cannot compliment the ego, pat the pride, smile upon sin, and put cold cream on the cancer of sin. You cannot write a prescription on

¹⁵McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:576-577

Gr. Greek

¹⁶MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Heb 10:26

philosophy and have it filled in the pleasures of the world. The only place you can go is to the foot of the cross. There God performs an operation, major surgery, and makes you a new creature in Christ Jesus. That is the message we have in the Sermon on the Plain. It complements the Sermon on the Mount. It is a message the Lord gave many times to many different groups of people.

The Lord concludes this with a parable.

17

6:46 you call Me ‘Lord, Lord.’ It is not sufficient to give lip service to Christ’s lordship. Genuine faith produces obedience. A tree is known by its fruits (v. 44). *See notes on Matt. 7:21–23.*¹⁸

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven [Matt. 7:21].

You can run around and mouth about living by the Golden Rule, but the point is: Are you doing the will of the Father in heaven? If you are doing His will, you’ll come to Christ, recognizing that you need a Savior.

19

7:21 Not everyone who says ... but he who does. The barrenness of this sort of faith demonstrates its real character (cf. v. 20)—the faith that says but does not do is really unbelief. Jesus was not suggesting that works are meritorious for salvation, but that true faith will not fail to produce the fruit of good works. This is precisely the point of James 1:22–25; 2:26.²⁰

And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?

And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments [Matt. 19:16–17].

Notice how this young man approaches the Lord Jesus. He addresses Him as Good Master. He is willing to concede that He is good, and probably the enemies of Jesus would not have gone that far.

“Why callest thou me good?” I am sure you can see what our Lord was after. When He said, “There is none good but one, that is, God,” He was saying in effect, “If you see that I am good, it is because I am God.” He is directing his thinking so that he might accept Him as the Christ, the Son of God. Then the Lord Jesus flashed on this young man’s life the commandments that have to do with a man’s relationship to his fellowman.

¹⁷McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:274

¹⁸MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Lk 6:46

¹⁹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:42

²⁰MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 7:21

He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? [Matt. 19:18–20].

This young man could say that he had kept these commandments, and yet he recognized a lack in his life. The commandments which our Lord gave him compose the last section of the Decalogue which has to do with a man's relationship to man. The first of the Ten Commandments have to do with man's relationship to God. Our Lord did not use those because He was leading this young man along in his thinking. However, now the Lord directs his thinking to his relationship to God—

Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me [Matt. 19:21].

"If thou wilt be perfect," meaning *complete*. Following Jesus would have led him to see that he was not keeping the first commandments which have to do with a man's relationship to God. The Lord Jesus was on His way to the cross. If this man followed Jesus, it would be to the foot of a cross. Something, however, was preventing him from going after the Lord. His riches were his stumbling block. For you and for me it might be something entirely different.

21

19:18, 19 These are 5 of the 6 commandments that make up the second table of the Ten Commandments—all dealing with human relationships (cf. Ex. 20:12–16; Deut. 5:16–20). *See note on 22:40*. Christ omitted the tenth commandment, which deals with covetousness, and added Lev. 19:18, the summation of the second half of the Decalogue. Cf. Rom. 13:1–10.

19:20 I have kept. The self-righteous young man would not admit to his own sin. *See note on 9:13*.

19:21 go, sell what you have and give to the poor. Again, Jesus was not setting forth terms for salvation, but rather exposing the young man's true heart. His refusal to obey here revealed two things: 1) he was not blameless as far as the law was concerned, because he was guilty of loving himself and his possessions more than his neighbors (cf. v. 19); and 2) he lacked true faith, which involves a willingness to surrender all at Christ's bidding (16:24). Jesus was not teaching salvation by philanthropy; but He was demanding that this young man give Him first place. The young man failed the test (v. 22). **come, follow Me.** This was the answer to the young man's question in v. 16. It was a call to faith. It is likely that the young man never even heard or contemplated it, though, because his own love of his possessions was such a stumbling block that he had already rejected Jesus' claim to lordship over his life. Thus he walked away in unbelief.

22

²¹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:105

²²MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 19:18

And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation [John 5:28–29].

A better translation for the word *damnation* would be “judgment.”

There are two resurrections mentioned here. The Book of Revelation is even more specific and describes the completion of the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4–6) and the second resurrection (Rev. 20:11–15). The first resurrection is the resurrection of all the saved—the first phase of which is the next thing on the agenda of God. We call it the Rapture of the church. “Rapture” is a good translation of the Greek *harpazo*¹⁸¹. Paul used it in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 where he says we shall be “caught up,” which means “to be raptured.” The Rapture takes place at some time in the future. It is not dated and there are no signs given for it. It could happen at any moment. He is going to call His own out of this world, both the living and the dead. That is part of the first resurrection. Then, during the Tribulation Period, a great many believers will become martyrs. They will be raised at the end of the Great Tribulation Period together with the Old Testament saints. That also is part of the first resurrection. They will be raised to live forever here upon this earth. That is the first resurrection. It is the resurrection of life, as our Lord called it.

Then the resurrection of judgment is the Great White Throne judgment when all the unsaved, of all the ages, will be raised. They wanted to be judged by their works, and they will be! They will stand before God who is just and righteous; they will have an opportunity to stand before a Holy God and to plead their case. But God has already warned them; there is no one saved in that judgment. It is only the lost who are brought there, and they will be judged according to their works, because there are degrees in punishment (see Luke 12:47–48).

²³

5:29 those who have done good...evil. Jesus was not teaching justification by works (see 6:29). In the context, the "good" is believing on the Son so as to receive a new nature that produces good works (3:21; James 2:14–20), while the "evil" done is to reject the Son (the unsaved) and hate the light which has the result of evil deeds (3:18, 19). In essence, works merely evidence one's nature as saved or unsaved (*see notes on Rom. 2:5–10*), but human works never determine one's salvation.²⁴

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling [Phil. 2:12].

“Salvation” in this verse is used, I believe, in a general sense. Paul is talking about working out their problems which they had in the church and working out the problems in their own Christian lives. He is not there to help them and is not sure that he ever will be there again because he is in a Roman prison. So he tells them to work out their “own salvation with fear and trembling.”

²³McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:398

²⁴MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Jn 5:29

A preacher was reading this verse of Scripture in the morning service. A little girl whispered to her mother, “Mother, you can’t work *out* salvation unless it has first been worked *in*, can you?” Now that is a very good question. The next verse answers it.²⁵

2:12 obeyed. Their faithful response to the divine commands Paul had taught them (cf. Rom. 1:5; 15:18; 2 Cor. 10:5, 6). **work out your own salvation.** The Gr. verb rendered “work out” means “to continually work to bring something to fulfillment or completion.” It cannot refer to salvation by works (cf. Rom. 3:21–24; Eph. 2:8, 9), but it does refer to the believer’s responsibility for active pursuit of obedience in the process of sanctification (*see notes on 3:13, 14; Rom. 6:19; cf. 1 Cor. 9:24–27; 15:58; 2 Cor. 7:1; Gal. 6:7–9; Eph. 4:1; Col. 3:1–17; Heb. 6:10, 11; 12:1, 2; 2 Pet. 1:5–11*). **fear and trembling.** The attitude with which Christians are to pursue their sanctification. It involves a healthy fear of offending God and a righteous awe and respect for Him (cf. Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Is. 66:1, 2).²⁶

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad [2 Cor. 5:10].

This is the judgment seat, literally, the *bēma*. There is still a *bēma* in Corinth, and when we were there on tour, we took pictures of the ruins of it. This was the place where the judges of the city would meet the citizens and would judge them for certain things—there was no question of life or death. At the judgment seat of Christ only believers will appear. It is not a judgment of the believer’s sins, which Christ fully atoned for on the cross. The judgment is to see whether you are going to receive a reward or not.

When Paul says, “*We* must all appear,” remember that he is writing to believers. All we believers will be judged, that we may receive the things done in the body. We will be judged on the way we lived the Christian life, how we have lived in these bodies down here. When we go into His presence, we will be finished with these old bodies. The question He will ask is how we *used* these bodies. How did we live down here?

Paul faces this question when he writes to the Philippians. He says in Philippians 1:21, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Then he talks of his desire to go to be with Christ but also of his desire to live longer so that he can minister to the Philippians. He wants to stay so that he can preach the gospel of Christ a little longer. I had the same reaction the first time I had surgery for cancer and there was not too much hope for me.

You see, I felt like the little boy years ago in my southland. The preacher asked one night, “How many want to go to heaven?” Everybody put up his hand except that one boy. The preacher looked down at him and said, “Don’t you want to go to heaven?” The boy answered, “Sure, I want to go to heaven, but I thought you was gettin’ up a load for tonight.” Like that boy, I didn’t want to go right away when I had the cancer. Paul didn’t

²⁵McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:306

Gr. Greek

²⁶MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Php 2:12

want to go. He said he wanted to stay in his body and preach a little longer. He wanted Christ to be magnified in his body that he might be accepted of Him and that he might receive a reward.

This is the way I feel. I want to stay in this body and do as much for the Lord as I possibly can. Here is the first motivation for believers: We are all going to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and we will answer to the Lord for our lives. We are going to give a report to Him. Let me make it very clear that this is not the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20:11–15 where only the unsaved will stand. If you are a believer, your name is written in the Book of Life, and you have eternal life. However, you will stand before the *bēma*, the judgment seat of Christ, to be judged for rewards. You and I will stand before Him. This should motivate us to serve Him acceptably. Then when we come into His presence, He will be able to say, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

2. The fear of the Lord urges us to persuade men.²⁷

5:10 This describes the believer’s deepest motivation and highest aim in pleasing God—the realization that every Christian is inevitably and ultimately accountable to Him. **the judgment seat of Christ.** “Judgment seat” metaphorically refers to the place where the Lord will sit to evaluate believers’ lives for the purpose of giving them eternal rewards. It is translated from the Gr. word *bēma*, which was an elevated platform where victorious athletes (e.g., during the Olympics) went to receive their crowns. The term is also used in the NT to refer to the place of judging, as when Jesus stood before Pontius Pilate (Matt. 27:19; John 19:13), but here the reference is definitely from the athletic analogy. Corinth had such a platform where both athletic rewards and legal justice were dispensed (Acts 18:12–16), so the Corinthians understood Paul’s reference. **the things done in the body.** Actions which happened during the believer’s time of earthly ministry. This does not include sins, since their judgment took place at the cross (Eph 1:7). Paul was referring to all those activities believers do during their lifetimes, which relate to their eternal reward and praise from God. What Christians do in their temporal bodies will, in His eyes, have an impact for eternity (*see notes on 1 Cor. 4:3–5*; cf. Rom. 12:1, 2; Rev. 22:12). **whether good or bad.** These Gr. terms do not refer to moral good and moral evil. Matters of sin have been completely dealt with by the death of the Savior. Rather, Paul was comparing worthwhile, eternally valuable activities with useless ones. His point was not that believers should not enjoy certain wholesome, earthly things, but that they should glorify God in them and spend most of their energy and time with what has eternal value (*see notes on 1 Cor. 3:8–14*).²⁸

Who will render to every man according to his deeds [Rom. 2:6].

He shall reward every man according to his works. Absolute justice is the criterion of the judgment or rewards. Man’s deeds stand before God in His holy light. No man in his

²⁷McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:109

Gr. Greek

²⁸MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 2 Co 5:10

right mind wants to be judged on this basis. Remember Cornelius—he was a good man, but he was lost.

To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life [Rom. 2:7].

Let's keep in mind that under this second principle, a way of life is not the subject. Rather, a way of life is the basis of judgment. The “do-gooder” will be judged according to his works. John said, “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Rev. 20:12). The man who wants to work for eternal life may do so. He will be judged according to his deeds, but he is warned that they will avail nothing. “And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:15). Trusting Christ as Savior puts your name in the “book of life.” Eternal life is not a reward for effort; it is a gift to those who trust Christ.

Now notice the third principle of judgment.²⁹

2:6–10 *See notes on 2:1–16.* Although Scripture everywhere teaches that salvation is not on the basis of works (*see notes on 4:1–4; Eph. 2:8, 9*), it consistently teaches that God's judgment is always on the basis of a man's deeds (Is. 3:10, 11; Jer. 17:10; John 5:28, 29; 1 Cor. 3:8; 2 Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7–9; cf. Rom. 14:12). Paul describes the deeds of two distinct groups: the redeemed (vv. 7, 10) and the unredeemed (vv. 8, 9). The deeds of the redeemed are not the basis of their salvation but the evidence of it. They are not perfect and are prone to sin, but there is undeniable evidence of righteousness in their lives (*see notes on James 2:14–20, 26*).³⁰ ...

... **2:7 eternal life.** Not simply in duration, because even unbelievers will live forever (2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 14:9–11), but also in quality (*see note on John 17:3*). Eternal life is a kind of life, the holy life of the eternal God given to believers.³¹

And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.

And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left [Matt. 25:32–33].

These are all Gentiles who have lived through the Great Tribulation and appear as a mingling of sheep and goats, which our Lord will separate and judge as two distinct groups.

Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

²⁹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:657-658

³⁰MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ro 2:6

³¹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ro 2:7

For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

And the King shall answer and say unto them. Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me [Matt. 25:34–40].

The 144,000 Jews sealed at the time of the Great Tribulation will go out over the entire world to preach the message of the gospel of the kingdom, which is to receive Christ as the sacrifice for their sins and to be ready for His immediate coming. Some nations will reject Christ. Antichrist will have God’s messengers butchered and slain, and anyone who would give them a cup of cold water will do so at the risk of his life. To hand out a cup of cold water has little value in our day, but in the Great Tribulation it will have tremendous value. It will mean taking a stand for Jesus Christ. The basis on which the nations will be judged is their acceptance or rejection of Jesus Christ. He says, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me”—because the messengers were representing Him. That will be the way they evidence faith in the message that the kingdom of heaven is at hand and that they are to repent and turn to Christ to be saved.

For those who reject, symbolized as goats, there is only judgment—

Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal [Matt. 25:45–46].

Entire nations will enter the millennial kingdom. Out of these will be some individuals who will reject Christ. But the judgment of the nations at the second coming of Christ is to determine what nations are to enter the millennial kingdom. This judgment is separate and distinct from all other judgments.

³²

25:32, 33 sheep. I.e., believers (10:16; Ps. 79:13; Ezek. 34). They are given the place at “His right hand”—the place of favor. **goats.** These represent unbelievers, consigned to the place of dishonor and rejection.

25:34 prepared for you. This terminology underscores that their salvation is a gracious gift of God, not something merited by the deeds described in vv. 35, 36. Before “the foundation of the world,” they were chosen by God and ordained to be holy (Eph. 1:4)—predestined to be conformed to Christ’s image (Rom. 8:29). So the good deeds commended in vv. 35, 36 are the fruit, not the root of their salvation. The deeds are not the basis for their entrance into the kingdom, but merely manifestations of God’s grace in

³²McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:136-137

their lives. They are the objective criteria for judgment, because they are the evidence of saving faith (cf. James 2:14–26).

25:40 the least of these My brethren. This refers in particular to other disciples. Some would apply this to national Israel; others to needy people in general. But here Christ is specifically commending “those on His right” (v. 34) for the way they received His emissaries. *See note on 18:5.*

25:46 everlasting punishment ... eternal life. The same Gr. word is used in both instances. The punishment of the wicked is as never-ending as the bliss of the righteous. The wicked are not given a second chance, nor are they annihilated. The punishment of the wicked dead is described throughout Scripture as “everlasting fire” (v. 41); “unquenchable fire” (3:12); “shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2); a place where “their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44–49); a place of “torments” and “flame” (Luke 16:23, 24); “everlasting destruction” (2 Thess. 1:9); a place of torment with “fire and brimstone” where “the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever” (Rev. 14:10, 11); and a “lake of fire and brimstone” where the wicked are “tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10). Here Jesus indicates that the punishment itself is everlasting—not merely the smoke and flames. The wicked are forever subject to the fury and the wrath of God. They consciously suffer shame and contempt and the assaults of an accusing conscience—along with the fiery wrath of an offended deity—for all of eternity. Even hell will acknowledge the perfect justice of God (Ps. 76:10); those who are there will know that their punishment is just and that they alone are to blame (cf. Deut. 32:3–5).

33

Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things [Gal. 6:6].

This is probably the bluntest verse in the Bible. Paul is really putting it on the line. The Greek word *koinōneō*, translated “communicate,” means sharing, taking part—sharing the things of Christ together. Paul is bluntly saying this: “Pay your preacher. If someone ministers to your spiritual benefits, minister to him with material benefits.” If God has blessed you materially and you are being blessed by someone spiritually, then you ought to minister to that person with material benefits. This is put on a grace basis of sharing, but believe me, friend, if you go into a grocery store and buy bread and meat and go by the checkout stand without paying for it, you are in trouble. There are many people who are ministered to spiritually, but when they go by the checkout counter, they don’t share. No one thinks anything about it. The Word of God says that you are to share with those who minister to you.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap [Gal. 6:7].

This is one of those remarkable verses in Scripture. This is an immutable law that operates in every sphere of life. In agriculture and horticulture if you sow corn, you get corn; if you sow cotton, you reap cotton. In the moral sphere you also reap what you sow.

Gr. Greek

³³MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 25:32

In the Book of Matthew, chapter 13, the Lord Jesus Christ told about a sower that went forth to sow. He also told us about a reaper that went forth to reap.

One day a visitor in a penitentiary passed by a cell where a man was patching his prison garb with needle and thread. The visitor, wanting to begin a conversation with the prisoner, said, "What are you doing? Sewing?" The prisoner looked up and replied, "No, *reaping!*" That is the point of this verse. The principle stated here is immutable, invariable, unalterable, and cannot be revoked. It cannot be changed one iota, and it is applicable to every sphere and field of life. When you sow wheat, you will get wheat. You will never pick a squash off of a walnut tree. Sometimes a watermelon vine extends out twenty feet in one direction, but it has never been known to make the mistake of putting a pumpkin on the end of it. It always puts a watermelon out there. There is wheat being found in tombs in Egypt that was put there five thousand years ago. They planted it and it came up wheat. In five thousand years the seed did not forget that it was wheat. What *you* sow you will reap and that will never change.

There are many men in the Bible who illustrate this principle. One of them is Jacob, whose story is told in Genesis 27–29. Jacob deceived his father, Isaac. He put on a goatskin and pretended to be his brother Esau, who was a hairy outdoorsman, in order to receive the blessing given to the oldest son. After deceiving his father, Jacob ran away and lived with his Uncle Laban for several years. He thought he had gotten away with deceiving his father. But remember, God says that what you sow you will reap. You won't reap something similar; you will reap the identical thing that you sow. What happened to Jacob? He fell in love with Rachel, Laban's youngest daughter. He served seven years for her. They had the wedding, and when he lifted the veil, what did he have? He did not have Rachel, the younger daughter; he had Leah, the older daughter. I have a notion that Jacob learned a real lesson on his honeymoon. He had deceived his father by pretending to be the older son when he was actually the younger son. Now his uncle gave him the older daughter when he thought he was getting the younger daughter. Believe me, chickens do come home to roost!

In 1 Kings 21 we find the story of Ahab and Jezebel and their murderous plot to take Naboth's vineyard. Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard, but Naboth did not want to sell his land. But since Ahab and Jezebel were king and queen, they usually took what they wanted. Jezebel had Naboth killed and Ahab took possession of the vineyard. They thought they would get away with their evil deed, but God sent Elijah to them with a message: "... Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine" (1 Kings 21:19). Later Ahab was wounded in battle. He told his chariot driver to take him out of the battle, and the blood from his wound ran out into his chariot. After the battle, he was brought back to Samaria, and there in the pool of Samaria they washed the chariot, and the dogs licked up the blood.

Another example is the apostle Paul. He was a leader in the stoning of Stephen, and after his conversion, when he was over in the Galatian country, he was stoned. You may think that, because he was converted and his sins were forgiven, he would not reap what he had sowed. But it is a law of God that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

I remember well hearing Mel Trotter, the evangelist who was a drunkard before his conversion. I had invited him to Nashville, Tennessee, to hold evangelistic meetings. One night after a meeting we went to a place called Candyland and everybody ordered a great

big sloppy banana split, or a milkshake, or a malt. All Mel Trotter ordered was a little bitty glass of carbonated water. Everyone began to rib him about it, and asked him for the reason. I shall never forget his answer, “When the Lord gave me a new heart at my conversion, He did not give me a new stomach. I am paying for the years I spent drinking.” May I say again, “Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Don’t be deceived. God is not mocked. You won’t get by with it.

I wish young people would realize the truth of this principle. Many of them are taking drugs. Many are trying to satisfy themselves by indulging in easy sex, free love. Some of them are already beginning to reap the results of what they have sown. Venereal disease has reached epidemic proportions in many states in America, and there is an alarming rise in mental disorders. Why? God says that you will not get by with sin—regardless of how many pills you take. God says you will reap what you sow. God will not be mocked. When you sow corn, you reap corn. When you sow sin, that is what you will reap. Someone may say, “I got converted.” That is wonderful, but you are still going to have a payday someday. You will still reap what you have sown.

For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting [Gal. 6:8].

Reaping “life everlasting” includes the fruit of the Spirit in this life and the glorious prospect of the future.

I think many Christians really ought to be fearful of the return of Christ for His own, because it is then that we shall go before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of the things done in the flesh. My friend, you may be saved, but it may still be very embarrassing for you in that day when you give an account of your life to Him. John mentions the fact that it is possible to be ashamed at His appearing (see 1 John 2:28). If you are going to live in the flesh, you will produce the things of the flesh. That does not, however, mean that you will lose your salvation, but it does mean that you will lose your reward, which will make it a day of shame and regret when you stand before Him.

God has put up a red light; now He puts up a green light. Here are words for your comfort and encouragement.

And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not [Gal. 6:9].

A father said to me some time ago, “I’m concerned about my boys.” He is a doctor, and he said, “The tide is against me. The schools are against me. Other parents seem to be against me, and even some friends are against me. But I want to raise my boys right.” If that is your concern, my friend, let me encourage you to sow the right seed. Be patient, and you will reap what you have sown. In Kansas you can’t go out and cut grain in January. You have to wait until the time of reaping comes. So just keep sowing. You may have problems and difficulties today, but just keep sowing the Word of God. The Lord has promised: “For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isa. 55:10–11).

Remember that Abraham believed God and walked with Him in the land of Canaan. At that time the Canaanite—wicked and idolatrous—was in the land. A son, Isaac, was born to Abraham. When Isaac became a young man, Abraham took him to the top of

Mount Moriah. In obedience to God's command, Abraham prepared to offer his son as a sacrifice. God, however, did not let him go through with it. Abraham sowed to the Spirit and he reaped life everlasting.

Jochebed was the mother of Moses. Because of the terrible times in which they lived, she devised a plan to save his life, and he was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter. By God's wonderful arrangement, Jochebed was able to be his nursemaid while he was young. Undoubtedly she taught Moses about God and His call to Abraham and about His purpose for Israel. Then she saw her boy grow up like an Egyptian. All Egypt was against her—the culture of Egypt, the pleasures of Egypt, the philosophy of Egypt, and the religion of Egypt. But there came a day when Moses forsook the pleasures and sins of Egypt and went out to take his place with God's people. Jochebed reaped what she had sown.

We also have an illustration of this principle in the life of David. His sin was glaring, and many folk think of him as being a cruel, sinful man. But sin did not characterize David's life. It is interesting that a drop of black ink on a white tablecloth can be seen from a long distance, but a drop of black ink on a black suit would never be noticed. Other kings during that period of time were so bad that, when they committed a sin such as David did, it would not be noticed. But in David's life it stands out like a horrible blot. David had a heart for God. Even in his confession, he reveals his hunger and thirst for God. But David sowed sin and reaped a terrible harvest in the lives of his own children.

We reap what we sow, my friend. "And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith [Gal. 6:10].

Now Paul moves on. He says that we ought to be do-gooders. Now I recognize that the entire religion of liberalism is one of "doing good." I believe in doing good, but you have to have the right foundation under the good deeds. The right foundation is the gospel of the grace of God and walking in the Spirit of God. When you walk in the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit is produced. Then, my friend, you are going to do good. You will do good for all men, especially for other believers.

34

6:6 all good things. Although this expression could refer to material compensation, the context suggests that Paul is referring to the spiritually and morally excellent things learned from the Word, in which they fellowship together. Paul uses this same term to describe the gospel (Rom. 10:15; cf. Heb. 9:11).

6:7 whatever a man sows ... reap. This agricultural principle, applied metaphorically to the moral and spiritual realm, is universally true (cf. Job 4:8; Prov. 1:31–33; Hos. 8:7; 10:12). This law is a form of God's wrath. *See note on Rom. 1:18.*

6:8 sows to his flesh. *See notes on 5:16–19; Rom. 7:18; 8:23.* Here it means pandering to the flesh's evil desires. **corruption.** From the Gr. word for degeneration, as in decaying food. Sin always corrupts and, when left unchecked, always makes a person

³⁴McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:198-200
Gr. Greek

progressively worse in character (cf. Rom. 6:23). **sows to the Spirit.** To walk by the Holy Spirit (*see notes on 5:16–18; Eph. 5:18; cf. John 8:31; 15:7; Rom. 12:1, 2; Col. 2:6; 3:2*). **everlasting life.** This expression describes not only a life that endures forever but, primarily, the highest quality of living that one can experience (cf. Ps. 51:12; John 10:10; Eph. 1:3, 18).

6:10 opportunity. This Gr. word refers to a distinct, fixed time period, rather than occasional moments. Paul's point is that the believer's entire life provides the unique privilege by which he can serve others in Christ's name. **especially ... the household of faith.** Our love for fellow Christians is the primary test of our love for God (*see notes on John 13:35; Rom. 12:10–13; 1 John 4:20, 21*).

35

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works [Rev. 20:12–13].

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne; and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them; and they were judged every one according to their works.

Yes, my friend, you will be able to get a fair trial there. Your life is on tape, and Christ happens to have the tape. When He plays it back, you will be able to listen to it, and it is not going to sound good to you, by any means. Are you willing to stand before God and have Him play the tape of your life? I think He will have it on a television screen so that you can watch it, too. Do you think your life can stand the test? I do not know about you, but I could not make it. Thank God for His grace—"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

The dead are classified as the small and the great. They are all lost, for evidently none have their names written in the Book of Life. They had never turned to God for salvation. The Lord Jesus said that in His generation "... ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40). These folk standing before His throne had not come.

These are books which record the works of all individuals. God keeps the tapes, and He will play them at the right time. There will be a lot of politicians who will have their tapes played in that day, and there will be a lot of public figures—even preachers—who will have their tapes played in that day, and they are not going to be happy about it. If you are saved, you are not going to stand before this judgment. Your works are to be judged as a child of God at the judgment seat of Christ, which will be for the purpose of rewards (see 2 Cor. 5:10). The Great White Throne judgment is the judgment of the lost. Multitudes want to be judged according to their works. This is their opportunity. The judgment is just, but no one is saved by works.

³⁵MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ga 6:6

“And the sea gave up the dead that were in it.” Multitudes who have gone to a watery grave in which the chemicals of their bodies have been dissolved in the waters of the sea will be raised. God will have no problem with this. After all, they are only atoms. He just has to put them together again. He did it once; He can do it again. The graves on earth will give up their bodies; and hades, the place where the spirits of the lost go, will disgorge for this judgment.

36

20:12 standing before God. In a judicial sense, as guilty, condemned prisoners before the bar of divine justice. There are no living sinners left in the destroyed universe since all sinners were killed and all believers glorified. **books.** These books record every thought, word, and deed of sinful men—all recorded by divine omniscience (*see note on Dan. 7:10*, the verse that is the source of this text). They will provide the evidence for eternal condemnation. Cf. 18:6,7. **Book of Life.** It contains the names of all the redeemed (Dan. 12:1; *see notes on 3:5*). **judged according to their works.** Their thoughts (Luke 8:17; Rom. 2:16), words (Matt. 12:37), and actions (Matt. 16:27) will be compared to God’s perfect, holy standard (Matt. 5:48; 1 Pet. 1:15,16) and will be found wanting (Rom. 3:23). This also implies that there are degrees of punishment in hell (cf. Matt. 10:14,15; 11:22; Mark 12:38–40; Luke 12:47,48; Heb. 10:29).³⁷

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments [1 John 2:3].

First of all, let me point out that this verse has nothing to do with the security of the believer. John is talking about assurance. As God’s children, we are in a family. But how can we have the assurance that we are in God’s family? He is telling us that assurance comes by keeping His commandments.

“If we keep his commandments” does not refer to the Ten Commandments. John is not dealing with any legal aspects; he is dealing with family matters. The Ten Commandments were given to a nation, and on these commandments every civilized nation has based its laws. The Ten Commandments are for the unsaved. Now God has something for His own family, and they are commandments for His children. For example, in Galatians 6:2 the family is told, “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” In 1 Thessalonians 4:2 Paul tells the family of Christ, “For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.” Some of those commandments are mentioned in the last chapter of 1 Thessalonians. I have counted twenty-two commandments in that chapter, and here are a few of them. “Rejoice evermore”—God wants you to be a joyful Christian. “Pray without ceasing” refers to an *attitude* of prayer. That is, when you get off your knees, you still are to walk in a prayerful attitude. “Quench not the Spirit”—don’t say no to Him. These are some of the commandments which the Lord Jesus has given to believers, and if we are to have fellowship with the

³⁶McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:1060-1061

³⁷MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Re 20:12

Father and enjoy it by having assurance in our own hearts, we must keep His commandments. We do not feel that we are free to do as we please. The Christian doesn't do as *he* pleases; he does as *Christ* pleases.

“And hereby we do know that we know him.” Remember that throughout this epistle John is answering the Gnostics who claimed to have a superior knowledge that no one else had—and generally it was heresy. The apostle John is saying that the important thing is to know Jesus Christ. And how can we have the assurance that we know Him? My friend, although a great many folk believe in the security of the believer, they don't have the assurance of salvation, and the reason is obvious. We cannot know that we are children of God if we are disobedient to Him. Obedience to Christ is essential and is the very basis of assurance. You cannot have that assurance (oh, you can bluff your way through, but you cannot have that deep, down-in-your-heart assurance) unless you keep His commandments.

He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him [1 John 2:4].

I would call this very plain talk! In the previous verse John has said that *we know* that we *know* Him—this is the positive side. We know by experience in contrast to the esoteric knowledge of the Gnostics. Now he presents the negative side: disobedience to Christ is a proof that we do not know Him. This is plain and direct language. Disobedience to Christ on the part of a professing Christian is tantamount to being a liar. In other words, his life is a lie.

There are a great many people who say they are children of God, but are they?. It is one thing to *say* you are a child of God, and it is another thing to be a possessor of eternal life, to have a new nature that cries out to the Father for fellowship and wants to obey Him. You cannot make me believe that all of these church members who have no love for the Word of God and are disobedient to Christ are really His children. I do not believe they have had the experience of regeneration. John is making it very clear that we know that we know Him because we keep His commandments.

Let me repeat that John is *not* talking about the Ten Commandments that were given to the nation Israel in the Old Testament. John is talking about the commandments that Christ gave to the church. If a child of God does not have a love for these commandments, he is in the very gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity, as the Scripture says (see Acts 8:23).

The Lord Jesus, when He was here in the flesh, said of the Father, “... I do always those things that please him” (John 8:29). I can't say that, but I can say that I *want* to please Him, and I have dedicated my life to that end. Although I sometimes stumble and fall, I *want* to please Him. While it is true that “he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life ...” (John 3:36), it corroborates his faith when in his heart he knows that he wants to do God's will. The natural man never did want to do God's will. Oh, boy, this is a strong statement which John makes! “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” And John will tell us that the Holy Spirit is the one who prompted him to say it. The truth is not in a man who claims to be a child of God but does not keep His commandments.

2:3–6 Obedience to God’s commands constitutes a third test of genuine fellowship. First John presents two external tests that demonstrate salvation: doctrinal and moral. The doctrinal test consists of confessing a proper view of Christ and of sin (see 1:1–4 and 1:5–2:2), while the moral test consists of obedience and love (see also vv. 7–11). While subjective assurance of salvation comes through the internal witness of the Holy Spirit (5:10; Rom. 8:14–16; 2 Cor. 1:12), the test of obedience constitutes objective assurance that one is genuinely saved. Obedience is the external, visible proof of salvation (*see notes on James 2:14–26; 2 Pet. 2:5–11*). The false teachers’ failure to obey God’s commands objectively demonstrated that they were not saved (Luke 6:46). Those who are truly enlightened and know God are obedient to His Word.

2:3,4 know ... keep. The repetition of these words emphasizes that those genuinely born again display the habit of obedience. Obedience results in assurance of salvation (cf. Eph. 2:2; 1 Pet. 1:14). That these two words are among John’s favorites is clear since he uses “know” approximately 40 times and “keep” approximately 10 times in this epistle.

2:6 abides. This word is one of John’s favorite terms for salvation (*see notes on John 15:4–10*). **just as He walked.** Jesus’ life of obedience is the Christian’s pattern. Those who claim to be Christians ought to live as He did (cf. John 6:38) since they possess His Spirit’s presence and power.

39

And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us [1 John 3:24].

The Holy Spirit verifies these things to our hearts if we have not grieved Him. We grieve the Holy Spirit when we do not do His will. Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). If we do not do that, we grieve the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is given to every believer, as Paul makes clear in Romans 8:9, “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if [lit., *since*] so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” The mark that you are a child of God is that you are indwelt by the Spirit of God, and it is the Holy Spirit who will verify these things and make them real to your heart.

40

3:23,24 Cf. 4:13. These verses again repeat the 3 features of this epistle—believing, loving, and obeying—which are the major evidences of true salvation. The third benefit of love is the abiding presence and empowering of the Holy Spirit.

41

³⁸McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:767-768

³⁹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Jn 2:3

⁴⁰McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:799

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous [1 John 5:3].

The New Scofield Reference Bible has changed “grievous” to *burdensome*. I’m not going to quarrel with that because it is a good translation, but the literal is really, *heavy*. His commandments are not heavy. This does not mean that they are difficult to keep but rather that they do not impose a burden when they are kept. John is saying that the child of God *wants* to keep His commandments. It is something that he wants to practice; it is not difficult for him to do these things at all. The little girl who was carrying a big, heavy baby was asked by a concerned woman, “Little girl, isn’t that baby too heavy for you?” The child replied, “He’s not heavy. He’s my brother.” It makes all the difference in the world, you see, when he’s your brother. “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.” The point is that they impose no burden on us because we are keeping them through love.

The story is told about a man and his family who years ago drove into a little town in Oklahoma in a covered wagon. They stopped at the town store to talk to the owner as he sat on an apple box out in front of the store. “What kind of town is this here?” they asked him. The storekeeper said, “Well, what kind of town did you come from?” “Oh,” the man said, “we came from a wonderful town. Everybody there seemed to know each other, seemed to care about each other, and had a concern for each other. They were very wonderful people. We really hated to leave, but we wanted to move west. We’re not sure where to settle down. What kind of town is this?” The storekeeper said, “This is just the same kind of town which you left. It’s that kind of town.” The man said, “Well, then, I think maybe we’ll settle here,” and they drove on down the street.

In a little while another covered wagon drove up in front of the little store. The man asked the storekeeper, “What kind of town is this?” So the storekeeper again said, “What kind of town did you leave?” “We were glad to get away from it,” the man said. “They were some of the meanest people that I have ever met. They were never very neighborly or very helpful. We never had any friends there, and that’s the reason we left.” The storekeeper told him. “Well, I think you are going to find this is the same kind of town. We are the same kind of people.” And the second man decided to drive on.

Another citizen of the town who had been sitting there with the storekeeper said, “Wait a minute! What do you mean by giving those two men two different viewpoints of this town?” And the storekeeper replied, “I’ve learned that any town will be the same kind of town that you have left—because you will be the same kind of person.”

May I say to you, the child of God ought to recognize that he is not to be looking for someone to do something for him, but he is to be expressing love in real action and in real concern for others. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). If you love the Lord Jesus, if you love your heavenly Father, you are going to love other believers. You will know that you are keeping His commandments, and they will not be a burden to you at all. The Lord Jesus said, “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:30). It will be heavy unless you have the

⁴¹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Jn 3:23

real love for the Lord and you truly want to serve Him. Then church work and other ministries will never become difficult.

Dr. Ironside taught this epistle of John while I was in seminary, and he told us this story:

Some time ago I read of a man who spent a few months in India. When he came back, he was discussing India at the home of some of his friends, and the talk drifted to missions, and this man, out of his wide experience, about five months in India, said, "I have no use for missions and missionaries. I spent months there, and didn't see that they were doing anything; in fact, in all that time I never met a missionary. I think the church is wasting its money on missions." A quiet old gentleman sat near. He had not said anything, but now spoke up and said, "Pardon me; how long did you say you were in India?"

"Five months."

"What took you there?"

"I went out to hunt tigers."

"And did you see any tigers?"

"Scores of them."

"It is rather peculiar," said the old gentleman, "but I have spent thirty years in India, and in those years I never saw a tiger but I have seen hundreds of missionaries. You went to India to hunt tigers and you found them. I went to India to do missionary work and found many other missionaries."

It's owing to what you are looking for, my friend. Are you concerned about God's work today? Are you concerned about getting out God's Word? Some folk say, "Well, I don't see that much progress is being made." You just don't happen to be where the action is, for the Word of God *is* going out, and it is having its effect in hearts and lives.

42

5:3 His commandments are not burdensome. For example, in contrast to the burdensome man-made religious traditions of the Jewish leaders (Matt. 23:4), the yoke of Jesus is easy and the burden light (11:30).⁴³

SALVATION ONCE AND FOR ALL

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway [1 Cor. 9:27].

The translation "castaway" is unfortunate. The Greek word is *adokimos*, which means "not approved." Paul is thinking of the judgment seat of Christ where the rewards are given. In his Second Epistle to the Corinthians he will talk about the fact that we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ where awards are given. Paul says that he is out on that racetrack trying to run so that he will get a reward. That is the reason he preaches the gospel as he does. Paul has liberty. This is the choice that he has made.

I think every Christian ought to work for a reward. We do not work for salvation; that is a gift given by the grace of God. My friend, if you are going to get a reward, you will

⁴²McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:812-813

⁴³MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Jn 5:3

have to work for it. If you are going to get a reward, then you had better get out on the racetrack and start moving.

44

9:27 discipline. From a term lit. meaning to hit under the eye. He knocked out the bodily impulses to keep them from preventing him from his mission of winning souls to Christ. **disqualified.** Another metaphor from the athletic games. A contestant who failed to meet basic training requirements could not participate at all, much less have an opportunity to win. Paul may be especially referring to such fleshly sins that disqualify a man from preaching and leading the church, particularly being blameless and above reproach in the sexual area, since such sin is a disqualification (*see notes on Ps. 101:6; Prov. 6:33; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6*).

45

Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall [1 Cor. 10:12].

It makes no difference who you are, you could fall today. It would be very easy for any one of us to blunder and stumble and fall. One can be a mature Christian, a real saint, and still fall. Therefore, you and I need to be very careful that we stay in the realm of the will of God where we are not quenching the Spirit of God in our lives.

46

10:12 Cf. Prov. 16:18. The Bible is filled with examples of overconfidence (see Esth. 3–5; Is. 37:36–38; Luke 22:33, 34, 54–62; Rev. 3:1–3, 17).⁴⁷

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling [Phil. 2:12].

“Salvation” in this verse is used, I believe, in a general sense. Paul is talking about working out their problems which they had in the church and working out the problems in their own Christian lives. He is not there to help them and is not sure that he ever will be there again because he is in a Roman prison. So he tells them to work out their “own salvation with fear and trembling.”

A preacher was reading this verse of Scripture in the morning service. A little girl whispered to her mother, “Mother, you can’t work *out* salvation unless it has first been worked *in*, can you?” Now that is a very good question. The next verse answers it.

48

⁴⁴McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:43

lit. literally

⁴⁵MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Co 9:27

⁴⁶McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:45

⁴⁷MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Co 10:12

2:12 obeyed. Their faithful response to the divine commands Paul had taught them (cf. Rom. 1:5; 15:18; 2 Cor. 10:5, 6). **work out your own salvation.** The Gr. verb rendered “work out” means “to continually work to bring something to fulfillment or completion.” It cannot refer to salvation by works (cf. Rom. 3:21–24; Eph. 2:8, 9), but it does refer to the believer’s responsibility for active pursuit of obedience in the process of sanctification (*see notes on 3:13, 14; Rom. 6:19*; cf. 1 Cor. 9:24–27; 15:58; 2 Cor. 7:1; Gal. 6:7–9; Eph. 4:1; Col. 3:1–17; Heb. 6:10, 11; 12:1, 2; 2 Pet. 1:5–11). **fear and trembling.** The attitude with which Christians are to pursue their sanctification. It involves a healthy fear of offending God and a righteous awe and respect for Him (cf. Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Is. 66:1, 2).⁴⁹

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it [Heb. 4:1].

We have come to the first “Let us” in this Epistle to the Hebrews. Constantly Paul urges the Hebrew believers to go on with the Lord; he is constantly challenging them. This is the first “Let us,” but there is a whole lot of “Let us” in this epistle.

“Let us therefore fear.” There are always those folk who are eager to find fault even with the Word of God, and they will say that this statement is a contradiction of other statements in the Bible. We are told in Romans 8:15, “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear....” And in 2 Timothy 1:7 Paul wrote, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” Well, I have an answer for those folk in a message I have called, “When It Is Not Wrong to Fear.” I hope that you are afraid of a rattlesnake. If I see one coming down the road, I don’t simply move to the righthand side, I give him the whole road! There are certain things that you and I would do well to fear—“Let us therefore *fear*.” I wish there were more concern among believers today about ignorance of the Word of God. In a church I pastored, a man was on our church board who was on about every board in town because he had a lot of money. He actually boasted of how many boards he was on. Then one day he boasted to me of how ignorant he was of the Word of God! The writer to the Hebrews said, “Let us therefore *fear*.” That man should have said to me with great concern, “Oh, my ignorance of the Word of God! I am afraid of it.” There are very few believers who are afraid of their ignorance of the Scriptures.

When Paul says, “Let us therefore fear,” he is speaking of a good fear. When I take my grandsons for a walk, I warn them not to go out into the street. I want them to be afraid to go out into the street—that is a good fear. The Word of God says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...” (Prov. 1:7). That is the kind of fear you and I are to have.

The fear he is talking about is for a purpose: “Lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” He is going to talk a great deal

⁴⁸McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:306

Gr. Greek

⁴⁹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Php 2:12

about rest in this chapter. The word *rest* occurs eight times here. There are several different kinds of rest, including Sabbath day or creation rest, and Canaan rest. Here he is speaking of Canaan rest. He is saying to believers, “Be afraid, because you do not want to miss it.” How many believers are missing that rest today? Have *you* entered into rest? Do you know, Christian friend, what it is to really trust Christ and rest in Him?
50

4:1–10 The second section of the writer’s exposition of Ps. 95:7–11 goes beyond the description of unbelief and its dire consequences (3:12–19) to define the nature of the “rest” which the disobedient had forfeited. The first section had dealt primarily with Ps. 95:7,8; the second section deals primarily with Ps. 95:11.⁵¹...

... **4:1 promise.** This is the first use of this important word in Hebrews. The content of this promise is defined as “entering His rest.” **His rest.** See note on 3:11. This is the rest which God gives, therefore it is called “My rest” (Ps. 95:11) and “His rest.” For believers, God’s rest includes His peace, confidence of salvation, reliance on His strength, and assurance of a future heavenly home (cf. Matt. 11:29). **come short.** The entire phrase could be translated “lest you think you have come too late to enter into the rest of God” (cf. 12:15). With reverential fear all are to examine their own spiritual condition (cf. 1 Cor. 10:12; 2 Cor. 13:5) and to actively press for commitment on the part of others (cf. Jude 23).⁵²

If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it [1 John 5:16].

“Death” refers here to *physical* death. It has no reference at all to spiritual death because the child of God has eternal life. John is saying that believers can commit a sin for which their heavenly Father will call them home; that is, He will remove them from this life physically, perhaps because they are disgracing Him.

Let us look at some people in Scripture who have committed a sin unto death. Moses and Aaron committed a sin unto death. You will recall that Moses got angry when the children of Israel kept begging for water and, instead of speaking to the rock as God commanded him, he smote the rock twice. He shouldn’t even have touched that rock. It had already been smitten once before, and he should have rested upon that. The rock was to be an example and a type of Christ. Paul wrote, “And [the children of Israel] did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:4). Christ died only once, and Moses spoiled the type by striking the rock twice. “And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not

⁵⁰McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:531

⁵¹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Heb 4:1

⁵²MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Heb 4:1

bring this congregation into the land which I have given them” (Num. 20:12). There was for this man Moses a restoration in that he could continue leading. However, he began to plead with God to forgive him and to permit him to enter the land, but the Lord told him in effect, “Although I have restored you to your place of leadership, you are not going to enter the land.” When Moses kept after the Lord, the Lord said to him, “... speak no more unto me of this matter” (Deut. 3:26). Moses and Aaron both had sinned a sin unto death—physical death.

In the New Testament we have another example of this in Ananias and Sapphira. They were a part of the early church, and they were guilty of a lie (see Acts 5:1–11). They had been willing to give a false impression to the early church; they were willing to live a lie. Because of that, God removed them from this earthly scene.

There is another incident of this mentioned in 1 Corinthians. Some of the people there had actually been getting drunk at the Lord’s Supper, and they were missing the meaning of it altogether. Paul wrote to them, “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and *many sleep*” (1 Cor. 11:30, italics mine)—that is, they were dead. Paul is saying that they had committed a sin unto death.

Someone might ask at this point, “What is a sin unto death?” First, let me be clear that John was not speaking of an unpardonable sin. We are talking about a sin unto physical death, not spiritual death. These people were God’s children. He would never have taken them home if they had not been His children. The Lord doesn’t whip the Devil’s children—He whips only His own. When His children sin unto death, He will take them home.

What is this sin? What is it specifically? Well, for Moses and Aaron it was one thing—they lost their tempers, and they destroyed a type of the Lord Jesus. Ananias and Sapphira were living like hypocrites. And in the city of Corinth, there were believers who were getting drunk and were disorderly at the Lord’s Table. So a sin unto death is no one thing specifically. I have a notion that for you it would be different from what it would be for me, but I am of the opinion that every believer is capable of committing the sin unto death—whatever it is for him. You can go on in sin until God will remove you from the scene. This does not mean that every Christian who dies has committed the sin unto death, but it is possible to do that.

Absalom also committed a sin unto death. I believe that Absalom was really a child of God, but he led a rebellion against his father, King David. I have observed something over a period of years. I have watched how God has dealt with troublemakers in the church. I’ve not only seen Him remove them by death, but I’ve also seen Him set them aside so that they were of no more use in the service of God at all. It is possible to commit the sin unto death. Let me repeat that it is physical death not spiritual death.

Let me illustrate this. There is a mother who has a boy, Willie—her little angel child, of course. Next door, though, there lives a little brat about the age of her little angel, and they play together out in the backyard. One day as she is working in the kitchen, she hears that little brat yelling at the top of his voice. She rushes to the door, looks out, and there is her precious little angel on top of the little brat next door, just beating the stuffing out of him! She says, “Willie, you are going to have to come into the house if you are not nice to the little boy next door.” He says, “Yes, Mama. I’ll be better.” She says, “Well, if you are not, I’m going to have to bring you into the house.” So she goes back in, and about thirty minutes go by, but again she hears that familiar cry of the little brat next

door. She goes to the door, and the same sight greets her. Her precious little angel is on top of the brat next door, just beating the stuffing out of him. She says, “Willie, come into the house.” He says, “I don’t want to come into the house.” She says, “I said that if you did that again, you would have to come into the house.” He balks, “I don’t want to come into the house!” So what does she do? She goes out and gets him by the hand, and she takes her precious little angel, yelling at the top of his voice, into the house. He had to come in. He may not be her precious little angel anymore, but he still is her son—that fact never was disturbed, but he can no longer play outside. I think that if a child of God goes on disgracing the Lord down here, the Lord will either set him aside or take him home by death. God doesn’t mind doing that. I think He does it in many instances.

All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death [1 John 5:17].

Believers who are alive today have all sinned, but we haven’t sinned a sin unto death. We did something that was wrong, it was unrighteousness, but God didn’t take us home. If He were taking home every believer who sinned, I would have been taken home a long time ago.

53

5:16,17 John illustrates praying according to God’s will with the specific example of the “sin leading to death.” Such a sin could be any premeditated and unconfessed sin that causes the Lord to determine to end a believer’s life. It is not one particular sin like homosexuality or lying, but whatever sin is the final one in the tolerance of God. Failure to repent of and forsake sin may eventually lead to physical death as a judgment of God (Acts 5:1–11; 1 Cor. 5:5; 11:30). No intercessory prayer will be effective for those who have committed such deliberate high-handed sin, i.e., God’s discipline with physical death is inevitable in such cases as He seeks to preserve the purity of His church (*see notes on 1 Cor. 5:5–7*). The contrast to the phrase “there is sin leading to death” with “there is sin not leading to death” signifies that the writer distinguishes between sins that may lead to physical death and those that do not. That is not to identify a certain kind of mortal or non-mortal sin, but to say not all sins are so judged by God.⁵⁴

INFANT BAPTISM

Then Peter said unto them. Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [Acts 2:38].

This is for a people who had the Word of God, who had heard the message, who knew the prophecies. They had been going along in one direction, which was away from God, even though they had a God-given religion. They are told to repent. They are to turn around and come God’s way.

⁵³McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:819-820

⁵⁴MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Jn 5:16

Peter says to them, “Repent, and be baptized.” Water baptism would be the evidence that they had repented, that they had come to Christ and had put their trust in Him.

Peter says to them, “Be baptized . . . in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. This will be an evidence that you have trusted Him for the remission of your sins—rather than bringing a sacrifice to be offered in the temple.” You see, their baptism would be a testimony to the fact that Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

“And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Anyone who believes, who puts his trust in Jesus Christ, will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

55

2:38 Repent. This refers to a change of mind and purpose that turns an individual from sin to God (1 Thess. 1:9). Such change involves more than fearing the consequences of God’s judgment. Genuine repentance knows that the evil of sin must be forsaken and the person and work of Christ totally and singularly embraced. Peter exhorted his hearers to repent, otherwise they would not experience true conversion (*see note on Matt. 3:2*; cf. 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; Matt. 4:17). **be baptized.** This Gr. word lit. means “be dipped or immersed” in water. Peter was obeying Christ’s command from Matt. 28:19 and urging the people who repented and turned to the Lord Christ for salvation to identify, through the waters of baptism, with His death, burial, and resurrection (cf. 19:5; Rom. 6:3, 4; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; *see notes on Matt. 3:2*). This is the first time the apostles publicly enjoined people to obey that ceremony. Prior to this, many Jews had experienced the baptism of John the Baptist, (*see notes on Matt. 3:1–3*) and were also familiar with the baptism of Gentile converts to Judaism (proselytes). **in the name of Jesus Christ.** For the new believer, it was a crucial but costly identification to accept. **for the remission of sins.** This might better be translated “because of the remission of sins.” Baptism does not produce forgiveness and cleansing from sin. *See notes on 1 Pet. 3:20, 21.* The reality of forgiveness precedes the rite of baptism (v. 41). Genuine repentance brings from God the forgiveness (remission) of sins (cf. Eph. 1:7), and because of that the new believer was to be baptized. Baptism, however, was to be the ever-present act of obedience, so that it became synonymous with salvation. Thus to say one was baptized for forgiveness was the same as saying one was saved. *See note on “one baptism” in Eph. 4:5.* Every believer enjoys the complete remission of sins (Matt. 26:28; Luke 24:47; Eph. 1:7; Col. 2:13; 1 John 2:12). **the gift of the Holy Spirit.** *See notes on 1:5, 8.*⁵⁶

16:15 household. *See note on 11:14.* Cf. v. 31.

⁵⁵McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:521

Gr. Greek
lit. literally

⁵⁶MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ac 2:38

And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway [Acts 16:32–33].

What a difference! He had put the stripes on these men. Now he washes their stripes. He is a changed man.

⁵⁷

16:31 Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. One must believe He is who He claimed to be (John 20:31) and believe in what He did (1 Cor. 15:3, 4; *see note on Rom. 1:16*). **you and your household.** All of his family, servants, and guests who could comprehend the gospel and believe heard the gospel and believed (*see note on 11:14*). This does not include infants. Cf. v. 15.⁵⁸

And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized [Acts 18:7–8].

Paul spent about eighteen months in the city of Corinth where he had a tremendous ministry. When the Jews oppose him, he turns to the Gentiles. We find now that the Lord speaks to Paul because he is coming into a great new dimension of his missionary endeavor.

⁵⁹

18:8 Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue. The conversion of this respected leader must have sent shock waves throughout the Jewish community (*see note on 6:9*). **all his household.** *See note on 11:14.*⁶⁰

And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other [1 Cor. 1:16].

Paul attached so little importance to baptism that he couldn't really remember whether he had baptized anyone else or not.

⁶¹

1:16 Stephanas. Nothing is known of this family.

1:17 This verse does not mean that people should not be baptized (cf. Acts 2:38), but that God did not send Paul to start a private cult of people personally baptized by him.

⁵⁷McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:585

⁵⁸MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ac 16:31

⁵⁹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:593

⁶⁰MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ac 18:8

⁶¹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:10

See Acts 26:16–18. He was called to preach the gospel and bring people to oneness in Christ, not baptize a faction around himself.⁶²

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God [John 3:5].

Now what does it mean to be born of water and of the Spirit? There are those who think that to be born of water is a reference to water baptism. But this would be a strange expression if it did refer to that. Then, there have been several very fine Christian doctors who interpret “born of water” as the physical birth which is a birth in water; that is, the child in the womb is in water. I don’t think that is what is meant here at all. He wasn’t talking about the difference between natural birth and spiritual birth, but He was talking about *how* a man could be born “from above” or “born again.”

As we saw in chapter 2, water is symbolic of the Word of God. We will find later in this book that Jesus says, “Sanctify them through thy truth: *thy word* is truth” (John 17:17, italics mine). There is a cleansing, sanctifying power in the Word. In John 15:3 Jesus says, “Now ye are clean through the *word* which I have spoken unto you” (italics mine). The Word of God is likened unto water again and again. We believe that “born of water and of the Spirit” means that a person must be born again by the Holy Spirit using the Scripture. We believe, very definitely, that no one could be born again without the Word of God applied by the Spirit of God. One today is born from above by the use of water, which is the Word of God, and the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, making it real to the heart.

There are three outstanding conversions in the Book of Acts. They have been given to us, I think, primarily as illustrations. There is the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, the conversion of Cornelius, and the conversion of Paul. These three men are representatives of the three families of Noah: the son of Shem, the son of Ham, and the son of Japheth. In each of these three cases, the Word of God was used by the Spirit of God for their conversions. God’s method seems to be the Word of God, used by the Spirit of God, given through a man of God. I am confident that our Lord, saying that one must be born of water and of the Spirit, referred to the Spirit of God using the Word of God. Without this, Nicodemus could not enter into the kingdom of God.

⁶³

3:5 born of water and the Spirit. Jesus referred not to literal water here but to the need for “cleansing” (e.g., Ezek. 36:24–27). When water is used figuratively in the OT, it habitually refers to renewal or spiritual cleansing, especially when used in conjunction with “spirit” (Num. 19:17–19; Ps. 51:9, 10; Is. 32:15; 44:3–5; 55:1–3; Jer. 2:13; Joel 2:28, 29). Thus, Jesus made reference to the spiritual washing or purification of the soul,

⁶²MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Co 1:16

⁶³McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:383-384

accomplished by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God at the moment of salvation (cf. Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5), required for belonging to His kingdom.⁶⁴

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned [Mark 16:16].

He does not say that if you are not baptized you will be damned. He is not saying that baptism is necessary to salvation, but that the person who is saved will be baptized. It is the rejection of Christ which brings eternal damnation. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

⁶⁵

16:15, 16 Similar to Matthew’s account of the Great Commission, with the added contrast of those who have been baptized (believers) with those who refuse to believe and are condemned. Even if v. 16 is a genuine part of Mark’s gospel, it does not teach that baptism saves, since the lost are condemned for unbelief, not for not being baptized (*see note on Acts 2:38*).⁶⁶

In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ [Col. 2:11].

Paul is telling them to get rid of that which is outward. The real circumcision is the New Birth. He explained this to the Galatians: “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature” (Gal. 6:15). You and I become new creatures when we come to Christ and trust Him as our Savior. We rest in Him; we are identified with Him.

Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead [Col. 2:12].

Lord Lyndhurst was the Lord Chancellor of Great Britain and possessed a sharp legal mind. He made this statement: “I know pretty well what evidence is; and I tell you, such evidence as that for the Resurrection has never broken down yet.” The death and resurrection of Christ is an historical fact. When Christ died you and I died with Him; He took our place. And when He was raised, we were raised in Him, and we are now joined to a living Christ. It is so important for us to see that we are joined to a *living* Savior.

It is so important to keep in mind that no outward ceremony brings us to Christ. The issue is whether or not we are born again, whether we really know Christ as Savior. If we do know Him, we are identified with Him. Identification with Christ is “putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ,” which is a spiritual circumcision.

⁶⁴MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Jn 3:5

⁶⁵McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:236

⁶⁶MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mk 16:15

When you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit baptizes you into the body of Christ. It is by this baptism that we are identified with Christ, and we are also “risen with him”—joined to the living Christ.

“Through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised him from the dead”—salvation is accomplished by the resurrection power of God. It’s not some philosophy; it’s not some gimmick; it’s not some little system; it’s not the taking of some course that will enable you to live for God.

67

2:11, 12 circumcision made without hands. *See note on circumcision in Gen. 17:11.* Circumcision symbolized man’s need for cleansing of the heart (cf. Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:26; Acts 7:51; Rom. 2:29) and was the outward sign of that cleansing of sin that comes by faith in God (Rom. 4:11; Phil. 3:3). At salvation, believers undergo a spiritual “circumcision” “by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh” (cf. Rom. 6:6; 2 Cor. 5:17; Phil 3:3; Titus 3:5). This is the new birth, the new creation in conversion. The outward affirmation of the already accomplished inner transformation is now the believer’s baptism by water (Acts 2:38).⁶⁸

And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed [Gen. 17:12].

Have you noticed how meticulous the record concerning the birth of Christ is? All the law was fulfilled in connection with the birth of this little baby. It is recorded that He was the son of Abraham, the son of David; He was in the line, and on the eighth day He was circumcised. He was “born under the law,” Paul says in Galatians 4:4.

69

17:12 eight days old. This same time frame was repeated in Lev. 12:3.

70

CONFESSION

And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost [John 20:22].

⁶⁷McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:350

⁶⁸MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Col 2:11

⁶⁹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 1:ix-74

⁷⁰MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ge 17:11

This period of history is a transition period between law and grace. There is an interval in the life of these men and in the ministry of the Lord Jesus between His death and resurrection and the Day of Pentecost. This is a time unique in the history of the world.

Our Lord had told them about prayer back in Luke 11. He had said that if they would ask, it should be given to them. In verse 13 of that chapter, He says that He is speaking especially of the gift of the Holy Spirit which the heavenly Father would give to them who ask Him. Well, as nearly as we can tell they never asked! In John 14:16 Jesus says, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter." It is true that Simon Peter showed some discernment when he said that Jesus is the Christ, but it was just a few minutes later that he told Jesus not to go to the cross to die. I personally believe that at the moment our Lord breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," these men were regenerated. Before this, they had not been indwelt by the Spirit of God.

This expression "breathed on them" occurs only one other time in the Bible. In Genesis, God breathed into Adam the breath of life. I believe here that Jesus Christ breathed into these men eternal life by giving them the Spirit of God. This would sustain them and secure them for the interval between His ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit would come and they would be baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ. Also they would be indued with power from on high. The church would come into existence on that day. From that time to the present, the Holy Spirit is in the world. He indwells the believer, and He baptizes every believer into the body of Christ.

Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained [John 20:23].

This is an important verse which is greatly misunderstood. John Calvin writes: "When Christ enjoins the apostles to forgive sins, He does not convey to them what is peculiar to Himself. It belongs to Him to forgive sins. He only enjoins them in His name to proclaim the forgiveness of sins."

Nowhere in the Book of Acts or in the Epistles do we find any instance of an apostle remitting the sins of anyone. They do go everywhere, proclaiming the forgiveness of sins. Let me ask the question: What is it that forgives sins? Even God cannot just arbitrarily forgive sins. Forgiveness of sins is only and alone through the blood of Jesus Christ. Back in the Old Testament, the forgiveness of sins was based on the fact that Christ would come and die. God saved "on credit" in the Old Testament until Christ would come and pay the penalty. Today God forgives our sins when we believe that Christ died for them.

How can you and I remit sins? By telling the gospel! This is the greater work which we shall do. When somebody turned and believed on Jesus while He was here on earth, that was wonderful. But what is staggering is when you or I simply give out the Word of God, and someone is born again and becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them" happens when you and I proclaim the gospel of the grace of God. That is the most glorious privilege that there is today, my friend.

We have a responsibility. If we do not preach the gospel to the world, their sins will not be remitted. I think we are reaping the penalty for the years we have not taken the gospel to the world. Because we have neglected our responsibility, our boys die in war.

Just think, if all the boys we have lost in war had been willing to lose their lives for Christ and be missionaries, how different the world might be! We have the only thing that will bring forgiveness to the world. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ. My friend, what are you doing?

71

20:22 Since the disciples did not actually receive the Holy Spirit until the day of Pentecost, some 40 days in the future (Acts 1:8; 2:1–3), this statement must be understood as a pledge on Christ’s part that the Holy Spirit would be coming.

20:23 See notes on *Matt. 16:19; 18:18*. This verse does not give authority to Christians to forgive sins. Jesus was saying that the believer can boldly declare the certainty of a sinner’s forgiveness by the Father because of the work of His Son if that sinner has repented and believed the gospel. The believer with certainty can also tell those who do not respond to the message of God’s forgiveness through faith in Christ that their sins, as a result, are not forgiven.

72

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven [Matt. 18:18].

We have already studied the contents of this verse in Matthew 16:19, where we learned that if we withhold the Word, we “bind on earth”; if we give the Word of God to others, we “loose on earth.”

73

16:19 the keys of the kingdom of heaven. These represent authority, and here Christ gives Peter (and by extension all other believers) authority to declare what was bound or loosed in heaven. This echoed the promise of John 20:23, where Christ gave the disciples authority to forgive or retain the sins of people. All this must be understood in the context of 18:15–17, where Christ laid out specific instructions for dealing with sin in the church (*see note on 18:15*). The sum of it all means that any duly constituted body of believers, acting in accord with God’s Word, has the authority to declare if someone is forgiven or unforgiven. The church’s authority is not to determine these things, but to declare the judgment of heaven based on the principles of the Word. When they make such judgments on the basis of God’s Word, they can be sure heaven is in accord. In other words, whatever they “bind” or “loose” on earth is already “bound” or “loosed” in heaven. When the church says the unrepentant person is bound in sin, the church is saying what God says about that person. When the church acknowledges that a repentant person has been loosed from that sin, God agrees.⁷⁴

⁷¹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:2-499

⁷²MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Jn 20:22

⁷³McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:100

⁷⁴MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 16:19

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation [2 Cor. 5:18].

The ministry of reconciliation is actually God's call to lost men everywhere to come to Him with all their sins, all their burdens, all their problems, all their difficulties, and to be reconciled to God. I want to spend some time here to look at this matter of reconciliation. The word is used twice in this verse, twice in the next verse, and once in the following verse. Verse 21 doesn't have the word in it, but it sums it all up. This is a most important subject, and we are in a very important section here.

First let me state that reconciliation is not the same as salvation. Reconciliation goes a step further. It is more than having our sins forgiven and divine justice being satisfied. Reconciliation involves a changed relationship—completely changed. It means to change something inside out and upside down and right side up. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.”

Notice that there is the Godward side of reconciliation. He is the One who did the reconciling. “God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ.” It is repeated in the next verse.

⁷⁵

5:18 all things are of God. Many modern translations add the article “these” before “things,” which connects the word “things” to all that Paul has just asserted in vv. 14–17. All the aspects related to someone's conversion and newly transformed life in Christ are accomplished by sovereign God. Sinners on their own cannot decide to participate in these new realities (*see note on Rom. 5:10; cf. 1 Cor. 8:6; 11:12; Eph. 2:1*).⁷⁶

PETER & PAPACY

And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease [Matt. 10:1].

The power He gave to them was their credential as they went to the nation Israel. The prophets of the Old Testament had said that this would be the credentials of the Messiah. Having given them this power, they are no longer disciples but apostles.

Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him [Matt. 10:2–4].

THE METHOD AND MESSAGE OF THE TWELVE

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not.

⁷⁵McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:112-113

⁷⁶MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 2 Co 5:18

But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel [Matt. 10:5–6].

Now if you are going to take your instructions from this chapter for your personal ministry, you will have to limit yourself to the nation Israel, because this is to be given to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Obviously, these verses do not contain our commission. Contrast it with our commission in Acts 1:8: “... and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Notice that we are to include Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth, while Jesus instructed the twelve in this chapter to stay out of Samaria and not to go into the way of the Gentiles but only to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

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10:1, 2 disciples ... apostles. “Disciple” means “student,” one who is being taught by another. “Apostles” refers to qualified representatives who are sent on a mission. The two terms emphasize different aspects of their calling.

10:1 He gave them power. *See note on 2 Cor. 12:12.* Jesus delegated His power to the apostles to show clearly that He and His kingdom were sovereign over the physical and spiritual realms, the effects of sin, and the efforts of Satan. This was an unheard of display of power, never before seen in all redemptive history, to announce Messiah’s arrival and authenticate Him plus His apostles who preached His gospel. This power was a preview of the power Christ will exhibit in His earthly kingdom, when Satan will be bound (Rev. 20) and the curse on physical life curtailed (Is. 65:20–25).

10:2 the names of the twelve apostles. The 12 are always listed in a similar order (cf. Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:13–16; Acts 1:13). Peter is always named first. The list contains 3 groups of 4. The 3 subgroups are always listed in the same order, and the first name in each subgroup is always the same, though there is some variation in the order within the subgroups—but Judas Iscariot is always named last. **Peter... Andrew ... James ... and John.** The first subgroup of 4 are the most familiar to us. These two sets of brothers, all fishermen, represent an inner circle of disciples often seen closest to Jesus (*see note on 17:1*). **James the son of Alphaeus.** There are 4 men in the NT named James: 1) the Apostle James, brother of John (*see note on 4:21*); 2) the disciple mentioned here, also called “James the Less” (Mark 15:40); 3) James, father of Judas (not Iscariot, Luke 6:16); and 4) James, the Lord’s half-brother (Gal. 1:19; Mark 6:3), who wrote the epistle that bears the name. He also played a leading role in the early Jerusalem Church (Acts 12:17; 15:13; Gal. 1:19).

10:3 Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus. Elsewhere he is called Judas, son of James (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13).

10:4 Simon the Cananite. The better manuscripts read “Cananaean”—a term for the party of the Zealots, a group determined to overthrow Roman domination in Palestine. Acts 1:13 refers to him as “Simon the Zealot.” Simon was probably a member of the Zealot party before coming to Christ. *See note on Mark 3:18.*

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⁷⁷McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:56-57

⁷⁸MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 10:1

And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils [Mark 3:14–15].

This is His final call to the apostles. Here is where they actually become apostles, and here is where they are sent out on a ministry set apart for Him. They are also set apart from Him in that He will not go with them physically. Mark does not furnish the details here, but in Matthew 10:5–42 there is recorded for us the message and method for them at this particular time.

In verses 16 through 19 the names of the apostles are listed. I would like to run through the list of the twelve: 1. Simon Peter (He is the first in all the lists of the apostles.); 2. James, son of Zebedee; 3. John, the brother of James; 4. Andrew, brother of Simon Peter (He is customarily listed with his brother.); 5. Philip; 6. Bartholomew, (also called Nathanael); 7. Matthew; 8. Thomas; 9. James the less, son of Alphaeus; 10. Thaddaeus, who is also called Lebbaeus and Jude; 11. Simon, the Canaanite; and 12. Judas Iscariot.

I have a book called *Marching Through Mark* in which I compare the lists of apostles as they are given in the four Gospels and in the Book of Acts. It is interesting to make this comparison of how they are listed and the different names that are used. These are the men that He chose.

And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread.

And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself [Mark 3:20–21].

Mark will impress us how busy Jesus really was. Note the reaction of His friends. If a man devotes his life to some noble but earthly cause, he is applauded. The musician, the athlete, the businessman, the artist, the statesman who gives himself to his work is recognized for his total devotion. But if a man gives himself in total dedication to the cause of God, he is branded as a fanatic.

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3:16–19 A list of the 12 (*see notes on Matt. 10:2–4*).

3:16 Peter. From this point on (except in 14:37), Mark uses this name for Simon, though this is not when the designation was first given (cf. John 1:42), nor does it mark the complete replacement of the name Simon (cf. Acts 15:14). The name means “stone,” and describes Peter’s character and activities, namely his position as a foundation rock in the building of the church (cf. Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20).

3:17 “Sons of Thunder.” Mark defines the Aram. term “Boanerges” for his Gentile readers. This name for the two brothers probably referred to their intense, outspoken personalities (cf. 9:38; Luke 9:54).

3:18 Thaddaeus. The only name that is not the same in all the NT lists of the 12 (cf. Matt. 10:2–4; Luke 6:14–16; Acts 1:13). Matthew calls him Lebbaeus, with Thaddaeus as a surname (Matt. 10:3); Luke and Acts call him “Judas *the son of James*”; and John 14:22 refers to him as “Judas (not Iscariot).” **the Cananite.** This does not indicate that this

⁷⁹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:173-174
Aram. Aramaic

Simon was a native of Cana. Rather, the word is derived from the Aram. which means “to be zealous” and was used for those who were zealous for the law. Luke uses the word transliterated from the Gr. term that meant “the Zealot” (Luke 6:15; *see note on Matt. 10:4*).

3:19 Iscariot. This Heb. term means “man of Kerioth,” as in Kerioth-Hezron, S of Hebron (Josh. 15:25). **went into a house.** A clearer translation is “went home,” which would refer to Jesus’ return to Capernaum (cf. 2:1). Verse divisions of the text are also misleading here; the phrase should be included with v. 20 and actually start the new paragraph.

Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor [Luke 6:12–16].

Notice that Jesus prayed all night to God. Why? He was going to choose twelve men to be His apostles. He spent the entire night in prayer before making His choice. One of the apostles turned out to be a traitor. Another apostle denied Him but later repented. Notice, however, that God’s men were always *chosen*. There are many candidates, to be sure, but consider what John 15:16 says: “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.” This has been a great comfort to me. I was a clerk in a bank when the Lord called me to be a preacher. I never dreamed of becoming a preacher; in fact, I actually looked down on preachers. I did not call Him, but He called me. I’ve always felt good about it, because since He called me, He is responsible. That is wonderful. It gives me comfort. The Lord found it essential and practical to spend the entire night in prayer before selecting the twelve apostles. Men chosen for God’s work should be selected on the basis of much prayer. The robe of Elijah did not fall by accident upon Elisha; it fell providentially. The present-day procedure by the church for choosing men to fill an office is far from God’s standard. We follow our feelings and consult our own selfish desires. We use human measuring rods rather than God’s measuring stick. We should spend time with God before making our decisions.

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6:13 He called His disciples. *See notes on Matt. 10:1–4.* Christ had many disciples. At one point He sent 70 out in pairs to proclaim the gospel (10:1). But on this occasion, He chose 12 and specifically commissioned them as apostles, i.e., “sent ones,” with a special authority to deliver His message on His behalf (cf. Acts 1:21, 22).⁸²

Gr. Greek

Heb. Hebrew

⁸⁰MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mk 3:16

⁸¹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:272

⁸²MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Lk 6:13

And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren [Acts 1:13–14].

I rejoice that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was there. Her reputation has now been cleared. At this point it was obvious that Jesus was the Son of God, and virgin born, as she had claimed.

The attitude of the apostles and the other believers was that of oneness, of prayer, and of waiting.

There is no way that we can duplicate this period today. Remember that this is in a time period, a time capsule, between His ascension into heaven and the coming of the Holy Spirit. You and I do not live in that time period. It cannot be duplicated. We are not waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit; He came over nineteen hundred years ago.

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1:13 upper room. Where the Last Supper may have been celebrated (Mark 14:15) and where Jesus had appeared to the apostles after His resurrection. **Bartholomew.** *See note on Matt. 10:3.* This disciple is also called Nathanael (John 1:45–49; 21:2). **James the son of Alphaeus.** *See note on Matt. 10:2.* The same person as James the younger, also called “the Less” to distinguish him from James, the brother of John (Mark 15:40). **Zealot.** *See note on Matt. 10:4.* **Judas the son of James.** The preferred rendering is “the brother of.” *See note on Matt. 10:3.* He was also known as Thaddaeus (Mark 3:18).⁸⁴

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? [Matt. 18:21].

Peter thought he was being magnanimous when he said this because two or three times was all you had to forgive according to the rabbis. Simon Peter was willing to forgive seven times. But Peter’s generosity was parsimonious in comparison to the new estimation of Jesus—

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18:21 Up to seven times. Peter thought he was being magnanimous. The rabbis, citing several verses from Amos (1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13) taught that since God forgave Israel’s

⁸³McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:513

⁸⁴MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ac 1:13

⁸⁵McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:100-101

enemies only 3 times, it was presumptuous and unnecessary to forgive anyone more than 3 times.⁸⁶

And he saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ [Mark 8:29].

This was their final examination for the first phase of His ministry. They were within six months now of the Cross.

This is the finest thing that Simon Peter ever said. He spoke for the group. Mark gives us only a fragment of the confession. *Christ* is not a name. *Jesus* is His name. *Christ* is a title—in the Hebrew, it was the *Messiah*, which means the “Anointed One.” This title gathers up all the rich meaning of the Old Testament. It is a fragment with fullness (cf. Mic. 5:2; Isa. 7:14; Ps. 2:2; Ps. 45:6–7; and Mal. 3:1). These are but a few of the many Old Testament references. Jesus came to reveal God.

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8:29 “But who do you say that I am?” After they reported the prevailing erroneous views about Jesus (v. 28), He asked the disciples to give their own evaluation of who He was. The answer every person gives to this question will determine his or her eternal destiny. **“You are the Christ.”** Peter unhesitatingly replied on behalf of the 12 (cf. Matt. 14:28; 15:15; 17:4; 19:27; 26:33; John 6:68; 13:36), clearly and unequivocally affirming that they believed Jesus to be the Messiah.⁸⁸

Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk [Acts 3:6].

An incident is told of one of the early saints of the church in Rome who walked in on the pope as he was counting money. Realizing that he had walked in on something which was private, he started to walk out. The pope said to him, “No longer can the church say ‘Silver and gold have I none.’” As the saintly man continued walking out, he said, “Neither can the church say to the impotent man, ‘Rise up and walk.’”

Today the organized church has wealth. I suppose that if one could put together all the holdings of all the churches, all groups, denominations, and non-denominations across the country, we would find the church wealthier than any other organization. I think it is wealthier than the Standard Oil Company. Yet the church today lacks power.

Now notice what Peter does.

And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength [Acts 3:7].

Remember that Dr. Luke wrote this book. You will notice that when Dr. Luke records a miracle, he gives a great many details which we don’t find in some other books. He tells

⁸⁶MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 18:21

⁸⁷McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:196-197

⁸⁸MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mk 8:29

specifically what happened. The weakness had been in the feet and ankle bones of this man.
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3:3-11. God’s supernatural healing of the crippled man through **Peter and John** (v. 7), together with his exuberant response (v. 8), attracted a crowd amazed (**filled with wonder and amazement**) at what had taken place. They ran and assembled at **Solomon’s Colonnade**, a portico of columns running the length of the east side of the outer court (cf. 5:12). Two other cripples were healed in Acts (9:32-34; 14:8-10).
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Major Sermons in Acts		
Sermon	Theme	Reference
Peter to crowds at Pentecost	Peter’s explanation of the meaning of Pentecost	Acts 2:14–40
Peter to crowds at the temple	The Jewish people should repent for crucifying the Messiah	Acts 3:12–26
Peter to the Sanhedrin	Testimony that a helpless man was healed by the power of Jesus	Acts 4:5–12
Stephen to the Sanhedrin	Stephen’s rehearsal of Jewish history, accusing the Jews of killing the Messiah	Acts 7:2–53
Peter to Gentiles	Gentiles can be saved in the same manner as Jews	Acts 10:28–47
Peter to church at Jerusalem	Peter’s testimony of his experiences at Joppa and a defense of his ministry to the Gentiles	Acts 11:4–18
Paul to synagogue at Antioch	Jesus was the Messiah in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies	Acts 13:16–41
Peter to Jerusalem Council	Salvation by grace available to all	Acts 15:7–11

⁸⁹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:523

v. verse
cf. *confer*, compare

⁹⁰Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:360

James to Jerusalem Council	Gentile converts do not require circumcision	Acts 15:13–21
Paul to Ephesian elders	Remain faithful in spite of false teachers and persecution	Acts 20:17–35
Paul to crowd at Jerusalem	Paul’s statement of his conversion and his mission to the Gentiles	Acts 22:1–21
Paul to Sanhedrin	Paul’s defense, declaring himself a Pharisee and a Roman citizen	Acts 23:1–6
Paul to King Agrippa	Paul’s statement of his conversion and his zeal for the gospel	Acts 26:2–23
Paul to Jewish leaders at Rome	Paul’s statement about his Jewish heritage	Acts 28:17–20

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For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days [Acts 10:44–48].

This incident has been called the Gentile Pentecost. Peter was astonished that the Gentiles should receive the Holy Spirit. This outpouring of the Holy Spirit was made audible by their speaking in tongues. The tongues were an evidence to Simon Peter and the others with him that God would save the Gentiles and would give to them His Holy Spirit. Peter later relates this as evidence that these Gentiles had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and that God had granted repentance unto life also to the Gentiles (Acts 11:17–18). In Acts 15:7–11 Peter again refers to this incident, declaring that it proves that the Holy Ghost has been given to the Gentiles and that they are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ just as are the Jews. It is hard for us to realize the great barrier that existed between Jew and Gentile. The Jews of that day simply could not believe that Gentiles were going to be saved—in spite of the fact that the Lord had told them this was to be so. Then the Gentiles at Cornelius’ house are baptized in water.

Again let me call your attention to the fact that the Book of Acts records three representative conversions. The Ethiopian eunuch was a son of Ham. Saul of Tarsus was a son of Shem. Cornelius was a son of Japheth. In each instance the Holy Spirit moved, using a man of God and the Word of God.

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⁹¹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ac 3:13

10:46. The sign which God used to validate the reality of Gentile salvation was **speaking in tongues**. (For the significance of tongues-speaking in Acts, see the comments on 19:1-7.)

10:47-48. Peter quickly discerned at least three theological implications of what had happened: (1) He could not argue with God (11:17). (2) Cornelius and his household, though uncircumcised (11:3), were **baptized** because they had believed in **Christ**, as evidenced by their receiving **the Holy Spirit**. The order of these events was believing in Christ, receiving the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues, and being baptized in water. (3) The reality of Cornelius' conversion was confirmed by Peter's staying with him several **days**, probably to instruct him more fully in his newfound faith.

⁹³

And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone [John 1:40–42].

This man, Simon, was as weak as water. Our Lord told him that he would be a stone man. I think everybody laughed there that day because nobody believed he could become the rock man, the man who would stand up on the Day of Pentecost and give the first sermon, which would be used to sweep three thousand persons into the church (see Acts 2:40–41).

⁹⁴

1:42 when Jesus looked at him. Jesus knows hearts thoroughly (vv. 43–51) and not only sees into them (vv. 47, 48) but also transforms a person into what He wants him to become. **You shall be called Cephas.** Up to this time, Peter had been known as "Simon son of Jonah" (the name "Jonah" in Aram. means "John"; cf. 21:15–17; Matt. 16:17). The term "Cephas" means "rock" in Aram. which is translated "Peter" in Greek. Jesus' assignment of the name "Cephas" or "Peter" to Simon occurred at the outset of His ministry (cf. Matt. 16:18; Mark 3:16). The statement not only is predictive of what Peter would be called but also declarative of how Jesus would transform his character and use him in relationship to the foundation of the church (cf. 21:18, 19; Matt. 16:16–18; Acts 2:14–4:32).⁹⁵

⁹²McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:559

⁹³Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:382

⁹⁴McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:376

Aram. Aramaic

⁹⁵MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Jn 1:42

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it [Matt. 16:18].

Let us look at this verse carefully. On what rock did Jesus build His church? There are those who say that it was built on Simon Peter. Well, obviously it was not, because there is a play upon words here. In the original Greek it is, “Thou art *Petros* [a little piece of rock], and upon this *petra* [bedrock] I will build my church.” There are others who hold that Christ is building His church upon the confession that Simon Peter made. I don’t agree with that at all.

Who is the Rock? The Rock is Christ. The church is built upon Christ. We have Simon Peter’s own explanation of this. In 1 Peter 2:4, referring to Christ, he writes, “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.” And he remembers Isaiah 28:16, “. . . Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded” (1 Pet. 2:6). The church is built upon Christ; He is the foundation. “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). Christ is the stone, and He says on this rock He *will build* His church. The church was still future when the Lord made this statement. And please don’t tell me there was a church in the Old Testament because the church did not come into existence until after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and the sending of the Holy Spirit. There could not have been a church until all of these things had taken place. “I will build my church”—this was future.

The “gates of hell” refers to death. The word used for *hell* is the Greek word *hades*, the *sheol* of the Old Testament, which refers to the unseen world and means “death.” The gates of *death* shall not prevail against Christ’s church. One of these days the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. That shout will be like the voice of an archangel and like a trumpet because the *dead* in Christ are to be raised. The gates of *death* shall not prevail against His church.

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven [Matt. 16:19].

What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven? Were they given only to Simon Peter? No, Jesus gives them to those who make the same confession made by Peter, those who know Christ as Savior. If you are a child of God, you have the keys as well as any person has the keys. The keys were the badge of authority of the office of the scribes who interpreted the Scriptures to the people (see Neh. 8:2–8). Every Christian today has the Scriptures and, therefore, the keys. If we withhold the Word, we “bind on earth”; if we give the Word, we “loose on earth.” No man or individual church has the keys—to the exclusion of all other believers. We have a responsibility today to give out the gospel because it is the only thing that can save people. This is a tremendous revelation. Who is sufficient for these things? You and I have a responsibility that is awesome indeed!

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⁹⁶McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:92-93

16:18 on this rock. The word for “Peter,” *Petros*, means a small stone (John 1:42). Jesus used a play on words here with *petra* which means a foundation boulder (cf. 7:24, 25). Since the NT makes it abundantly clear that Christ is both the foundation (Acts 4:11, 12; 1 Cor. 3:11) and the head (Eph. 5:23) of the church, it is a mistake to think that here He is giving either of those roles to Peter. There is a sense in which the apostles played a foundational role in the building of the church (Eph. 2:20), but the role of primacy is reserved for Christ alone, not assigned to Peter. So Jesus’ words here are best interpreted as a simple play on words in that a boulder-like truth came from the mouth of one who was called a small stone. Peter himself explains the imagery in his first epistle: the church is built of “living stones” (1 Pet. 2:5) who, like Peter, confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Christ Himself is the “chief cornerstone” (1 Pet. 2:6, 7). **church.** Matthew is the only gospel where this term is found (see also 18:17). Christ called it “My church,” emphasizing that He alone is its Architect, Builder, Owner, and Lord. The Gr. word for church means “called out ones.” While God had since the beginning of redemptive history been gathering the redeemed by grace, the unique church He promised to build began at Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit, by whom the Lord baptized believers into His body—which is the church (*see notes on Acts 2:1–4; 1 Cor. 12:12, 13*). **the gates of Hades.** Hades is the place of punishment for the spirits of dead unbelievers. The point of entry for such is death. This, then, is a Jewish phrase referring to death. Even death, the ultimate weapon of Satan (cf. Heb. 2:14, 15), has no power to stop the church. The blood of martyrs, in fact, has sped the growth of the church in size and spiritual power.

16:19 the keys of the kingdom of heaven. These represent authority, and here Christ gives Peter (and by extension all other believers) authority to declare what was bound or loosed in heaven. This echoed the promise of John 20:23, where Christ gave the disciples authority to forgive or retain the sins of people. All this must be understood in the context of 18:15–17, where Christ laid out specific instructions for dealing with sin in the church (*see note on 18:15*). The sum of it all means that any duly constituted body of believers, acting in accord with God’s Word, has the authority to declare if someone is forgiven or unforgiven. The church’s authority is not to determine these things, but to declare the judgment of heaven based on the principles of the Word. When they make such judgments on the basis of God’s Word, they can be sure heaven is in accord. In other words, whatever they “bind” or “loose” on earth is already “bound” or “loosed” in heaven. When the church says the unrepentant person is bound in sin, the church is saying what God says about that person. When the church acknowledges that a repentant person has been loosed from that sin, God agrees.

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22:22 key of the house of David. This authority to admit or refuse admittance into the king's presence evidenced the king's great confidence in Eliakim. Jesus applied this terminology to Himself as one who could determine who would enter His future Davidic kingdom (Rev. 3:7).⁹⁹

Gr. Greek

⁹⁸MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 16:18

⁹⁹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Is 22:22

I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death [Rev. 1:18].

2. “I am he that liveth, and was dead”—or, the living One who became dead. This speaks of His redemptive death and resurrection. Most of us have a guilt complex. We are afraid somebody will point a finger at us and say, “You are guilty.” We are, of course, but Paul deals with this question in Romans 8:34, where he says, “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” Where is the fellow who is going to condemn you? Paul says, “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ who died.” Do you find fault with me? Do you say I am a great sinner? I want you to know that Christ died for me, and He is risen from the dead. He rose for my justification to show that I am forgiven and that I am going to heaven someday. And He is even at the right hand of God—how wonderful—and He makes intercession, that is, He prays for me. We see this in His next reason:

3. “And, behold, I am alive for evermore.” This refers to His present state. He is not only judging, but He is making intercession for us. How we need that!

4. “And have the keys of death and of hades.” The keys speak of authority and power. Jesus has power over death and the grave right now—because of His own death and resurrection. *Hades* is the Greek word for the unseen world. It can refer to the grave where the body is laid or to the place where the spirit goes.

My friend, you and I can take comfort in the fact that Jesus has the keys of death. He is the One who can relieve us of the terrible fear of death.

¹⁰⁰

1:18 keys of Hades and of Death. *See note on Luke 16:23.* Death and Hades are essentially synonyms, but death is the condition and Hades, equivalent to the OT Sheol, the place of the dead (*see note on 20:13*). Christ decides who lives, who dies, and when.¹⁰¹

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep [John 21:15–17].

¹⁰⁰McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:896-897

¹⁰¹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Re 1:18

Our Lord takes Simon Peter and calls this faltering, failing, fumbling disciple to service. We learn one all-important lesson from this interview. Love for the Savior is the prerequisite for service.

Three times our Lord interrogates Simon Peter, and three times he responds. Then we find that three times the Lord Jesus Christ gives him his commission.

Why three times? Dr. Godet suggests that the reason lies in the fact that Simon Peter denied Christ three times, and now He makes him affirm his devotion three times. No doubt that is part of the reason, but there is more.

It is quite interesting to note that Simon Peter, with the other disciples, had been called to the ministry—actually had been called into the apostleship—after a miraculous catch of fish. If you will recall the account of this fishing experience back in the Gospels of Mark and Luke you will refresh your mind in the fact that it was after our Lord took over the directing of their fishing that the nets broke—and after that He made them apostles.

Then you will further recall that Simon Peter lost his commission around a little fire of coals that had been built in the courtyard of the palace of the high priest the night Jesus was arrested. Simon Peter went blundering in there to warm his hands and made the fatal mistake of his life. It was there he denied the Lord three times. He should not have gone there, but he did; and when he did, he committed this base denial.

Is it not an interesting thing that now by the Sea of Galilee, around coals of fire, after a miraculous catch of fish, the Lord Jesus restores his commission to him? Here the Lord puts Simon Peter back into service. What a picture of spiritual beauty!

When our Lord asked Peter the question three times, it looks like repetition, but it is not. While there is a similarity in the questions, no two are identical.

The *first interrogation*: “So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter [would that we could read this as our Lord said it that morning!], Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” There are many who express the desire to have had the privilege of being present at certain great occasions in the life of our Lord—when He performed miracles, etc. Candidly, I am not sure that I would want to go back to that day. However, if I could go back and hear Him speak to Simon Peter by the Sea of Galilee, I would go back gladly.

To begin with, He called him Simon. That is interesting—“Simon, son of Jonas.” Why did He call him Simon? You will recall when the Lord Jesus first met this man—Andrew brought him to Jesus. When Jesus beheld him, He said (in effect), “Thou art Simon, son of Jonas, thou shalt be called Cephas, which by interpretation is a stone.” *Cephas* is the Aramaic word for “rock man”; in Greek it is *Petros*. And that name clung to him. We find that over in Caesarea Philippi, when he gave that marvelous testimony concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and said, “Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:69), the Lord Jesus said in effect, “Blessed art thou, Simon [He goes back to his old name], you will be called Peter because you are going to be a rock man from here on. You will be a man who will stand for something, but right now there is still a question.” And so the Lord reminds him of his old name.

There are three words in the Greek language that are translated into the English by the one word *love*. Perhaps, my friend, you are not aware of the fact that the English language is a beggar for words. We have the one word *love* and that is about all. You cannot think of another word. Hollywood, today, would give a million dollars for another

word. The best they have done is *sex* and that is pretty low. But the Greek language is a language that is versatile; it is flexible. They have three words for this thing called love.

The first word they have is the word *eros*. In the use of this word they degraded the meaning of love. The Greeks degraded the word in this use for they personified it. The fact of the matter is they have made “Eros” a god and put together in combination the names Aphrodite and Eros. Today we know these names better as Venus and Cupid. The latter are the Roman names but they are the same, as the Greeks are the ones who started this idea with Aphrodite and Eros. *Eros* is a word of sensuality and we do believe that the Hollywood word *sex*, that has really been put into high gear today, would best express what the Greeks had in mind. But this word *eros* is never used in the Word of God.

There is another Greek word—it is *phileō*, and it means “friendship.” It has to do with the affections and the emotions in human relations at its very best usage. We get our word *philanthropic* from it, and *philadelphia* comes from it—Philadelphia, the city of “brotherly love.” And that is a word that is used in Scripture.

But there is yet another word for love. It is *agapaō*. *Agapaō* is actually the highest and noblest word for love. Dr. Vincent in his *Word Studies* calls it a word of dignity. It is also a divine word, in that it is a word used to speak of the love of God. The Lord Jesus Christ, in His choice of language, passed over the words *eros* and *phileō* and used the word *agapaō* when He was speaking to Simon Peter. He said, “Do you, Simon Peter, love me with all your heart?”

It is wonderful to have the right doctrine and the right creed, but salvation is a love affair. If you do not love Him, there is no affair. “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” Love is the supreme word.

Candidly, if it had been left to me I would have chosen *faith* as the supreme word of Christianity. In fact, I would consider *faith* as the supreme word of any religion. But, of course, Scripture answers that right away: “And now abideth faith, hope, charity [love], these three; but the greatest of these is charity [love]” (1 Cor. 13:13). But I’ll tell you why I would choose *faith*—it is a greater compliment to be trusted than to be loved. You see, there is many an old rascal today who is being loved by some wonderful girl. Yes, there is. Sometimes it is the other way around also. But, you see, the minute the object proves unworthy, he is no longer trusted. Will you think closely with me for a minute? Simon Peter had failed the Lord. Actually, the Lord could no longer have confidence in him, but He loved him. Oh, how He loved him!

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). While Simon Peter was denying the Lord, the Lord Jesus was on His way to the cross to die for him! Later, Peter wrote in his first epistle, “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Pet. 2:24).

Now notice that our Lord’s first question to Peter is, “Lovest thou me more than these?”

What He is saying is: “Do you love Me more than these men love Me?” You will recall that the Lord Jesus said, the last time they were in the Upper Room, “One of you will deny Me”—Simon doubtless thought, “Yes, I haven’t trusted this crowd either. But there is one fellow here upon whom You can depend—You can depend on me.” The Lord Jesus said, “Simon, son of Jonas, are you prepared now to say that you love Me

more than these other disciples love Me?” That is what He is saying. Now listen to Simon Peter, “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.” Here Simon came down and would not use the word *agapaō*; he used the word *phileō*. He says, “You know that I have an affection for You.”

Why did not Simon Peter use the word our Lord uses? If you want my opinion, this man is through boasting. Never again will he brag of what he will do. Never again will you hear him saying, I am going to do something big for the Lord. For here on he is going to do something big, but he is not going to say anything about it. He comes to the low plain: “I have an affection for You.”

Now will you notice the exhortation. Our Lord responds, “Feed my lambs.” Let me give you a better translation: “Be grazing my baby lambs”—the word for lambs is diminutive, which means little baby lambs. “Simon Peter, if you love me I want you to go and graze the little baby lambs; I want you to feed them.” Many Christians seem to think He said, “Be criticizing My little lambs.” But He has not given you that commission, friend. He says feed them.

The *second interrogation*: Will you notice verse 16, “He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.” This time our Lord leaves off “more than these.” The reason I think He does it is that He is saying, “Maybe, Simon Peter, you cannot boast anymore and say that you love Me more than do the other disciples, but can you not now say that you do love Me?” In this He is helping this man, trying to lift him up to a higher plane. But Simon Peter just cannot. And somehow we admire him for it. We are glad that he is not boasting anymore. Instead he is willing to take a lower position. Listen to his *affirmation*: “Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I have an affection for thee.” But he does not attempt to rise higher—he does not dare to do this, for he is afraid to make such a gesture.

The *second exhortation*: Will you notice this second exhortation, which, incidentally, is ours also. “Feed my sheep.” Actually it is not that at all, but rather, “Shepherd the sheep”—that is the word that is used. We want you to notice something, and this is interesting: He says, “feed” the little baby lambs but “shepherd or discipline” the sheep. In our day we have this truth in reverse; we want to discipline the young—that is our method, and we feel as if we should “teach” the old folk. My friend, that is not His method. We are to feed the lambs, and shepherd or discipline the older sheep. Do you know why? It is because the little lambs follow the sheep, hence the older sheep must be disciplined.

The *third interrogation*: “He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” Christ now adopts the word of Simon Peter when He asks, “Simon Peter, do you really have an *affection* for me?” Our translation does not show it, but our Lord comes down to the statement of Simon Peter here, and Peter is grieved now.

In the *third affirmation*—“Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.”

Let us get at the real meaning of this conversation between our Lord and Simon Peter. Peter was grieved, not because the Lord had asked him the question three times, but he was grieved in his heart because the Lord had to come down and stoop to his level in using his word.

But Simon Peter is still not prepared to climb up. He as much as says that the best thing he can do is to say to the Lord that he has an affection for Him and that the Lord knows he has this affection. He is not bragging now for he realizes that the Lord knows his heart—that he has a real affection in his heart for Him.

The *third exhortation* is “Feed my sheep”—here it has the meaning “be grazing my sheep.” You see, the sheep need feeding also.

Milton suffered the loss of a friend, a young minister, who was drowned in the Irish Channel, in crossing; and Milton wrote a poem entitled “Lycidas,” in which he made this statement: “The hungry sheep look up and are not fed.” In this line he was referring to the pulpit in his day—he might well have been writing of a future day which is ours.

Let me impress it upon your heart that the acid test of any man today, either in pulpit or pew, is “Lovest thou me?”

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21:17 Peter was grieved. The third time Jesus asked Peter, He used Peter’s word for love that signified something less than total devotion, questioning even that level of love Peter thought he was safe in claiming (*see note on vv. 15–17*). The lessons driven home to Peter grieved his heart, so that he sought for a proper understanding of his heart, not by what he said or had done, but based on the Lord’s omniscience (cf. 2:24, 25).¹⁰³

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren [Luke 22:31–32].

The word *converted* in this passage does not mean conversion as we think of it. The Lord is speaking about the time when Peter will have a change of heart and mind and his faith will be increased. At that time such a tremendous change would be wrought in Peter that he would be able to strengthen his brethren. The Lord knew that Peter would deny Him, and yet He said, “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.”

The Lord today is our intercessor. He knows when you are moving toward the place of failure and stumbling. If you belong to Him, my friend, He has already prayed for you that your faith fail not. You may fail Him, but if you belong to Him, your *faith* will not fail. The reason your faith will not fail is because He has prayed for you. My, what a picture of His love!

In John 17:9 our Lord prayed to the Father, “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.” The Lord does not pray for the world. He died for the world, and you cannot ask Him to do any more than that. He died for the world, but He prays for His own that they will be kept while they are in the world. The Lord Jesus Christ prayed for you today. It may be that you did not pray for yourself but He has prayed for you.

¹⁰²McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:502-505

¹⁰³MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Jn 21:17

Peter was later able to strengthen his brethren. The man who has been tested is the man who is really able to help others, even if he has failed and has come back to the Lord. This is the reason I always send a converted drunkard to talk to a drunkard. When I was a young preacher, one drunkard whom I tried to help just patted me on the knee and said, “Vernon you are a good boy.” However, he did not think I could understand his case. He was right; I could not. I found a man who had been an old drunken bum before coming to Christ and asked him to see this man. He went to his home, sat down beside him, and said, “Bill, you know you and I used to drink together. Jesus has saved me, and He can save you too.” And He did—He saved Bill too. The man who has been through the experience himself is the one who can help.

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22:31 Simon, Simon. The repetition of the name (cf. 10:41; Acts 9:4) implied an earnest and somber tone of warning. Christ Himself had given Simon the name Peter (6:14), but here He reverted to his old name, perhaps to intensify His rebuke about Peter’s fleshly overconfidence. The context also suggests that Peter may have been one of the more vocal participants in the dispute of v. 24. **Satan has asked for you.** Though addressed specifically to Peter, this warning embraced the other disciples as well. The pronoun “you” is plural in the Gr. text. **sift you as wheat.** The imagery is apt. It suggests that such trials, though unsettling and undesirable, have a necessary refining effect.

22:32 I have prayed for you. The pronoun “you” is singular (*see note on v. 31*). Although it is clear that He prayed for all of them (John 17:6–19), He personally assured Peter of His prayers and of Peter’s ultimate victory, even encouraging Peter to be an encourager to the others. **that your faith should not fail.** Peter himself failed miserably, but his faith was never overthrown (cf. John 21:18, 19).

105

BROTHERS OF JESUS

Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him [Mark 6:1–3].

When this incident has been compared with the fourth chapter of Luke, the critics say that it reveals a contradiction in the Bible. They say the two accounts conflict one with the other. The fact of the matter is that we have the record of two visits that our Lord made to His hometown of Nazareth. I think He probably made other visits to Nazareth, but these are the two that are recorded. Luke 4 relates the first visit and He went there alone. He performed no miracle and He left suddenly when they tried to kill Him. On the second visit, which is recorded here in Mark 6, we find His disciples are with Him, that He healed “a few sick folk,” and that He remained in this area. This is based on

¹⁰⁴McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:346

Gr. Greek

¹⁰⁵MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Lk 22:31

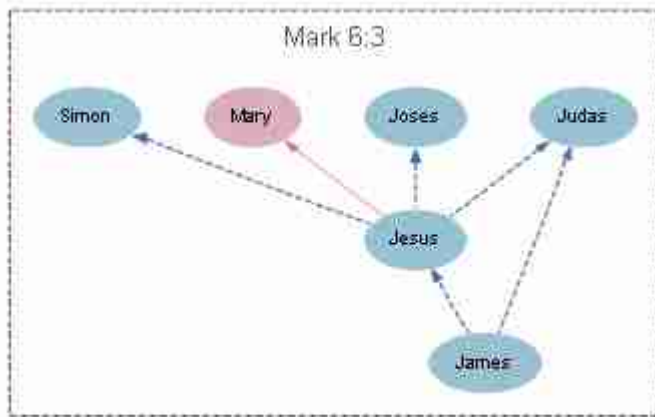
information from Matthew 13:53–58 as well as this chapter of Mark 6. On both occasions He entered the synagogue and taught, and on both occasions He was rejected by His fellow townspeople. So this is not a conflict, but rather two records of two visits that He made to His hometown. The first time He left, He went down to Capernaum and made that His headquarters. But He returned because He wanted to reach His hometown people.

In the first verse when it says “his country,” it literally means His fatherland. It was the custom of our Lord to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath day wherever He was. I think He felt the need to worship God in this way and, also, it was the place to reach the people of that day. His teaching amazed those who had known Him. His words, His works, His wonders all occasioned a consternation on the part of His fellow citizens, which prompted their questions. They actually did not believe that Nazareth could produce anyone like Jesus. They were looking at themselves, of course, and judging Nazareth by themselves. Nazareth hadn’t done too well by them—so they figured there couldn’t be One like the Lord Jesus. They had no faith in One of their own, and they had no faith in themselves.

This passage also reveals that Mary had other children. These were half brothers and sisters of Jesus. I think the Jude who is mentioned here is the author of the Epistle of Jude. And they were *scandalized* because of Him. They thought that they knew Him, which was, of course, their stumbling stone. I think there is a danger in getting familiar with Jesus. He is One with whom we don’t get familiar at all. That was their problem. They thought they knew Him, but they did not. They had seen Him as a boy grow up in the town.

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6:3 carpenter. The people of Nazareth still thought of Jesus as one who carried on his father’s trade (cf. Matt. 13:55) as a craftsman who worked in wood and other hard materials (e.g., stones, bricks). The common earthly position of Jesus and His family caused the townspeople to stumble—they refused to see Him as higher than themselves and found it impossible to accept Him as the Son of God and Messiah. **Son of Mary.**



Only here is Jesus called this. The normal Jewish practice was to identify a son by his father’s (Joseph’s) name. Perhaps that was not done here because Joseph was already dead, or because Christ’s audience were recalling the rumors concerning Jesus’ illegitimate birth (cf. John 8:41; 9:29)—a man was called the son of his mother if his father was unknown—and were

¹⁰⁶McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:184

purposely insulting Him with this title as a reference to illegitimacy. **brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon.** *See note on Matt. 12:46.* These were actual half-brothers of Jesus. “James” was later the leader in the Jerusalem church (cf. Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12) and wrote the epistle of James. “Judas” (Heb. name “Judah”) wrote the epistle of Jude. Nothing more is known of the other two. **His sisters.** Actual half-sisters whose names are never given in the NT. Nothing is known of them, not even if they became believers as the other family members did. **they were offended at Him.** The Eng. term “scandalize” comes from the Gr. verb translated “were offended,” which essentially means “to stumble,” or “become ensnared,” and fall into a sin (*see note on 4:17*). The residents of Nazareth were deeply offended at Jesus’ posturing Himself as some great teacher because of His ordinary background, His limited formal education, and His lack of an officially-sanctioned religious position.¹⁰⁷

- ✚ James (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3; Ac 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Co 15:7; Ga 1:19; 2:9; 12; Jas 1:1...)
- ✚ Jesus, Christ (Mt 1:1; 16; 17; 18; 21; 25; 2:1; 4; 3:13; 15...)
- ✚ Joses, Joseph (Mt 13:55; 27:56; Mk 6:3; 15:40; 47; Lk 23:50)
- ✚ Judas, Jude (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3; Jud 1)
- ✚ Mary (Mt 1:16; 18; 20; 2:11; 13:55; Mk 6:3; Lk 1:27; 30; 34; 38...)
- ✚ Simon (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3)

Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day’s journey [Acts 1:12].

“**A** sabbath day’s journey,” which was less than one mile, kept people pretty much in their location. That was why they would all camp very close to the temple during the feast days when they came to Jerusalem to worship. The Mount of Olives would probably be covered with people camping out, possibly several hundred thousand of them at the time of the feasts. Why? Because they needed to stay within a Sabbath Day’s journey of the temple.

And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James.

These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren [Acts 1:13–14].

I rejoice that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was there. Her reputation has now been cleared. At this point it was obvious that Jesus was the Son of God, and virgin born, as she had claimed.

The attitude of the apostles and the other believers was that of oneness, of prayer, and of waiting.

There is no way that we can duplicate this period today. Remember that this is in a time period, a time capsule, between His ascension into heaven and the coming of the

Heb. Hebrew

Gr. Greek

¹⁰⁷MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mk 6:3

Holy Spirit. You and I do not live in that time period. It cannot be duplicated. We are not waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit; He came over nineteen hundred years ago.

APPOINTMENT OF AN APOSTLE

And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)

Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out [Acts 1:15–18].

Here is Simon Peter speaking up again. Note that this is *before* the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost. This man needs the filling of the Holy Spirit—and so do you and I.

He certainly gives a vivid picture of Judas, doesn't he?

If you are bothered by a seeming discrepancy here and with Matthew 27:5, the following quotation from *Unger's Bible Dictionary* by Merrill F. Unger (pp. 615–616) will be helpful to you.

NOTE.—Between these two passages (Matt. 27:5; Acts 1:16–25) there appears at first sight a discrepancy. In Matthew it is stated “He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.” In Acts (ch. 1) another account is given. There it is stated: (1) That instead of throwing the money into the temple he bought a field with it. (2) That instead of hanging himself, “falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.” (3) That for this reason, and not because the priests had bought it with the price of blood, the field was called “Aceldama.” The fact would seem to be that Judas hanged himself, probably with his girdle, which either broke or became untied, and threw him heavily forward upon the jagged rocks below, thus inflicting the wound mentioned by Peter in the Acts. The apparent discrepancy in the two accounts as to the disposition of the money may be thus explained: “It was not lawful to take into the temple treasury, for the purchase of sacred things, money that had been unlawfully gained. In such case the Jewish law provided that the money was to be restored to the donor, and, if he insisted on giving it that he should be induced to spend it for something for the public weal. By a fiction of law the money was still considered to be Judas's, and to have been applied by him in the purchase of the well-known ‘potter's field’” (Edersheim, *Life of Jesus*, ii, 575).

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1:12 mount called Olivet. Located across the Kidron Valley, E of Jerusalem, this large hill rising about 200 ft. higher in elevation than the city, was the site from which Jesus ascended into heaven (Luke 24:50, 51). **Sabbath day's journey.** One-half of a mi. (about 2,000 cubits), the farthest distance a faithful Jew could travel on the Sabbath to accommodate the prohibition of Ex. 16:29. This measurement was derived from tradition based on Israel's encampments in the wilderness. The tents farthest out on the camp's

¹⁰⁸McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:513-514
mi. mile/miles

perimeter were 2,000 cubits from the center tabernacle—the longest distance anyone had to walk to reach the tabernacle on the Sabbath (Josh. 3:4; cf. Num. 35:5).

1:13 upper room. Where the Last Supper may have been celebrated (Mark 14:15) and where Jesus had appeared to the apostles after His resurrection. **Bartholomew.** See note on Matt. 10:3. This disciple is also called Nathanael (John 1:45–49; 21:2). **James the son of Alphaeus.** See note on Matt. 10:2. The same person as James the younger, also called “the Less” to distinguish him from James, the brother of John (Mark 15:40). **Zealot.** See note on Matt. 10:4. **Judas the son of James.** The preferred rendering is “the brother of.” See note on Matt. 10:3. He was also known as Thaddaeus (Mark 3:18).

1:14 continued ... in prayer. The pattern of praying in the name of Jesus started at this time (cf. John 14:13, 14). **with the women.** Doubtless they included Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Clopas, the sisters Mary and Martha, and Salome. Some of the apostles’ wives also may have been present (cf. 1 Cor. 9:5). **Mary the mother of Jesus.** See note on Luke 1:27, 28. Mary’s name does not appear again in the NT. **brothers.** Jesus’ half-brothers, named in Mark 6:3 as James, Joses, Judas, and Simon. James was the leader of the Jerusalem church (12:17; 15:13–22) and author of the epistle that bears his name. Judas (Jude) wrote the epistle of Jude. At this time they were new believers in Jesus as God, Savior, and Lord, whereas only 8 months earlier John had mentioned their unbelief (John 7:5). Their conversions are not recorded in the NT, but James may have been saved following a post-resurrection appearance by Jesus (1 Cor. 15:7).

1:15 in those days. Some unspecified time during the believers’ 10 days of prayer and fellowship between the ascension and Pentecost. **Peter.** See note on Matt. 10:2. The acknowledged leader of the apostles took charge.

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When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

Then saith he to the disciple. Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home [John 19:25–27].

Jesus calls Mary, “Woman,” just as He had in John 2 at the wedding at Cana. His hour is come. He is to die, but He will rise again. He is to be glorified. His relationship to His mother is to be severed. To her, as well as to us, He is to be the glorified Christ. His resurrection will clear her name forever. Her reputation will be vindicated. But she must come to Christ in faith just as every other believer comes. While He is dying for the sins of the world, He will not neglect her. We know that Mary will be praying with the disciples in the Upper Room after His resurrection (see Acts 1:14), and after that she drops out of the picture. As long as she lived John would keep her in his home and care for her, as the Lord Jesus asked him to do.

110

¹⁰⁹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ac 1:12

¹¹⁰McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:493

19:26 the disciple whom He loved. This is a reference to John (*see note on 13:23*; cf. Introduction: Author and Date). Jesus, as first-born and breadwinner of the family before He started His ministry, did not give the responsibility to His brothers because they were not sympathetic to His ministry nor did they believe in Him (7:3–5) and they likely were not present at the time (i.e., their home was in Capernaum-see 2:12).¹¹¹

19:25-27. In stark contrast with the cruelty and indifference of the soldiers, a group of four women watched with love and grief. The anguish of Jesus' **mother** fulfilled a prophecy of Simeon: "A sword will pierce your own soul too" (Luke 2:35). Seeing her sorrow **Jesus** honored **His mother** by consigning her into the care of John, **the beloved disciple**. His brothers and sisters being in Galilee, were not in a position to care for or comfort her. The words of Jesus to Mary and the beloved disciple were His third saying from the cross (the first one recorded by John). In the other Gospels Jesus had already given a respite to the Roman executioners (Luke 23:24) and a pardon to one thief (Luke 23:42-43).¹¹²

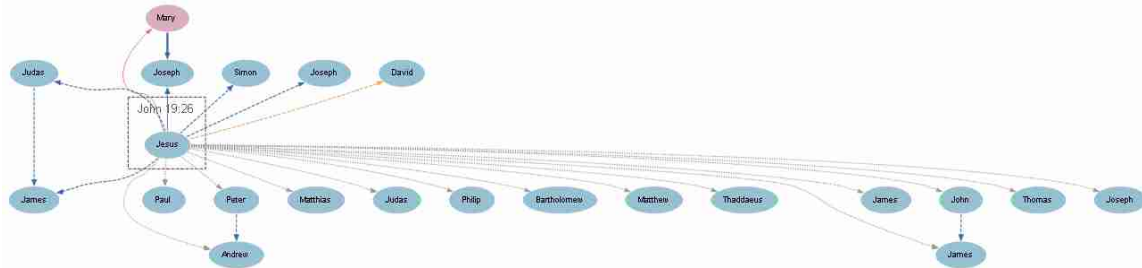
Jesus, Christ (Mt 1:1; 16; 17; 18; 21; 25; 2:1; 4; 3:13; 15...)

- *son of Joseph* (Jn 1:45; 6:42)
- *mother Mary* (Mt 1:16; 18; Ac 1:14)
- *brother Simon* (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3)
- *brother James* (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3)
- *brother Judas, Jude* (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3)
- *brother Joseph, Joses* (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3)
- *apostle Andrew* (Mt 10:2; Lk 6:14)
- *apostle Paul, Saul* (Ro 1:1; 1 Co 1:1; 2 Co 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Ti 1:1; Tit 1:1)
- *apostle, disciple Peter, Simon, Cephas, Simeon* (Mt 10:2; 4; Mk 3:16; 18; Jn 18:15; 1 Pe 1:1; 2 Pe 1:1)
- *apostle Matthias* (Ac 1:26)
- *apostle Judas* (Mt 10:4; Mk 3:19)
- *apostle Philip* (Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18)
- *apostle Bartholomew* (Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18)
- *apostle Matthew, Levi* (Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18)
- *apostle Thaddaeus* (Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18)
- *apostle James* (Mt 10:2; Mk 3:17)
- *apostle James* (Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18)
- *apostle John* (Mt 10:2; Mk 3:14)
- *apostle Thomas* (Mt 10:2; Mk 3:14; Lk 6:13)
- *disciple Joseph* (Mt 27:57; Jn 19:38)
- *family of David* (Mt 1:17)

And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour [2 Sam. 6:22].

¹¹¹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Jn 19:26

¹¹²Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:339



When he says he will make himself “more vile,” he means that he will come down to the level of the most humble worshiper. He doesn’t mind being informal in his worship of God.

Because of her attitude, David “put her aside.” That is, he became permanently estranged from her, and she was childless. Obviously, Michal did not share David’s love and enthusiasm for God.
113

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114

6:23 Michal ... had no children. Whether David ceased to have marital relations with Michal or the Lord disciplined Michal for her contempt of David, Michal bore no children. In OT times, it was a reproach to be childless (1 Sam. 1:5, 6). Michal’s childlessness prevented her from providing a successor to David’s throne from the family of Saul (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22–28).
115

MARY EVER VIRGIN

To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary [Luke 1:26–27].

¹¹³McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 2:201-202

¹¹⁴McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 2:201-202

¹¹⁵MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 2 Sa 6:23

We move now from Jerusalem to Nazareth. Six months after the angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias, he appears to Mary.

Two times in one verse she is called a virgin. Do you know what a virgin is? I ask this because many folks do not seem to know. A virgin is a woman who could never have a child in a natural way because she has never had a relationship with a man that would make the birth of a child possible. Someone needs to talk rather plainly today because there are men saying that the Virgin Birth is biologically impossible. When I hear a man make that statement, I always feel like calling him up and saying, “I would like to have lunch with you and tell you about the birds and the bees because you do not seem to know much about them.” The Scripture makes it clear that the Lord Jesus Christ was virgin born.

I do not object to an unbeliever saying that he does not believe in the Virgin Birth, but when he makes the statement that the *Bible* does not teach it, I object. I say very plainly that one who makes this statement must have something wrong with his intellect or is ignorant of the birds and the bees. It should be remembered that Luke was a doctor and he gives the most extended account of the Virgin Birth.

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1:27 a virgin. The importance of the virgin birth cannot be overstated. A right view of the incarnation hinges on the truth that Jesus was virgin-born. Both Luke and Matthew expressly state that Mary was a virgin when Jesus was conceived (*see note on Matt. 1:23*). The Holy Spirit wrought the conception through supernatural means (*see notes on v. 35; Matt. 1:18*). The nature of Christ’s conception testifies of both His deity and His sinlessness. **betrothed.** *See notes on Matt. 1:18, 19.*¹¹⁷

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us [Matt. 1:23].

Now let’s look at this a moment because it is very important. The liberal theologian has, of course, denied the fact of the virgin birth of Christ, and he has denied that the Bible teaches His virgin birth. Very candidly, I suspect that the Revised Standard Version was published in order to try to maintain some of the theses of the liberals. In fact, I am sure of this because one of the doctrines they have denied is the Virgin Birth. In the New Testament of the Revised Standard Version, which was copyrighted in 1946, Matthew 1:23 reads thus: “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel’ (which means, God with us).”

In the Old Testament of the Revised Standard Version, which was copyrighted in 1952, Isaiah 7:14 reads like this: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” Notice that in Isaiah they substituted “young woman” for the word *virgin*,

¹¹⁶McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:246-247

¹¹⁷MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Lk 1:27

even though in Matthew 1:23 they had used the word *virgin*, which is a fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14!

The prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 was given as a *sign*. My friend, it is no sign at all for a young woman to conceive and bear a son. If that's a sign, then right here in Southern California a sign is taking place many times a day, every day. They translated it "young woman" to tone down that word *virgin*.

Let us look at Isaiah 7:14 in the original Hebrew language. The word used for "virgin" is *almah*. The translators of the RSV went to the writings of Gesenius, an outstanding scholar who has an exhaustive Hebrew lexicon. (I can testify that it's also exhausting to look at it!) Gesenius admitted that the common translation of the word is "virgin," but he said that it could be changed to "young woman." The reason he said that was because he rejected the miraculous. So this new translation and others who have followed him, have attempted to say that *almah* means "young woman" and not "virgin."

Let's turn back to Isaiah 7 and study the incident recorded there. This was during the time when Ahaz was on the throne. He was one of those who was far from God, and I list him as a bad king. God sent Isaiah to bring a message to him, and he wouldn't listen. So we read: "Moreover the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD" (Isa. 7:10-12). May I say, it was pious hypocrisy for him to say what he did. God had asked Isaiah to meet Ahaz on the way to deliver God's message to him that God would give victory to Ahaz. However, Ahaz wouldn't believe God and so, in order to encourage his faith, Isaiah tells him that God wants to give him a sign. In his super pious way Ahaz says, "Oh, I wouldn't ask a sign of the Lord." Isaiah answered him, "God is going to give you a sign whether you like it or not. The sign isn't just for you but for the whole house of David." Now here is the sign: "... Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14). Obviously, if this refers to a young woman, it would be no sign to Ahaz, or to the house of David, or to anybody else; but if a *virgin* conceives and bears a son, that, my friend, is a sign. And that's exactly what it means.

When the word *almah* is used in the Old Testament, it means a virgin. Rebekah was called an *almah* before she married Isaac. I asked a very fine Hebrew Christian, who is also a good Hebrew scholar, about that. He said, "Look at it this way. Suppose you went to visit a friend of yours who had three daughters and two of them were married and one was still single. He would say, 'These two are my married daughters, and this young lady is my third daughter.' Do you think he would mean a prostitute when he said 'young lady?' If you would imply that she was anything but a virgin, he would probably knock your block off." May I say, I would hate to be those who deny the virgin birth of Jesus Christ when they must come into the presence of the Son of God. I'm afraid they are going to wish they could somehow take back the things they have said to malign Him.

The fact that the word *almah* means "a virgin" is proven by the Septuagint. During the intertestamental period, seventy-two Hebrew scholars, six from each of the twelve tribes, worked down in Alexandria, Egypt, on the translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek language. When they came to this "sign" in Isaiah, those seventy-two men understood that it meant "virgin," and they translated it into the Greek word *parthenos*. That is the same word which Matthew uses in his gospel. My friend,

parthenos does not mean “young woman”; it means “virgin.” For example, Athena was the virgin goddess of Athens, and her temple was called the Parthenon because *parthenos* means “virgin.” It is clear that the Word of God is saying precisely what it means.

118

HIS NAME

Notice something wonderful. “Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” It looks as if there is a problem here. Can you tell me where Jesus was ever called Emmanuel? No, He is called Jesus because that is His name. He was given this name because He shall save His people from their sins. Christ, by the way, is His title; Jesus is His name. But it says here that He shall be called “Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”

Friend, here we have one of the most wonderful things in the entire Word of God. Let’s look at this. Emmanuel means “God with us.” He can’t be Emmanuel, God with us, unless He is virgin born. That’s the only way! And notice, unless He is Emmanuel, He cannot be Jesus, the Savior. The reason they call Him Jesus, Savior, is because He is God with us. This truth about the One who came down to this earth is one of the most wonderful things in the Bible.

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb. 2:9). He had to be a sacrifice that was acceptable. I couldn’t die for the sins of the world. I can’t even die a redemptive death for my own sins. But He can! How can Jesus be a Savior? Because He is Emmanuel, God with us. How did He get with us? He was virgin born. I say again, He was called Jesus. He was never called Emmanuel. But you cannot call Him Jesus unless He is Emmanuel, God with us. He must be Emmanuel to be the Savior of the world. That is how important the Virgin Birth is.

Can a person be a Christian and deny the Virgin Birth? Hear me very carefully: I believe that it is possible to accept Christ as your Savior without knowing much about Him. You may not even know that this record is in the Bible. But after you have become a child of God, you will not deny the Virgin Birth of the Lord Jesus. You may not have to know it to be saved, but as a child of God you cannot deny the virgin birth of Jesus Christ.

Do I sound dogmatic, friend? Well, I hope I do because I consider this to be all-important. I want a Savior who is able to reach down and save Vernon McGee. If He’s just another man like I am, then He’s not going to be able to help me very much. But if He is Emmanuel, God with us, virgin born, then He is my Savior. Is He your Savior today? He took upon Himself our humanity in this way so that He might taste death for us, that He might die a redemptive death on the cross for us.

119

¹¹⁸McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:11-12

¹¹⁹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:12-13

1:23 virgin. Scholars sometimes dispute whether the Hebrew term in Is. 7:14 means “virgin” or “maiden.” Matthew is quoting here from the LXX which uses the unambiguous Gr. term for “virgin” (*see note on Is. 7:14*). Thus Matthew, writing under the Spirit’s inspiration, ends all doubt about the meaning of the word in Is. 7:14.

Immanuel. Cf. Is. 8:8, 10.¹²⁰

1:25 know her. A euphemism for sexual intercourse. See Gen. 4:1, 17, 25; 38:26; Judg. 11:39.
¹²¹

1:24-25. As soon as **Joseph** awakened from this dream, he obeyed. He violated all custom by immediately taking **Mary** into his **home** rather than waiting till the one-year time period of betrothal had passed. Joseph was probably thinking of what would be best for Mary in her condition. He brought her home and began to care and provide for her. But there was **no** sexual relationship between them **until** after the **birth** of this Child, Jesus. Matthew simply noted the birth of the Child and the fact that He was named **Jesus**, whereas Luke, the physician (Col. 4:14), recorded several details surrounding the birth (Luke 2:1-7).
¹²²

Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? [Luke 1:34].

Mary was the first one to question the Virgin Birth. She said, “How can it be?” This is still a good question. Dr. Luke quotes the angel Gabriel and gives us the answer.
¹²³

1:34 I do not know a man. I.e., conjugally. Mary understood that the angel was speaking of an immediate conception, and she and Joseph were still in the midst of the long betrothal, or engagement period (*see note on Matt. 1:18*), before the actual marriage and consummation. Her question was borne out of wonder, not doubt, nor disbelief, so the angel did not rebuke her as he had Zacharias (v. 20).¹²⁴

LXX Septuagint—an ancient translation of the Old Testament into Greek
Gr. Greek

¹²⁰MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 1:23

¹²¹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 1:25

¹²²Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:20

¹²³McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:247

¹²⁴MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Lk 1:34

MOTHER OF GOD

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¹²⁵

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Immanuel. Cf. Is. 8:8, 10.¹²⁶

**And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?
For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped
in my womb for joy.**

**And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things
which were told her from the Lord [Luke 1:43–45].**

Little is said in Scripture about Elisabeth. She sang the first song of the New Testament, and when you have a soloist like this, you should not ignore her. She is a remarkable person. She had faith while her husband Zacharias did not. He was struck dumb because of his unbelief, but Elisabeth was not. She believed God. Now she encourages Mary. Mary is a young woman and Elisabeth is an old woman. Elisabeth had walked with God for many years and she assures her that there would be a performance of those things which had been revealed to her. I would like to give Elisabeth a little credit along with the others. She should not be deified, of course. She was only a woman, just as Mary was only a woman. And Mary needed the encouragement that Elisabeth could give.

¹²⁷

1:43 the mother of my Lord. This expression is not in praise of Mary, but in praise of the Child whom she bore. It was a profound expression of Elizabeth's confidence that Mary's Child would be the long-hoped-for Messiah—the one whom even David called “Lord” (cf. 20:44). Elizabeth's grasp of the situation was extraordinary, considering the

¹²⁵ McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:11-13

LXX Septuagint—an ancient translation of the Old Testament into Greek
Gr. Greek

¹²⁶ MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 1:23

¹²⁷ McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:248-249

aura of mystery that overshadowed all these events (cf. 2:19). She greeted Mary not with skepticism but with joy. She understood the response of the child in her own womb. And she seemed to comprehend the immense importance of the Child who Mary was carrying. All of this must be attributed to the illuminating work of the Spirit (v. 41).¹²⁸

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law [Gal. 4:4].

At the time determined by God, God the Father sent forth God the Son, born of a woman, born under the Law. Mary was a Jewish woman. Out here on the West Coast there is a woman who is saying that Jesus did not belong to any race. How absolutely puerile and senseless! It is an attempt to take a saccharine sweet position which has no meaning whatsoever. The woman at the well (as recorded in the fourth chapter of John's gospel) knew more than the woman out here knows today. She said, "How is it that thou, being a *Jew*, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? ..." (John 4:9, italics mine). She thought He was a Jew, and our Lord didn't correct her; so I conclude that she was accurate. If you don't mind, I'll follow her rather than some of my contemporaries who try to play down the fact that Jesus, according to the flesh, was a Jew. He had a perfect humanity. He also was *God* manifest in the flesh. In my day that is being questioned. However, the only *historical* Jesus that we have is the One who is described in one of the oldest creeds of the church as "very man of very man and very God of very God." I agree with that creed because it is exactly what the Word of God teaches.

Now what was God's purpose in sending forth His Son?

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4:4 the fullness of the time. In God's timetable, when the exact religious, cultural, and political conditions demanded by His perfect plan were in place, Jesus came into the world. **God sent forth His Son.** As a father set the time for the ceremony of his son becoming of age and being released from the guardians, stewards, and tutors, so God sent His Son at the precise moment to bring all who believe out from under bondage to the law—a truth Jesus repeatedly affirmed (John 5:30, 36, 37; 6:39, 44, 57; 8:16, 18, 42; 12:49; 17:21, 25; 20:21). That the Father sent Jesus into the world teaches His pre-existence as the eternal second member of the Trinity. *See notes on Phil. 2:6, 7; Heb. 1:3–5; cf. Rom. 8:3, 4. born of a woman.* This emphasizes Jesus' full humanity, not merely His virgin birth (Is. 7:14; Matt. 1:20–25). Jesus had to be fully God for His sacrifice to be of the infinite worth needed to atone for sin. But, He also had to be fully man so He could take upon Himself the penalty of sin as the substitute for man. See Luke 1:32, 35; John 1:1, 14, 18. **under the law.** Like all men, Jesus was obligated to obey God's law. Unlike anyone else, however, He perfectly obeyed that law (John 8:46; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5). His sinlessness made Him the unblemished sacrifice for sins, who "fulfilled all righteousness," i.e., perfectly obeyed

¹²⁸MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Lk 1:43

¹²⁹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:175-176

God in everything. That perfect righteousness is what is imputed to those who believe in Him.¹³⁰

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women [Luke 1:28].

There is a tendency among Protestants to play down the role of Mary, but this verse tells us that she was highly favored. In the same breath, however, let me say that she was blessed *among* women, not *above* women. She is not lifted above women; she lifted up womanhood. This is the role she played. It is so easy to say that a woman brought sin into the world, but remember, it was a woman, and not a man, who brought the Savior into the world.

¹³¹

1:28 highly favored. Lit. “full of grace”—a term used of all believers in Eph. 1:6, where it is translated “accepted.” This portrays Mary as a recipient, not a dispenser, of divine grace.¹³²

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end [Luke 1:30–33].

This is plain language. There is no way of misinterpreting it. This passage is quite literal. Those folks who deny the Virgin Birth also do not believe that the Lord is going to sit on the throne of His father David. Apparently it was understood that what Luke is writing about is literal. The virgin’s womb is literal and the throne of David is literal. He shall literally reign over the house of Jacob and of His kingdom there shall be no end. That kingdom is also a reality.

¹³³

1:30 Do not be afraid. The same thing Gabriel had said to Zacharias (v. 13). *See note on v. 12.*¹³⁴

¹³⁰MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ga 4:4

¹³¹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:247

¹³²MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Lk 1:28

¹³³McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:247

And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed [Luke 1:46–48].

Now Mary sings a song. This is known as the *Magnificat*. This song teaches us several interesting things. Mary tells us in her song that she needed a Savior and that she rejoiced in Him. Protestant friend, let us call her blessed. We don't make her a goddess and kneel before her, but we do need to call her blessed. It was her glorious privilege to be the mother of the Son of God, to bring Him into the world. We should not play it down, but we should not play it up either. She was a wonderful person, and it was no accident that she was chosen by God. It was. His definite decision, and God makes no mistakes.

1:47 my Savior. Mary referred to God as “Savior,” indicating both that she recognized her own need of a Savior, and that she knew the true God as her Savior. Nothing here or anywhere else in Scripture indicates Mary thought of herself as “immaculate” (free from the taint of original sin). Quite the opposite is true; she employed language typical of someone whose only hope for salvation is divine grace. Nothing in this passage lends support to the notion that Mary herself ought to be an object of adoration. *See notes on vv. 46–55.*¹³⁵

CALL NO MAN “FATHER”

Then said the high priest, Are these things so?

And he said, Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken; The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran [Acts 7:1–2].

They have made an accusation against him. He is questioned as to the truth of the charges. In his response he makes no attempt to clear himself. In fact, he doesn't even mention the charges they have made against him. What a marvelous beginning. He calls them *brethren*. They are his brethren in the flesh. He calls the older men *fathers*. He is a younger man and shows them this respect. This young man is to become the first martyr in the church.

We sometimes hear it said that Christianity at the beginning was actually a youth movement. It is not altogether inaccurate to state that it was a youth movement. Two men who held as prominent a place as any were Stephen and Saul of Tarsus, whom we will meet soon. These two men had a great deal to do with the shaping of the course of the early church. Both of them were remarkable young men. Both of them were gifted and used by the Holy Spirit. Yet the only time these two young men ever met, they were enemies. The cross divided Stephen and Saul of Tarsus just as truly as it divided the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus. Paul knew what he was saying in 1 Corinthians

¹³⁴MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Lk 1:30

¹³⁵MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Lk 1:47

1:18: “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” When Saul saw Stephen, he thought Stephen was very foolish.

This address of Stephen is a master stroke. He reviews the history of the nation beginning with Abraham. That is where the history of the nation Israel began. They did not go back any farther. You will find the same thing in the Gospel of Matthew. This book, written to the nation Israel, traces the genealogy of Jesus Christ back to Abraham. If you want to trace it all the way back to Adam, you must turn to the Gospel of Luke. Stephen starts with Abraham, a man of faith.

Even though he traces the resistance and rebellion against God by the nation, still there was always a believing remnant.

This is true today, too. In the organized church, in the visible church which you and I can see, there is a remnant of believers. Not every one in the visible church is a true believer. People may ask, “Do you think So-and-So is a Christian?” The answer is that even though he goes to church and is a church officer, he may not be a Christian. Just as in the nation Israel there was the believing remnant, so in the visible church there is the little remnant of true believers.

Abraham was a man of faith. He believed God, and he obeyed God. Faith always leads to obedience. Stephen starts his narrative with Abraham in Mesopotamia, down in the Tigris-Euphrates valley. That was the place of Abraham’s hometown. It was there that God called him.

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7:2–53 Stephen’s response does not seem to answer the High-Priest’s question. Instead, he gave a masterful, detailed defense of the Christian faith from the OT and concluded by condemning the Jewish leaders for rejecting Jesus.

7:2 The God of glory. A title used only here and in Ps. 29:3. God’s glory is the sum of His attributes (*see notes on Ex. 33:18, 19*). **Abraham ... Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran.** Genesis 12:1–4 refers to the repeat of this call after Abraham had settled in Haran (ca. 500 mi. NW of Ur). Evidently, God had originally called Abraham while he was living in Ur (cf. Gen. 15:7; Neh. 9:7), then repeated that call at Haran (*see notes on Gen. 11:31–12:3*).

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¹³⁶McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:537
mi. mile/miles

¹³⁷MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ac 7:2

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4:16 of faith. Justification is through faith alone (*see notes on 1:16, 17 and 3:24*). **according to grace.** But the power of justification is God’s great grace (*see note on 1:5*), not man’s faith. **promise.** *See note on v. 13.* **those who are of the law.** Believing Jews. **those who are of the faith of Abraham.** Believing Gentiles. **father of us all.** *See note on v. 11.*¹³⁹

For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel [1 Cor. 4:14–15]. Paul was the missionary who led them to Christ. It is a wonderful thing to be the spiritual father of someone whom you have led to Christ.

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4:15 ten thousand instructors. The terms actually say “countless tutors,” referring by hyperbole to an unlimited number of moral guardians used with children. Only Paul was their spiritual father; hence, no one cared like him.¹⁴¹

Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? [Heb. 12:9].

Believe me, I listened to my dad. I hadn’t heard about the new psychology in which you don’t pay any attention to your parents, and your parents aren’t supposed to discipline you. My dad disciplined, and I listened to him. The writer says that if we listen to our earthly parents, “shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?” Whether or not you listen to your earthly father, you had better listen to your heavenly Father.

The writer to the Hebrews goes on to make a suggestion. He says, “Be in subjection to the father of spirits, *and live*.” Does he mean live it up? I think he means to live a Christian life in all its fullness—that’s the positive side. But I think there is also a negative aspect, which is that the heavenly Father disciplines in very severe ways sometimes, and there is a sin unto death. The sin unto death is a sin that a child of God can commit, and sometimes the heavenly Father will take a disobedient child out of this

mi. mile/miles

¹³⁸MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ac 7:2

¹³⁹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ro 4:16

¹⁴⁰McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:22

¹⁴¹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Co 4:15

world because he is disgracing Him. The writer is saying that you had better listen to your heavenly Father because He is disciplining you in love, but if you persist in going on in sin, He may take you home.

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12:9 subjection. Respect for God equals submission to His will and law, and those who willingly receive the Lord's chastening will have a richer, more abundant life (cf. Ps. 119:165). **Father of spirits.** Probably best translated as "Father of our spirits," it is in contrast to "human fathers" (lit. "fathers of our flesh").¹⁴³

PURGATORY

And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life [Rev. 21:26–27].

And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it: and there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie: but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life.

God has apparently accomplished His original purpose with man—fellowship. He now has a creature who is a free moral agent and who chooses to worship and serve Him eternally.

There can be no night, since the Lamb is the light, and He is eternally present.

The gates are not for protection, and they are never closed. Rather, they are the badge or coat of arms of the bride. Notice that these gates are of pearl. The pearl of great price has been purchased at a great price. In the parable (see Matt. 13:45–46) that the Lord Jesus gave, the pearl is not Christ whom the sinner buys. What is a sinner to pay for Christ?—he hasn't anything that he can pay. It is the other way around. The merchant man who bought that pearl was the Lord Jesus Christ, and the pearl is the bride. It is interesting that a pearl is formed by a grain of sand that gets into the body of a little oyster or mollusk of some kind, and that little marine creature begins to put around that grain a secretion that before long makes the pearl. The pearl of great price is *margarites* in the Greek, and if the church has a name, it is Margaret. The Lord Jesus Christ paid a great price to buy this pearl. This pearl was formed from His side. Someone has said, "I got into the heart of Christ through a spear wound." He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities. The church will be for the display of His grace throughout eternity to the absolute myriads of God's created intelligences. "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7).

In other words, in eternity you and I will be there on display. They will look at Vernon McGee and say: "Do you see that fellow? He deserved hell, and the Lord Jesus

¹⁴²McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:603

lit. literally

¹⁴³MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Heb 12:9

Christ died for him and paid a tremendous price. He trusted Christ; that is all he had to offer. Now look what the Lord Jesus has done for him. He has made him fit for heaven and made him acceptable in the beloved.”

The church will be the fairest jewel of all when He makes up His jewels (see Mal. 3:17–18). When He makes up His jewels, the church is going to be on display. This is the reason that the New Jerusalem will be the center of the new heavens and the new earth.

The Lamb’s Book of Life contains the names of the redeemed of all ages. No one who was not redeemed by the blood of Christ will ever be permitted to enter the portals of the New Jerusalem. There is a great gulf fixed between the saved and the lost.

The greatest joy that will capture the heart of the redeemed will be that of abiding in the presence of Christ for eternity. “That where I am, there ye may be also” is what He said in John 14:3. This is heaven, my friend, to be with Him. Revelation is all about Jesus Christ—He is the centerpiece of God’s universe.

Our attention has already been directed to the fact that a redeemed remnant of Israel makes regular visits to the city of God. In verse 24 another group is identified who come into the city to bring their glory and honor. These are the redeemed gentile nations which will occupy the earth together with Israel for eternity. These nations, like Israel, do not belong to the church, for they are redeemed after the church is removed from the earth (or before the church came into existence). They come as visitors to the city. They come as worshipers. In Hebrews 12:22 we are told there is also present an innumerable company of angels who evidently constitute the servant class. The city is cosmopolitan in character. All nationalities meet there, and the created intelligences of God walk the street of the New Jerusalem.

Among the multitudes, there is not one who will bring defilement or sin. How superior is this city to even the Garden of Eden where the lie of Satan made an entrance for sin. No lie or liar will ever enter the portals of the heavenly Jerusalem. All dwellers and all tourists are not only redeemed from sin but have also lost their taste for sin. They come through the gates which are never closed. The enjoyment of this glorious city is not restricted to the church, although they are the only ones who dwell there.

Jerusalem, the golden, with milk and honey blest!
Beneath thy contemplation sink heart and voice oppressed;
I know not, O I know not what joys await me there;
What radiancy of glory, what bliss beyond compare.

“Jerusalem the Golden”

—Bernard of Cluny

What a picture and how inadequately I have dealt with it. Oh, if only you and I both could be lifted up so that we might get a glimpse of the glory of that city and of the glory of the One who is its chief adornment, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the glorious prospect and privilege of being with Him throughout eternity. There is nothing to compare to it!

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21:27 Lamb’s Book of Life. *See note on 3:5.*

¹⁴⁴McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:1074-1075

And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die [2 Sam. 12:13].

David should have died for this crime. God spared David's life and put away his sin, but David's baby died. God is not going to let David get by with his sin.

Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die [2 Sam. 12:14].

And friends, the enemies of the Lord still blaspheme God because of what David did. When I was a pastor in downtown Los Angeles, there were many times when some unbeliever or skeptic came to me and said, "How could God choose a man like David?" They would actually leer at me while waiting for my reply. The enemy is still blaspheming. God is going to take David to the woodshed.

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12:13 I have sinned against the LORD. David did not attempt to rationalize or justify his sin. When confronted with the facts, David's confession was immediate. The fuller confessions of David are found in Pss. 32 and 51. **The LORD also has put away your sin.** The Lord graciously forgave David's sin, but the inevitable temporal consequences of sin were experienced by him. Forgiveness does not always remove the consequences of sin in this life, only in the life to come. **you shall not die.** Although the sins of David legally demanded his death (see v. 5), the Lord graciously released David from the required death penalty. There are events in the OT record where God required death and others where He showed grace and spared the sinner. This is consistent with justice and grace. Those who perished are illustrations of what all sinners deserve. Those who were spared are proofs and examples of God's grace.

12:14 the enemies of the LORD. Because of God's reputation among those who opposed Him, David's sin had to be judged. The judgment would begin with the death of Bathsheba's baby son.

146

By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison [1 Pet. 3:19].

This has been a most misunderstood passage of Scripture. The key word to this entire passage is in verse 20; it is the little word *when*—

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3:19 preached. Between Christ's death and resurrection, His living spirit went to the demon spirits bound in the abyss and proclaimed that, in spite of His death, He had triumphed over them (*see notes on Col. 2:14,15*). **spirits in prison.** This refers to fallen

¹⁴⁵McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 2:215-216

¹⁴⁶MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 2 Sa 12:13

¹⁴⁷McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:701

angels (demons), who were permanently bound because of heinous wickedness. The demons who are not so bound resist such a sentence (cf. Luke 8:31). In the end, they will all be sent to the eternal lake of fire (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10).¹⁴⁸

SAINTS

And as touching the dead, that they rise: have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?

He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living: ye therefore do greatly err [Mark 12:26–27].

They do not know the power of God. Abraham is not dead; Isaac is not dead, Jacob is not dead. Their bodies were buried there in Hebron, but they are not dead. They have gone to be with Him, and that is where Christians are today that die in the Lord, friend. He is devastating in His answers to these religious rulers. Now we have another person coming to our Lord, after hearing the discussion with the Sadducees.

¹⁴⁹

12:26 book of Moses. The Pentateuch—the first 5 books of the OT. Jesus appealed to the only Scriptures the Sadducees held as completely authoritative. **the burning bush passage.** A reference to Ex. 3:1–4:17 where God first appeared to Moses at the bush. **how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am.’** By keying on the emphatic present tense of Ex. 3:6, “I *am* the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” Jesus was underscoring the personal and perpetual covenantal relationship God established with the 3 patriarchs. Even though all 3 were dead when God spoke to Moses, God was still their God just as much as when they were alive on earth—and more so in that they were experiencing eternal fellowship with Him in heaven (*see note on Matt. 22:32*).

12:27 You are ... greatly mistaken. Jesus accused the Sadducees of making a complete error in teaching that there is no resurrection.

¹⁵⁰

And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:

That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another [1 Cor. 12:23–25].

¹⁴⁸MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Pe 3:19

¹⁴⁹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:214

¹⁵⁰MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mk 12:26

You have seen some little, underdeveloped boy taking exercises and lifting weights. He is trying to develop some muscles and trying to develop some strength. Just so, God pays attention to the body of believers so that the small gifts are developed. I think there are many gifts in the church which need to be developed today.

Perhaps you feel that you are not doing anything for the Lord. One of the most thrilling things in the world, especially if you are a young person, is to find out what God wants you to do and where He wants you to go. What a thrill, what an experience, what an adventure to find out what gift God has given you!

Paul goes on to say that this should all be done so that there is no schism in the body. The members should all have the same care one for another.

And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it [1 Cor. 12:26].

My friend, there is no place for jealousy in the church—we all are members of the same body. If one is honored, we all receive that honor. And when one member is suffering, we all suffer with him.

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues [1 Cor. 12:27–28].

What about the gift of “helps”? Oh, what a wonderful gift that is! If you have it, I hope you are exercising it.

¹⁵¹

12:25 God has designed visible, public gifts to have a crucial place, but equally designed and more vital to life are the hidden gifts, thus maintaining the perspective of unity—all are essential to the working of the body of Christ.

12:26, 27 This is a call to mutual love and concern in the fellowship of believers (cf. Phil. 2:1–4) which maintains the unity that honors the Lord. There is one body in which all function, yet never do they lose their personal identity and the essential necessity of ministry as God has designed them to do it.

¹⁵²

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:

So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another [Rom. 12:4–5].

This is the first time that Paul has introduced the great theme of the church as the body of Christ. This is the primary subject in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, Ephesians, and Colossians. The church as the body of Christ is to function as a body. This means that the many members do not have the same gifts. You may have a gift that I could never exercise. There are many members in the body, hundreds of members, and therefore

¹⁵¹ McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:61-62

¹⁵² MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Co 12:25

hundreds of gifts. I do not think Paul ever gave a complete list of all the gifts because every time he dealt with gifts of the Spirit he always brought up new gifts which he had not mentioned in previous lists. I am sure the Spirit of God led him to do that.

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12:4–8 One of two NT passages (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12–14) listing the general categories of spiritual gifts. The emphasis in each list is not on believers' identifying their gift perfectly, but on faithfully using the unique enablement God has given each. The fact that the two lists differ clearly implies the gifts are like a palette of basic colors, from which God selects to blend a unique hue for each disciple's life (*see notes on vv.6–8; 1 Cor. 12:12–14*).

12:4 many members ... one body. Just as in the natural body, God has sovereignly given the body of Christ a unified diversity (*see note on 1 Cor. 12:14–20*).

12:5 in Christ. *See notes on 8:1; Eph. 1:3–14.*

154

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints [Eph. 6:16–18].

The armor of the believer is a spiritual armor because we fight against a spiritual enemy. We are to stand in that armor, and that armor is Christ, the living Christ. Satan himself, in the Book of Job, describes how God protects His own. He said, "Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? ..." (Job 1:10). God has provided protection for us today in the armor He supplies.

"Above all, taking the shield of faith." The shield covered all of the armor. The shield referred to is a large shield the size of a door. It was the shield of the heavy infantry. A soldier stood behind it and was fully protected. Christ is both the door to salvation and the door that protects the believer from the enemy without. This is the picture in John, chapter 10. Christ is both salvation and security.

"Faith" enables us to enter the door: "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John 10:9). That is salvation. What about security? Faith places us securely in His hands: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:27–28). Faith enables us to lay hold of the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith also enables us to stand behind that shield which will quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.

"The fiery darts of the wicked." He is shooting them fast and furiously. I remember that when I was in college, I had a brilliant philosophy professor who had studied in Germany. I respected his intellect, although I didn't realize at the time that he was intellectually dishonest. I looked up to him but, very frankly, he was taking my feet out from under me. I would try to answer him in class when I probably should have kept my mouth shut. But we became friends, and we used to walk together across the campus after class and discuss the questions I had raised. I came to the place where I went to the Lord

¹⁵³McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:731

¹⁵⁴MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ro 12:4

in prayer and said, “Lord, if I can’t believe Your Word, I don’t want to go into the ministry.” Then the Lord in a very miraculous way sent me to hear a man who was the most brilliant man, I think, whom I have ever heard. He gave me the answer to my questions. Then I began to learn that when a fiery dart comes my way and I don’t have the answer, I am to put up the shield of faith. And this is what I have been doing ever since. I have found that the shield of faith has batted down the fiery darts of the wicked one.

I remember that I was upset about questions concerning the Genesis record of creation. I was ready to get out of the ministry because I couldn’t accept certain things. The problem was not with my pygmy intellect, although I thought it was at the time; I just didn’t know enough. So I put up the shield of faith.

Someone was walking with me in Israel as we were observing some excavations. He asked me, “Suppose they dig up something down there that looks like it disproves the Bible. What position would you take?” I answered, “I would put up the shield of faith, and that would bat down the fiery darts of the wicked one. I have learned that when a fiery dart is batted down, I will get the correct answer later on.” I remember a time when the authorship of John was being questioned—was the Gospel of John written by John? Today it is pretty well established that John was the writer, but at one time I had questions about it.

The fiery darts of the wicked one come fast and furiously, and they are going to continue to come. The only thing that will bat them down is this shield of faith. It is like a big door. The hoplites, the heavily armed soldiers in the Greek infantry, could move with those tremendous shields, put them out in front of them, and stand protected shoulder to shoulder, while the enemy shot everything they had at them. When the enemy was out of ammunition, they would move in, certain of victory. That is the way to stand against the fiery darts of the evil one.

“And take the helmet of salvation.” The helmet protects the head, and God does appeal to the mind of man. I recognize that He appeals to the heart, but God also appeals to the intellect. Throughout the Scriptures God uses reason with man. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa. 1:18). “And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee” (Acts 24:25). Paul reasoned with Felix; he appealed to the mind of the man as well as to his heart. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

A theology professor who was a liberal said many years ago when I was a student, “Faith is a leap in the dark.” That is not true. God does not ask you to take a leap into the dark. In fact, God says if it is a leap in the dark, don’t take it. God wants you to leap into the light. God has a solid foundation for you, and how wonderful it is!

Christ is the salvation of the sinner. He is the One to receive the glory in it all. That plume on the top of the helmet is Christ. He has been made unto us salvation. “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). Even before His birth in Bethlehem He was marked out as the Savior.

Paul mentions this helmet in connection with salvation again in another epistle. “But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:8).

All the parts of the armor mentioned so far have been for defense. Have you noticed that? Everything is for the front of the individual. There is no protection for his back; nothing is provided for retreat. Believe me, a retreating Christian is certainly open season for the enemy; the enemy can get through to him.

Now we have two weapons for offense. The first one is the Word of God, called the sword of the Spirit. “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). Christ is the living Word of God. He used the Word of God to meet Satan in the hour of His temptation. Out of His mouth goeth a sharp two-edged sword in the battle of Armageddon (see Rev. 1:16; 19:21). He gains the victory with that sword. What is it? It is the Word of God. We need that sharp sword going out of our mouths today. The Word of God is a powerful weapon of offense. You and I are to use it.

Our second weapon of offense is prayer—“praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.” Praying in the Holy Spirit is not turning in a grocery list to God. It means that you and I recognize our enemy and that we lay hold of God for spiritual resources. We lay hold of God for that which is spiritual that we might be filled with all the fullness of God. Paul here distinguishes between prayer and supplication. Prayer is general; supplication is specific. All effective prayer must be in the Spirit.

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6:18 This verse introduces the general character of a believer’s prayer life: 1) “all prayer and supplication” focuses on the variety; 2) “always” focuses on the frequency (cf. Rom. 12:12; Phil. 4:6; 1 Thess. 5:17); 3) “in the Spirit” focuses on submission, as we line up with the will of God (cf. Rom. 8:26, 27); 4) “being watchful” focuses on the manner (cf. Matt. 26:41; Mark 13:33); 5) “all perseverance” focuses on the persistence (cf. Luke 11:9; 18:7, 8); and 6) “all saints” focuses on the objects (cf. 1 Sam. 12:23).¹⁵⁶

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ’s sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me [Rom. 15:30].

I have been dwelling a long time in this area. One reason is that this is a personal area, and Paul is laying bare his heart. The second reason is that we are seeing how Christianity functioned in the first century. We are seeing the practical side of Christianity. In the first part of Romans Paul gave us doctrine. Now Paul is putting that doctrine into practice.

This is one of the most solemn, earnest, and serious appeals of Paul for prayer that we find in the Bible. He says, “I beg of you, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and

¹⁵⁵McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:282-283

¹⁵⁶MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Eph 6:18

through the love of the Spirit, that ye strive intensely with me in your prayers to God on behalf of me.” Paul recognizes that he is facing danger and has come to a crisis in his ministry. Enemies are on every hand. Paul had reason to fear, as succeeding events proved. He is asking for prayer in a very wonderful way, “through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul realized that everything that was to come to him had to come through Jesus Christ. He asked the believers in Rome to join with him in prayer. He says, “I want all of you to pray through Christ—He is our great Intercessor—go through Him to God on my behalf.”

By “through the love of the Spirit” he means that love is the fruit of the Spirit which joins all believers together. And, friend, we ought to pray for each other.

“That ye strive intensely for me.” The Greek word for *strive* is tremendous. We get our English word *agonize* from it. Paul is saying, “Agonize with me.”

“On behalf of me”—he is asking for prayer for his personal safety that he might come in “the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.” Oh, my friend, how we need to pray like this—not just praying by rote or by going over our prayer list hurriedly. For the apostle Paul prayer was with great agony, great exercise of soul. He laid hold of God. This kind of praying is so desperately needed today! You and I *need* people who know how to pray for us.

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15:30 the love of the Spirit. This phrase occurs only here in Scripture and refers to Paul’s love for the Holy Spirit, not the Spirit’s love for him (cf. Ps. 143:10).¹⁵⁸

Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:

That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak [Col. 4:3–4].

“Withal praying also for us”—Paul says, “Don’t forget to pray for us.” My friend, you can’t help Paul any longer by praying for him, but you can help your pastor and other Christian ministries.

“That God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds.” Paul was in prison when he wrote this. He wanted to be released and go out through an open door that he might preach the gospel.

I consider every aspect of my ministry to be a door, and I ask God to keep the doors open. He has promised that He would. This is the verse that I have chosen for my ministry: “. . . behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name” (Rev. 3:8). He has set a lot of open doors before me, and I ask Him to open even more doors.

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¹⁵⁷McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:753

¹⁵⁸MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ro 15:30

¹⁵⁹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:363

4:3 a door. An opportunity (1 Cor. 16:8, 9; 2 Cor. 2:12). **the mystery of Christ.** See notes on 1:26, 27; 2:2, 3.¹⁶⁰

Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power:

That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ [2 Thess. 1:11–12].

“That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you.” If God has prospered you, made you a financial success, and you can glorify Christ, that’s fine. But somehow I am more impressed by a little woman who has been flat on her back in a hospital most of her life—yet has a radiant testimony for Christ. Certainly Christ is being glorified in her.
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1:11 we also pray. Paul’s prayer life is exemplified 4 times in this letter (cf. v. 12; 2:16,17; 3:1–5,16). Here he prayed as he did in v. 5, that they might behave in ways consistent with their identity as Christians (cf. 1 Thess. 2:19; Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10), living up to their “calling to salvation” (cf. Rom 8:30; 11:29; Gal. 4:13–15; 1 Cor. 1:26; Col. 1:3–5; 1 Thess. 2:12) with lives marked by goodness and powerful works of faith.

1:12 that. The worthy walk of v. 11 allows God to be glorified in us, the light of all purposes (cf. 2:14; 1 Cor. 10:31; 1 Pet. 4:11).
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So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision [Dan. 8:17].

Gabriel, in the explanation that follows, will make it clear that Antiochus Epiphanes is but a picture in miniature of the coming Antichrist.

“For at the time of the end shall be the vision.” Notice that it is for “the time of the end,” not the end of time. Nowhere in the Bible are we told about the end of time. “The time of the end” locates the complete fulfillment of this prophecy in the period which our Lord Jesus called the Great Tribulation. The man referred to is the Antichrist, also called the Man of Sin and the little horn of chapter 7. This prophecy goes beyond the immediate future and is projected into the distant future—even in our day it is still future. Antiochus is merely an adumbration of the other “little horn” who will come at the end of the “times of the Gentiles,” which is made abundantly clear by the use of these eschatological terms.
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¹⁶⁰MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Col 4:3

¹⁶¹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:411-412

¹⁶²MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 2 Th 1:11

¹⁶³McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 3:580-581

8:17 afraid and fell. Loss of consciousness is a common reaction to heavenly visitation (cf. Ezek. 1; Is. 6; Rev. 1). **time of the end.** This term likely has a double sense of fulfillment. First, the “end” (as v. 19), “latter time” (vv. 19,23), and “appointed time” (v. 19) refer to time late in the specific span that the historical prophecy has in view. That time is the period defined by the empires in these verses, Persia (Ram) and Greece (Goat), when the Grecian sector will be divided into 4 parts (v. 8). One of these, the Syrian under Seleucus (*see note on v. 22*), will eventually lead to Antiochus Epiphanes (175–164 B.C.) as the “little horn” meant in v. 9, who persecutes the people of Israel (v. 10) and defies God (v. 11). Cf. 11:21–35 and *see notes there*. Secondly, this “little horn” in v. 9, the Antichrist in the last days at the time of the eschatological fulfillment, sees Antiochus as a pattern of the Antichrist, who in many ways will be like him, though far greater in power, and will exercise his career in the end of the age just before Christ’s return.¹⁶⁴

Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven [Matt. 18:9–10].

Our Lord says that we are not to despise one of the little ones. When one of them dies, his spirit goes immediately to be with God. All little ones go to heaven, my friend. If you have lost a little one, knowing this will be a great comfort to you. They go to heaven, not because they are innocent or because they are yours, but they go to heaven because Jesus *died* for them. That is what our Lord is talking about here. “Don’t offend them; don’t despise them. Let them come to Me. Even if they die, their spirits are going to be right there in the presence of My Father.” So many parents wonder about the eternal state of their little ones.

King David knew about his. When his son by Bathsheba fell ill, he was greatly exercised about the life of the child. We have the record of this in 2 Samuel 12:15–23. He fasted and wept and lay all night upon the earth. But when the child was dead, he arose, bathed, changed his clothes, and went into the house of God and worshiped. His servants were baffled by his actions, and David’s explanation was this “... While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.” He had the confidence that one day he would be with him. This is a very precious truth. Many people have lost little ones, and I have lost a little one, also—my firstborn. She is buried here in Altadena in Southern California. Every now and then I go by there and put a few flowers on her grave. She’s not there; she’s with Him, but I go there because that is all I have left of her now. But someday, some golden tomorrow, I’m going to be there in heaven, and I am going to see my little one. She is saved. I have two children—one in heaven and one here on earth. I confess that I have worried more about the one here than the one in heaven. I know where my firstborn is, and someday I’ll go to be with her.

¹⁶⁴MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Da 8:17

The feeling of our Lord about children is very important to note, especially in our day when there are so many crimes committed against these little ones. Recently, I have been reading about a mother and a stepfather who left a precious little girl along the freeway. How shocking it was to read about this. They just wanted to get rid of her. Some folk believe there is no hell, but I want to say this: If there were no hell, there *ought* to be one for folk like that! And there *is* one. Our Lord uses the strongest language possible in warning us about offenses against children.

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18:10 do not despise. I.e., spurn or belittle another believer by treating him or her unkindly or indifferently. **their angels.** This does not suggest that each believer has a personal guardian angel. Rather, the pronoun is collective and refers to the fact that believers are served by angels in general. These angels are pictured “always” watching the face of God so as to hear His command to them to help a believer when needed. It is extremely serious to treat any fellow believer with contempt since God and the holy angels are so concerned for their well-being.¹⁶⁶

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known [1 Cor. 13:11–12].

A great many people ask, “Will I know my loved ones in heaven?” You surely will. What is the scriptural proof? “Now we see through a glass, darkly.” You have never seen me. It is possible you may think you have seen me, but what you saw was a suit of clothes with a head and two hands sticking out of it. You didn’t really see me. And I have never really seen you, because we just see through a glass, darkly, but then face to face. Now I know only in part, but then I shall know even as also I am known. Someone asked G. Campbell Morgan, “Do you think we will know our loved ones in heaven?” Dr. Morgan in his truly British manner answered, “I do not expect to be a bigger fool in heaven than I am here, and I know my loved ones here.”

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13:8–10 never fails. This refers to love’s lastingness or permanence as a divine quality. Love outlasts all failures (cf. 1 Pet. 4:8; 1 John 4:16). Paul strengthens his point on the permanence of love by comparing it to the spiritual gifts which the Corinthians so highly prized: prophecy, knowledge, and languages, all of which will have an end. There may be a distinction made on how prophecy and knowledge come to an end, and how the gift of languages does. This is indicated by the Gr. verb forms used. In the case of prophecy and knowledge, they are both said to “be abolished” (in both cases the verb indicates that something will put an end to those two functions. Verses 9, 10 indicate that

¹⁶⁵McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:99-100

¹⁶⁶MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 18:10

¹⁶⁷McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:65-66

Gr. Greek

what will abolish knowledge and prophecy is “that which is perfect.” When that occurs, those gifts will be rendered inoperative. The “perfect” is not the completion of Scripture, since there is still the operation of those two gifts and will be in the future kingdom (cf. Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17; Rev. 11:3). The Scriptures do not allow us to see “face to face” or have perfect knowledge as God does (v. 12). The “perfect” is not the rapture of the church or the second coming of Christ, since the kingdom to follow these events will have an abundance of preachers and teachers (cf. Is. 29:18; 32:3, 4; Joel 2:28; Rev. 11:3). The perfect must be the eternal state, when we in glory see God face to face (Rev. 22:4) and have full knowledge in the eternal new heavens and new earth. Just as a child grows to full understanding, believers will come to perfect knowledge and no such gifts will be necessary.

On the other hand, Paul uses a different word for the end of the gift of languages, thus indicating it will “cease” by itself, as it did at the end of the apostolic age. It will not end by the coming of the “perfect,” for it will already have ceased. The uniqueness of the gift of languages and its interpretations was, as all sign gifts, to authenticate the message and messages of the gospel before the NT was completed (Heb. 2:3, 4). “Tongues” was also limited by being a judicial sign from the God of Israel’s judgment (*see note on 14:21*; cf. Is. 28:11, 12). “Tongues” were also not a sign to believers, but unbelievers (*see note on 14:22*), specifically those unbelieving Jews. Tongues also ceased because there was no need to verify the true messages from God once the Scripture was given. It became the standard by which all are to be deemed true. “Tongues” was a means of edification in a way far inferior to preaching and teaching (*see notes on 14:5, 12, 13, 27, 28*). In fact, chap. 14 was designed to show the Corinthians, so preoccupied with tongues, that it was an inferior means of communication (vv. 1–12), an inferior means of praise (vv. 13–19), and an inferior means of evangelism (vv. 20–25). Prophecy was and is, far superior (vv. 1, 3–6, 24, 29, 31, 39). That tongues have ceased should be clear from their absence from any other books in the NT, except Acts. Tongues ceased to be an issue of record or practice in the early church, as the Scripture was being written. That tongues has ceased should be clear also from its absence through church history since the first century, appearing only sporadically and then only in questionable groups. A more detailed discussion is given in the notes on chap. 14.¹⁶⁸

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is [1 John 3:2].

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God”—not tomorrow, but *right now*—that is the wonderful part of it. The world won’t understand us, that’s for sure, because it didn’t understand Him. It takes a *spiritual* insight, and that comes through the anointing which we have talked about that He has given to us. The Spirit of God is the one who can make this real to us, and only the Spirit of God can do that, my friend. Until He confirms it to your heart, of course, you must say, “I don’t know whether I am saved.” But the Spirit of God can confirm this to your heart.

¹⁶⁸MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Co 13:8

John says, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God.” But someone says to me, “McGee, I’m a little discouraged with you. I think you ought to be a little farther along.” I would agree with you on that. I wish I were a better man, and I wish I knew more about the Word of God. Yes, I’d be willing to go along with that—I ought to be farther along than I am. But don’t you be discouraged with me, and then I won’t be discouraged with you because of the fact that “it doth not yet appear what we *shall* be.”

“But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him.” This is a wonderful prospect! He sees in you and in me what He will make out of us. I’m thankful that God is not through with me. If I thought He was through with me now, I would be very much discouraged, but He is yet to perform a work.

The story is told that when a great big piece of marble was brought in to him, Michelangelo walked around it, looking at it, and then said, “My, isn’t it beautiful!” One of his helpers who was standing there said, “Well, all I see is a great big piece of marble—that’s all.” Michelangelo exclaimed, “Oh, I forgot. You don’t see what I see. I see a statue of David there.” The helper looked again and replied, “Well, I don’t see it.” Michelangelo said, “That is because it is now in my own mind, but I am going to translate it into this piece of marble.” And that is what he did. God says, “It doth not yet appear what you shall be.” He sees what He is going to make out of us someday. We are discouraged when we look at each other as we are now, but God sees us as we shall be when He shall appear and we shall be like Him. What a glorious prospect this is for us!

“We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” We are going to see the glorified Christ. We are not going to be equal to Him, but we are going to be like Him in our own way. This does not mean that all of us are going to be little robots or simply little duplicates—it is not that at all. We will be like Him but with our own personalities, our own individualities, our own selves. He will never destroy the person of Vernon McGee. He’ll not destroy the person that you are, but He is going to bring you up to the full measure, the stature where you will be like Him—not identical to Him, but like Him.

It is going to be wonderful in heaven that we will love everybody—I’m excited about that. But the most wonderful thing about heaven to me is that everybody is going to love me! That’s going to be quite a change, and I’m looking forward to it. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” This is another great incentive to Christian living. I do not think there is anything else quite like it.

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3:2 now we are children of God. Everyone who exercises genuine saving faith becomes a child of God at the moment of belief (John 1:12; Rom. 8:16; 2 Pet. 1:4), though the truly heavenly, divine life in that person (cf. Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10) will not be revealed until Jesus appears (*see note on Rom. 8:19*). In the meantime, the Holy Spirit is working into us the image of Christ (*see note on 2 Cor. 3:18*). **we shall be like Him.** This phrase introduces the fourth feature of the believer’s hope in 2:28–3:3. When Christ returns He shall conform every believer to His image, i.e., His nature. A tension exists between the first part of the verse (“now we are children”) and the latter part (“we shall be like Him”).

¹⁶⁹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:787-788

Such tension finds resolution in the solid hope that at Christ's return the believer shall experience ultimate conformity to His likeness (*see notes on Rom. 8:29; 1 Cor. 15:42–49; Phil. 3:21*). The glorious nature of that conformity defies description, but as much as glorified humanity can be like incarnate deity, believers will be, without becoming deity.¹⁷⁰

And Jesus answering said unto them, The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage:

But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage:

Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection [Luke 20:34–36].

According to both Matthew and Mark, He told them their problem was that they knew neither the Scriptures nor the power of God.

Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.

For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him [Luke 20:37–38].

You see, after Jesus had answered the Herodians and the Pharisees soundly, the Sadducees bring this old cliché to Him with the thought that anyone answering their question would be ridiculous. The Sadducees would correspond to the liberal section of the contemporary church, while the Pharisees could be equated with the conservatives. The Sadducees rejected the supernatural. They, therefore, did not believe in the Resurrection.

Their question grows out of a situation created by the Mosaic system. The Sadducees attempted to make it preposterous by saying that the woman married seven times. That in itself is not likely, but it could happen. In our day there are examples of those who have been married as often, but they are more concerned about the present life than anything beyond.

The Sadducees, as a sect, arose about 300 B.C. Most of the high priests and temple politicians were Sadducees. They were prominent and rich. Isn't it interesting that today most of the church politicians and the *rich* churches are liberal? That tells us that human nature has not changed down through the centuries.

The Sadducees denied the miraculous. They stripped the Scriptures of the supernatural. (They were in direct conflict with the Pharisees who were supernaturalists.) They never accepted the inerrancy of Scripture. There is a striking similarity between the beliefs of the Sadducees and liberalism today. Liberalism is a departure from historic Christianity. Concerning conservatism and liberalism, Dr. Louis Berkhof said, "The difference is so great between them that one of them will have to surrender the term *Christian*." I have decided that the liberal is not Christian at all. Many churches should call themselves the "Boulevard Religious Club" or the "First" or "Second Religious Club" because they are not Christian.

¹⁷⁰MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Jn 3:2

There was a time when those who were unregenerate were outside the church. They denied the authority of Scripture, the deity of Christ, and the supernatural. They were called infidels and skeptics. When I first came to Southern California, you could see them on soap boxes in front of downtown churches or in the city parks. Now they are in the pulpits of the city. They are still infidels and skeptics; they still deny the deity of Christ and the supernatural. They have crept into the church unawares.

The Sadducees were the greatest enemies which Christ had and were the main instigators of the first persecution of the church. The Pharisees with the Sadducees were the leaders in the persecution of the Lord Jesus. After the death of the Lord, the Pharisees dropped the entire affair. They were no longer interested in persecuting Him or His followers; in fact, many of them became Christians. The Sadducees, however, went on with the persecution of the church. You can read about it in the third and fourth chapters of Acts.

The Resurrection was the acid test of the Sadducees, and it is the acid test of the liberal. They do not believe in a literal resurrection. It is interesting that there is no account in Scripture of a Sadducee ever coming to Christ for salvation. A Pharisee named Nicodemus was converted, and Acts 6:7 tells us, "... a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." Many priests became believers, but there is no record of a Sadducee being converted.

Every young minister soon discovers that the preaching of the cross is an offense. He will never be voted the most outstanding citizen in his town. He will never find himself in a great political position, nor will he be on television very often. The subtle temptation is to throw overboard the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and become a popular preacher. Judas sold out the Lord. Peter denied Him but loved Him and came back to Him. When a man sells Christ for popularity, he will never come back. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? ..." (Jer. 13:23). The next time some starry-eyed optimist tells you that the liberals are coming back to Christ, forget it. The Sadducees were the worst enemies that the gospel of Christ ever had—whether in the first or the twentieth centuries.

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20:33 This was the third in a series of questions designed to entrap Him. This question was raised by the Sadducees (v. 27). *See notes on vv. 2, 22.* Matthew 22:34–40 and Mark 12:28–34 recorded one last question raised by a scribe. Luke omitted it from his record.

20:36 equal to the angels. I.e., like the angels in that they do not procreate (*see note on Matt. 22:30*).

20:37 the *burning bush passage*. Ex. 3:1–4:17. In that passage God identified Himself to Moses as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—using the present tense. He didn't say He *was* their God, but "I AM" their God, indicating that their existence had not ended with their deaths.

¹⁷¹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:338-2

20:38 all live to Him. Only Luke records this phrase. All people—whether departed from their earthly bodies or not—are still living, and will live forever. No one is annihilated in death (cf. John 5:28–30).

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And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne [Rev. 8:3].

And another angel came and stood over [*Gr.: epi*] the altar, having a golden censer (bowl); and there was given unto him much incense, that he should add it unto (give it unto) the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. “Another angel” is positively not Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is no longer in the position of intercessor for the church. We saw in chapters 4–5 that He moved away from that position and was given the seven-sealed book. He is in charge of everything that happens from there on in Revelation. He is not moving as one of the actors down on earth’s stage; He is in heaven with the church, and He is not the intercessor. He is now in the place of judgment. He holds the book of the seven seals, and He directs all the activities from the throne. This angel is, as it is stated here, just “another angel.” I do not think the Lord Jesus would be identified as that. Although it is true that in the Old Testament the preincarnate Christ appeared as an angel, I do not believe He will ever appear again as an angel. He will be as He is in the glorified body, and we will see Him as He is someday.

The “golden altar” is the place where prayer is offered. Christ is not in the place of intercession before the golden altar. He is now upon the throne. Incense is likened unto prayer and is a type of prayer. David said in Psalm 141:2, “Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense....”

Incense speaks of the value of Christ’s name and work in prayer. “If you ask in My name” is His injunction. Many today who really believe the Word of God are falling into the habit of ending their prayer by just saying “Amen.” Someone said to me, “It is redundant to say, ‘In Jesus’ name,’ because in your heart you are praying in Jesus’ name.” I agree that to pray in Jesus’ name means more than simply putting on a tag end, “in Jesus’ name.” But I want to say that if you are making a prayer in Jesus’ name, and especially a public prayer, be sure to say that it is in Jesus’ name. I believe that is very important. Here they are offering incense, a sweet smelling incense. You and I are not heard for our much speaking or for our flowery prayer. We are heard when our prayer is made in Jesus’ name.

It is interesting that the incense was given to this angel. Christ didn’t need anything given to Him when He prayed. The prayers of saints which were offered under the fifth seal (see Rev. 6:9–11) are now being answered because of the person and sacrifice of Christ.

And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand [Rev. 8:4].

¹⁷²MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Lk 20:33

And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.

Prayer is going to be answered because of Christ.

¹⁷³

8:3 censer. A golden pan, suspended on a rope or chain, that was used to transport fiery coals from the brazen altar to the altar of incense, in order to ignite the incense, symbolizing the prayers of the people (5:8; Ex. 27:3; cf. Luke 1:8,9). This occurred twice daily at the time of the morning and evening sacrifices.¹⁷⁴

15:1–9 It was ineffective at this point to intercede for the nation. Even prayers by Moses (cf. Num. 14:11–25) and Samuel (cf. 1 Sam. 12:19–25), eminent in intercession, would not defer judgment, where unrepentance persists (cf. 18:8; 26:3). Chief among things provoking judgment was the intense sin of King Manasseh (695–642 B.C.). Noted in v. 4., this provocation is recounted in 2 Kin. 21:1–18, cf. 2 Kin. 23:26, which says the Lord did not relent from His anger because of this (see also 2 Kin. 24:3,4).¹⁷⁵

STATUES & RELICS

And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat.

And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof [Exod. 25:17–19].

Notice what God now says:

And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be [Exod. 25:20].

The cherubim looked down upon the mercy seat.

And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee.

And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel [Exod. 25:21–22].

The ark was a chest covered inside and outside with gold. It was made of shittim wood which was more or less indestructible and much like the redwood of California. It was a perfect symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ in His deity and humanity. Jesus Christ was the

¹⁷³McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:961-962

¹⁷⁴MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Re 8:3

¹⁷⁵MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Je 15:1

God-man; His deity was represented by the gold and His humanity was represented by the wood.

The ark could not be spoken of as merely a wooden chest because it also was a gold chest. It could not be called a golden chest because it was also a chest of wood. It required both gold and wood to maintain the symbolism pointing to Christ as the God-man. There is no mingling of the two. To overlook this duality is to entertain a monstrous notion of His person. There is no doctrine in Scripture so filled with infinite mystery and so removed from the realm of explanation as the hypostatical union of Christ, the God-man. Yet there is no symbol so simple as the ark that describes this union of God and man in one body. A mere box made of wood and gold speaks of things unfathomable. Truly God chooses the simple things to confound the wise. That simple box tells the whole story, as far as man can take it in, of the unsearchable mystery of the blessed person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The ark was covered with gold both inside and outside. Colossians 2:9 tells us, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Jesus Christ was not merely a thaumaturgist, that is, a wonder-worker. Nor was He a man with an overdeveloped God consciousness. He *was* God! He spoke as God. He put Himself on the same plane as God. In John 14:1, 9, our Savior says, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me... Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father...." Yes, He was God.

He was also perfectly man. He grew tired. He sat down to rest at a well in Samaria in the heat of the day. He slept, He ate, He drank, He laughed, He wept, and beyond all that, He suffered and died. All of these are human characteristics. The gold and the wood in the ark were both required, yet neither was mingled with the other. Nor was the identity of one lost in the other. Christ was both God and man, but the two natures were never fused or merged. He never functioned at the same time as both God and man. What He did was either perfectly human or perfectly divine.

The ark was not an empty box. It contained three items which are enumerated in Hebrews 9:4; "Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant." The contents of the ark were also symbolic. Aaron's rod that budded speaks of the Lord's resurrection. The manna speaks of the fact that Christ is the Bread of Life. The Ten Commandments speak of the life He lived on earth fulfilling the Law in all points and fulfilling the prophecies spoken of Him.

The tables of the covenant speak of the Kingship of Christ. He was born a King. He lived a King. He died a King, and He rose from the dead a King. He is coming again to earth as King. God's program is moving today and has been moving from eternity past to the time when Christ shall rule over this earth. Earth needs a ruler. Man needs a King. Someday He is coming as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The pot of manna speaks of Christ as a prophet. He spoke for God as John 6:32 clearly shows: "... Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." Jesus Christ was also God's message to man. He was to *Logos*, the Word of God, the very alphabet of God, the Alpha and Omega. He is God's final message to man. Since Christ came to earth as God-man, heaven has been silent because God has no addenda to place after Christ. He has no

postscript to the letter because Christ is the embodiment of that letter. God told out His heart in Christ.

Aaron's rod that budded speaks of the work of Christ as priest. The prophet spoke for God before man; the priest spoke for man before God. As priest Christ offered Himself. As a priest He passed into heaven. Even now He sits at God's right hand in heaven. Jesus Christ the God-man was raised from the dead and He is the unique example of resurrection up to the present hour. Easter lilies and eggs do not speak of the resurrection, but Aaron's rod that budded does. It was an old dead stick that came alive. The ark speaks of Christ as prophet, priest, and king. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

The mercy seat rested on top of the ark. It served as the top for the chest, the ark, but it was a separate piece of furniture. It was made of pure gold with cherubim on each end with their wings spread, overshadowing it, and looking down upon the top where the blood was placed. It was here the high priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice. It was the blood that made it the *mercy seat*. This too was symbolic of the work of Christ. Christ literally presented His blood in heaven after His death on the cross. A critic recommended my book, *The Tabernacle, God's Portrait of Christ*, but warned people that I took everything literally and must be watched carefully because I held the position that Christ offered His blood in heaven. The critic felt this was crude. I do not believe this is crude because the blood of Christ is not crude; it is precious. Peter calls his Savior's blood "precious" in 1 Peter 1:18–19, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Christ's blood is more precious than silver or gold. The most valuable thing in heaven is the blood He shed for man on earth. He presented His blood as He entered heaven and that is what makes God's throne a mercy seat for us today. We are bidden to come to God today on the basis of the fact that Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, has offered His own blood for our sins. Hebrews 4:14–16 reminds us that, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

You and I approach God through our great High Priest in heaven. He is the living Christ at God's right hand. Through Him we find mercy and help. Many believers are trying to fight the battle down here alone. They are trying to meet the issues of life alone. Friends, you and I are not able to do it. We are not strong enough. We need help. And we are not availing ourselves of the help Christ offers. Paul prayed for the Ephesians that the mighty power that worked in Christ, bringing Him from the dead, might work in them (Eph. 1:19–20). We see very little of that power working in believers today. We need to lay hold of it by faith because we have a High Priest who is at God's right hand.

The high priest who served in this tabernacle rushed into the Holy Place, sprinkled the blood on the mercy seat, and rushed out again. Christ, our High Priest, when He made His offering, sat down at God's right hand and is still there for us today. He died down

here to save us. He lives in heaven to keep us saved. And we should keep in contact with Him. Have you had a talk with Him today?

We have looked now at the articles of furniture in the Holy of Holies: the ark and the mercy seat. Now we will consider the furniture in the second compartment, the Holy Place.¹⁷⁶

25:18 cherubim. Forged as one with the golden cover of the ark were two angelic beings rising up on each end and facing one another, their wings stretching up and over forming an arch. Cherubim, associated with the majestic glory and presence of God (cf. Ezek. 10:1–22), were appropriately woven into the tabernacle curtains and the veil for the Holy of Holies (26:1, 31), for this place was where God was present with His people. Scripture reveals them as the bearers of God’s throne (1 Sam. 4:4; Is. 37:16) and the guardians of the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Life (Gen. 3:24).¹⁷⁷

26:1 ten curtains. The beauty of these curtains could be seen only from the inside, the thick outer protective covering of goats’ hair drapes, and ram and badger skins (v. 14) hiding them from the view of anyone except the priests who entered.¹⁷⁸

And thou shalt make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made:

And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver [Exod. 26:31–32].

The veil was hung upon pillars and speaks of the humanity of Jesus Christ. The pillars were made of shittim wood covered with gold, with silver sockets attached. These speak of deity taking hold of earth through redemption. There was no capital on top of these pillars, which made them different from the other pillars in the tabernacle; they were just cut off. Isaiah 53:8 tells us, “He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.” Jesus Christ was cut off out of the land of the living—He lived to be only thirty-three years old.

Now the veil was made of fine-twined linen and was the only entrance to the Holy of Holies. The veil speaks of the humanity of Christ. When Christ was on the cross, He dismissed His spirit. At the moment of His death the veil was torn in two, representing the fracture of His spirit and His body. When the veil in the temple was rent in two, the way into God’s presence was open. The only way to get to God today is through the Lord Jesus Christ. There is only one entrance to the Holy of Holies and only one way to God. In John 14:6 Jesus Himself said, “...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

¹⁷⁶McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 1:ix-281

¹⁷⁷MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ex 25:18

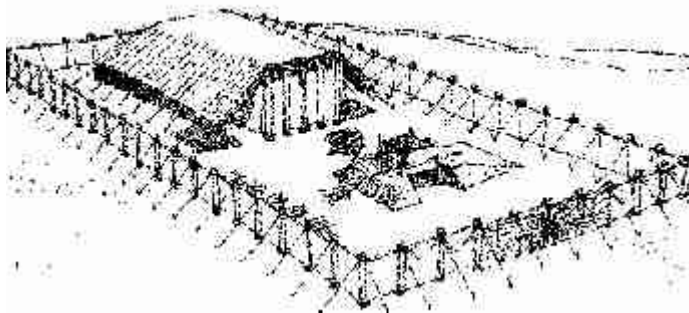
¹⁷⁸MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ex 26:1

Some people believe that you can come to God if you are sincere and belong to some church. Do not believe it. You will not find this type of thinking in the Word of God.

What a wonderful picture the veil is. It shows us the humanity of Christ. Friends, it is the death of Jesus Christ that saves us. His spotless life condemns us. When I stand before the veil, I am condemned. I see myself as not able to pass into the presence of God. We read in Matthew 27:50–51 that, “Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.” The death of Jesus Christ provides access to God, and the rent veil pictures it.

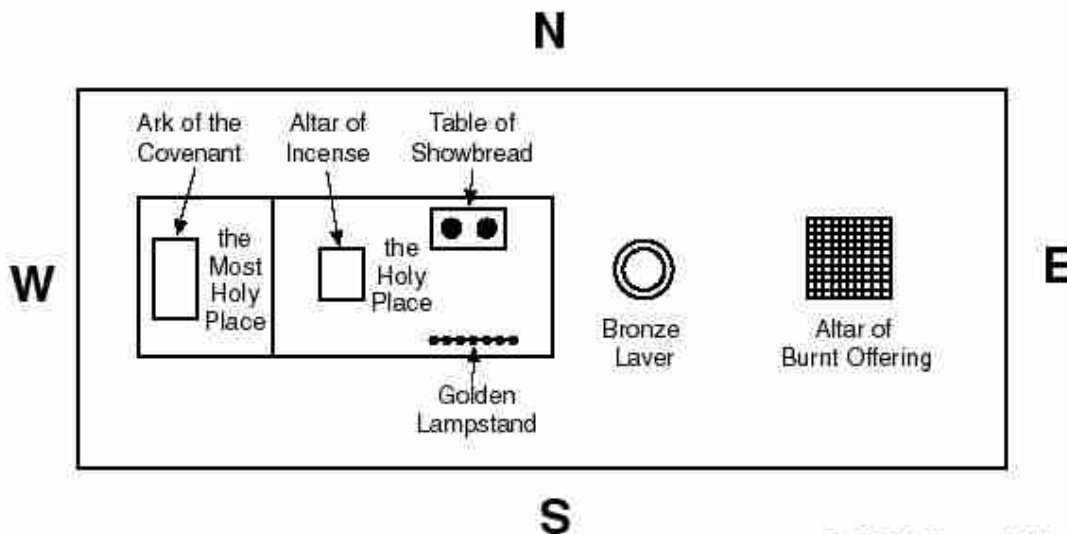
26:31–34 A veil, similar in design to the inner curtains (*see note on 26:1*), divided the tabernacle into the Holy Place and the Most Holy, or lit. the Holy of Holies.

The Plan of the Tabernacle



The tabernacle was to provide a place where God might dwell among his people. The term *tabernacle* sometimes refers to the tent, including the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, which was covered with embroidered curtains. But in other places it refers to the entire complex, including the curtained court in which the tent stood

The Plan of the Tabernacle



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¹⁷⁹ This illustration shows relative positions of the tabernacle furniture used in Israelite worship. The tabernacle is enlarged for clarity ¹⁸⁰

lit. literally

And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building [1 Kings 6:3–7].

Let me say a word about the construction of the temple. As we have seen, it was only twice as large as the tabernacle. It was surrounded on three sides by a three-story building. This was the place where the priests lived during their course of service. In the front there was a portico that was 10 x 20 x 120 cubits—half as long as a football field. The brazen altar was 20 x 20 x 10 cubits, while the altar of the tabernacle was 5 x 5 x 3 cubits. There were ten lampstands to replace the one of the tabernacle. There were ten tables of showbread rather than one. There was a multiplication of some of the articles of furniture.

There were 30,000 Israelites used in the construction; they were drafted for the work. There were 150,000 extra workers and 3,300 overseers used in the construction of the building. Hiram, king of Tyre, furnished the material and the artifices. The temple was completed in seven years and six months. The temple was made of stone, and the sound of a hammer was not heard during the building. The cost of the building is estimated around five million dollars. It was like a jewel box. There were two pillars in it which were very impressive. Later on we will see what they mean.

I have mentioned these details by way of comparison. The temple was inferior to the tabernacle, not only in innate quality, but in that which the temple characterizes.

First of all, it was complicated. The simplicity of the tabernacle was lost. In the New Testament the temple is bypassed and the tabernacle is used for the typology. Why? Well, the temple had become very complicated. This has an application for us. We are living in a day when the emphasis is put on methods rather than on the Word of God. The church is filled with new programs and new methods.

When I first began my ministry I pastored in a little white church on a red clay hill in Georgia, surrounded by a cotton patch. We just had a back room that served as Sunday school. We didn't have very good facilities. We did have central heating, however, as a great big old potbellied stove sat right in the middle of the church. I went by that church a short time ago. The city of Atlanta has grown all around it now. The church now has a big Christian education department and all of the latest equipment. I asked a member of the church, one who had been saved during my ministry, "Does anybody ever get saved here today?" He said, "No. Nobody has been saved." May I say to you that there is a girl out on the mission field who was saved when it was a little old simple church. Although it was very simple, people got saved. I don't like all of the methods employed today. I think we need to get back to the Word of God.

The second thing I want you to notice is that Solomon made windows of narrow lights. There had been no windows in the tabernacle. Now Solomon's windows did not let in much light, but they did let in a little. The people no longer depended upon divine

¹⁷⁹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ex 26:31

¹⁸⁰MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ex 26:36

light as they had in the tabernacle. They depended on the natural light which came from outside.

The third indication of inferiority is that the cherubim were made of olive wood. They were ten cubits high—very impressive—but they were no longer made of solid gold. The fourth thing is that the temple was more ornate and gaudy than the tabernacle, and there was more ceremony and ritual connected with it.

This is the temple that was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. The temple put up by Zerubbabel was destroyed in turn and then supplanted by Herod's temple in Christ's day. The temple actually pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ. In John 2:19 Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." He wasn't talking about Herod's temple; He was talking about His body: "Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body" (John 2:20–21). The temple is equated with the body of Christ.

Because this chapter is largely a record of building detail, I have not quoted much of it. However, you will find it very interesting to read. As you read of the magnificence of the temple, keep in mind that it was conceived in the mind and heart of David, as he wanted a suitable place to house the ark of the covenant. (He had no idea, of course, of building a dwelling place for God; he said it was only a footstool for Him.) Its purpose was to provide access to God by sacrifice. Also notice how complicated it is in comparison to the tabernacle. After I had written a book on the tabernacle, I was going to follow it with a book on the temple. After a great deal of study, I threw up my hands in despair. It is much too complicated to illustrate or set before us the wonderful person of the Lord Jesus Christ. However, God honored it with His presence, and the place was filled with the Shekinah glory, as we shall see in the following chapter.

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6:23 cherubim. These two sculptured winged creatures, with human faces overlaid with gold (cf. Gen. 3:24; Ezek. 41:18, 19), stood as guards on either side of the ark (see 2 Chr. 3:10–13) and are not to be confused with the cherubim on the mercy seat (see Ex. 25:17–22). The cherubim represented angelic beings who were guardians of God's presence and stood on either side of the ark (8:6, 7) in the Most Holy Place. They were 15 ft. tall and 15 ft. between wing tips (v. 24–26). *See note on Ex. 25:16.*

6:29 palm trees. An image reminiscent of the Garden of Eden in Gen. 2. The palm tree represented the tree of life from the Garden.

6:31–35 There was distinct and magnificent separation by doors between the inner court of the temple (v. 36) and the Holy Place, as well as between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place.

6:36 the inner court. This walled-in, open space that surrounded the temple was also called "the court of the priests" (2 Chr. 4:9) or the "upper court" (Jer. 36:10). The wall of that court had a layer of wood between each of the 3 courses of stone. The alternation of timber beams with masonry was common in Mediterranean construction.

6:37 fourth year ... Ziv. Cf. 6:1.

¹⁸¹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 2:260-261

6:38 seven years. From foundation to finishing, the temple took 7 years and 6 months to build. *See note on 2 Chr. 5:1.*

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And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.

And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived [Num. 21:8–9].

There is a marvelous lesson here, you see. They are to look at the brazen serpent, and they are to look in faith. In fact, they would not look if it were not in faith. I can well imagine some of the folk saying that this was just nonsense. They would want something else, something more tangible than just turning around to look at a serpent of brass. But, of course, if a man would not turn to look at the serpent of brass, he would die.

Now, we don't have to guess at the meaning of this and the lesson for us. When our Lord was talking to Nicodemus on that dark night, He said, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:14–16).

How was the Son of man lifted up? You say, on a cross. Yes, but He was dying on the cross of Barabbas, and Barabbas was a thief and a murderer. Barabbas was guilty and was worthy of death. Jesus was not. Our Lord was made sin for us. On that cross, He not only has taken the place of Barabbas but also your place and my place. God permitted this and did this because He loves us. But God cannot save us by His love. It doesn't say that God so loved the world that He saved the world. Not at all. God so loved the world that He *gave* His only begotten Son. Now what God asks you to do, my friend, is to look and live. Look to Christ! He is taking *your* place there. You are a sinner and it is you who deserves to die. Christ did not deserve to die. He died for you.

We read here that this serpent of brass was made, and those who looked to it lived. Those who did not look to it—died. It is just that simple today. Either you are looking to Christ as your Savior because you are a sinner, or you are not doing it. If you are not doing it, I don't care how many times you have been baptized, how many ceremonies you have been through, how many churches you have joined, or who your father and mother happened to be, you are a lost, hell-doomed sinner. You must look to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is just as simple as that. And by the way, it is just as complicated as that. What a problem people have today. They would rather look to themselves and to their own good works, trusting that somehow their own good works might save them. It is a problem for people to admit they are sinners and to look to Christ and trust Him.

Now the children of Israel move on. They come to the River Arnon which you can trace on your map.

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¹⁸²MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Ki 6:23

21:7 We have sinned. The people confessed their iniquity and asked that they might be released from the judgment God had sent.

21:9 a bronze serpent. One had to fix his gaze upon this snake, a definite act of the will, if he wanted to be healed and live. See the typological use of this incident in John 3:14, 15.

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And he made a molten sea, ten cubits from the one brim to the other: it was round all about, and his height was five cubits: and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about [1 Kings 7:23].

This huge laver was supported on twelve oxen cast in brass, three oxen looking in each direction. The brim of it was ornate with lilies. The laver was for the priests to wash in. While there was only one simple laver in the tabernacle, here we have multiplication and beautification in Solomon's temple.

185

7:26 two thousand baths. See note on 2 Chr. 4:5.

7:27–37 carts. Hiram made 10 movable stands of bronze 6 ft. square and 4.5 ft. high. Each consisted of 4 upright corner poles joined together by square panels. For mobility, the stands rode on 4 wheels of bronze (v. 30).

186

And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul [Acts 19:11].

There are different words used in the Greek which our Bible translates as miracles. Here the word for "miracle" is *dunamis* from which we get our word *dynamite*. It means "an act of power." God wrought special powers by the hands of Paul. He is exercising the gifts of an apostle.

This was a great religious center, possibly more than Athens or any other place. The great temple of Diana was there, and the worship connected with it was satanic to the very core. Now in order to meet that kind of opposition, God granted to Paul some special powers.

So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them [Acts 19:12].

What were these handkerchiefs and aprons which are mentioned here? Well, actually we could call them sweat cloths. Paul used them as he worked. Remember that he was a tentmaker and this was in a warm climate. While he was working, he would be perspiring. He would use these cloths, these handkerchiefs and aprons, to wipe his brow.

¹⁸³McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 1:ix-507

¹⁸⁴MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Nu 21:7

¹⁸⁵McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 2:263

¹⁸⁶MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Ki 7:26

They were dirty. They had his perspiration from his body on them. People would come and pick up these dirty cloths and would be healed of their diseases! In that area there were the mystery religions which used white garments and emphasized that everything must be very clean and white. Everything had to be just so. It seems that God was rebuking all of that sort of thing. He used these dirty, sweaty cloths to heal people.

This reveals the special power that was granted to the apostle Paul. As far as I know, this is the only incident like this that ever took place—including the day in which we live. It is almost blasphemous for anyone to send out a little handkerchief and claim there is a power in it. Paul's handkerchief was an old sweat cloth. God used that to rebuke the heathen, pagan religions of that day. Diseases were healed and evil spirits went out of them when they picked up these dirty, sweaty cloths.

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19:11 unusual miracles. These confirmed that Paul was God's messenger, since there was no completed NT to use to determine the truth of his message (cf. 2 Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:3, 4).

19:12 handkerchiefs ... aprons. The headbands and outer clothing Paul wore while making tents. The belief that mystical power could be so transmitted was widespread in the ancient world, e.g., believing that Peter's shadow could heal (cf. 5:15; Matt. 9:21).

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And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year.

And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet [2 Kings 13:20–21].

Even in death Elisha was a miracle-working individual. What a tremendous tower of strength he had been in that nation.

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13:20 spring. The prophet, who was Israel's defense (v. 14), was dead and it was the season for war campaigns to begin after the rains of winter.

13:21 he revived. A dead man returned to life after touching Elisha's bones. This miracle was a sign that God's power continued to work in relationship to Elisha even after his death. What God had promised to Jehoash through Elisha when he was alive would surely come to pass after the prophet's death (cf. vv. 19, 25) in the defeat of the enemy, the recovery of the cities that had been taken, and their restoration to the kingdom of Israel (vv. 22–25).

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¹⁸⁷McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:598

¹⁸⁸MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ac 19:11

¹⁸⁹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 2:333

Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might over-shadow some of them.

There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one [Acts 5:15–16].

May I compare this to modern faith healing? Modern faith healers never heal *all* the people who come to them. Have you ever noticed that? The apostles had sign gifts, friend. No one in the church since then has had those gifts. People were healed, every one of them. They emptied the hospitals. This was the power of the early church.

We must remember that at that time there was no written New Testament. The church is built on Jesus Christ—He is the Cornerstone—and the apostles were witnesses to Christ. The sign gifts were given to them to demonstrate the fact that they spoke with God’s authority, Today we have a written New Testament as our authority.

¹⁹¹

5:15 shadow of Peter. The people truly believed he had divine healing power and that it might even extend to them through his shadow (cf. 3:1–10). But Scripture does not say Peter’s shadow ever healed anyone; in fact, the healing power of God through him seemed to go far beyond his shadow (v. 16, “multitude ... all were healed”). This outpouring of healing was an answer to the prayer in 4:29, 30.

5:16 unclean spirits. Cf. Matt. 10:1; 12:43–45; Mark 1:23–27; 5:1–13; 6:7; 9:25; Luke 4:36; 8:29; 9:42. They are demons, fallen angels (Rev. 12:3) who are so designated because of their vile wickedness. They frequently live inside unbelievers, particularly those who vent their wicked nature.

¹⁹²

And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment [Matt. 9:20].

You cannot help but notice how striking this passage is. The little girl was twelve years old, and this woman had suffered with this issue of blood for twelve years. Here were twelve years of light going out of this child’s life, and twelve years of darkness were coming to an end and light was breaking into this woman’s life. Here is the contrast of light and darkness.

In the previous verse note what the woman did—Jesus did not touch her, as He did in many other miracles, but she touched Him. It was not the method, however, that brought about her healing; it was her faith.

For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.

¹⁹⁰MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 2 Ki 13:20

¹⁹¹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:532

¹⁹²MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ac 5:15

But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour [Matt. 9:21–22].

Dr. Luke gives us much more detail about this miracle, recording our Lord's reaction to this woman's touch and her response. Jesus then moves from this woman and continues toward the house of Jairus.

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9:20 a flow of blood for twelve years. This woman's affliction not only was serious physically but also left her permanently unclean for ceremonial reasons (cf. Lev. 15:25–27). This meant she would have been shunned by all, including her own family, and excluded from both synagogue and temple. **the hem of His garment.** Cf. 14:36. Probably one of the tassels that were sown to the corners of a garment in order to remind the wearer to obey God's commandments (Num. 15:38–40; Deut. 22:12).

9:22 made you well. Lit. "saved you."

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CHURCH & AUTHORITY

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers [Acts 2:42].

I have a little booklet called the *Spiritual Fingerprints of the Visible Church*. How can you identify a real church? Notice the four marks of identification. First, *They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine*. The mark of a church is not the height of the steeple nor the sound of the bell. It is not whether the pulpit is stationed in the middle or the chancel is divided. The important issue is whether or not they hold to the apostles' doctrine. Correct doctrine was one of the fingerprints of the visible church. Secondly, *fellowship*. They were sharing the things of Christ. The third, *breaking of bread*. Breaking of bread is more than just going through the ritual of the Lord's Supper. It means being brought into a fellowship and a relationship with Christ. The fourth, *prayers*. I'm afraid in the average church today it is a little fingerprint. That is, prayer is the evident weakness of the church. Actually, the greatest asset of any church is prayer.

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2:42 apostles' doctrine. The foundational content for the believer's spiritual growth and maturity was the Scripture, God's revealed truth, which the apostles received (*see notes on John 14:26; 15:26, 27; 16:13*) and taught faithfully. *See notes on 2 Pet. 1:19–21; 3:1, 2, 16.* **fellowship.** Lit. "partnership," or "sharing." Because Christians become partners

¹⁹³McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:54

Lit. literally

¹⁹⁴MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 9:20

¹⁹⁵McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:521-522

with Jesus Christ and all other believers (1 John 1:3), it is their spiritual duty to stimulate one another to righteousness and obedience (cf. Rom. 12:10; 13:8; 15:5; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 4:2, 25; 5:21; Col. 3:9; 1 Thess. 4:9; Heb. 3:13; 10:24, 25; 1 Pet. 4:9, 10). **breaking of bread.** A reference to the Lord's Table, or Communion, which is mandatory for all Christians to observe (cf. 1 Cor. 11:24–29). **prayers.** Of individual believers and the church corporately (see 1:14, 24; 4:24–31; cf. John 14:13, 14).¹⁹⁶

Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it [Eph. 5:25].

God never asked a woman to submit to any man who doesn't love her and love her like this. Oh, this is Christian love on a high plane. Today young people are finding out about sex, and there are innumerable books on the subject of marriage. I may sound to you like an antiquated preacher when I say that they are nonsense. Only the Christian can know what is real love in marriage, because it is carried to the high plane of the relationship between Christ and the church. There is nothing else like that, my friend.

That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word [Eph. 5:26].

“Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it”—that is in the *past*. In the *present* He is sanctifying the church with the water of the Word of God. The cleanser, which is the Bible, is better than any cleanser advertised on radio or television. The Word of God will not only take out the soiled spots, it will keep you from getting further spots in your life.

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5:25 love your wives. Though the husband's authority has been established (vv. 22–24), the emphasis moves to the supreme responsibility of husbands in regard to their wives, which is to love them with the same unreserved, selfless, and sacrificial love that Christ has for His church. Christ gave everything He had, including His own life, for the sake of His church, and that is the standard of sacrifice for a husband's love of his wife. Cf. Col. 3:19.

5:26, 27 sanctify ... cleanse ... holy ... without blemish. This speaks of the love of Christ for His church. Saving grace makes believers holy by the agency of the Word of God (Titus 2:1–9; 3:5) so that they may be a pure bride. For husbands to love their wives as Christ does His church, demands a purifying love. Since divine love seeks to completely cleanse those who are loved from every form of sin and evil, a Christian husband should not be able to bear the thought of anything sinful in the life of his wife that displeases God. His greatest desire for her should be that she become perfectly conformed to Christ, so he leads her to purity. *See note on 2 Cor. 11:23.*

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¹⁹⁶MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ac 2:42

¹⁹⁷McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:269

¹⁹⁸MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Eph 5:25

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth [1 Tim. 3:15].

I have selected this as the key verse of this epistle because 1 Timothy is a book about church order. While he is away Paul writes, “I’ve written this to you so you will know how to act in the house of God.”

“The church of the living God”—Paul is speaking to the church that *is* the church.

“The pillar and ground of the truth.” “Pillar” means the stay, the prop, or that which is foundational. What Paul is saying is that the church is the pillar, the bedrock—it is the prop and support of the truth. If the officers do not represent the truth, the church has no foundation, no prop, and it cannot hold up the truth of God.

Some men purport to represent the truth, but they actually do not represent the truth in the way they lead their lives. I knew a deacon once who carried the biggest Bible I have ever seen. Every time you saw him he was weighed down on one side carrying that Bible. But he was a man you couldn’t depend upon—there was a question about his integrity. He hurt the church he served and brought it into disrepute. Paul is writing to tell the church how it should act so that it can represent and proclaim the truth of God to the world on the outside.

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3:15 how you ought to conduct yourself. The second half of this verse expresses the theme of this epistle—setting things right in the church. **house of God.** This is better translated “household.” Believers are members of God’s household (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19; Heb. 3:6; 1 Pet. 4:17) and must act accordingly. This is not a reference to any building, but to the people who make up the true church. **church of the living God.** The church is God’s possession (Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:14; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:9). The title “the living God” has a rich OT heritage (Deut. 5:26; Josh. 3:10; 1 Sam. 17:26,36; 2 Kin. 19:4,16; Pss. 42:2; 84:2; Is. 37:4,17; Jer. 10:10; 23:26; Dan. 6:20,26; Hos. 1:10). **pillar and ground.** Paul’s imagery may have referred to the magnificent temple of Diana (Artemis) in Ephesus, which was supported by 127 gold-plated marble pillars. The word translated “ground” appears only here in the NT and denotes the foundation on which a building rests. The church upholds the truth of God’s revealed Word. **the truth.** The content of the Christian faith recorded in Scripture and summed up in v. 16.²⁰⁰

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven [Matt. 16:19].

What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven? Were they given only to Simon Peter? No, Jesus gives them to those who make the same confession made by Peter, those who know Christ as Savior. If you are a child of God, you have the keys as well as any person has

¹⁹⁹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:445

²⁰⁰MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Ti 3:15

the keys. The keys were the badge of authority of the office of the scribes who interpreted the Scriptures to the people (see Neh. 8:2–8). Every Christian today has the Scriptures and, therefore, the keys. If we withhold the Word, we “bind on earth”; if we give the Word, we “loose on earth.” No man or individual church has the keys—to the exclusion of all other believers. We have a responsibility today to give out the gospel because it is the only thing that can save people. This is a tremendous revelation. Who is sufficient for these things? You and I have a responsibility that is awesome indeed!

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16:19 the keys of the kingdom of heaven. These represent authority, and here Christ gives Peter (and by extension all other believers) authority to declare what was bound or loosed in heaven. This echoed the promise of John 20:23, where Christ gave the disciples authority to forgive or retain the sins of people. All this must be understood in the context of 18:15–17, where Christ laid out specific instructions for dealing with sin in the church (*see note on 18:15*). The sum of it all means that any duly constituted body of believers, acting in accord with God’s Word, has the authority to declare if someone is forgiven or unforgiven. The church’s authority is not to determine these things, but to declare the judgment of heaven based on the principles of the Word. When they make such judgments on the basis of God’s Word, they can be sure heaven is in accord. In other words, whatever they “bind” or “loose” on earth is already “bound” or “loosed” in heaven. When the church says the unrepentant person is bound in sin, the church is saying what God says about that person. When the church acknowledges that a repentant person has been loosed from that sin, God agrees.²⁰²

And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican [Matt. 18:16–17].

There are some people who like to smother trouble and cover it up. This is not the way the Lord tells us to handle it. If there is a problem between two believers, it should be worked out in an amiable, peaceful, and quiet manner. If the individuals cannot work things out, take it to a group. If the group cannot work things out, the last resort is to take the problem to the church as the final authority. The Lord says in conclusion, concerning this subject:

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven [Matt. 18:18].

We have already studied the contents of this verse in Matthew 16:19, where we learned that if we withhold the Word, we “bind on earth”; if we give the Word of God to others, we “loose on earth.”

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²⁰¹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:92-93

²⁰²MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 16:19

²⁰³McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:100

18:16 if he will not hear. I.e., if he remains impenitent, follow step 2: “take with you one or two more,” to fulfill the principle of Deut. 19:15.

18:17 tell it to the church. If he still refuses to repent, step 3 requires that the matter be reported to the whole assembly (v. 17)—so that all may lovingly pursue the sinning brother’s reconciliation. But failing that, step 4 means that the offender must be excommunicated, regarded by the church as “a heathen and a tax collector” (*see note on 5:46*). The idea is not merely to punish the offender, or to shun him completely, but to remove him as a detrimental influence from the fellowship of the church, and henceforth to regard him as an evangelistic prospect rather than as a brother. Ultimately, the sin for which he is excommunicated is a hard-hearted impenitence.

18:18 bind on earth ... bound in heaven. *See note on 16:19.*

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Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained [John 20:23].

This is an important verse which is greatly misunderstood. John Calvin writes: “When Christ enjoins the apostles to forgive sins, He does not convey to them what is peculiar to Himself. It belongs to Him to forgive sins. He only enjoins them in His name to proclaim the forgiveness of sins.”

Nowhere in the Book of Acts or in the Epistles do we find any instance of an apostle remitting the sins of anyone. They do go everywhere, proclaiming the forgiveness of sins. Let me ask the question: What is it that forgives sins? Even God cannot just arbitrarily forgive sins. Forgiveness of sins is only and alone through the blood of Jesus Christ. Back in the Old Testament, the forgiveness of sins was based on the fact that Christ would come and die. God saved “on credit” in the Old Testament until Christ would come and pay the penalty. Today God forgives our sins when we believe that Christ died for them.

How can you and I remit sins? By telling the gospel! This is the greater work which we shall do. When somebody turned and believed on Jesus while He was here on earth, that was wonderful. But what is staggering is when you or I simply give out the Word of God, and someone is born again and becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them” happens when you and I proclaim the gospel of the grace of God. That is the most glorious privilege that there is today, my friend.

We have a responsibility. If we do not preach the gospel to the world, their sins will not be remitted. I think we are reaping the penalty for the years we have not taken the gospel to the world. Because we have neglected our responsibility, our boys die in war. Just think, if all the boys we have lost in war had been willing to lose their lives for Christ and be missionaries, how different the world might be! We have the only thing that will bring forgiveness to the world. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ. My friend, what are you doing?

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²⁰⁴MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 18:16

20:23 See notes on *Matt. 16:19; 18:18*. This verse does not give authority to Christians to forgive sins. Jesus was saying that the believer can boldly declare the certainty of a sinner's forgiveness by the Father because of the work of His Son if that sinner has repented and believed the gospel. The believer with certainty can also tell those who do not respond to the message of God's forgiveness through faith in Christ that their sins, as a result, are not forgiven.²⁰⁶

JUSTIFICATION

For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love [Gal. 5:6].

No legal apparatus will produce a Christian life. The formula is simple: "faith which worketh by love." As we advance in Galatians, Paul will give us the *modus operandi*, but let us remember that it is a simple formula: "Faith which worketh by love." That is the way to live the Christian life. Faith will work by love. Love will be the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

²⁰⁷

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing [1 Cor. 13:2].

The first verse was speaking of love as it comes from the heart. This is from the mind, love as an act of the intellect. Knowledge alone is not sufficient. Love must be added to that knowledge. Understanding alone is not enough. Love must be added to that understanding. I feel this is the sad plight of Bible-believing churches in our day. There is a knowledge of the Bible and an understanding of the truths of the Bible but a lack of love. How terrible to find churches filled with gossip, bitterness, and hatred! Along with knowledge there must be love.

²⁰⁸

13:2 the gift of prophecy. See notes on *12:10*. In *14:1-5*, Paul speaks of this gift as the most essential one because it brings God's truth to people. Even this gift must be ministered in love (cf. *Eph. 4:15*). **understand all mysteries and all knowledge.** This encompasses gifts of wisdom, knowledge, and discernment (see notes on *12:8, 10*), which are to be exercised in love (see *Phil. 1:9*). **all faith.** See note on *Matt. 17:20*. This

²⁰⁵ McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:2-499

²⁰⁶ MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Jn 20:23

²⁰⁷ McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:185

²⁰⁸ McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:63-64

refers to the gift of faith (enduring, believing prayer; *see note on 12:9*), which is useless without selfless love for the church.²⁰⁹

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him [John 14:21].

Don't say that you love Christ if you are not obeying Him. He is making this very clear here. Jesus is going to manifest Himself to the one who loves Him. Don't think this will be a manifestation by a vision. Later He says that it is the Holy Spirit who will take the things of Jesus and show them to you. Where does He do this? In the Scriptures. That is where Jesus is manifested.

²¹⁰

14:21–24 Once again, Jesus emphasized the need for the habitual practice of obedience to His commands as evidence of the believer's love for Him and the Father (*see note on v. 15*). This is consistent with the teaching of James 2:14–26 that true saving faith is manifest by works produced by God in the transforming, regenerating power of the Spirit. Those works are expressions of the love which the Spirit pours into the believer's heart (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22).²¹¹

Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder [Matt. 19:5–6].

This was God's original plan for man and woman before sin entered the human family. Divorce was not in God's original plan. Why? Because *sin* was not in God's original plan, and divorce is always a result of sin. Regardless of what you may say, there is sin in the relationship somewhere which causes divorce. So our Lord took them back to the original plan of God.

²¹²

19:5 Quoted from Gen. 2:24 (*see note there*).

19:1-12. Jesus . . . left Galilee for the last time and headed for Jerusalem through **the region of Judea to the east side of the Jordan** River. That area was known as Perea. There, as often before, He was **followed by large crowds** of needy people, and **He healed them**. But **some Pharisees** sought to **test** Jesus through a question: Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife **for any and every reason?** The nation was divided over this issue. Followers of Hillel felt a man could divorce his wife for almost any reason, but

²⁰⁹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Co 13:2

²¹⁰McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:463

²¹¹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Jn 14:21

²¹²McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:103

others, following Shammai, thought one could not divorce his wife unless she were guilty of sexual offense. Without getting involved in the Hillel-Shammai controversy Jesus reminded the religious leaders of God's original purpose in establishing the marriage bond. God made people **male and female** (v. 4; Gen. 1:27). In marriage He joins them **together** in an inseparable bond. This bond is a higher calling than the parent-child relationship, for **a man** is to **leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife** in a one-flesh relationship (Gen. 2:24). **Therefore what God has joined together**, men ought **not separate** (chōrizetō; in 1 Cor. 7:10 this word means "to divorce").²¹³

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain [1 Cor. 9:24].

In an athletic event, only one can come in first. But in the spiritual race all of us can win the prize if we are getting out the Word of God.

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible [1 Cor. 9:25].

The awards that God gives won't swell your bank account down here and remain here when you leave; they will be for your eternal enrichment.

I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air [1 Cor. 9:26].

Paul says that he is not just shadowboxing. He is not just playing at this thing. He is not playing church. This is real.

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway [1 Cor. 9:27].

The translation "castaway" is unfortunate. The Greek word is *adokimos*, which means "not approved." Paul is thinking of the judgment seat of Christ where the rewards are given. In his Second Epistle to the Corinthians he will talk about the fact that we shall all appear before the judgment seat of Christ where awards are given. Paul says that he is out on that racetrack trying to run so that he will get a reward. That is the reason he preaches the gospel as he does. Paul has liberty. This is the choice that he has made.

I think every Christian ought to work for a reward. We do not work for salvation; that is a gift given by the grace of God. My friend, if you are going to get a reward, you will have to work for it. If you are going to get a reward, then you had better get out on the racetrack and start moving.

²¹⁴

9:24–27 Liberty cannot be limited without self-control, since the flesh resists limits as its freedom. Here, Paul speaks of his personal self-control.

v. verse

²¹³Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:63

²¹⁴McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:43

9:24 race. The Greeks enjoyed two great athletic events, the Olympic games and the Isthmian games, and because the Isthmian events were held in Corinth, believers there were quite familiar with this analogy of running to win.

9:25 temperate. Self-control is crucial to victory. **crown.** A wreath of greenery given to the winner of the race. Cf. 2 Tim. 4–8; 1 Pet. 1:4.

9:26 not with uncertainty. Four times he has mentioned his goal of winning people to salvation (vv. 19, 22). **beats the air.** Paul changes the metaphor to boxing to illustrate the point that he was no shadow boxer, just waving his arms without effect (cf. 1 Tim. 1:18).

9:27 discipline. From a term lit. meaning to hit under the eye. He knocked out the bodily impulses to keep them from preventing him from his mission of winning souls to Christ. **disqualified.** Another metaphor from the athletic games. A contestant who failed to meet basic training requirements could not participate at all, much less have an opportunity to win. Paul may be especially referring to such fleshly sins that disqualify a man from preaching and leading the church, particularly being blameless and above reproach in the sexual area, since such sin is a disqualification (*see notes on Ps. 101:6; Prov. 6:33; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6*).

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For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Not of works, lest any man should boast [Eph. 2:8–9].

These are the great verses that consummate this section on the believer's past, present, and future. We were dead in trespasses and sin, God saved us by His grace, raising us now to heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and we will someday be in heaven displaying the grace of God. None of this depends on our own works or merit, "for by grace ye have been saved." Notice I have changed it to the literal phrase "*the* grace." The article points out that it is something special. The great emphasis is upon the grace of God. It is favor bestowed on the unworthy and undeserving.

Now don't come along and say, "I hope to be saved." If you have put your trust in Christ, you can say, "I *am* saved." Someone may say, "Oh, I wouldn't dare make a statement like that because I don't know what the future holds." Friend, your salvation rests upon the *grace* of God—not upon your faithfulness. You can be confident of this very thing, "... that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). If you are a child of God, you may wander from Him, but He will always make a way back for you because it is by His grace and that alone that you are saved. You have a finished salvation. On the basis of what Christ has done for you and on the fact that the Holy Spirit has inclined you toward Christ and you have believed the Word of God and have trusted Him, you can say, "I am saved" It's not an "I hope so" salvation or an "I'll try" salvation. It is a salvation that is by the grace of God, by means of faith, and it is not of yourself. It is a gift of God.

lit. literally

²¹⁵MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Co 9:24

The grace of God has been defined theologically as “unmerited favor.” I like to speak of it as “love in action.” Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, the man who taught me theology, made this important statement about God’s grace and God’s love in his book, *The Ephesian Letter, Doctrinally Considered*.

A sharp distinction is properly drawn between the compassionate love of God for sinners, and His grace which is now offered to them in Jesus Christ. Divine love and divine grace are not one and the same. God might love sinners with an unutterable compassion and yet, because of the demands of outraged divine justice and holiness, be unable to rescue them from a righteous doom. However, as has been before stated, if love shall graciously provide for the sinner all that outraged justice and holiness could ever demand, the love of God would then be free to act without restraint in behalf of those for whom the perfect substitutionary sacrifice was made. This is Christ’s achievement on the cross. On the other hand, divine grace in salvation is the unrestrained compassion of God acting toward the sinner on the basis of that freedom already secured through the righteous judgment against sin—secured by Christ in His sacrificial death. Divine love might desire to save, yet be unable righteously to do so; but divine grace is free to act since Christ has died. It is to be observed, then, that the eternal purpose of God is not the manifestation of His *love* alone, though His love and His mercy are, like His grace, mentioned in this context and expressed in Christ’s death; but it is rather the manifestation of His grace. Out of God’s infinite treasure chest He lavishes His grace upon sinners without restraint or hindrance.

Now faith is the instrumental cause of salvation. It is the only element that the sinner brings to the great transaction of salvation. Yet it too is the gift of God. I know someone will say to me, “Since faith is the gift of God and God hasn’t given it to me, then I guess I’m not to blame if I don’t believe.” The answer is this: God has made it very clear that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. If you want to trust Christ, you will have to listen to the Word of God. God will give faith to all who give heed to the message of the gospel.

We find this taught in 2 Corinthians. Moses had a veil over his face, not because he was blinding everybody like a headlight, but so that the people could not view the glory that was fading away. It was the glory that belonged to the Mosaic system and that belonged to the Law. “But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ” (2 Cor. 3:14). There is no need for a veil today because He is the unveiled Christ; the gospel is freely declared. But we are told, “But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away” (2 Cor. 3:15–16). What is “it”? It is the heart. When the heart shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Anytime that you are ready to turn to Christ, you can turn to Christ.

Someone else objects, “Maybe I’m not given the gift of faith.” That’s not your problem. Your problem is that you don’t want to give up your sins which the Bible condemns. Whenever you get sick of your sins, when you want to turn from yourself, from the things of the world, from religion, from everything the Bible condemns, and turn to Christ, then you will be given faith. You can trust Him.

I am weary of hearing folk say they don’t believe because they have intellectual problems. Actually they have moral rather than intellectual problems if only they would face up to them. Sin is the real problem in the hearts of a great many folk today. Even many of the saints don’t enjoy their salvation for that very reason. Psychologists at Duke University made a study and found that the second most frequent reason people are

emotionally disturbed and mentally unstable is because they live in the past. They are preoccupied with past mistakes and failures, and they look to themselves instead of looking to Christ and trusting Him.

Faith is that instrument of salvation. Spurgeon says, “It is not thy joy in Christ that saves thee; it is Christ. It is not thy hope in Christ that saves thee; it is Christ. It is not even thy faith in Christ, though that be the instrument; it is Christ’s blood and merit.” That is where the power is, and that is where the salvation is.

Paul is not talking about *faith* when he says, “And that not of yourselves.” He is talking about *salvation*. Salvation is a gift that eliminates boasting. It is all of God and not of us. It is God’s *gift*.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them [Eph. 2:10].

“We are his workmanship.” The Greek word is *poiema* from which we get our word *poem*. The church is His poem and His new creation. Paul is not talking about the local church here, but rather about that body of believers from the day of Pentecost to the Rapture, the *real* believers (and most of them are members of local churches). That body of believers is His workmanship and His new creation in Christ Jesus.

For what are we created? For good works. When we get to the last part of this epistle, we will be told how we are to walk in a way that is creditable and acceptable to God. While we are seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, we are to walk down here in a way that will bring glory to His name.

²¹⁶

2:8 faith, and that not of yourselves. “That” refers to the entire previous statement of salvation, not only the grace but the faith. Although men are required to believe for salvation, even that faith is part of the gift of God which saves and cannot be exercised by one’s own power. God’s grace is preeminent in every aspect of salvation (cf. Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16).

2:10 created in ... for good works. Good works cannot produce salvation but are subsequent and resultant God-empowered fruits and evidences of it (cf. John 15:8; Phil. 2:12, 13; 2 Tim. 3:17; Titus 2:14; James 2:16–26). **which God prepared beforehand.** Like his salvation, a believer’s sanctification and good works were ordained before time began (*see notes on Rom. 8:29, 30*).

²¹⁷

COMMUNION OF SAINTS

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing [John 15:5].

Because we have free will, we can break fellowship with God by allowing sin in our life, by stepping out of the will of God, or by worldliness. He wants us to abide so that we

²¹⁶McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:236-237

²¹⁷MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Eph 2:8

bring forth much fruit. You will notice here that there is a similarity to the parable of the sower. Remember that some of the seed fell on good ground and brought forth thirtyfold—that is fruit. Some of the seed brought forth sixty—that is more fruit. Some of the seed brought forth an hundredfold—that is much fruit. God wants us to bear much fruit.

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15:4–6 Abide in Me. The word "abide" means to remain or stay around. The "remaining" is evidence that salvation has already taken place (1 John 2:19) and not vice versa. The fruit or evidence of salvation is continuance in service to Him and in His teaching (8:31; 1 John 2:24; Col. 1:23). The abiding believer is the only legitimate believer. Abiding and believing actually are addressing the same issue of genuine salvation (Heb. 3:6–19). For a discussion of the perseverance of the saints, *see note on Matt. 24:13*.²¹⁹

For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? [1 Cor. 10:16–19].

Paul's argument here is quite logical. He says that an idol is nothing. So if you offer meat to an idol, it is nothing—the meat is not affected at all.

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10:17 are one bread. This refers to the bread of communion as the symbol of Christ's body given for all who believe. Since we all partake of that body, we are one. *See note on 6:17*.²²¹

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone [Eph. 2:19–20].

Paul reminds the gentile believers that though they were strangers and alienated from God, their present position is infinitely bettered. They are no more strangers and sojourners (foreigners). They are now fellow citizens with the saints.

"Saints" is not a reference to Old Testament saints. Gentile believers are fellow citizens with the New Testament Jewish saints, the other members of the body of Christ.

²¹⁸McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:468

²¹⁹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Jn 15:4

²²⁰McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:46

²²¹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Co 10:17

They belong to a household, not as servants, but as relatives, as members of the family of God. They are His dear children. "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake" (1 John 2:12). We are little children. This is a new relationship, a relationship foreign to the Old Testament. Even David, the man after God's own heart, is called "my servant David" in 2 Samuel 7:8; and God's term for Moses was also "my servant" in Numbers 12:7.

Now this citizenship is not in Israel and the earthly Jerusalem, but it is in heaven. "For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20). We are now fellow citizens. We belong to heaven at the present time. The word *conversation* should rightly be changed to *citizenship* and is translated that way in the *American Standard Version*. Another has well translated it, "Our city home is in heaven."

We are "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." This is important. It does not mean that the apostles and prophets were the foundation but that they personally laid the foundation. The early church built its doctrine upon that of the apostles. "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42).

Much has been written about the identity of the prophets in verse twenty. Are they Old Testament prophets or New Testament prophets? The fact that the prophets are in the same classification as apostles without the article *the* would seem to designate them as New Testament prophets. I think you will find this confirmed when we get into the third chapter.

"Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" reveals that Christ is the Rock on which the church is built. Paul makes this very clear: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). Peter states it like this: "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed" (1 Pet. 2:6-8). The important thing to note here is that Peter says that the Lord Jesus is that chief cornerstone. Therefore Peter understood what the Lord meant when He said, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). Jesus is talking about Himself. He is the Rock on which the church is built. The apostles and prophets put down the foundation, and Christ is the chief cornerstone, the Rock.

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2:19 fellow citizens with the saints. God's kingdom is made up of the people from all time who have trusted in Him. There are no strangers, foreigners, or second-class citizens there (cf. Phil. 3:20). **members of the household of God.** Redeemed sinners not only

²²²McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:240-241

become heavenly citizens but also members of God's own family. The Father bestows on believers the same infinite love He gives His Son. *See note on 1:5; cf. Heb. 3:6.*²²³

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me [Rom. 15:30].

I have been dwelling a long time in this area. One reason is that this is a personal area, and Paul is laying bare his heart. The second reason is that we are seeing how Christianity functioned in the first century. We are seeing the practical side of Christianity. In the first part of Romans Paul gave us doctrine. Now Paul is putting that doctrine into practice.

This is one of the most solemn, earnest, and serious appeals of Paul for prayer that we find in the Bible. He says, "I beg of you, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that ye strive intensely with me in your prayers to God on behalf of me." Paul recognizes that he is facing danger and has come to a crisis in his ministry. Enemies are on every hand. Paul had reason to fear, as succeeding events proved. He is asking for prayer in a very wonderful way, "through our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul realized that everything that was to come to him had to come through Jesus Christ. He asked the believers in Rome to join with him in prayer. He says, "I want all of you to pray through Christ—He is our great Intercessor—go through Him to God on my behalf."

By "through the love of the Spirit" he means that love is the fruit of the Spirit which joins all believers together. And, friend, we ought to pray for each other.

"That ye strive intensely for me." The Greek word for *strive* is tremendous. We get our English word *agonize* from it. Paul is saying, "Agonize with me."

"On behalf of me"—he is asking for prayer for his personal safety that he might come in "the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." Oh, my friend, how we need to pray like this—not just praying by rote or by going over our prayer list hurriedly. For the apostle Paul prayer was with great agony, great exercise of soul. He laid hold of God. This kind of praying is so desperately needed today! You and I *need* people who know how to pray for us.

²²⁴

15:30 the love of the Spirit. This phrase occurs only here in Scripture and refers to Paul's love for the Holy Spirit, not the Spirit's love for him (cf. Ps. 143:10).

15:30, 31 prayers ... that I may be delivered. Many Jews in Judea rejected the gospel and were prepared to attack Paul when he returned. Aware of the trouble that awaited him (Acts 20:22–24), he wanted the Roman Christians to pray for his deliverance only so he could complete the ministry the Lord had given him. Their prayers were

²²³MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Eph 2:19

²²⁴McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:753

answered in that he met with success in Jerusalem (Acts 21:17, 19, 20) and was delivered from death, but not imprisonment (Acts 21:10, 11; 23:11).²²⁵

WORSHIP STATUES

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me [Exod. 20:4–5].

Some people may feel that this passage does not apply to us today. Colossians 3:5 tells us that "...covetousness...is idolatry." Anything that you give yourself to, especially in abandonment, becomes your "god." Many people do not worship Bacchus, the cloven-footed Greek and Roman god of wine and revelry of long ago, but they worship the bottle just the same. There are millions of alcoholics in our country right now. The liquor interests like to tell us about how much of the tax burden they carry, when actually they do not pay a fraction of the bill for the casualties they cause by their product. A lot of propaganda is being fed to this generation and large groups of people are being brainwashed. Whether or not folk recognize it, they worship the god Bacchus.

Other people worship Aphrodite, that is, the goddess of sex. Some people worship money. Anything to which you give your time, heart, and soul, becomes your God. God says that we are not to have any gods before Him.

²²⁶

20:4–6 The mode or fashion of worship appropriate to only one Lord forbids any attempt to represent or caricature Him by use of anything He has made. Total censure of artistic expression was not the issue; the absolute censure of idolatry and false worship was the issue. Violation would seriously affect succeeding generations because the Lord demanded full and exclusive devotion, i.e., He is a jealous God (cf. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9). The worship of man-made representations was nothing less than hatred of the true God.

20:5, 6 to the third and fourth generations . . . thousands. Moses had made it clear that children were not punished for the sins of their parents (Deut. 24:16; see Ezek. 18:19–32), but children would feel the impact of breaches of God's law by their parents' generation as a natural consequence of its disobedience, its hatred of God. Children reared in such an environment would imbibe and then practice similar idolatry, thus themselves expressing hateful disobedience. The difference in consequence served as both a warning and a motivation. The effect of a disobedient generation was to plant wickedness so deeply that it took several generations to reverse.

²²⁷

²²⁵ MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ro 15:30

²²⁶ McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 1:ix-267

And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat.

And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof [Exod. 25:17–19]...

...The ark was a chest covered inside and outside with gold. It was made of shittim wood which was more or less indestructible and much like the redwood of California. It was a perfect symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ in His deity and humanity. Jesus Christ was the God-man; His deity was represented by the gold and His humanity was represented by the wood.

The ark could not be spoken of as merely a wooden chest because it also was a gold chest. It could not be called a golden chest because it was also a chest of wood. It required both gold and wood to maintain the symbolism pointing to Christ as the God-man. There is no mingling of the two. To overlook this duality is to entertain a monstrous notion of His person. There is no doctrine in Scripture so filled with infinite mystery and so removed from the realm of explanation as the hypostatical union of Christ, the God-man. Yet there is no symbol so simple as the ark that describes this union of God and man in one body. A mere box made of wood and gold speaks of things unfathomable. Truly God chooses the simple things to confound the wise. That simple box tells the whole story, as far as man can take it in, of the unsearchable mystery of the blessed person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The ark was covered with gold both inside and outside. Colossians 2:9 tells us, “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” Jesus Christ was not merely a thaumaturgist, that is, a wonder-worker. Nor was He a man with an overdeveloped God consciousness. He *was* God! He spoke as God. He put Himself on the same plane as God. In John 14:1, 9, our Savior says, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me... Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father....” Yes, He was God.

He was also perfectly man. He grew tired. He sat down to rest at a well in Samaria in the heat of the day. He slept, He ate, He drank, He laughed, He wept, and beyond all that, He suffered and died. All of these are human characteristics. The gold and the wood in the ark were both required, yet neither was mingled with the other. Nor was the identity of one lost in the other. Christ was both God and man, but the two natures were never fused or merged. He never functioned at the same time as both God and man. What He did was either perfectly human or perfectly divine.

The ark was not an empty box. It contained three items which are enumerated in Hebrews 9:4; “Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant.” The contents of the ark were also symbolic. Aaron’s rod that budded speaks of the Lord’s resurrection. The manna speaks of the fact

²²⁷MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ex 20:4

that Christ is the Bread of Life. The Ten Commandments speak of the life He lived on earth fulfilling the Law in all points and fulfilling the prophecies spoken of Him.

The tables of the covenant speak of the Kingship of Christ. He was born a King. He lived a King. He died a King, and He rose from the dead a King. He is coming again to earth as King. God's program is moving today and has been moving from eternity past to the time when Christ shall rule over this earth. Earth needs a ruler. Man needs a King. Someday He is coming as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The pot of manna speaks of Christ as a prophet. He spoke for God as John 6:32 clearly shows: "... Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." Jesus Christ was also God's message to man. He was to *Logos*, the Word of God, the very alphabet of God, the Alpha and Omega. He is God's final message to man. Since Christ came to earth as God-man, heaven has been silent because God has no addenda to place after Christ. He has no postscript to the letter because Christ is the embodiment of that letter. God told out His heart in Christ.

Aaron's rod that budded speaks of the work of Christ as priest. The prophet spoke for God before man; the priest spoke for man before God. As priest Christ offered Himself. As a priest He passed into heaven. Even now He sits at God's right hand in heaven. Jesus Christ the God-man was raised from the dead and He is the unique example of resurrection up to the present hour. Easter lilies and eggs do not speak of the resurrection, but Aaron's rod that budded does. It was an old dead stick that came alive. The ark speaks of Christ as prophet, priest, and king. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

The mercy seat rested on top of the ark. It served as the top for the chest, the ark, but it was a separate piece of furniture. It was made of pure gold with cherubim on each end with their wings spread, overshadowing it, and looking down upon the top where the blood was placed. It was here the high priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice. It was the blood that made it the *mercy seat*. This too was symbolic of the work of Christ. Christ literally presented His blood in heaven after His death on the cross. A critic recommended my book, *The Tabernacle, God's Portrait of Christ*, but warned people that I took everything literally and must be watched carefully because I held the position that Christ offered His blood in heaven. The critic felt this was crude. I do not believe this is crude because the blood of Christ is not crude; it is precious. Peter calls his Savior's blood "precious" in 1 Peter 1:18-19, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Christ's blood is more precious than silver or gold. The most valuable thing in heaven is the blood He shed for man on earth. He presented His blood as He entered heaven and that is what makes God's throne a mercy seat for us today. We are bidden to come to God today on the basis of the fact that Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, has offered His own blood for our sins. Hebrews 4:14-16 reminds us that, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are,

yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

You and I approach God through our great High Priest in heaven. He is the living Christ at God’s right hand. Through Him we find mercy and help. Many believers are trying to fight the battle down here alone. They are trying to meet the issues of life alone. Friends, you and I are not able to do it. We are not strong enough. We need help. And we are not availing ourselves of the help Christ offers. Paul prayed for the Ephesians that the mighty power that worked in Christ, bringing Him from the dead, might work in them (Eph. 1:19–20). We see very little of that power working in believers today. We need to lay hold of it by faith because we have a High Priest who is at God’s right hand.

The high priest who served in this tabernacle rushed into the Holy Place, sprinkled the blood on the mercy seat, and rushed out again. Christ, our High Priest, when He made His offering, sat down at God’s right hand and is still there for us today. He died down here to save us. He lives in heaven to keep us saved. And we should keep in contact with Him. Have you had a talk with Him today?

We have looked now at the articles of furniture in the Holy of Holies: the ark and the mercy seat. Now we will consider the furniture in the second compartment, the Holy Place.

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25:18 cherubim. Forged as one with the golden cover of the ark were two angelic beings rising up on each end and facing one another, their wings stretching up and over forming an arch. Cherubim, associated with the majestic glory and presence of God (cf. Ezek. 10:1–22), were appropriately woven into the tabernacle curtains and the veil for the Holy of Holies (26:1, 31), for this place was where God was present with His people. Scripture reveals them as the bearers of God’s throne (1 Sam. 4:4; Is. 37:16) and the guardians of the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Life (Gen. 3:24).²²⁹

25:17-22. A cover (KJV, “mercy seat”) was to be mounted over the golden chest. The chest lid (23“ x 39”)—with **two cherubim** (pl. of “cherub”) facing **each other** on the lid—was to be made of a solid **piece of pure gold**. Apparently these golden **cherubim** were to resemble winged angels in God’s presence (cf. 1 Sam. 4:4; Pss. 80:1; 99:1; Isa. 37:16). **Cherubim** were also woven into the curtains that covered the tabernacle itself (Ex. 26:1-6) and into the curtain between the holy place and the most holy place (26:31-33).

Of crucial importance is that **above the atonement cover between the two cherubim** God would **meet with** His people. There on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:1-20) the high priest sprinkled blood on the lid (kappōret, “covering”). The blood then covered

²²⁸McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 1:ix-281

²²⁹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ex 25:18

pl. plural

cf. *confer*, compare

(kāpar, “to cover, make atonement for”; cf. Ex. 30:10) Israel’s sin. The atonement cover symbolized for Israel what was later accomplished by Christ, who as the Lamb of God (John 1:29) made atonement for sin (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:11-14) by His shed blood (Eph. 1:7; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

(3) The table of the bread of the Presence.

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The ark was a chest covered inside and outside with gold. It was made of shittim wood which was more or less indestructible and much like the redwood of California. It was a perfect symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ in His deity and humanity. Jesus Christ was the God-man; His deity was represented by the gold and His humanity was represented by the wood.

The ark could not be spoken of as merely a wooden chest because it also was a gold chest. It could not be called a golden chest because it was also a chest of wood. It required both gold and wood to maintain the symbolism pointing to Christ as the God-man. There is no mingling of the two. To overlook this duality is to entertain a monstrous notion of His person. There is no doctrine in Scripture so filled with infinite mystery and so removed from the realm of explanation as the hypostatical union of Christ, the God-man. Yet there is no symbol so simple as the ark that describes this union of God and man in one body. A mere box made of wood and gold speaks of things unfathomable. Truly God chooses the simple things to confound the wise. That simple box tells the whole story, as far as man can take it in, of the unsearchable mystery of the blessed person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The ark was covered with gold both inside and outside. Colossians 2:9 tells us, “For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” Jesus Christ was not merely a thaumaturgist, that is, a wonder-worker. Nor was He a man with an overdeveloped God consciousness. He *was* God! He spoke as God. He put Himself on the same plane as God. In John 14:1, 9, our Savior says, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me... Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father....” Yes, He was God.

He was also perfectly man. He grew tired. He sat down to rest at a well in Samaria in the heat of the day. He slept, He ate, He drank, He laughed, He wept, and beyond all that, He suffered and died. All of these are human characteristics. The gold and the wood in the ark were both required, yet neither was mingled with the other. Nor was the identity of one lost in the other. Christ was both God and man, but the two natures were never fused or merged. He never functioned at the same time as both God and man. What He did was either perfectly human or perfectly divine.

The ark was not an empty box. It contained three items which are enumerated in Hebrews 9:4; “Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant.” The contents of the ark were also symbolic. Aaron’s rod that budded speaks of the Lord’s resurrection. The manna speaks of the fact

²³⁰Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 1:148

that Christ is the Bread of Life. The Ten Commandments speak of the life He lived on earth fulfilling the Law in all points and fulfilling the prophecies spoken of Him.

The tables of the covenant speak of the Kingship of Christ. He was born a King. He lived a King. He died a King, and He rose from the dead a King. He is coming again to earth as King. God's program is moving today and has been moving from eternity past to the time when Christ shall rule over this earth. Earth needs a ruler. Man needs a King. Someday He is coming as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The pot of manna speaks of Christ as a prophet. He spoke for God as John 6:32 clearly shows: "... Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven." Jesus Christ was also God's message to man. He was to *Logos*, the Word of God, the very alphabet of God, the Alpha and Omega. He is God's final message to man. Since Christ came to earth as God-man, heaven has been silent because God has no addenda to place after Christ. He has no postscript to the letter because Christ is the embodiment of that letter. God told out His heart in Christ.

Aaron's rod that budded speaks of the work of Christ as priest. The prophet spoke for God before man; the priest spoke for man before God. As priest Christ offered Himself. As a priest He passed into heaven. Even now He sits at God's right hand in heaven. Jesus Christ the God-man was raised from the dead and He is the unique example of resurrection up to the present hour. Easter lilies and eggs do not speak of the resurrection, but Aaron's rod that budded does. It was an old dead stick that came alive. The ark speaks of Christ as prophet, priest, and king. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

The mercy seat rested on top of the ark. It served as the top for the chest, the ark, but it was a separate piece of furniture. It was made of pure gold with cherubim on each end with their wings spread, overshadowing it, and looking down upon the top where the blood was placed. It was here the high priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice. It was the blood that made it the *mercy seat*. This too was symbolic of the work of Christ. Christ literally presented His blood in heaven after His death on the cross. A critic recommended my book, *The Tabernacle, God's Portrait of Christ*, but warned people that I took everything literally and must be watched carefully because I held the position that Christ offered His blood in heaven. The critic felt this was crude. I do not believe this is crude because the blood of Christ is not crude; it is precious. Peter calls his Savior's blood "precious" in 1 Peter 1:18-19, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Christ's blood is more precious than silver or gold. The most valuable thing in heaven is the blood He shed for man on earth. He presented His blood as He entered heaven and that is what makes God's throne a mercy seat for us today. We are bidden to come to God today on the basis of the fact that Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, has offered His own blood for our sins. Hebrews 4:14-16 reminds us that, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are,

yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

You and I approach God through our great High Priest in heaven. He is the living Christ at God’s right hand. Through Him we find mercy and help. Many believers are trying to fight the battle down here alone. They are trying to meet the issues of life alone. Friends, you and I are not able to do it. We are not strong enough. We need help. And we are not availing ourselves of the help Christ offers. Paul prayed for the Ephesians that the mighty power that worked in Christ, bringing Him from the dead, might work in them (Eph. 1:19–20). We see very little of that power working in believers today. We need to lay hold of it by faith because we have a High Priest who is at God’s right hand.

The high priest who served in this tabernacle rushed into the Holy Place, sprinkled the blood on the mercy seat, and rushed out again. Christ, our High Priest, when He made His offering, sat down at God’s right hand and is still there for us today. He died down here to save us. He lives in heaven to keep us saved. And we should keep in contact with Him. Have you had a talk with Him today?

We have looked now at the articles of furniture in the Holy of Holies: the ark and the mercy seat. Now we will consider the furniture in the second compartment, the Holy Place.

²³¹

21:7 We have sinned. The people confessed their iniquity and asked that they might be released from the judgment God had sent.

21:9 a bronze serpent. One had to fix his gaze upon this snake, a definite act of the will, if he wanted to be healed and live. See the typological use of this incident in John 3:14, 15.

²³²

21:6-9. In anger **the LORD sent poisonous snakes among them and many of the people . . . died.** They urged **Moses** to intercede before God for them, which he did. He then relayed instruction from **the LORD** that all those **bitten** should **look on a bronze snake** which he constructed and placed high on a **pole**. Those who **looked at** it were healed. This involved a look of faith (cf. John 3:14-15).

²³³

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:

²³¹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 1:ix-281

²³²MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Nu 21:7

cf. *confer*, compare

²³³Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 1:239

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life [John 3:14–15].

When Moses lifted up that brass serpent on a pole, because of God's judgment upon the sin of the people, all they had to do for healing was to look to it. As Moses lifted up the serpent, so Christ is going to be lifted up. That serpent, you see, represented the sin of the people. And Christ was made sin for us on the cross because He bore our sin there. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.

3:14 so must the Son of Man be lifted up. Cf. 8:28; 12:32, 34; 18:31, 32. This is a veiled prediction of Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus referred to the story of Num. 21:5–9 where the Israelite people who looked at the serpent lifted up by Moses were healed. The point of this illustration or analogy is in the "lifted up." Just as Moses lifted up the snake on the pole so that all who looked upon it might live physically, those who look to Christ, who was "lifted up" on the cross for the sins of the world, will live spiritually and eternally.

3:15 eternal life. This is the first of 10 references to "eternal life" in John's gospel. The same Gr. word is translated 8 times as "everlasting life." The two expressions appear in the NT nearly 50 times. Eternal life refers not only to eternal quantity but divine quality of life. It means lit. "life of the age to come" and refers therefore to resurrection and heavenly existence in perfect glory and holiness. This life for believers in the Lord Jesus is experienced before heaven is reached. This "eternal life" is in essence nothing less than participation in the eternal life of the Living Word, Jesus Christ. It is the life of God in every believer, yet not fully manifest until the resurrection (Rom. 8:19–23; Phil. 3:20, 21).

²³⁴

And he made a molten sea, ten cubits from the one brim to the other: it was round all about, and his height was five cubits: and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about [1 Kings 7:23].

This huge laver was supported on twelve oxen cast in brass, three oxen looking in each direction. The brim of it was ornate with lilies. The laver was for the priests to wash in. While there was only one simple laver in the tabernacle, here we have multiplication and beautification in Solomon's temple.

²³⁵

7:26 two thousand baths. *See note on 2 Chr. 4:5.*

7:27–37 carts. Hiram made 10 movable stands of bronze 6 ft. square and 4.5 ft. high. Each consisted of 4 upright corner poles joined together by square panels. For mobility, the stands rode on 4 wheels of bronze (v. 30).²³⁶

Gr. Greek

lit. literally

²³⁴MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Jn 3:14

²³⁵McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 2:263

JESUS = GOD

And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him [Matt. 28:9].

This seems to contradict the encounter of Mary Magdalene with her resurrected Lord. In John 20:17 we find this: “Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.” The explanation is that between these two encounters Jesus had ascended to His Father and had presented His precious blood in heaven’s Holy of Holies.

²³⁷

28:9 Jesus met them. For a summary of Christ’s post-resurrection appearances, *see note on Luke 24:34.*²³⁸

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God [John 1:1].

The Gospel of John introduces the Lord Jesus Christ with three tremendous statements:
“In the beginning was the Word,”
“And the Word was with God,”
“And the Word was God.”

“The Word” is one of the highest and most profound titles of the Lord Jesus Christ. To determine the exact meaning is not easy. Obviously the Lord Jesus Christ is not the *logos* of Greek philosophy; rather He is the *memra* of the Hebrew Scriptures. Notice how important the Word is in the Old Testament. For instance, the name for Jehovah was never pronounced. It was such a holy word that they never used it at all. But this is the One who is the Word and, gathering up everything that was said of Him in the Old Testament, He is now presented as the One “In the beginning.” This beginning antedates the very first words in the Bible, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” That beginning can be dated, although I do not believe that anyone can date it accurately—it is nonsense to say that it is 4004 B.C., as Ussher’s dating has it. It probably goes back billions and billions of years. You see, you and I are dealing with the God of eternity. When you go back to creation He is already there, and that is exactly the way this is used—“in the beginning *was* the Word.” Notice it is not *is* the Word; it was not in the beginning that the Word started out or was begotten. *Was* (as Dr. Lenske points out) is known as a durative imperfect, meaning continued action. It means that the Word was in the beginning. What beginning? Just as far back as you want to go. The Bible says, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). Does that begin God?

²³⁶MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Ki 7:26

²³⁷McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:152-153

²³⁸MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 28:9

No, just keep on going back billions and trillions and “squillions” of years. I can think back to billions of years back of creation—maybe you can go beyond that—but let’s put down a point there, billions of years back of creation. He already was; He comes out of eternity to meet us. He did not begin. “In the beginning *was* the Word”—He was already there when the beginning was. “Well,” somebody says, “there has to be a beginning somewhere.” All right, wherever you begin, He is there to meet you, He is already past tense. “In the beginning *was* the Word”—five words in the original language, and there is not a man on top of this earth who can put a date on it or understand it or fathom it. This first tremendous statement starts us off in space, you see.

The second statement is this, “and the Word was with God.” This makes it abundantly clear that He is separate and distinct from God the Father. You cannot identify Him as God the Father because He is *with* God. “But,” someone says, “if He is with God, He is not God.” The third statement sets us straight, “and the Word was God.” This is a clear, emphatic declaration that the Lord Jesus Christ is God. In fact, the Greek is more specific than this, because in the Greek language the important word is placed at the beginning of the sentence and it reads, “God was the Word.” That is emphatic; you cannot get it more emphatic than that. Do you want to get rid of the deity of Christ? My friend, you cannot get rid of it. The first three statements in John’s gospel tie the thing down. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

1:1–18 These verses constitute the prologue which introduces many of the major themes that John will treat, especially the main theme that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (vv. 12–14, 18; cf. 20:31). Several key words repeated throughout the gospel (e.g., life, light, witness, glory) appear here. The remainder of the gospel develops the theme of the prologue as to how the eternal “Word” of God, Jesus the Messiah and Son of God, became flesh and ministered among men so that all who believe in Him would be saved. Although John wrote the prologue with the simplest vocabulary in the NT, the truths which the prologue conveys are the most profound. Six basic truths about Christ as the Son of God are featured in the prologue: 1) the eternal Christ (vv. 1–3); 2) the incarnate Christ (vv. 4, 5); 3) the forerunner of Christ (vv. 6–8); 4) the unrecognized Christ (vv. 9–11); 5) the omnipotent Christ (vv. 12, 13); and 6) the glorious Christ (vv. 14–18).

1:1 In the beginning. In contrast to 1 John 1:1 where John used a similar phrase (“from the beginning”) to refer to the starting point of Jesus’ ministry and gospel preaching, this phrase parallels Gen. 1:1 where the same phrase is used. John used the phrase in an absolute sense to refer to the beginning of the time-space-material universe. **was.** The verb highlights the eternal pre-existence of the Word, i.e., Jesus Christ. Before the universe began, the Second Person of the Trinity always existed; i.e., He always was (cf. 8:58). This word is used in contrast with the verb “was made” (or “were made”) in v. 3 which indicate a beginning in time. Because of John’s theme that Jesus Christ is the eternal God, the Second Person of the Trinity, he did not include a genealogy as Matthew and Luke did. While in terms of Jesus’ humanity, He had a human genealogy; in terms of His deity, He has no genealogy. **the Word.** John borrowed the use of the term “Word” not only from the vocabulary of the OT but also from Gr. philosophy, in which the term was essentially impersonal, signifying the rational principle of “divine reason,” “mind,”

or even "wisdom." John, however, imbued the term entirely with OT and Christian meaning (e.g., Gen. 1:3 where God's Word brought the world into being; Pss. 33:6; 107:20; Prov. 8:27 where God's Word is His powerful self-expression in creation, wisdom, revelation, and salvation) and made it refer to a person, i.e., Jesus Christ. Greek philosophical usage, therefore, is not the exclusive background of John's thought. Strategically, the term "Word" serves as a bridge-word to reach not only Jews but also the unsaved Greeks. John chose this concept because both Jews and Greeks were familiar with it. **the Word was with God.** The Word, as the Second Person of the Trinity, was in intimate fellowship with God the Father throughout all eternity. Yet, although the Word enjoyed the splendors of heaven and eternity with the Father (Is. 6:1–13; cf. 12:41; 17:5), He willingly gave up His heavenly status, taking the form of a man, and became subject to the death of the cross (*see notes on Phil. 2:6–8*). **was God.** The Gr. construction emphasizes that the Word had all the essence or attributes of deity, i.e., Jesus the Messiah was fully God (cf. Col. 2:9). Even in His incarnation when He emptied Himself, He did not cease to be God but took on a genuine human nature/body and voluntarily refrained from the independent exercise of the attributes of deity.

1:3 All things were made through Him. Jesus Christ was God the Father's agent involved in creating everything in the universe (Col. 1:16, 17; Heb. 1:2).

1:4, 5 life...light...darkness. John introduces the reader to contrastive themes that occur throughout the gospel. "Life" and "light" are qualities of the Word that are shared not only among the Godhead (5:26) but also by those who respond to the gospel message regarding Jesus Christ (8:12; 9:5; 10:28; 11:25; 14:6). John uses the word "life" about 36 times in his gospel, far more than any other NT book. It refers not only in a broad sense to physical and temporal life that the Son imparted to the created world through His involvement as the agent of creation (v. 3), but especially to spiritual and eternal life imparted as a gift through belief in Him (3:15; 17:3; Eph. 2:5). In Scripture "light" and "darkness" are very familiar symbols. Intellectually, "light" refers to biblical truth while "darkness" refers to error or falsehood (cf. Ps. 119:105; Prov. 6:23). Morally, "light" refers to holiness or purity (1 John 1:5) while "darkness" refers to sin or wrongdoing (3:19; 12:35, 46; Rom. 13:11–14; 1 Thess. 5:4–7; 1 John 1:6; 2:8–11). "Darkness" has special significance in relationship to Satan (and his demonic cohorts) who rules the present spiritually dark world (1 John 5:19) as the "prince of the power of the air" promoting spiritual darkness and rebellion against God (Eph. 2:2). John uses the term "darkness" 14 times (8 in the gospel and 6 in 1 John) out of its 17 occurrences in the NT, making it almost an exclusive Johannine word. In John, "light" and "life" have their special significance in relationship to the Jesus Christ, the Word (v. 9; 9:5; 1 John 1:5–7; 5:12, 20).

1:5 comprehend. The better meaning of this term in context is "overcome." Darkness is not able to overcome or conquer the light. Just as a single candle can overcome a room filled with darkness, so also the powers of darkness are overcome by the person and work of the Son through His death on the cross (cf. 19:11a).

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²³⁹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Jn 1:1

And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus) receive my spirit,

And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep [Acts 7:59–60].

Stephen falls asleep. Jesus puts his body to sleep to await the Rapture. Stephen goes into the presence of Christ who is standing to meet him. Stephen is the first martyr of the church to go to be with his Lord.

The other young man there that day was a Pharisee, and he thought he had everything. He looked up into heaven when Stephen said that he saw the heavens open. I am sure that Saul looked up longingly and admitted to himself, *I don't see anything, but I'd like to see what he sees. I have an empty heart.* Stephen was a tremendous witness to Saul. Stephen was the one, I believe, who prepared Saul for the appearance of the Lord Jesus on the Damascus road, as we shall see.

²⁴⁰

7:59 stoned. This was the punishment prescribed in the law for blasphemy (Lev. 24:16); however, this was not a formal execution but an act of mob violence.

²⁴¹

Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen [Rom. 9:4–5].

Paul raises the question: Who are Israelites? There are eight things that identify Israelites:

1. *The Adoption.* The adoption was national and pertained to the national entity, not to separate individuals. The *only* nation that God ever called His “son” is the nation Israel: “And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn” (Exod. 4:22). Again in Deuteronomy 7:6 “For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.” Either God meant this or He did not mean it. And if He didn't mean it, then I don't know why you believe in John 3:16—both promises are in the same Book. I believe John 3:16, and I believe Deuteronomy 7:6. He said “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt” (Hos. 11:1). God speaks of the nation—not just an individual—the *nation* of Israel as being His son. He never said that of any other people. The *adoption* belongs to Israel.

2. *The Glory.* This was the physical presence of God with them as manifested in the tabernacle and later in the temple. Exodus 40:35 reveals, “And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.” The children of Israel are the only people who have ever had the visible presence of God. There is no visible presence of God today. We need to remember that fact.

Many years ago there was an evangelist who put up a tent in Southern California. He bragged that you could see angels walking on top of the tent and that you could see

²⁴⁰McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:541-542

²⁴¹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ac 7:59

angels inside the tent. The minute he made a statement like that I knew there was something radically wrong. I also knew there was an explanation, and there was—the man died an alcoholic. I imagine that, after two or three drinks, you could see angels walking on tents, and he probably did. But only Israel truly had the visible presence of God. The church does not have it. Why? Because the Spirit of God indwells every believer, making real the living Christ who is at God's right hand.

3. *The Covenants.* God has made certain covenants with the nation Israel that He intends to carry out. Many of them He has already carried out. He said He would make them a blessing to all people. He said to David that this One would come in his line. All of this has been fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. God made many covenants with Israel—with Abraham, with David, with the nation—which He has not made with any other people. To Israel belong the covenants.

4. *The Law.* The Mosaic Law was given to the nation Israel. "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine" (Exod. 19:5). Then God says in Exodus 31:13, "Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you." This is for the nation Israel, you see.

I have been asked, "Why don't you keep the Sabbath day?" I do not keep it because I am not a member of the nation Israel. Others have asked me, "Did God ever change the Sabbath day?" God has not changed the Sabbath, but He has sure changed us. We are in Christ, and that is a new relationship. He gave the Mosaic Law to Israel.

5. *The Service of God.* This had to do with the worship of the tabernacle and temple. They were to be a kingdom of priests. "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel" (Exod. 19:6). The nation failed God, but God did not give up His purpose that they should be priests. God took the tribe of Levi and gave them the responsibility of serving and caring for the tabernacle and, later on, the temple. In the future, in the millennial kingdom the nation Israel will once again be God's priests upon the earth.

6. *The Promises.* The Old Testament abounds with promises made to these people. God told Joshua, "Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel" (Josh. 1:2). The children of Israel were to possess the land. I was over there some time ago, but I didn't cross the Jordan because it wasn't safe—probably someone would have shot at me. Several years ago I did cross the Jordan River, but not because God gave a command to Joshua and the people of Israel. I have never felt that any of the land of Palestine belonged to me. The land is beginning to bloom like a rose, but much of that land is still barren. It will be a beautiful land again when the Lord Jesus comes to rule. It has never been my land, and it never will be. The land of Palestine was given strictly to the Jews.

7. *The Fathers.* This refers primarily to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

8. *Christ the Messiah.* He came according to the flesh. When He came to this earth, He was a Jew. The woman at the well called Him a *Jew* (see John 4:9). Paul is careful to say that we know Him no longer after the flesh: "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more" (2 Cor. 5:16). Paul identifies Jesus as God, and to Paul He is the

God-Man. John 1:14 tells us, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” Christ came as a human babe to the nation Israel. The woman at the well identified Him as a Jew, and I think she was in a better position to say who He was than some scholar in New York City sitting in a swivel chair in a musty library.

Perhaps “Christ the Messiah” should be separated from the other seven features because it is greater than all the others. “For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham” (Heb. 2:16).

²⁴²

9:5 fathers. The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, through whom the promises of the Messiah were fulfilled. **Christ ... the eternally blessed God.** This is not intended primarily as a benediction, but as an affirmation of the sovereignty and deity of Christ.²⁴³

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him [Col. 2:6]. What does it mean to be saved, to be a Christian? Well, I have a letter from a man who tells me that I am not saved because I have frankly admitted that I am not perfect, that I do not keep all the Ten Commandments. He says that I am not saved until I do. My friend, salvation is to receive a person, and that person is Jesus Christ—“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord.”

“So walk ye in him.” Now that you have received Him, *walk* in Him, walk in the Spirit. Walking is not a balloon ascension. A great many people think the Christian life is some great, overwhelming experience and you take off like a rocket going out into space. That’s not where you live the Christian life. Rather, it is in your home, in your office, in the schoolroom, on the street. The way you get around in this life is to *walk*. You are to walk in Christ. God grant that you and I might be joined to Him in our daily walk.

²⁴⁴

2:6 walk in Him. “Walk” is the familiar NT term denoting the believer’s daily conduct (1:10; 4:5; Rom. 6:4; 8:1, 4; 13:13; 1 Cor. 7:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; 10:3; 12:18; Gal. 5:16, 25; 6:16; Eph. 2:10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15; Phil. 3:16–18; 1 Thess. 2:12; 4:1, 12; 2 Thess. 3:11; 1 John 1:6, 7; 2:6; 2 John 6; 3 John 3, 4). To walk in Christ is to live a life patterned after His.²⁴⁵

Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ [2 Pet. 1:1].

²⁴²McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:710-711

²⁴³MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ro 9:5

²⁴⁴McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:349

²⁴⁵MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Col 2:6

When we run across that little word *precious* in this very first verse, we recognize it as Peter's word—he uses it several times in his first epistle, and he is the only writer of Scripture who uses it in this sense. It is like being able to recognize the handwriting on a letter. It *is* like seeing Simon Peter's signature when we see the word *precious* here.

“Simon Peter” is the way he begins this second letter. In his first epistle he simply used the name *Peter*. Simon was the name given to him at his birth, but *Peter*, meaning “rock,” is the name our Lord Jesus gave to him. He uses both names in this epistle. Simon, the man of weakness, and Peter, the man of strength, the wishy-washy man and the rock-man—he has been both. But as he writes this epistle, we may be sure of one thing: he is the rock-man now, the man who is to be crucified for Christ.

“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle.” The word *servant* actually means “bond slave.” He doesn't take an exalted position in the church. He refers to himself as a bond slave—also an apostle (that is his authority), but notice that he does not say *the* apostle, but *an* apostle; he was only one of them.

“To them that have obtained like precious faith with us.” What he is saying here is quite wonderful. When he uses the word *faith*, I think he means the body of truth which we call the gospel. He is saying, “You have received it, and it is up to you what you do with it.”

Those who hold what I call a hyper-Calvinistic viewpoint say that you have to be chosen before you can be saved and that God has to give you the faith to believe. Well, I'll go along with part of that, but I also insist that the reason some folk don't come to Christ is made clear for us in the Word of God. Notice 2 Corinthians 3:15–16: “But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.” When it says that “it” shall turn to the Lord, what is “it”? Well, since the antecedent is the word *heart*, it is saying that when the heart shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. My friend, if you are not a believer today, don't say it is because you have some *mental* reservations. The fact is that you have some *sinful* reservations. When the *heart* will turn to the Lord, then He will lift the veil. Anytime you are ready God is ready, and He will save you. It is not God's will that any should perish. Today it is “whosoever will may come” and “... God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16, italics mine). All He asks you to do is believe. He doesn't even ask you to clean up before you come to Him—but *He* will clean you up if you really mean business with Him.

They “have obtained like precious faith”—how? “Through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” This is the righteousness which is made over to us when we trust Christ as Savior. You see, He not only subtracts our sin, He also adds to us His own righteousness. We are not like criminals who have been pardoned and turned loose; we have been given a standing before God, and that standing is in Christ—accepted in the beloved!²⁴⁶

1:1 Simon Peter. See Introduction. **a bondservant and apostle.** Peter identifies himself with a balance of humility and dignity. As a servant, he was on equal basis with other

²⁴⁶McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:718

Christians—an obedient slave of Christ. As an apostle, he was unique, divinely called, and commissioned as an eyewitness to the resurrection of Christ (*see notes on Rom. 1:1*). **To those.** The recipients of this letter are the same as those who received Peter’s first letter (cf. 3:1; 1 Pet. 1:1; see Introductions to 1, 2 Peter). **obtained.** An uncommon word often referring to obtaining something by lot (cf. Acts 1:17). It is often translated “received,” and can mean “attaining by divine will.” Here, Peter was emphasizing that salvation was not attained by personal effort, skill, or worthiness, but came purely from God’s grace. **like precious.** Generally the Gr. word which is translated “like precious” was used to designate equal in rank, position, honor, standing, price, or value. It was used in the ancient world with strangers and foreigners who were given equal citizenship in a city. Here, Peter was emphasizing that Christians have all received the same precious, priceless saving faith. There are no first and second class Christians in spiritual, racial, or gender distinctions (cf. Gal. 3:28). Since Peter was writing to mostly Gentiles, he may have been emphasizing that they have received the same faith as the Jews (cf. Acts 10:44–48; 11:17,18). **faith.** Peter is speaking of a subjective faith, i.e., the Christian’s power to believe for his salvation. Faith is the capacity to believe (Eph. 2:8,9). Even though faith and belief express the human side of salvation, God still must grant that faith. God initiates faith when the Holy Spirit awakens the dead soul in response to hearing the Word of God (cf. Acts 11:21; Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:2). **by the righteousness.** Peter’s point is that believers share the equal gift of salvation because God’s righteousness is imputed to them. That righteousness recognizes no distinction between people except that the sins of some are more heinous than others. So, not only do they have faith because God gives it to them, they are saved only because God imputes righteousness to them (*see notes on Rom. 3:26; 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:8,9*). **our God and Savior Jesus Christ.** The Gr. construction has only one article before this phrase, making the entire phrase refer to the same person. Thus, Peter is identifying Jesus Christ as both Savior and God (cf. Is. 43:3,11; 45:15,21; 60:16; Rom. 9:5; Col. 2:9; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8).²⁴⁷

REAL PRESENCE

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you [John 6:53].

That means to partake of Him spiritually, which is more real than a physical partaking.

Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

Gr. Greek

²⁴⁷MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 2 Pe 1:1

This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever [John 6:54–58].

Friend, this is an amazing statement. Our Lord is preparing these men for that Last Supper and the institution of the Lord's Supper. This, obviously, is something that is not to be taken literally because He was right there before them. He is not saying for them to begin to eat Him and to drink His blood! What He is saying is that He is going to give His life. In that Upper Room He made it very clear that the blood is the symbol of life. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood ..." (Lev. 17:11). God had taught the Israelites that truth from the very beginning when He called them out of the land of Egypt. There at Mount Sinai Moses gives them this great axiom, "the life of the flesh is in the blood," which is also medically true, by the way. The life of the flesh *is* in the blood. And Jesus is giving His life. He will shed His blood upon the cross and give His life. Salvation is by accepting and receiving Him in a most intimate way.

This is the basis for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Friend, there has been just as much disagreement among believers in the churches down through the ages over the interpretation of the Lord's Supper as there has been over baptism. I don't think they have fought over it quite as much, but the disagreement is there.

Hoc est meus corpus—"This is my body." When He gave them the bread at the supper in the Upper Room, He said, "... This is my body ..." (Luke 22:19). Now there have been different emphases put on that.

The Roman Catholic church puts the emphasis upon *this*. *This* is My body. They say that transubstantiation takes place, that the bread becomes the flesh of Christ. Well, I don't think our Lord taught cannibalism in any form, shape, or fashion. I think, of course, that is a wrong emphasis. Then there are those who have taken the position of the Lutheran church, which is consubstantiation. This means that *by, with, in, through, and under* the bread you get the body of Christ. Again, may I say, I think that falls short of what our Lord really means. Then there are those who take Zwingli's position. He was the Swiss Reformation leader who gave it a spiritual interpretation. He felt it was just a symbol, just a religious ritual, and that is all. I think that is probably the interpretation that most of Protestantism gives to it today. Frankly, I feel that falls as far short of the interpretation of the Lord's Supper as the other two do. Calvin put the emphasis on *is*—"This *is* my body." The Reformed faith has always put the emphasis there, and the early church put the emphasis there. The bread is bread, and it always will be bread. It cannot be changed. The wine is always just what it is, and there is no miracle that takes place there. You don't get the body of Christ by going through the ritual. And yet, it is more than a ritual. I had a seminary professor who taught us that in the Lord's Supper it is bread in your mouth, but it is Christ in your heart. Friend, I believe that there is a spiritual blessing that comes in observing the Lord's Supper. I think that He ministers to you spiritually through your obedience in observing the Lord's Supper. There is no such thing as a hocus-pocus there. Nor is it just an idle ritual that we go through. It is meaningful, and it has a spiritual blessing for the heart.

I think that is what our Lord is saying to them here. An intimate, real relationship with Him is the important thing. When they ate manna in the wilderness it was only a temporary thing. Jesus has something that is eternal—*life* which is eternal. We are told at

the beginning of this gospel, “In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4).²⁴⁸

6:53–58 eat...drink. Jesus’ point was an analogy that has spiritual, rather than literal, significance: just as eating and drinking are necessary for physical life, so also is belief in His sacrificial death on the cross necessary for eternal life. The eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood metaphorically symbolize the need for accepting Jesus’ cross work. For the Jews, however, a crucified Messiah was unthinkable (cf. Acts 17:1–3). Once again, the Jews, in their willful and judicial blindness, could not see the real spiritual significance and truth behind Jesus’ statements. Moreover, Jesus’ reference here to eating and drinking was not referring to the ordinance of communion for two significant reasons: 1) communion had not been instituted yet, and 2) if Jesus was referring to communion, then the passage would teach that anyone partaking of communion would receive eternal life.²⁴⁹

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins [Matt. 26:26–28].

Here we see the Lord instituting the Lord’s Supper over the dying ashes of a fading feast, the Passover. The cup circulated seven times during the Passover. It was evidently at the last time that Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper. During the feast they sang the Hallel Psalms—Psalms 111 to 118. When you read them for your own spiritual profit, keep in mind that our Lord sang them on that auspicious night. At that last supper, He reared a new monument to Himself. It was not made of marble or bronze but was made of the temporary elements of bread and wine. *Both speak of His death until He comes again.*²⁵⁰

26:26 Take, eat; this is My body. Jesus thus transformed the last Passover into the first observance of the Lord’s Supper. He is the central antitype in both ceremonies, being represented symbolically by both the paschal lamb of the Passover and the elements in the communion service. His statement, “this is My body” could not possibly have been taken in any literal sense by the disciples present that evening. *See note on Luke 22:19.*

22:19 This is My body. I.e., it represented His body (cf. the words of 8:11, “The seed is the word of God”—and also v. 20). Such metaphorical language was a typical Hebraism. No eucharistic miracle of transubstantiation was implied, nor could the disciples have missed the symbolic intent of His statement, for His

²⁴⁸McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:407-408

²⁴⁹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Jn 6:53

²⁵⁰McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:140

actual body—yet unbroken—was before their very eyes. *See note on Matt. 26:26. do this.* Thus He established the observance as an ordinance for worship (*see notes on 1 Cor. 11:23–26*). **remembrance of Me.** Passover had looked forward to the sacrifice of Christ; He transformed the seder into an altogether different ceremony, which looks back in remembrance at His atoning death.²⁵¹

26:28 My blood of the new covenant. Covenants were ratified with the blood of a sacrifice (Gen. 8:20; 15:9, 10). Jesus' words here echo Moses' pronouncement in Ex. 24:8. The blood of the New Covenant is not an animal's blood, but Christ's own blood, shed for the remission of sins. *See notes on Jer. 31:31–34; Heb. 8:1–10:18; 8:6.*
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31:31–34 a new covenant. In contrast to the Mosaic Covenant under which Israel failed, God promised a New Covenant with a spiritual, divine dynamic by which those who know Him would participate in the blessings of salvation. The fulfillment was to individuals, yet also to Israel as a nation (v. 36; Rom. 11:16–27). It is set 1) in the framework of a reestablishment in their land (e.g., chaps. 30–33 and in vv. 38–40) and 2) in the time after the ultimate difficulty (30:7). In principle, this covenant, also announced by Jesus Christ (Luke 22:20), begins to be exercised with spiritual aspects realized for Jewish and Gentile believers in the church era (1 Cor. 11:25; Heb. 8:7–13; 9:15; 10:14–17; 12:24; 13:20). It has already begun to take effect with “the remnant according to the election of grace” (Rom. 11:5). It will be also realized by the people of Israel in the last days, including the regathering to their ancient land, Palestine (chaps. 30–33). The streams of the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants find their confluence in the millennial kingdom ruled over by the Messiah.

MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Jeremiah 31:31-34

And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body.

And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.

And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God [Mark 14:22–25].

There are several things here that I think are interesting and important. The Passover cup went around seven times during the Passover feast. During that time they would sing one of the great Hallel Psalms. Apparently it was the seventh time around when He did not

²⁵¹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Lk 22:19

²⁵²MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 26:26

drink but instituted the Lord's Supper with them. The Lord's Supper now looks back to what He did for us on the cross more than nineteen hundred years ago.

The Passover looked forward to His coming, but the Passover will be restored for the millennial kingdom (as we learn in Ezekiel). And the reason for it, I think, is that during the Millennium there will be a remembrance of His coming; when it was first instituted, it had looked forward to His coming. I see no reason why it couldn't look forward and also look backward. And, by the way, that would bring out the real meaning of the Passover during the millennial kingdom. Paul says, "... For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).

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14:22–25 At this point in the narrative, it appears that Judas had gone (John 13:23–30) and Jesus was alone with the faithful 11 disciples (*see note on Luke 22:21*). Then it was that He transformed the Passover of the Old Covenant into the Lord's Supper of the New Covenant, creating a new memorial feast to remember God's deliverance from sin.

14:22 as they were eating. There is no indication from any of the gospel accounts as to which part of the meal they were eating, but it is likely that this occurred just prior to eating the roasted lamb or concurrently with it. It is significant that Jesus established the truth of New Covenant while in the midst of eating the Passover. **this is My body.** Jesus gave new meaning to eating the bread. The unleavened bread symbolized the severing of the Israelites from the old life in Egypt. It represented a separation from worldliness, sin, and false religion and the beginning of a new life of holiness and godliness. From then on in the Lord's Supper, the bread would symbolize Christ's body, which He sacrificed for the salvation of men (*see note on Matt. 26:26*).

14:23 the cup. The third cup of wine in the ceremony (*see note on 1 Cor. 10:16*).

14:24 My blood of the new covenant. The shedding of blood in a sacrifice was always God's requirement in establishing any covenant (cf. Gen. 8:20; 15:10; Ex. 24:5–8). Here, Christ's blood needed to be shed for the remission of sins (Heb. 9:22; 1 Pet. 1:19; *see note on Matt. 26:28*). **for many.** This lit. means "for the benefit of many." The "many" are all who believe, both Jew and Gentile. *See note on 10:45; cf. Matt. 20:28.*

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APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION

And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone [Eph. 2:19–20].

Paul reminds the gentile believers that though they were strangers and alienated from God, their present position is infinitely bettered. They are no more strangers and sojourners (foreigners). They are now fellow citizens with the saints.

²⁵³McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:224

lit. literally

²⁵⁴MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mk 14:22

“Saints” is not a reference to Old Testament saints. Gentile believers are fellow citizens with the New Testament Jewish saints, the other members of the body of Christ. They belong to a household, not as servants, but as relatives, as members of the family of God. They are His dear children. “I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake” (1 John 2:12). We are little children. This is a new relationship, a relationship foreign to the Old Testament. Even David, the man after God’s own heart, is called “my servant David” in 2 Samuel 7:8; and God’s term for Moses was also “my servant” in Numbers 12:7.

Now this citizenship is not in Israel and the earthly Jerusalem, but it is in heaven. “For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20). We are now fellow citizens. We belong to heaven at the present time. The word *conversation* should rightly be changed to *citizenship* and is translated that way in the *American Standard Version*. Another has well translated it, “Our city home is in heaven.”

We are “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.” This is important. It does not mean that the apostles and prophets were the foundation but that they personally laid the foundation. The early church built its doctrine upon that of the apostles. “And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42).

Much has been written about the identity of the prophets in verse twenty. Are they Old Testament prophets or New Testament prophets? The fact that the prophets are in the same classification as apostles without the article *the* would seem to designate them as New Testament prophets. I think you will find this confirmed when we get into the third chapter.

“Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” reveals that Christ is the Rock on which the church is built. Paul makes this very clear: “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). Peter states it like this: “Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed” (1 Pet. 2:6–8). The important thing to note here is that Peter says that the Lord Jesus is that chief cornerstone. Therefore Peter understood what the Lord meant when He said, “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). Jesus is talking about Himself. He is the Rock on which the church is built. The apostles and prophets put down the foundation, and Christ is the chief cornerstone, the Rock.

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2:20 the foundation of the apostles and prophets. For discussion of these gifted men, *see note on 4:11*. As important as they were, it was not them personally, but the divine revelation they taught, as they authoritatively spoke the word of God to the church before

²⁵⁵McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:240-241

the completion of the NT, that provided the foundation (cf. Rom. 15:20). **cornerstone.** Cf. Ps. 118:22; Is. 28:16; Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:6, 7. This stone set the foundation and squared the building.²⁵⁶

4:11 He Himself gave some to be. As evidenced by His perfect fulfillment of His Father's will, Christ possessed the authority and sovereignty to assign the spiritual gifts (v. 7, 8) to those He has called into service in His church. He gave not only gifts, but gifted men. **apostles.** See note on 2:20. A term used particularly of the 12 disciples who had seen the risen Christ (Acts 1:22), including Matthias, who replaced Judas. Later, Paul was uniquely set apart as the apostle to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:15–17) and was numbered with the other apostles. He, too, miraculously encountered Jesus at his conversion on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:1–9; Gal. 1:15–17). Those apostles were chosen directly by Christ, so as to be called “apostles of Christ” (Gal. 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1). They were given 3 basic responsibilities: 1) to lay the foundation of the church (2:20); 2) to receive, declare and write God's Word (3:5; Acts 11:28; 21:10, 11); and 3) to give confirmation of that Word through signs, wonders, and miracles (2 Cor. 12:12; cf. Acts 8:6, 7; Heb. 2:3, 4). The term “apostle” is used in more general ways of other men in the early church, such as Barnabas (Acts 14:4), Silas, Timothy, (1 Thess. 2:6) and others (Rom. 16:7; Phil. 2:25). They are called “apostles of the churches” (2 Cor. 8:23), rather than “apostles of Jesus Christ” like the 13. They were not self-perpetuating, nor was any apostle who died replaced. **prophets.** See note on 2:20. Not ordinary believers who had the gift of prophecy but specially commissioned men in the early church. The office of prophet seems to have been exclusively for work within a local congregation. They were not “sent ones” as were the apostles (see Acts 13:1), but, as with the apostles, their office ceased with the completion of the NT. They sometimes spoke practical direct revelation for the church from God (Acts 11:21–28) or expounded revelation already given (implied in Acts 13:1). They were not used for the reception of Scripture. Their messages were to be judged by other prophets for validity (1 Cor. 14:32) and had to conform to the teaching of the apostles (v. 37). Those two offices were replaced by the evangelists and teaching pastors. **evangelists.** Men who proclaim the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ to unbelievers. Cf. the use of this term in Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5. The related verb translated “to preach the gospel” is used 54 times and the related noun translated “gospel” is used 76 times in the NT. **pastors and teachers.** This phrase is best understood in context as a single office of leadership in the church. The Gr. word translated “and” can mean “in particular” (see 1 Tim. 5:17). The normal meaning of pastor is “shepherd,” so the two functions together define the teaching shepherd. He is identified as one who is under the “great Pastor” Jesus (Heb. 13:20, 21; 1 Pet. 2:25). One who holds this office is also called an “elder” (see notes on Titus 1:5–9) and “bishop” (see notes on 1 Tim. 3:1–7). Acts 20:28 and 1 Pet. 5:1, 2 bring all 3 terms together.

²⁵⁶MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Eph 2:20

MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ephesians 4:11

Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen [Acts 1:1–2].

The “former treatise” was Luke’s gospel, which also was directed to *Theophilus*—whose name means “lover of God.” I totally reject the idea that just any lover of God is intended. Obviously Luke knew a man by the name of Theophilus, and undoubtedly the name was appropriate—a lover of God. Luke’s gospel was “all that Jesus began both to do and teach,” and in the Book of Acts Jesus *continues* to do and to teach. Today He is still at it, if I may use that expression, and He will continue on with this present program until He takes His own out of the world.

“Until the day in which he was taken up, *after that* he through the Holy Ghost [Spirit]” makes it clear that just because Jesus was taken up into heaven didn’t mean He ceased doing and teaching. But now, from the vantage place of the right hand of God, He is continuing to work through the Holy Spirit. As in the army where commands pass from one man to another, so the Lord Jesus Christ is working through the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit operates through the apostles and on out to you and to me where we are today. This is a remarkable statement here.

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1:2 taken up. Christ’s ascension to the Father (cf. Luke 24:51). Luke uses this term 3 other times (vv. 9, 11, 22) to describe the end of the Lord’s earthly ministry (cf. John 6:62; 13:1, 3; 16:28; 17:13; 20:17). **through the Holy Spirit had given commandments.** The Spirit was the source and power of Jesus’ earthly ministry (cf. Matt. 4:1; 12:18; Mark 1:12; Luke 3:22; 4:1, 14, 18) and of the apostles’ service (cf. Luke 24:49; John 14:16, 17; 16:7). “Commandments” are authoritative NT truths, revealed to the apostles (cf. John 14:26; 16:13–15). **He had chosen.** The Lord sovereignly chose the apostles for salvation and service (cf. John 6:70; 15:16).²⁵⁸

Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little [John 6:7].

Why did Philip light upon that fixed sum of two hundred denarii? I think that is what they had in the treasury at that time. Probably Judas had made a treasurer’s report that morning, and that was the total. Philip looked at the crowd, then thought of what they had in the treasury bag, and said that two hundred pennyworth of bread would not be sufficient for them. The “penny” was the Roman coin *denarius*. One denarius represented a day’s wages for a common laborer.

The other gospel writers tell us that the disciples advised the Lord Jesus. They wanted to be on the board of directors. They said, “Why don’t You send the multitude away?” Our Lord answered, “We’re not going to send them away. We’re going to have them sit

²⁵⁷McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:510

²⁵⁸MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ac 1:2

down and we're going to feed them" (cf. Luke 9:12–15). These men who had elected themselves to the board of directors found themselves waiters, serving the crowd. And that is what they should have been doing all the time.

By the way, this leads me to say that there are too many men in the church today who want position. They want to have an office; they want to be on the board of directors. They like to tell the preacher what to do. Yet they do not have all the necessary information to begin with, nor do they have spiritual discernment. They don't realize that they are the ones who ought to be out doing the work of the ministry. They ought to be out witnessing for the Lord—passing the bread to the hungry multitudes. But generally they would rather advise the pastor how to do it.

So here our Lord is drawing out Philip, and Philip says they don't have enough money to buy sufficient bread. Since Philip and Andrew are together, Andrew speaks up.
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6:7 Two hundred denarii. Since one denarius was a day's pay for a common laborer, 200 denarii would be approximately 8 months' wages. The crowd, however, was so large that such a significant amount was still inadequate to feed them.²⁶⁰

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it [Matt. 16:18].

Let us look at this verse carefully. On what rock did Jesus build His church? There are those who say that it was built on Simon Peter. Well, obviously it was not, because there is a play upon words here. In the original Greek it is, "Thou art *Petros* [a little piece of rock], and upon this *petra* [bedrock] I will build my church." There are others who hold that Christ is building His church upon the confession that Simon Peter made. I don't agree with that at all.

Who is the Rock? The Rock is Christ. The church is built upon Christ. We have Simon Peter's own explanation of this. In 1 Peter 2:4, referring to Christ, he writes, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." And he remembers Isaiah 28:16, "... Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded" (1 Pet. 2:6). The church is built upon Christ; He is the foundation. "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). Christ is the stone, and He says on this rock He *will build* His church. The church was still future when the Lord made this statement. And please don't tell me there was a church in the Old Testament because the church did not come into existence until after the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and the sending of the Holy Spirit. There could not have been a church until all of these things had taken place. "I will build my church"—this was future.

The "gates of hell" refers to death. The word used for *hell* is the Greek word *hades*, the *sheol* of the Old Testament, which refers to the unseen world and means "death." The

²⁵⁹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:401-402

²⁶⁰MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Jn 6:7

gates of *death* shall not prevail against Christ's church. One of these days the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. That shout will be like the voice of an archangel and like a trumpet because the *dead* in Christ are to be raised. The gates of *death* shall not prevail against His church.

²⁶¹

16:18 on this rock. The word for "Peter," *Petros*, means a small stone (John 1:42). Jesus used a play on words here with *petra* which means a foundation boulder (cf. 7:24, 25). Since the NT makes it abundantly clear that Christ is both the foundation (Acts 4:11, 12; 1 Cor. 3:11) and the head (Eph. 5:23) of the church, it is a mistake to think that here He is giving either of those roles to Peter. There is a sense in which the apostles played a foundational role in the building of the church (Eph. 2:20), but the role of primacy is reserved for Christ alone, not assigned to Peter. So Jesus' words here are best interpreted as a simple play on words in that a boulder-like truth came from the mouth of one who was called a small stone. Peter himself explains the imagery in his first epistle: the church is built of "living stones" (1 Pet. 2:5) who, like Peter, confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Christ Himself is the "chief cornerstone" (1 Pet. 2:6, 7). **church.** Matthew is the only gospel where this term is found (see also 18:17). Christ called it "My church," emphasizing that He alone is its Architect, Builder, Owner, and Lord. The Gr. word for church means "called out ones." While God had since the beginning of redemptive history been gathering the redeemed by grace, the unique church He promised to build began at Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit, by whom the Lord baptized believers into His body—which is the church (*see notes on Acts 2:1–4; 1 Cor. 12:12, 13*). **the gates of Hades.** Hades is the place of punishment for the spirits of dead unbelievers. The point of entry for such is death. This, then, is a Jewish phrase referring to death. Even death, the ultimate weapon of Satan (cf. Heb. 2:14, 15), has no power to stop the church. The blood of martyrs, in fact, has sped the growth of the church in size and spiritual power.²⁶²

2:1 Day of Pentecost. "Pentecost" means "fiftieth" and refers to the Feast of Weeks (Ex. 34:22, 23) or Harvest (Lev. 23:16), which was celebrated 50 days after Passover in May/June (Lev. 23:15–22). It was one of 3 annual feasts for which the nation was to come to Jerusalem (*see notes on Ex. 23:14–19*). At Pentecost, an offering of firstfruits was made (Lev. 23:20). The Holy Spirit came on this day as the firstfruits of the believer's inheritance (cf. 2 Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:11, 14). Those gathered into the church then were also the firstfruits of the full harvest of all believers to come after. **in one place.** The upper room mentioned in 1:13.²⁶³

²⁶¹ McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:92

Gr. Greek

²⁶² MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 16:18

²⁶³ MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ac 2:1

And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease [Matt. 10:1].

The power He gave to them was their credential as they went to the nation Israel. The prophets of the Old Testament had said that this would be the credentials of the Messiah. Having given them this power, they are no longer disciples but apostles.

Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him [Matt. 10:2–4].

THE METHOD AND MESSAGE OF THE TWELVE

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not.

But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel [Matt. 10:5–6].

Now if you are going to take your instructions from this chapter for your personal ministry, you will have to limit yourself to the nation Israel, because this is to be given to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Obviously, these verses do not contain our commission. Contrast it with our commission in Acts 1:8: “... and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Notice that we are to include Samaria and the uttermost part of the earth, while Jesus instructed the twelve in this chapter to stay out of Samaria and not to go into the way of the Gentiles but only to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

10:1, 2 disciples ... apostles. “Disciple” means “student,” one who is being taught by another. “Apostles” refers to qualified representatives who are sent on a mission. The two terms emphasize different aspects of their calling.

10:1 He gave them power. *See note on 2 Cor. 12:12.* Jesus delegated His power to the apostles to show clearly that He and His kingdom were sovereign over the physical and spiritual realms, the effects of sin, and the efforts of Satan. This was an unheard of display of power, never before seen in all redemptive history, to announce Messiah’s arrival and authenticate Him plus His apostles who preached His gospel. This power was a preview of the power Christ will exhibit in His earthly kingdom, when Satan will be bound (Rev. 20) and the curse on physical life curtailed (Is. 65:20–25).

10:2 the names of the twelve apostles. The 12 are always listed in a similar order (cf. Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:13–16; Acts 1:13). Peter is always named first. The list contains 3 groups of 4. The 3 subgroups are always listed in the same order, and the first name in each subgroup is always the same, though there is some variation in the order within the subgroups—but Judas Iscariot is always named last. **Peter... Andrew ... James ... and John.** The first subgroup of 4 are the most familiar to us. These two sets of brothers, all fishermen, represent an inner circle of disciples often seen closest to Jesus (*see note on 17:1*). **James the son of Alphaeus.** There are 4 men in the NT named James: 1) the Apostle James, brother of John (*see note on 4:21*); 2) the disciple mentioned here, also called “James the Less” (Mark 15:40); 3) James, father of Judas (not Iscariot, Luke 6:16); and 4) James, the Lord’s half-brother (Gal. 1:19; Mark 6:3), who

wrote the epistle that bears the name. He also played a leading role in the early Jerusalem Church (Acts 12:17; 15:13; Gal. 1:19).

10:3 Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus. Elsewhere he is called Judas, son of James (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13).

10:4 Simon the Cananite. The better manuscripts read “Cananaean”—a term for the party of the Zealots, a group determined to overthrow Roman domination in Palestine. Acts 1:13 refers to him as “Simon the Zealot.” Simon was probably a member of the Zealot party before coming to Christ. *See note on Mark 3:18.*

10:5–11:1 This is the second of 5 major discourses recorded in Matthew (see Introduction: Historical and Theological Themes).

10:5 Do not go into the way of the Gentiles. Christ did not forbid the disciples to preach to Gentiles or Samaritans if they encountered them on the way, but they were to take the message first to the covenant people, in the regions nearby (cf. Rom. 1:16).

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And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb [Rev. 21:14].

This city has twelve foundations, and the names of the twelve apostles are upon them. The church today is “... built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). When Christ returned to heaven, He committed the keys into the keeping of the apostles. On the human level, the church was in the hands of these twelve men. The Book of Acts gives the order: “The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen” (Acts 1:1–2). I do not believe that Matthias is the apostle who succeeded Judas. I personally believe it was Paul. Simon Peter held that meeting to elect Matthias before the Holy Spirit came, and I do not think he was in the will of God when he did so. You never hear Matthias mentioned again, but you surely hear of Paul the apostle, and I think he is the one whom God chose to succeed Judas, making Paul the twelfth apostle.

To these twelve apostles were committed all the writings of the church. These men preached the first sermons, they organized the first churches, and they were among the first martyrs. It is not honoring to Scripture to attempt to minimize the importance of the twelve apostles. In a real sense they were the foundation of the church. To them the church shall eternally be grateful. This is not to rob Christ of His place, for He is “the chief corner stone,” but the church is built upon the foundation which the apostles laid.

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21:12–14 wall. No measurements are given for the length of the wall.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 10:1

²⁶⁵McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:1069-1070

²⁶⁶MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Re 21:12

21:14-16. The **12 foundations** to the city's **wall** bore **the names of the 12 apostles of the Lamb**. The apostles were part of the church, the body of Christ. Thus both the church and Israel will be in the city; the former are represented by the apostles' names on the foundations (v. 14), and the latter by the names of Israel's 12 tribes on the gates (v. 12). The distinction between Israel and the church is thus maintained. An **angel** measured **the city with a measuring rod of gold**, about 10 feet in length. The city is **12,000 stadia in length** and width, approximately 1,400 miles on each side. Tremendous as is the dimension of the city, the amazing fact is that it is also 1,400 miles **high**.

Commentators differ as to whether the city is a cube or a pyramid. The descriptions seem to favor the pyramid form.

²⁶⁷

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

Baptism

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost [Matt. 28:19].

This, I am confident, will have a real application during the Great Tribulation Period and even during the Millennium. But, my friend, it has an application for us today, also.

“Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost [Spirit].” Baptism by water in the name of the Trinity has been practiced by the church from its beginning. Even Paul, who was not sent to baptize (see 1 Cor. 1:14–17), practiced this rite of the early church. “The name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]” is evidence for the Trinity of the Godhead.

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I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name [1 Cor. 1:14–15].

Here he is talking about water baptism. He is saying that he didn't specialize even in that because of the danger of folk thinking that he was baptizing in his own name. You see, he is focusing on the centrality of Christ. There are folk even in our day who think that water baptism saves them or that it actually has some mystical power that cannot be gotten otherwise.

And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other [1 Cor. 1:16].

Paul attached so little importance to baptism that he couldn't really remember whether he had baptized anyone else or not.

v. verse

²⁶⁷Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:986

²⁶⁸McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:154

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect [1 Cor. 1:17].

It is important for us to see today that there are a great many people who are dividing and separating over many secondary issues. This causes schisms and strife in the church. The church in Corinth was fractured by that kind of party spirit. Three men, Apollos, Paul, and Cephas, had brought to Corinth a *message* that had a unifying quality and power. The gospel they preached emphasized fusion and not faction. However, because these people were baby Christians, they began to put the emphasis on individuals. Now Paul is drawing their attention away from their factions and their party spirit and turning them to the centrality of Christ.

28:19 therefore. I.e., on the basis of His authority, the disciples were sent to “make disciples of all nations.” The sweeping scope of their commission is consummate with His unlimited authority. **in the name of the Father ... Son and ... Holy Spirit.** The formula is a strong affirmation of trinitarianism.²⁶⁹

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God [John 3:5].

Now what does it mean to be born of water and of the Spirit? There are those who think that to be born of water is a reference to water baptism. But this would be a strange expression if it did refer to that. Then, there have been several very fine Christian doctors who interpret “born of water” as the physical birth which is a birth in water; that is, the child in the womb is in water. I don’t think that is what is meant here at all. He wasn’t talking about the difference between natural birth and spiritual birth, but He was talking about *how* a man could be born “from above” or “born again.”

As we saw in chapter 2, water is symbolic of the Word of God. We will find later in this book that Jesus says, “Sanctify them through thy truth: *thy word* is truth” (John 17:17, italics mine). There is a cleansing, sanctifying power in the Word. In John 15:3 Jesus says, “Now ye are clean through the *word* which I have spoken unto you” (italics mine). The Word of God is likened unto water again and again. We believe that “born of water and of the Spirit” means that a person must be born again by the Holy Spirit using the Scripture. We believe, very definitely, that no one could be born again without the Word of God applied by the Spirit of God. One today is born from above by the use of water, which is the Word of God, and the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, making it real to the heart.

There are three outstanding conversions in the Book of Acts. They have been given to us, I think, primarily as illustrations. There is the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, the conversion of Cornelius, and the conversion of Paul. These three men are representatives of the three families of Noah: the son of Shem, the son of Ham, and the son of Japheth. In each of these three cases, the Word of God was used by the Spirit of God for their conversions. God’s method seems to be the Word of God, used by the Spirit of God, given through a man of God. I am confident that our Lord, saying that one must be born

²⁶⁹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 28:19

of water and of the Spirit, referred to the Spirit of God using the Word of God. Without this, Nicodemus could not enter into the kingdom of God.

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3:5 born of water and the Spirit. Jesus referred not to literal water here but to the need for "cleansing" (e.g., Ezek. 36:24–27). When water is used figuratively in the OT, it habitually refers to renewal or spiritual cleansing, especially when used in conjunction with "spirit" (Num. 19:17–19; Ps. 51:9, 10; Is. 32:15; 44:3–5; 55:1–3; Jer. 2:13; Joel 2:28, 29). Thus, Jesus made reference to the spiritual washing or purification of the soul, accomplished by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God at the moment of salvation (cf. Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5), required for belonging to His kingdom.²⁷¹

Then Peter said unto them. Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [Acts 2:38].

This is for a people who had the Word of God, who had heard the message, who knew the prophecies. They had been going along in one direction, which was away from God, even though they had a God-given religion. They are told to repent. They are to turn around and come God's way.

Peter says to them, "Repent, and be baptized." Water baptism would be the evidence that they had repented, that they had come to Christ and had put their trust in Him.

Peter says to them, "Be baptized ... in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. This will be an evidence that you have trusted Him for the remission of your sins—rather than bringing a sacrifice to be offered in the temple." You see, their baptism would be a testimony to the fact that Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

"And ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Anyone who believes, who puts his trust in Jesus Christ, will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

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2:38 Repent. This refers to a change of mind and purpose that turns an individual from sin to God (1 Thess. 1:9). Such change involves more than fearing the consequences of God's judgment. Genuine repentance knows that the evil of sin must be forsaken and the person and work of Christ totally and singularly embraced. Peter exhorted his hearers to repent, otherwise they would not experience true conversion (*see note on Matt. 3:2*; cf. 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; Matt. 4:17). **be baptized.** This Gr. word lit. means "be dipped or immersed" in water. Peter was obeying Christ's command from

²⁷⁰McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:383-384

²⁷¹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Jn 3:5

²⁷²McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:521

Gr. Greek
lit. literally

Matt. 28:19 and urging the people who repented and turned to the Lord Christ for salvation to identify, through the waters of baptism, with His death, burial, and resurrection (cf. 19:5; Rom. 6:3, 4; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27; *see notes on Matt. 3:2*). This is the first time the apostles publicly enjoined people to obey that ceremony. Prior to this, many Jews had experienced the baptism of John the Baptist, (*see notes on Matt. 3:1–3*) and were also familiar with the baptism of Gentile converts to Judaism (proselytes). **in the name of Jesus Christ.** For the new believer, it was a crucial but costly identification to accept. **for the remission of sins.** This might better be translated “because of the remission of sins.” Baptism does not produce forgiveness and cleansing from sin. *See notes on 1 Pet. 3:20, 21.* The reality of forgiveness precedes the rite of baptism (v. 41). Genuine repentance brings from God the forgiveness (remission) of sins (cf. Eph. 1:7), and because of that the new believer was to be baptized. Baptism, however, was to be the ever-present act of obedience, so that it became synonymous with salvation. Thus to say one was baptized for forgiveness was the same as saying one was saved. *See note on “one baptism” in Eph. 4:5.* Every believer enjoys the complete remission of sins (Matt. 26:28; Luke 24:47; Eph. 1:7; Col. 2:13; 1 John 2:12). **the gift of the Holy Spirit.** *See notes on 1:5, 8.*²⁷³

3:2 Repent. This is no mere academic change of mind, nor mere regret or remorse. John the Baptist spoke of repentance as a radical turning from sin that inevitably became manifest in the fruit of righteousness (v. 8). Jesus’ first sermon began with the same imperative (4:17). For a discussion of the nature of repentance, *see notes on 2 Cor. 7:8–11.* **the kingdom of heaven.** This is an expression unique to Matthew’s gospel. Matthew uses the word “heaven” as a euphemism for God’s name—to accommodate his Jewish readers’ sensitivities (cf. 23:22). Throughout the rest of Scripture, the kingdom is called “the kingdom of God.” Both expressions refer to the sphere of God’s dominion over those who belong to Him. The kingdom is now manifest in heaven’s spiritual rule over the hearts of believers (Luke 17:21); and one day will be established in a literal earthly kingdom (Rev. 20:4–6). **is at hand.** In one sense the kingdom is a present reality, but in its fullest sense it awaits a yet-future fulfillment. MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible.* electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Matthew 3:2

3:20 disobedient ... in the days of Noah. Peter further explains that the abyss is inhabited by bound demons who have been there since the time of Noah, and who were sent there because they severely overstepped the bounds of God’s tolerance with their wickedness. The demons of Noah’s day were running riot through the earth, filling the world with their wicked, vile, anti-God activity, including sexual sin, so that even 120 years of Noah’s preaching, while the ark was being built, could not convince any of the human race beyond the 8 people in Noah’s family to believe in God (*see notes on 2 Pet. 2:4,5; Jude 6,7; cf. Gen. 6:1–8*). Thus God bound these demons permanently in the abyss until their final sentencing. **saved**

²⁷³MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible.* electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ac 2:38

through water. They had been rescued in spite of the water not because of the water. Here, water was the agent of God's judgment not the means of salvation (*see note on Acts 2:38*).

MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Peter 3:20

4:5 one Lord. See Acts 4:12; Rom. 10:12; Gal. 1:8. **one faith.** The body of doctrine revealed in the NT (cf. Jude 3). **one baptism.** This probably refers to the water baptism following salvation, a believer's public confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Spiritual baptism, by which all believers are placed into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:11–13) is implied in v. 4.

MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ephesians 4:5

And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us [Acts 16:15].

We do not know anything about Mr. Lydia, but he must have been around there somewhere. There are families like that, you know, where the woman is the dominant one in the family. Apparently that was the way it was in the family of Lydia. Thank God she was that kind of woman because her entire household turned to God through her witness. And now we find Paul and his group staying at her home and boarding there. I would assume she was a person of means and was able to take care of them.

²⁷⁴

16:15 household. *See note on 11:14.* Cf. v. 31.

16:15. Lydia was then **baptized**, apparently soon after her faith in Christ. **The members of her household** probably refer to servants as well as to her children, if she was a widow. Other persons in the New Testament who along with their "household" members came to Christ include Cornelius (10:24, 44), the Philippian jailer (16:31), Crispus (18:8), Aristobulus (Rom. 16:10), Narcissus (Rom. 16:11), and Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:16).

That she was a woman of considerable means is evidenced by the size of her **house**. It would have to be ample enough to house four men as well as her household without embarrassment (cf. Acts 16:40).

(2) The deliverance of the soothsayer. 16:16-18. Some men were exploiting a demon-possessed **slave girl** for her ability to predict the future. The English words, **a spirit by which she predicted the future**, translate two Greek words, "a spirit, a python." This concept goes back to the Greek city of Delphi where the god Apollo was believed to be embodied in a python snake. The original priestess at Delphi was purported to be possessed by Apollo and thereby able to predict the future; therefore anyone possessed by

²⁷⁴McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:584
cf. *confer*, compare

the python spirit could foretell coming events. No doubt an actual demon gave such a person predictive powers. Demons took advantage of people's worship of false gods (cf. 17:23; 1 Cor. 10:20).

The **girl** attached herself to **Paul and the others** and was **shouting** (imperf. tense) who they were (**servants of the Most High God**) and what they preached (**the way to be saved**). Though her statements were true, the gospel of Christ would be damaged by an association with a demon-possessed slave girl. So after **many days . . . Paul** exorcised the demon, speaking directly **to the spirit**. (Other cases of victory over the occult in Acts are recorded in 8:9-24; 13:6-12; 19:13-20.)

(3) The conversion of the jailer (16:19-34). 16:19-21. Each Roman colony was governed by two leaders called *douvir* in Latin. The term **magistrates** translates *stratēgois*, the Greek equivalent for the Latin word.

The charge of **the slave girl's owners** against **Paul and Silas** was obviously prejudicial. Shortly before this incident the Emperor Claudius had expelled the Jews from Rome (18:2). Philippi, a Roman colony, would have caught this flavor of anti-Semitism. This also helps explain why Timothy and Luke were not taken before the authorities. Timothy was a half-Gentile (16:1) and Luke was probably a Gentile.

Furthermore, Paul and Silas were accused of disrupting the **city . . . by advocating customs unlawful for . . . Romans to accept or practice**. Rome permitted the peoples of its colonies to have their own religions but not to proselytize Roman citizens. The civil leaders could not distinguish between Judaism and Christianity (cf. 18:14-15), so they would see the preaching of Paul and Silas as a flagrant infraction of imperial law.

²⁷⁵

Confirmation

Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John:

Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost:

(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) [Acts 8:14–16].

When the apostles heard that there was a great moving of the Spirit down in Samaria, they sent Peter and John to check on it. They found a great company of professing believers who had not been born again. They had not been baptized into the church by the Holy Spirit. They were not indwelt by the Spirit of God. They were not saved. They had gone through an outward ceremony.

My friend, being baptized with water or going through some other ceremony will not make you a Christian. This gives the background to explain why Simon was able to put over his racket on the others. He liked this idea of performing miracles.

Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost [Acts 8:17].

imperf. imperfect

²⁷⁵Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:399

It may be that Philip had not told all the facts and conditions of the gospel. It may be that they had not accepted them. At any rate, now they are brought into partnership with the apostles. Now they believe the gospel and they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now the Spirit of God has entered into them. I think this needs to be considered in its historical setting. It was the commission given to the apostles to open up each new area to the gospel. On the Day of Pentecost the gospel was given in Jerusalem. Peter and John are to bring it into Samaria and Judea. Paul is to be the apostle to the Gentiles. Jesus had given this commission. We are now seeing it fulfilled here in Samaria.

And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,

Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost [Acts 8:18–19].

Simon wanted to pay for the gift. Why? Well, because this man is a religious racketeer. He wants to use it for profit.

How many such claims are made by individuals today! They claim that great miracles take place in their meetings and humbly say they have nothing to do with them. If that is so, why do they permit this type of deception to go on? *Bewitch* is the word used here. There have been religious racketeers around bewitching the multitudes from that day to this.

Persecution from the outside didn't hurt the church. It scattered the believers and actually worked for the furtherance of the gospel. What hurt the church was that people got on the inside, professing to be believers when they were not believers. Always the church is hurt from the inside.

It was the same with the Lord Jesus. He was betrayed from the inside. He was betrayed to His nation by one of His own disciples. His own nation betrayed Him to the Roman Empire, and the Roman Empire crucified Him. Also today He is betrayed within the church.

It is like the wooden horse brought into the city of Troy. The city was impenetrable, it was invulnerable, until that wooden horse got on the inside. The Devil started out by persecuting the church, fighting it from the outside. He found that didn't work. It just spread the gospel. Then he decided to start his work from the inside. That is where he can get in and do damage. How many pastors could testify to that today!

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8:13 Simon ... believed. His belief was motivated by purely selfish reasons and could never be considered genuine. Cf. John 2:23, 24. He saw it as an external act useful to gain the power he believed Philip possessed. By following Philip, he also was able to maintain contact with his former audience.

8:15 receive the Holy Spirit. *See note on 2:4.*

8:16 as yet ... upon none of them. This verse does not support the false notion that Christians receive the Holy Spirit subsequent to salvation. This was a transitional period in which confirmation by the apostles was necessary to verify the inclusion of a new group of people into the church. Because of the animosity that existed between Jews and

²⁷⁶McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:544-545

Samaritans, it was essential for the Samaritans to receive the Spirit, in the presence of the leaders of the Jerusalem church, for the purpose of maintaining a unified church. The delay also revealed the Samaritans' need to come under apostolic authority. The same transitional event occurred when the Gentiles were added to the church (11:44–46; cf. 15:6–12; 19:6).

8:17 laid hands on them. This signified apostolic affirmation and solidarity. *See note on 6:6. received the Holy Spirit.* That this actually occurred likely demonstrated that believers also spoke in tongues here, just as those who received the Spirit did on the Day of Pentecost (*see note on 2:4*), as the Gentiles did when they received the Spirit (10:46), and as those followers of John did (19:6). As Samaritans, Gentiles, and believers from the Old Covenant were added to the church, the unity of the church was established. No longer could one nation (Israel) be God's witness people, but the church made up of Jews, Gentiles, half-breed Samaritans, and OT saints who became NT believers (19:1–7). To demonstrate the unity, it was imperative that there be some replication in each instance of what had occurred at Pentecost with the believing Jews, such as the presence of the apostles and the coming of the Spirit manifestly indicated through speaking in the languages of Pentecost (2:5–12).

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8:14-17. It was necessary for **the apostles in Jerusalem** to commission **Peter and John** to Samaria for several reasons. Normally **the Holy Spirit** baptizes, indwells, and seals at the moment of faith, but in this instance the delay served several purposes: (1) Peter and John's prayer (for bestowing of **the Holy Spirit**) and their laying **on of hands** (resulting in the coming of the Spirit) confirmed Philip's ministry among the Samaritans. This authenticated this new work to the Jerusalem apostles. (2) Also this confirmed Philip's ministry to the Samaritans. This message Philip had preached was validated by the coming of the Spirit, a mark of the coming kingdom (cf. v. 12; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:23-27; Joel 2:28-32). (3) Perhaps the most important aspect of God's withholding the Spirit till apostolic representatives came from the Jerusalem church was to prevent schism. Because of the natural propensity of division between Jews and Samaritans it was essential for **Peter and John** to welcome the Samaritan believers officially into the church. The contrast between John's attitude here and in Luke 9:52-54 is significant.

e. *The perversion of the truth (8:18-24).*

8:18-19. The clause **Simon saw that the Spirit was given** implies there was some external manifestation to evidence the coming of **the Holy Spirit**. Possibly it was speaking in tongues, though the Scripture does not say so (cf. 2:4; 10:45-46; 19:6).

The term *simony*, which is the buying or selling of things considered religious or sacred such as an ecclesiastical office, comes from Simon's desire to purchase the **ability** to impart the Holy Spirit to others.

²⁷⁷ MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ac 8:13

cf. *confer*, compare

v. verse

Luke's purpose in including this incident with Simon was to show the superiority of Christianity over the occult and demoniacs. Several times this kind of conflict took place in Acts, and Christ was always the Victor (13:6-12; 16:16-18; 19:13-20; 28:1-6).

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Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts [2 Cor. 1:21–22].

Now you have here not only the faithful God, the true God, and the sure Lord Jesus, but you have the indwelling Holy Spirit. And I believe, very candidly, that you have here in this statement the total ministry of the Holy Spirit today.

“He which stablisheth us.” Now how do you become established? When Paul had written his first letter to these Corinthians—and they had been so fickle—he concluded by saying, “. . . be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). What does it mean to be established? We believe that is the work of the Holy Spirit. First of all, the Holy Spirit convicts. The Lord Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit came into the world, He would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. And the second thing that He would do (if, having been convicted, we confessed our sin and accepted Christ as our Savior) would be to regenerate us, you see. And He not only would regenerate us, He would indwell us. And not only would He indwell us, but He would baptize us.

And by the way, this expression here is quite interesting: “Now he which stablisheth us with you in [into] Christ, and hath anointed us, is *God*.” God who? God the Holy Spirit, if you please.

Sometimes, especially at funerals, we hear the song, “Safe in the Arms of Jesus.” Well, the word here is not safe *in* the arms of Jesus. When you are put into Christ by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, you are a part of His body. Rather than being safe *in* His arms, you are as safe *as* an arm of Jesus Christ. You are as safe as a member of His body. What a wonderful security that is!

In speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit, Paul uses the present tense. This is what He is doing for you today, my friend: He convicts you, He regenerates you, He indwells you, and He baptizes you.

“Now he which . . . hath anointed us, is God.” The anointing of the Holy Spirit is a neglected truth in our day. In 1 John 2:20 we are told, “But ye have an unction [that is, an *anointing*] from the Holy One, and ye know all things.” That anointing is the Holy Spirit. It takes the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us into all truth. “But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him” (1 John 2:27). This ministry of the Holy Spirit is very important. He doesn't give you a mail-order degree, nor does this knowledge come in a gift-wrapped box. You have the Holy Spirit to teach you, Christian friend, and He alone

²⁷⁸Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:373

can open the Word of God to you. That is the reason this is a miracle Book. The Lord Jesus said to His own men, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ...” (John 16:12–13). He *wants* to guide you into all truth.

“Who hath also sealed us”—that is a marvelous ministry of the Spirit. “And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30). Is it possible to grieve Him away? No, He has sealed us and is going to deliver us someday. This is somewhat like taking a letter down to the post office. Occasionally some of the mail is lost and never does get delivered. If we want to be very sure that a certain piece of mail arrives, we have that letter registered and a seal put on it. The postal service guarantees that they will get that letter to the person to whom it is addressed. Also, all legal documents bear a seal—“In witness thereof I set my seal” is the phraseology that has come down to us from old English. It is also a brand, a mark of ownership. In the early days of the West, when there were no fences, the cattlemen would brand their cattle. The brand was a mark of ownership.

The Holy Spirit puts a brand on you to show that you belong to God. My friend, if you are a little sheep of His, you are not going to get lost. Oh, you may stray away, but He will come to find you. The Holy Spirit is pictured in Luke’s parable as the woman sweeping the floor, looking for the lost coin until she *found* it (see Luke 15:8).

“And given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” would be better translated: you are “given the earnest, which is the Holy Spirit in our hearts.” You know that “earnest money” indicates there will be more to follow. When you put down earnest money on a piece of property, it is a pledge that you are going to pay more money on that property. In such a way, God has given us the Holy Spirit, which indicates there is more to follow. This is a wonderful thing.

When people buy on the installment plan, there is a possibility that the buyer may later defect, even though he has put a down payment on the merchandise. But there is no defection in this Buyer. He has purchased us with His blood. He has put down a purchase price, which guarantees that the saved soul will be delivered safely to the Father. It means that the saved soul is in escrow today.

God has put His Holy Spirit into every believer. He is the earnest. He has come into the life of the believer to bring the fullness of God to bear in our experiences. What is it that you need today? You know that He is rich in mercy—He is the Father of mercies. What do you need? Why don’t you go to Him and ask Him for it? Do you need power? Do you need joy? Do you need wisdom? Do you need help? These are comforts—He is the God of all comfort. Paul knew this; he had experienced it. Also, the writer knows it; he has *experienced* it.

²⁷⁹

1:21 He who establishes us. Christ’s saving work of grace stabilizes believers and places them on a firm foundation in Him (cf. Rom. 16:25; 1 Cor. 15:58; 1 Pet. 5:10).

1:21, 22 Christ ... God ... Spirit. A clear reference to the 3 members of the Trinity. The authenticity of Paul’s spiritual life and that of every genuine believer is verified by

²⁷⁹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:91-93

these 4 divine works (“establishes us,” “anointed us,” “sealed us,” “given us the Spirit”) accomplished in their lives. For the critics to attack Paul’s authenticity was equal to tearing down God’s work as well as the church’s unity.

1:21 anointed. This word is borrowed from a commissioning service that would symbolically set apart kings, prophets, priests, and special servants. The Holy Spirit sets apart believers and empowers them for the service of gospel proclamation and ministry (cf. Acts 1:8; 1 John 2:20, 27).

1:22 sealed us. Refers to the ancient practice of placing soft wax on a document and imprinting the wax with a stamp that indicated authorship or ownership, authenticity, and protection. The Holy Spirit attaches all these meanings to His act of spiritually sealing believers (*see notes on Eph. 1:13*; cf. Hag. 2:23; Eph. 4:30). **guarantee.** A pledge or down payment. The Spirit is the down payment on the believer’s eternal inheritance (*see note on Eph. 1:14*; cf. 2 Pet. 1:4, 11).

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Holy Eucharist

And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body.

And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it.

And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God [Mark 14:22–25].

There are several things here that I think are interesting and important. The Passover cup went around seven times during the Passover feast. During that time they would sing one of the great Hallel Psalms. Apparently it was the seventh time around when He did not drink but instituted the Lord’s Supper with them. The Lord’s Supper now looks back to what He did for us on the cross more than nineteen hundred years ago.

The Passover looked forward to His coming, but the Passover will be restored for the millennial kingdom (as we learn in Ezekiel). And the reason for it, I think, is that during the Millennium there will be a remembrance of His coming; when it was first instituted, it had looked forward to His coming. I see no reason why it couldn’t look forward and also look backward. And, by the way, that would bring out the real meaning of the Passover during the millennial kingdom. Paul says, “... For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7).

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14:22–25 At this point in the narrative, it appears that Judas had gone (John 13:23–30) and Jesus was alone with the faithful 11 disciples (*see note on Luke 22:21*). Then it

²⁸⁰MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 2 Co 1:21

²⁸¹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:224

was that He transformed the Passover of the Old Covenant into the Lord's Supper of the New Covenant, creating a new memorial feast to remember God's deliverance from sin.

14:22 as they were eating. There is no indication from any of the gospel accounts as to which part of the meal they were eating, but it is likely that this occurred just prior to eating the roasted lamb or concurrently with it. It is significant that Jesus established the truth of New Covenant while in the midst of eating the Passover. **this is My body.** Jesus gave new meaning to eating the bread. The unleavened bread symbolized the severing of the Israelites from the old life in Egypt. It represented a separation from worldliness, sin, and false religion and the beginning of a new life of holiness and godliness. From then on in the Lord's Supper, the bread would symbolize Christ's body, which He sacrificed for the salvation of men (*see note on Matt. 26:26*).

14:23 the cup. The third cup of wine in the ceremony (*see note on 1 Cor. 10:16*).

14:24 My blood of the new covenant. The shedding of blood in a sacrifice was always God's requirement in establishing any covenant (cf. Gen. 8:20; 15:10; Ex. 24:5–8). Here, Christ's blood needed to be shed for the remission of sins (Heb. 9:22; 1 Pet. 1:19; *see note on Matt. 26:28*). **for many.** This lit. means "for the benefit of many." The "many" are all who believe, both Jew and Gentile. *See note on 10:45*; cf. Matt. 20:28.

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2:10 But that you may know. Jesus' power to heal the paralytic's physical infirmities proved the veracity of His claim and power to forgive sins. **Son of Man.** Jesus used this term for Himself to emphasize His humiliation (*see notes on 14:62; Matt. 8:20*). It appears 14 times in Mark (v. 10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21, 41, 62).

MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mark 2:10

22:21 the hand of My betrayer is with Me. Luke recounted the details of the Lord's Supper topically, not chronologically (see Introduction: Background and Setting'; *see note on 1:3*). Matthew and Mark placed Jesus' warning about the betrayer prior to the giving of the bread and cup; Luke put it afterward. Only John 13:30 records Judas' departure, but John says nothing about the bread and cup. So it is difficult to tell by comparison whether Judas left before or after the institution of the Lord's Supper. But Luke's words here seem to imply that Judas actually shared in that event. If so, his presence at that table makes his hypocrisy and crime all the more despicable (cf. 1 Cor. 11:27–30).

MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Luke 22:21

26:26 Take, eat; this is My body. Jesus thus transformed the last Passover into the first observance of the Lord's Supper. He is the central antitype in both ceremonies, being represented symbolically by both the paschal lamb of the Passover and the elements in the communion service. His statement, "this is My

lit. literally

²⁸²MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mk 14:22

body” could not possibly have been taken in any literal sense by the disciples present that evening. *See note on Luke 22:19.*

MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Matthew 26:26

10:16 cup of blessing. The proper name given to the third cup during the Passover Feast. At the last Passover with the disciples, Jesus used the third cup as the symbol of His blood shed for sin. That cup became the one used to institute the Lord’s Supper. He set the cup apart as a token of salvation blessing before passing it to the 12 (*see notes on Luke 22:17, 20*). **communion.** Means “to have in common, to participate and have partnership with.” The same Gr. word is used in 1:9; 2 Cor. 8:4; Phil. 2:1; 3:10. Commemorating the Lord’s Supper was a regular and cherished practice in the early church, by which believers remembered their Savior’s death and celebrated their common salvation and eternal life which reflected their perfect spiritual oneness. **the blood of Christ.** A vivid phrase used to represent Christ’s sacrificial death and full atoning work. *See note on Rom. 5:9.* See Acts 20:28; Rom. 3:25; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 1:20; 1 Pet. 1:19; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5; 5:9. **the bread.** This symbolized our Lord’s body as the cup symbolized His blood. Both point to His death as a sacrifice for the salvation of men.

MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Corinthians 10:16

26:28 My blood of the new covenant. Covenants were ratified with the blood of a sacrifice (Gen. 8:20; 15:9, 10). Jesus’ words here echo Moses’ pronouncement in Ex. 24:8. The blood of the New Covenant is not an animal’s blood, but Christ’s own blood, shed for the remission of sins. *See notes on Jer. 31:31–34; Heb. 8:1–10:18; 8:6.*

MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Matthew 26:28

10:45 Son of Man. *See note on 2:10.* **did not come to be served.** Jesus was the supreme example of servant leadership (cf. John 13:13–15). The King of Kings, and Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:16) relinquished His privileges (Phil. 2:5–8) and gave His life as a selfless sacrifice in serving others. **ransom for many.** *See note on Matt. 20:28.* “Ransom” refers to the price paid to free a slave or a prisoner; “for” means “in place of.” Christ’s substitutionary death on behalf of those who would put their faith in Him is the most glorious, blessed truth in all of Scripture (cf. Rom. 8:1–3; 1 Cor. 6:20; Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Eph. 1:7; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19). The ransom was not paid to Satan, as some erroneous theories of the atonement teach. Satan is presented in Scripture as a foe to be defeated, not a ruler to be placated. The ransom price was paid to God to satisfy His justice and holy wrath against sin. In paying it, Christ “bore our sins in His own body on the [cross]” (1 Pet. 2:24). *See notes on 2 Cor. 5:21.*

MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mark 10:45

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you [Luke 22:19–20].

The Lord took two of the most frail elements in the world as symbols of His body and blood. Bread and wine—both will spoil in a few days. When He raised a monument, it was not made of brass or marble, but of two frail elements that perish. He declared that the bread spoke of His body and the wine spoke of His blood. The bread speaks of His body broken—not a *bone* broken but a broken *body* because He was made sin for us (see 2 Cor. 5:21). I do not believe He even looked human when He was taken down from that cross. Isaiah had said of Him, “... his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men” (Isa. 52:14); and “... there is no beauty that we should desire him” (Isa. 53:2).

For centuries the Passover feast had looked forward to the Lord’s coming and His death. Now He is in the shadow of the cross, and this is the last Passover. The Passover feast has now been fulfilled. We gather about the Lord’s Table and search our hearts. What we do at this Table is in remembrance of Him. We look back to what He did for us on the cross, and we look forward to His coming again. “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come” (1 Cor. 11:26).

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22:19 This is My body. I.e., it represented His body (cf. the words of 8:11, “The seed is the word of God”—and also v. 20). Such metaphorical language was a typical Hebraism. No eucharistic miracle of transubstantiation was implied, nor could the disciples have missed the symbolic intent of His statement, for His actual body—yet unbroken—was before their very eyes. *See note on Matt. 26:26. do this.* Thus He established the observance as an ordinance for worship (*see notes on 1 Cor. 11:23–26*). **remembrance of Me.** Passover had looked forward to the sacrifice of Christ; He transformed the seder into an altogether different ceremony, which looks back in remembrance at His atoning death.

22:20 took the cup. This is the third (the cup of blessing) of the 4 cups in the Passover celebration (*see note on 1 Cor. 10:16*). **after supper.** Cf. 1 Cor. 11:25. These two verses are virtually identical in form. Paul stated that he had received his information about this event from the Lord Himself (1 Cor. 11:23). **This cup is the new covenant.** Clearly, the cup only represented the New Covenant (*see note on v. 19*).

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**The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?
The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?
For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.**

²⁸³ McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:344-345

²⁸⁴ MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Lk 22:19

Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing? [1 Cor. 10:16–19].

Paul's argument here is quite logical. He says that an idol is nothing. So if you offer meat to an idol, it is nothing—the meat is not affected at all.

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10:16 cup of blessing. The proper name given to the third cup during the Passover Feast. At the last Passover with the disciples, Jesus used the third cup as the symbol of His blood shed for sin. That cup became the one used to institute the Lord's Supper. He set the cup apart as a token of salvation blessing before passing it to the 12 (*see notes on Luke 22:17, 20*). **communion.** Means "to have in common, to participate and have partnership with." The same Gr. word is used in 1:9; 2 Cor. 8:4; Phil. 2:1; 3:10. Commemorating the Lord's Supper was a regular and cherished practice in the early church, by which believers remembered their Savior's death and celebrated their common salvation and eternal life which reflected their perfect spiritual oneness. **the blood of Christ.** A vivid phrase used to represent Christ's sacrificial death and full atoning work. *See note on Rom. 5:9.* See Acts 20:28; Rom. 3:25; Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 1:20; 1 Pet. 1:19; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5; 5:9. **the bread.** This symbolized our Lord's body as the cup symbolized His blood. Both point to His death as a sacrifice for the salvation of men.²⁸⁶

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you [John 6:53].

That means to partake of Him spiritually, which is more real than a physical partaking.

Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever [John 6:54–58].

Friend, this is an amazing statement. Our Lord is preparing these men for that Last Supper and the institution of the Lord's Supper. This, obviously, is something that is not to be taken literally because He was right there before them. He is not saying for them to begin to eat Him and to drink His blood! What He is saying is that He is going to give His life. In that Upper Room He made it very clear that the blood is the symbol of life. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood ..." (Lev. 17:11). God had taught the Israelites that truth from the very beginning when He called them out of the land of Egypt. There at

²⁸⁵McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:46

Gr. Greek

²⁸⁶MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Co 10:16

Mount Sinai Moses gives them this great axiom, “the life of the flesh is in the blood,” which is also medically true, by the way. The life of the flesh *is* in the blood. And Jesus is giving His life. He will shed His blood upon the cross and give His life. Salvation is by accepting and receiving Him in a most intimate way.

This is the basis for the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Friend, there has been just as much disagreement among believers in the churches down through the ages over the interpretation of the Lord’s Supper as there has been over baptism. I don’t think they have fought over it quite as much, but the disagreement is there.

Hoc est meus corpus—“This is my body.” When He gave them the bread at the supper in the Upper Room, He said, “... This is my body ...” (Luke 22:19). Now there have been different emphases put on that.

The Roman Catholic church puts the emphasis upon *this*. *This* is My body. They say that transubstantiation takes place, that the bread becomes the flesh of Christ. Well, I don’t think our Lord taught cannibalism in any form, shape, or fashion. I think, of course, that is a wrong emphasis. Then there are those who have taken the position of the Lutheran church, which is consubstantiation. This means that *by, with, in, through, and under* the bread you get the body of Christ. Again, may I say, I think that falls short of what our Lord really means. Then there are those who take Zwingli’s position. He was the Swiss Reformation leader who gave it a spiritual interpretation. He felt it was just a symbol, just a religious ritual, and that is all. I think that is probably the interpretation that most of Protestantism gives to it today. Frankly, I feel that falls as far short of the interpretation of the Lord’s Supper as the other two do. Calvin put the emphasis on *is*—“This *is* my body.” The Reformed faith has always put the emphasis there, and the early church put the emphasis there. The bread is bread, and it always will be bread. It cannot be changed. The wine is always just what it is, and there is no miracle that takes place there. You don’t get the body of Christ by going through the ritual. And yet, it is more than a ritual. I had a seminary professor who taught us that in the Lord’s Supper it is bread in your mouth, but it is Christ in your heart. Friend, I believe that there is a spiritual blessing that comes in observing the Lord’s Supper. I think that He ministers to you spiritually through your obedience in observing the Lord’s Supper. There is no such thing as a hocus-pocus there. Nor is it just an idle ritual that we go through. It is meaningful, and it has a spiritual blessing for the heart.

I think that is what our Lord is saying to them here. An intimate, real relationship with Him is the important thing. When they ate manna in the wilderness it was only a temporary thing. Jesus has something that is eternal—*life* which is eternal. We are told at the beginning of this gospel, “In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4).

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6:53–58 eat...drink. Jesus’ point was an analogy that has spiritual, rather than literal, significance: just as eating and drinking are necessary for physical life, so also is belief in His sacrificial death on the cross necessary for eternal life. The eating of His flesh and drinking of His blood metaphorically symbolize the need for accepting Jesus’ cross work.

²⁸⁷McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:407-408

For the Jews, however, a crucified Messiah was unthinkable (cf. Acts 17:1–3). Once again, the Jews, in their willful and judicial blindness, could not see the real spiritual significance and truth behind Jesus' statements. Moreover, Jesus' reference here to eating and drinking was not referring to the ordinance of communion for two significant reasons: 1) communion had not been instituted yet, and 2) if Jesus was referring to communion, then the passage would teach that anyone partaking of communion would receive eternal life.²⁸⁸

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread [1 Cor. 11:23].

Sometimes people say they want to celebrate the Lord's Supper exactly as the Lord did—then they have it at an eleven o'clock morning service. If you want to have it at the time the Lord had it, it must be at night. They went in at night to eat the Passover supper, and it was at that supper that the Lord instituted the Lord's Supper.

It was the very same night in which He was betrayed. At that supper He took bread. **And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me [1 Cor. 11:24].**

Paul wasn't present in the Upper Room. He got this as a direct revelation from the Lord. It was the night when the forces of hell met to destroy our Savior. I think the simplicity and the sublimity and the sanity of this supper is tremendous.

Notice that it says, "when he had given thanks." He gave thanks that night while the shadow of the cross hung over the Upper Room. Sin was knocking at the door of the Upper Room, demanding its pound of flesh. And He gave thanks. He gave thanks to God.

Then, "he brake it." There has always been a difference of opinion among believers, on that. Do you break the bread, or do you serve it as it is? The Roman Catholics break it, the Lutherans do not, and most Protestant churches do not.

In several churches in which I served I instituted an evening communion, because the Lord instituted the Lord's Supper at night. I also tried something else. I asked the one who served the bread to the congregation to take a piece and break it before them. That spoke of the broken body of our Lord.

The breaking of the bread also indicates that this is something that is to be shared. Bengel made this statement: "The very mention of the breaking involves distribution, and rebukes the Corinthian plan of every man his own."

After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me [1 Cor. 11:25].

The bread speaks of His broken body; the cup speaks of the New Covenant. Have you noticed that it is called the *cup*? (It is also called the fruit of the vine in some instances, but it is never called *wine*). Have I heard that argued! "Should we have fermented or unfermented wine for the Lord's Supper?" That is baby talk to ask questions like that. My friend, we can know it was unfermented. This is Passover, the time of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Do you think that they had unleavened bread and leavened grape juice (wine is leavened grape juice)? The whole business was unleavened—it had to be at

²⁸⁸MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Jn 6:53

the Passover feast. But the interesting thing is that here Jesus calls it the cup. His body was the cup that held the blood. He was born to die and to shed that blood. Again and again the apostles remind us that we have forgiveness of sins because of the blood, that He has extended mercy to us because of the blood. He did not open the back door of heaven and slip us in under cover of darkness. He brings us in the front door as *sons* because the penalty of sin was paid when the demands of a holy God were met. Let's not forget that, my beloved, in this day when the notion is that God can shut His eyes to sin and do nothing about it. He has *done* something about it. This is the cup; it holds the blood of the New Covenant.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come [1 Cor. 11:26].

Paul here adds something new. In 1 Corinthians he is always opening up a door or raising a shade, letting us see something new. Here it is "till he come." When we observe the Lord's Supper, that table looks in three different directions. (1) It is a commemoration. He repeats, "This do . . . in remembrance of me." This table looks back over nineteen hundred years to His death upon the cross. He says, "Don't forget that. It is important." That is to the past. (2) This table is a communion (sometimes we call it a communion service). It speaks of the present, of the fact that today there is a *living* Christ, my beloved. (3) It is a commitment. It looks to the future—that He is coming again. This table won't last forever; it is temporary. After the service it is removed, and we may not celebrate it again because we just do it until He comes. It speaks of an absent Lord who is coming back. It looks to the future.

The Lord Jesus Christ took these frail elements—bread and grape juice, which will spoil in a few days, the weakest things in the world—and He raised a monument. It's not of marble, bronze, silver, or gold; it is *bread* and *juice*—that's all. But it speaks of Him, and it tells me that I am responsible for His death.

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body [1 Cor. 11:27–29].

What does he mean to "discern" the Lord's body? Looking back in church history you will find that the churches had a great problem in determining the meaning of this. What *does* it mean to discern the Lord's body? The answer of the Roman Catholic church is that transubstantiation takes place, that when the priest officiates at the altar, the bread actually becomes the body of Christ, also that the juice actually becomes the blood of Christ. If this were true, to eat it would be cannibalism. (Thank the Lord, it does not change; it is still bread and juice). But they were wrestling with the problem. How do you discern the Lord's body in this? In the Lutheran church (Martin Luther didn't want to come too far, as he had been a Roman Catholic priest), it is consubstantiation. That is, it is *in, by, with, through, and under* the bread that you get the body of Christ. It is not the body, but it *is* the body. You can figure that one out—I can't. Then Zwingli, the Swiss Reformation leader, came all the way. He said it was just a symbol. And the average Protestant today thinks that is all it is, a symbol. I disagree with that explanation as much as I do with the other two. It is more than a symbol.

Follow me now to the Emmaus road, and I think we shall find there recorded in Luke's gospel, chapter 24, what it means to discern Christ's body and His death.

Two of Jesus' disciples, two believers, are walking home after having witnessed the terrible Crucifixion in Jerusalem and the events that followed it. Are they down in the dumps! As they walk along discussing these things, our resurrected Lord joins them and asks what they are talking about that makes them so sad. Thinking Him to be a stranger, they tell Him about Jesus' being condemned to death and crucified and about the report of the women who went to the tomb. "And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. Then he [Christ] said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further." He acted as if He were going through the town without stopping. "But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." It was dangerous to walk those highways at night.

"And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them . . ." A few days before He had eaten the Passover with His own, now these are two other disciples, and here is the first time after His resurrection He is observing the Lord's Supper. "And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them." Wasn't that wonderful to have Him present for the meal! In the meal He takes the bread, He breaks it, He blesses it, He gives it to them. "And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us . . ." (Luke 24:24–32). He had a meal with them. Then what did He do? He *revealed* Himself. That was the Lord's Supper.

Oh, friend, when you observe the Lord's Supper, He is present. Yes, He is! This is not just a symbol. It means you must discern the body of Christ. You have bread in your mouth, but you have Christ in your heart. May God help us to so come to the table that Jesus Christ will be a *reality* to us. God forgive us for making it a dead, formal ritual! **For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep [1 Cor. 11:30].** They suffered sickness and death. Why? Because they had participated in the Lord's Supper unworthily—that is, in an unworthy manner.

²⁸⁹

11:21, 22 If they intended to selfishly indulge themselves, they might as well have stayed at home.

11:23–26 While the information was not new to the Corinthians, because Paul had previously "delivered" it, it is an important reminder. This description of Christ's final supper with his disciples is one of the most beautiful in all of Scripture, yet it was given in the midst of a strong rebuke of carnal selfishness. If this letter was written before any of the gospels (see Matt. 26:26–30; Mark 14:22–26; Luke 22:17–20; John 13:2), as most conservative scholars believe, then Paul's instruction was the first biblical record of the

²⁸⁹McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:54-56

institution of the Lord's Supper—given directly from the Lord and not through his reading of any other apostles (cf. Gal. 1:10–12).

11:24 broken. There is weak manuscript evidence for this word being included. See John 19:33, 36.

11:25 new covenant in My blood. The Old Covenant was practiced repeatedly by the blood of animals offered by men; but the New Covenant has been ratified once and for all by the death of Christ (cf. Heb. 9:28). **in remembrance of Me.** Jesus transformed the third cup of the Passover into the cup of remembrance of His offering (*see note on 10:16*).

11:26 The gospel is presented through the service of communion as the elements are explained. They point to His physical incarnation, sacrificial death, resurrection, and coming kingdom.

11:27, 29 in an unworthy manner. I.e., ritualistically, indifferently, with an unrepentant heart, a spirit of bitterness, or any other ungodly attitude.

11:27 guilty. To come to the Lord's Table clinging to one's sin does not only dishonor the ceremony, but it also dishonors His body and blood, treating lightly the gracious sacrifice of Christ for us. It is necessary to set all sin before the Lord (v. 28), then partake, so as not to mock the sacrifice for sin, by holding on to it.

11:29 judgment. I.e., chastisement. **not discerning the Lord's body.** When believers do not properly judge the holiness of the celebration of Communion, they treat with indifference the Lord Himself—His life, suffering, and death (cf. Acts 7:52; Heb. 6:6; 10:29).

11:30 sleep. I.e., are dead. *See note on 15:18.* The offense was so serious that God put the worst offenders to death, an extreme but effective form of church purification (cf. Luke 13:1–5; Acts 5:1–11; 1 John 5:16).

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Penance & Reconciliation

The children of Israel were having a high old time, friends. They were worshiping their golden calf and living in sin.

And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

And he took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it. And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them? [Exod. 32:19–21].

Now listen to Aaron try to crawfish out of it all. This would really be humorous, if it were not so serious a matter.

And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief.

²⁹⁰MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Co 11:21

For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him [Exod. 32:22–23].

In other words, Moses is getting the blame for what happened. The children of Israel thought that Moses had deserted them, and so they turned to the golden calf.

32:19 broke them. Moses pictured the nation breaking God's commandments by actually breaking the tablets on which they were written.

32:22–24 Aaron, held responsible by Moses for what had taken place in the camp (vv. 21, 25), endeavored to avoid responsibility for the people's actions by shifting the blame to their propensity to do evil, and also for the presence of the golden calf by ridiculously representing it as having just popped out of the fire all by itself!

²⁹¹

Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now [Num. 14:13–19].

Moses reminds God that the rumor will go around that although He was able to bring them out of Egypt, He was not able to put them into the land, to complete that which He had begun. God agrees to go ahead with them and put Israel into the land.

And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word [Num. 14:20].

And then the Lord gives this prophecy:

But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD [Num. 14:21].

As God brought these children of Israel out of the land of Egypt and did put them in the Promised Land, so God will complete the plan He had for you when He saved you. And He will complete the plan He is working on now for the entire earth, because the time is coming when the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord.

GOD'S JUDGMENT

Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice;

Surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it:

But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it [Num. 14:22–24].

Judgment falls on the children of Israel. The generation that murmured will not enter the Promised Land. Joshua and Caleb are the only ones whom God singles out from the people. God promises that *they* shall enter the land, and God made good that promise.

²⁹²

²⁹¹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ex 32:19

14:13–19 As in Ex. 32:11–13, Moses interceded for Israel to protect the Lord’s reputation with the Egyptians, who would charge the Lord with inability to complete His deliverance of Israel and thus deny His power. Second, the Lord’s loyal love was the basis on which the Lord could forgive His people.

14:22 ten times. Taken literally this includes: 1) Ex. 14:10–12; 2) Ex. 15:22–24; 3) Ex. 16:1–3; 4) Ex. 16:19, 20; 5) Ex. 16:27–30; 6) Ex. 17:1–4; 7) Ex. 32:1–35; 8) Num. 11:1–3; 9) Num. 11:4–34; 10) Num. 14:3.

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Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained [John 20:23].

This is an important verse which is greatly misunderstood. John Calvin writes: “When Christ enjoins the apostles to forgive sins, He does not convey to them what is peculiar to Himself. It belongs to Him to forgive sins. He only enjoins them in His name to proclaim the forgiveness of sins.”

Nowhere in the Book of Acts or in the Epistles do we find any instance of an apostle remitting the sins of anyone. They do go everywhere, proclaiming the forgiveness of sins. Let me ask the question: What is it that forgives sins? Even God cannot just arbitrarily forgive sins. Forgiveness of sins is only and alone through the blood of Jesus Christ. Back in the Old Testament, the forgiveness of sins was based on the fact that Christ would come and die. God saved “on credit” in the Old Testament until Christ would come and pay the penalty. Today God forgives our sins when we believe that Christ died for them.

How can you and I remit sins? By telling the gospel! This is the greater work which we shall do. When somebody turned and believed on Jesus while He was here on earth, that was wonderful. But what is staggering is when you or I simply give out the Word of God, and someone is born again and becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them” happens when you and I proclaim the gospel of the grace of God. That is the most glorious privilege that there is today, my friend.

We have a responsibility. If we do not preach the gospel to the world, their sins will not be remitted. I think we are reaping the penalty for the years we have not taken the gospel to the world. Because we have neglected our responsibility, our boys die in war. Just think, if all the boys we have lost in war had been willing to lose their lives for Christ and be missionaries, how different the world might be! We have the only thing that will bring forgiveness to the world. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ. My friend, what are you doing?

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²⁹²McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 1:ix-489

²⁹³MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Nu 14:13

²⁹⁴McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:2-499

20:23 See notes on *Matt. 16:19; 18:18*. This verse does not give authority to Christians to forgive sins. Jesus was saying that the believer can boldly declare the certainty of a sinner's forgiveness by the Father because of the work of His Son if that sinner has repented and believed the gospel. The believer with certainty can also tell those who do not respond to the message of God's forgiveness through faith in Christ that their sins, as a result, are not forgiven.²⁹⁵

You can see the effect that this had. It caused the name of the Lord Jesus to be spread through that entire pagan city. Ephesus was a great city, and it was shaken by this.

The miracles which Paul and the other apostles performed were not the type of thing that one hears about today. For many years there have been stories of miracles being performed in Los Angeles and in Southern California, but they made no dent or impression on this great pagan city. The miracles of Paul shook Ephesus to its very foundation. The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified through them.

And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.

Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver [Acts 19:18–19].

That would be about \$8,000.00 U.S. currency before inflation. That is quite a bonfire, by the way, an \$8,000.00 bonfire! That's what they had in Ephesus.

²⁹⁶

19:15 Jesus ... Paul I know. Recognizing that the exorcists had no authority over him (unlike Jesus and Paul), the demon rejected their attempt to expel him from his victim. This confirms that the power to cast out demons belonged to Jesus and the apostles and no one else. Even the demons give testimony to that.

19:16 Cf. Mark 5:1–4.

19:19 books. Of secret magical spells. Burning them proved the genuineness of the magicians' repentance (*see note on 2:38*); having destroyed these books, they could not easily resume their practices. **fifty thousand pieces of silver.** Fifty thousand days' wages for a common laborer—an astonishing sum of money given to indicate how widespread the practice of magic was in Ephesus.

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The congregation did listen to Paul. They excommunicated the man.

But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.

²⁹⁵MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Jn 20:23

²⁹⁶McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:599

²⁹⁷MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ac 19:15

Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many [2 Cor. 2:5–6].

They had obeyed Paul. They had excommunicated the man, which was the right thing for them to do.

Then the man acknowledged his sin and came under great conviction. Now what ought they to do? They should forgive him.

So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him [2 Cor. 2:7–8].

“He will be overwhelmed, not only because of his sin, but because you won’t receive him. So now put your arm about him, and restore him to your fellowship.” To the Galatian believers Paul wrote: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1).

For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;

Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices [2 Cor. 2:9–11].

You see, the Devil tries to push us one way or another. Sometimes the Devil gets us to shut our eyes to gross immorality. There are many instances of that in our churches today. I know one preacher who has had trouble with women in three different churches. Each church he went to serve knew his past record, and still they accepted him as pastor! In shutting their eyes to gross immorality, they were hurting the cause of Christ Jesus.

Now suppose he had repented and had really turned from his sin (which he did not), then they should have forgiven him. Unfortunately, many of our stiff-backed brethren will not forgive anything. That can be the work of the Devil as well as shutting one’s eyes to immorality. Satan gets the advantage of a great many Christians because they are unforgiving. There are two things that we don’t hear very often even in our conservative churches: we don’t hear folk admitting their sins and asking for forgiveness nor do we hear folk forgiving those who confess. There is an unforgiving spirit in many of our churches.

We need to remember that we are all capable of any sin. Whatever the other man has done, we are also capable of doing. When such a man repents from his sin, he is to be restored in the spirit of meekness. He is to be brought back into fellowship. This is part of the ministry. It is a glorious ministry, isn’t it?

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2:6 punishment ... inflicted by the majority. This indicates that the church in Corinth had followed the biblical process in disciplining the sinning man (cf. Matt.

²⁹⁸McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:94

18:15–20; 1 Cor. 5:4–13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14). The Gr. word for “punishment,” used frequently in secular writings but only here in the NT, denoted an official legal penalty or commercial sanction that was enacted against an individual or group (city, nation). **is sufficient.** The process of discipline and punishment was enough; now it was time to show mercy because the man had repented (cf. Matt. 18:18, 23–35; Gal. 6:1, 2; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13; Heb. 12:11).

2:7 to forgive. It was time to grant forgiveness so the man’s joy would be restored (cf. Ps. 51:12, 14; Is. 42:2, 3). Paul knew there was—and is—no place in the church for man-made limits on God’s grace, mercy, and forgiveness toward repentant sinners. Such restrictions could only rob the fellowship of the joy of unity (cf. Matt. 18:34, 35; Mark 11:25, 26).

2:10 in the presence of Christ. Paul was constantly aware that his entire life was lived in the sight of God, who knew everything he thought, did, and said (cf. v. 17; 4:2; 2 Tim. 4:1).

2:11 devices. The devil wants to produce sin and animosity that will destroy church unity. He uses every possible approach to accomplish this—from legalism to libertinism, intolerance to excessive tolerance (cf. 11:13, 14; Eph. 4:14; 6:11, 12; 1 Pet. 5:8). Paul used a different word (but with similar meaning) for “devices” (wiles) in Eph. 6:11. It, along with the words for “take advantage” and “ignorant,” strongly implies that Satan targets the believer’s mind, but God has provided protection by unmasking Satan’s schemes in Scripture, along with providing the counteracting truth.

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Holy Orders

There are some people who like to smother trouble and cover it up. This is not the way the Lord tells us to handle it. If there is a problem between two believers, it should be worked out in an amiable, peaceful, and quiet manner. If the individuals cannot work things out, take it to a group. If the group cannot work things out, the last resort is to take the problem to the church as the final authority. The Lord says in conclusion, concerning this subject:

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven [Matt. 18:18].

We have already studied the contents of this verse in Matthew 16:19, where we learned that if we withhold the Word, we “bind on earth”; if we give the Word of God to others, we “loose on earth.”

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18:17 tell it to the church. If he still refuses to repent, step 3 requires that the matter be reported to the whole assembly (v. 17)—so that all may lovingly pursue the sinning

Gr. Greek

²⁹⁹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 2 Co 2:6

³⁰⁰McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:100

brother's reconciliation. But failing that, step 4 means that the offender must be excommunicated, regarded by the church as "a heathen and a tax collector" (*see note on 5:46*). The idea is not merely to punish the offender, or to shun him completely, but to remove him as a detrimental influence from the fellowship of the church, and henceforth to regard him as an evangelistic prospect rather than as a brother. Ultimately, the sin for which he is excommunicated is a hard-hearted impenitence.

18:18 bind on earth ... bound in heaven. *See note on 16:19.*

18:19 if two of you agree on earth. This promise applies to the issue of discipline discussed in vv. 15–17. The "two of you" spoken of here harks back to the two or three witnesses involved in step two of the discipline process (*see note on v. 15*).

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And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you [Luke 22:19–20].

The Lord took two of the most frail elements in the world as symbols of His body and blood. Bread and wine—both will spoil in a few days. When He raised a monument, it was not made of brass or marble, but of two frail elements that perish. He declared that the bread spoke of His body and the wine spoke of His blood. The bread speaks of His body broken—not a *bone* broken but a broken *body* because He was made sin for us (*see 2 Cor. 5:21*). I do not believe He even looked human when He was taken down from that cross. Isaiah had said of Him, "... his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men" (*Isa. 52:14*); and "... there is no beauty that we should desire him" (*Isa. 53:2*).

For centuries the Passover feast had looked forward to the Lord's coming and His death. Now He is in the shadow of the cross, and this is the last Passover. The Passover feast has now been fulfilled. We gather about the Lord's Table and search our hearts. What we do at this Table is in remembrance of Him. We look back to what He did for us on the cross, and we look forward to His coming again. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (*1 Cor. 11:26*).

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22:19 This is My body. I.e., it represented His body (*cf. the words of 8:11, "The seed is the word of God"—and also v. 20*). Such metaphorical language was a typical Hebraism. No eucharistic miracle of transubstantiation was implied, nor could the disciples have missed the symbolic intent of His statement, for His actual body—yet unbroken—was before their very eyes. *See note on Matt. 26:26. do this.* Thus He established the observance as an ordinance for worship (*see notes on 1 Cor. 11:23–26*). **remembrance of Me.** Passover had looked forward to the sacrifice of Christ; He transformed the seder

³⁰¹ MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 18:17

³⁰² McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:344-345

into an altogether different ceremony, which looks back in remembrance at His atoning death.³⁰³

And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had avow [Acts 18:18].

There are a great many folk who find fault with Paul because he made a vow. They say that this is the man who preached that we are not under Law but we are under grace, and so he should not have made a vow. Anyone who says this about Paul is actually making a little law for Paul. Such folk are saying that Paul is to do things their way. Under grace, friend, if you want to make a vow, you can make it. And if you do not want to make a vow, you don't have to. Paul didn't force anyone else to make a vow. In fact, he said emphatically that no one has to do that. But if Paul wants to make a vow, that is his business. That is the marvelous freedom that we have in the grace of God today.

There are some super-saints who form little cliques and make laws for the Christian. They say we can't do this and we can't do that. May I say to you very candidly that our relationship is to the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is a love affair. If we love Him, of course we will not do anything that will break our fellowship with Him. Don't insist that I go through your little wicket gate; I am to follow Him. He shows me what I can and cannot do in order to maintain fellowship with Him.

If one wishes to eat meat, there is freedom to eat meat. If one wishes to observe a certain day, there is freedom to observe it. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). The important thing is to do all to the glory of God. Eating meat will not commend you to God and neither will abstaining from meat commend you to God.

Let's not find fault with Paul here. Poor Gallio and Paul surely do get in trouble with their critics right in this particular passage. I want to defend both of them.

Paul is now returning from his second missionary journey. He has made Corinth the terminus of his journey and now he is going back to Antioch. He sails from Cenchrea, which is the seaport over on the east side. There is a canal through the Corinthian peninsula today, but there was none in that day. They would actually pull the boats overland. I have a picture taken to show the rocks that are worn by the boats which were pulled over the isthmus to the other side. Cenchrea was the port of Corinth on the eastward side. Paul goes there with Aquila and Priscilla, and they take ship there. He is not going westward any farther; he is sailing for home.

³⁰⁴

18:18 Priscilla and Aquila. *See note on v. 2.* That they could accompany Paul means there was sufficient leadership in Corinth, with men such as Gaius, Sosthenes, Stephanas, and Crispus. **He had his hair cut off ... he had taken a vow.** To show God his gratitude for helping him through a difficult time in Corinth, he took a Nazirite vow—a special

³⁰³ MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Lk 22:19

³⁰⁴ McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:594

pledge of separation and devotion to God (cf. Num. 6:2–5, 13–21). The vow generally lasted a specific period of time, although Samson (Judg. 13:5), Samuel (1 Sam. 1:11), and John the Baptist (Luke 1:15) were Nazirites for life. In Paul’s day, if someone made the vow while away from Jerusalem, at the termination of his vow he would shave his head, as Paul did, and afterwards present the shorn hair at the temple within 30 days.
Cenchrea. The eastern port of Corinth.³⁰⁵

This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work [1 Tim. 3:1].

“**T**his is a *true* saying” could be translated, “This is a *faithful* saying.” In other words, this is a saying that stands the test of time; it is one you can depend upon.

“If a man *desire* the office of a bishop” means if a man *seeks* the office of a bishop. This has in it the thought that there will be the active seeking of the office. I believe that a man who has the qualifications ought to seek the office. He ought to want a place where he can use the gift that the Spirit of God has given him. If the Spirit of God has not given him the gift and is not leading him, then it would be a tragedy indeed if a man sought the office of bishop. This also suggests that there was not just one bishop in the church, but there were several.

“The office of a bishop.” *Bishop* is a word that has been misinterpreted and interpreted differently by different groups. Those who practice the episcopal form of church government put great emphasis upon this word and its interpretation.

Bishop actually means “an overseer, a superintendent.” In the early church the pastor was called by several different titles: (1) he was called a presbyter, or elder; (2) he was called a pastor, or shepherd; (3) he was called a bishop, or an overseer; and (4) he was called a minister. The pastor was never called “reverend,” and I don’t think any preacher should be so called. *Reverend* means “terrible, that which incites terror.” It is a name which applies only to God.

I take the position that the terms *elder* and *bishop* refer to the same person. Those who hold to the episcopal form of church government will, of course, disagree with me altogether. I believe that the use of “elder” (*presbuteros* in the Greek) refers to the *person* who holds the office, and it suggests that he must be a mature Christian. On the other hand, the use of “bishop” (*episkopos* in the Greek) refers to the *office* that is held. Therefore, these two words apply to the same individual or office.

A bishop in the early church never had authority over other bishops or elders. He did not have authority over churches. You do not find such a practice presented in the Word of God. Even Paul, who founded a number of churches, never spoke of himself as the bishop of a church, or as the one who was ruling a church in any way whatsoever. Therefore, the minister is one who is to serve the church, not rule over it.

“He desireth a good work”—he is seeking a place where he can serve in the church.
A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach [1 Tim. 3:2].

³⁰⁵MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ac 18:18

We have given here the positive requirements of an elder—the things he *ought* to be.

“Blameless.” The thing that must be understood is that you *will* be blamed for things if you hold an office, any office, in the church. What is important is that the accusation must not be true. An elder must be blameless in the sense that he will not be found guilty of anything that he might be accused of.

Shortly after I had been called to a pastorate in downtown Los Angeles, I met Dr. James McGinley in Chicago. He asked me, “How do you like being pastor in that great church?” “Well,” I said, “it’s a marvelous opportunity, but I find myself in a very unique place: I am accused of many things, and I can’t defend myself. You cannot spend all your time answering everybody, so I’ve determined to just preach the Word of God and not try to answer them.” Dr. McGinley said, “Just rejoice that the things you are accused of are not true.” It is nice to be in that position, and that should be the position of a bishop—blameless: accused but not guilty.

“The husband of one wife.” This can be interpreted two ways. It could mean that he ought to be married. I feel that Paul had this in mind. You may say, “Well, Paul was not married.” I take the position that Paul had been married and his wife had died. He could not have been a member of the Sanhedrin without being married. He simply had not married again, perhaps because of his travels as an apostle.

When I first became a pastor I was not married and I was frequently kidded by a friend who said I had no right to be a pastor if I wasn’t married. Using this verse, he would say, “You should be the husband of one wife.” However, I think that the primary meaning here is that the bishop or elder should not have *two* wives. Polygamy was common in Paul’s day, and bigamy was certainly prevalent. The officer in the church should be the husband of one wife.

“Vigilant” means temperate. The elder should be calm and not credulous. He should be a man who knows how to keep his cool.

“Sober” means sober-minded or serious. He means business. This does not mean an elder cannot have a sense of humor, but he should be serious about the office which he holds.

“Of good behaviour.” An elder should be orderly in his conduct. He doesn’t do questionable things. I knew a minister who got himself into a great deal of difficulty because of his careless actions. The rumors were that he had had an affair with a woman in his congregation. I’m confident from all the information that came to me from several sources that he was not guilty, but he certainly had been careless in his conduct. He was a young minister, and often at church social gatherings, he would kiddingly say that he was going to take another man’s wife home. He would take her, leave her off at her door, and then go on to his home. All this was done with a great deal of kidding, but it caused some people to raise their eyebrows and start talking. My feeling is that the conduct of an officer or a minister should be absolutely above reproach. Kidding is fine, but it should not lead to questionable activity.

“Given to hospitality” means that an elder is to be a hospitable individual. He is the type of fellow who invites his preacher or others out to lunch. I’ve always liked fellows like that and have had the privilege in recent years of meeting many wonderful and hospitable laymen in my travels all over the country. One will come and put his arm around me and say, “Now can I help you in some way? Is there anything I can do?” They do things like having a bowl of fruit or a bouquet of flowers sent to my hotel room where

I happen to be staying. One time in San Diego I broke off a capped tooth, and a doctor friend recommended a dentist there. That dentist is such a wonderful man I still go all the way to San Diego for my dental care. Such hospitable men can be found all across our country.

“Apt to teach.” This is something I emphasize, because I do not feel any man ought to be an elder in a church unless he can teach the Word of God. I used to say to my church officers that I wished it was possible to give a theological exam to each one of them to determine if he was qualified to be an officer. I never actually did that, but I always thought it would be a good idea.

Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous [1 Tim. 3:3].

Now we come to the negative qualifications—the things an elder should *not* be.

“Not given to wine”—he should not be a drunkard.

“No striker”—not violent or pugnacious.

“Not greedy of filthy lucre.” He shouldn’t have a love of money. The love of money is a root of all evil we are told in Scripture (1 Tim. 6:10). The way a church officer handles his money can lead him into a great deal of trouble—either his own money or the church’s money.

“Patient” means reasonable. He should be a reasonable man, someone you can talk to or reason with.

“Not a brawler.” He should not be a contentious person. Men who are constantly stirring up trouble in a church should never be selected as church officers.

“Not covetous” again refers to the love of money, but it also suggests an idolatry, actually the worship of money. He should not be a man who puts the pursuit of wealth above everything else.

One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity [1 Tim. 3:4].

An elder should have the authority in his own home—without being a dictator.

(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) [1 Tim. 3:5].

A man does not know how to rule the house of God if he cannot rule his own home.

Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil [1 Tim. 3:6].

“Not a novice” means not a recent convert, not someone who has recently been saved. Sometimes a man is converted one week, and the next week he is made a church officer or asked to give his testimony. He is not ready for it. This is a caution that needs to be heeded today.

I had the privilege for several years of teaching a Bible study group of Christians in Hollywood. It was natural for them to want to push to the front some prominent personality who had recently made a decision for Christ. However, the cause of Christ is hurt when those who are young in the faith attempt to speak on matters of doctrine about which they are not knowledgeable.

“Lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.” Pride was the Devil’s great sin. Also it is often the sin of officers in the church and of preachers. It is a danger for all of us, but it is reprehensible when it is in the church.

Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil [1 Tim. 3:7].

“Them which are without” means those who are outside the church. In other words, if a man has a bad reputation on the outside—if he doesn’t pay his bills, is untrustworthy, or is a liar—he immediately is *not* a candidate to be an officer in the church. If he is such a man he is really a candidate of the Devil—he would better represent the Devil than he would represent the cause of Christ.

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3:1–13 Paul’s purpose in writing this letter was to instruct Timothy regarding the church (vv. 14,15). Of primary importance to any church is that its leaders be qualified to teach and set the example for the rest. These verses delineate those qualifications for pastors and deacons (*see also notes on Titus 1:5–9*).

3:1 This is a faithful saying: *See note on 1:15. desires ... desires.* Two different Gr. words are used. The first means “to reach out after.” It describes external action, not internal motive. The second means “a strong passion,” and refers to an inward desire. Taken together, these two words aptly describe the type of man who belongs in the ministry—one who outwardly pursues it because he is driven by a strong internal desire. **bishop.** The word means “overseer” and identifies the men who are responsible to lead the church (cf. 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:7). In the NT the words “bishop,” “elder,” “overseer,” and “pastor” are used interchangeably to describe the same men (Acts 20:17,28; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Pet. 5:1,2). Bishops (pastors, overseers, elders) are responsible to lead (5:17), preach and teach (5:17), help the spiritually weak (1 Thess. 5:12–14), care for the church (1 Pet. 5:1,2), and ordain other leaders (4:14).

3:2 must. The use of this Gr. particle stresses emphatically that living a blameless life is absolutely necessary for church leaders. **blameless.** Lit. “not able to be held” in a criminal sense; there is no valid accusation of wrongdoing that can be made against him. No overt, flagrant sin can mar the life of one who must be an example for his people to follow (cf. v. 10; 4:17; 5:7; Ps. 101:6; Phil. 3:17; 2 Thess. 3:9; Heb. 13:7; 1 Pet. 5:3). This is the overarching requirement for elders; the rest of the qualifications elaborate on what it means to be blameless. Titus 1:6,7 uses another Gr. word to mean the same thing. **the husband of one wife.** Lit. in Gr. a “one-woman man.” This says nothing about marriage or divorce (for comments on that, *see note on v. 4*). The issue is not the elder’s marital status, but his moral and sexual purity. This qualification heads the list, because it is in this area that leaders are most prone to fail. Various interpretations of this qualification have been offered. Some see it as a prohibition against polygamy—an unnecessary injunction since polygamy was not common in Roman society and clearly forbidden by Scripture (Gen 2:24), the teaching of Jesus (Matt. 19:5,6; Mark 10:6–9), and Paul (Eph. 5:31). A polygamist could not even have been a church member, let alone a church leader. Others see this requirement as barring those who remarried after the death of their wives. But, as already noted, the issue is sexual purity, not marital status. Further, the Bible encourages remarriage after widowhood (5:14; 1 Cor. 7:39). Some believe that

³⁰⁶McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:441-443
Gr. Greek

Paul here excludes divorced men from church leadership. That again ignores the fact that this qualification does not deal with marital status. Nor does the Bible prohibit all remarriage after divorce (*see notes on Matt. 5:31,32; 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:15*). Finally, some think that this requirement excludes single men from church leadership. But if that were Paul's intent, he would have disqualified himself (1 Cor. 7:8). A "one-woman man" is one totally devoted to his wife, maintaining singular devotion, affection and sexual purity in both thought and deed. To violate this is to forfeit blamelessness and no longer be "above reproach" (Titus 1:6,7). Cf. Prov. 6:32,33. **temperate**. The Gr. word lit. means "wineless," but is here used metaphorically to mean "alert," "watchful," "vigilant," or "clear-headed." Elders must be able to think clearly. **sober-minded**. A "sober-minded" man is disciplined, knows how to properly order his priorities, and is serious about spiritual matters. **good behavior**. The Gr. word means "orderly." Elders must not lead chaotic lives; if they cannot order their own lives, how can they bring order to the church? **hospitable**. From a compound Gr. word meaning "love of strangers" (*see notes on Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2; cf. 1 Pet. 4:9*). As with all spiritual virtues, elders must set the example; their lives and homes are to be open so all can see their spiritual character. **able to teach**. Used only here and in 2 Tim. 2:24. The only qualification relating to an elder's giftedness and spiritual ability, and the only one that distinguishes elders from deacons. The preaching and teaching of God's Word is the overseer/pastor/elder's primary duty (4:6,11,13; 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:15,24; Titus 2:1).

3:3 not given to wine. More than a mere prohibition against drunkenness (*see note on Eph. 5:18*). An elder must not have a reputation as a drinker; his judgment must never be clouded by alcohol (cf. Prov. 31:4,5; 1 Cor. 6:12), his lifestyle must be radically different from the world and lead others to holiness, not sin (Rom. 14:21). *See note on 5:23*. **not violent**. Lit. "not a giver of blows." Elders must react to difficult situations calmly and gently (2 Tim. 2:24,25), and under no circumstances with physical violence. **not greedy for money**. The better Gr. manuscripts omit this phrase. *See note below on "not covetous."* The principle is included, however, in Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2. **gentle**. Considerate, genial, gracious, quick to pardon failure, and one who does not hold a grudge. **not quarrelsome**. "Peaceful," "reluctant to fight"; one who does not promote disunity or disharmony. **not covetous**. Elders must be motivated by love for God and His people, not money (cf. 1 Pet. 5:2). A leader who is in the ministry for money reveals a heart set on the world, not the things of God (Matt. 6:24; 1 John 2:15). Covetousness characterizes false teachers (Titus 1:11; 2 Pet. 2:1-3,14; Jude 11), but not Paul's ministry (Acts 20:33; 1 Cor. 9:1-16; 2 Cor. 11:9; 1 Thess. 2:5).

3:4 who rules his own house well. The elder's home life, like his personal life, must be exemplary. He must be one who "rules" (presides over, has authority over) "his own house" (everything connected with his home, not merely his wife and children) "well" (intrinsically good; excellently). Issues of divorce should be related to this matter. A divorced man gives no evidence of a well-managed home, but rather that divorce shows weakness in his spiritual leadership. If there has been a biblically permitted divorce, it must have been so far in the past as to have been overcome by a long pattern of solid family leadership and the rearing of godly children (v. 4; Titus 1:6). **submission**. A

military term referring to soldiers ranked under one in authority. An elder's children must be believers (*see note on "faithful" in Titus 1:6*), well-behaved, and respectful.

3:5 take care of the church of God. An elder must first prove in the intimacy and exposure of his own home his ability to lead others to salvation and sanctification. There he proves God has gifted him uniquely to spiritually set the example of virtue, to serve others, resolve conflicts, build unity, and maintain love. If he cannot do those essential things there, why would anyone assume he would be able to do them in the church?

3:6 not a novice, lest ... puffed up with pride. Putting a new convert into a leadership role would tempt him to pride. Elders, therefore, are to be drawn from the spiritually mature men of the congregation (*see notes on 5:22*). **fall into the same condemnation as the devil.** Satan's condemnation was due to pride over his position. It resulted in his fall from honor and authority (Is. 14:12–14; Ezek. 28:11–19; cf. Prov. 16:18). The same kind of fall and judgment could easily happen to a new and weak believer put in a position of spiritual leadership.

3:7 good testimony ... outside. A leader in the church must have an unimpeachable reputation in the unbelieving community, even though people there may disagree with his moral and theological stands. How can he make a spiritual impact on those who do not respect him? Cf. Matt. 5:48; Phil. 2:15.

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Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine [1 Tim. 5:17].

The early church paid their teachers, and a good teacher, I think, was paid a little bit more.

308

5:17–25 The source of much of the Ephesian church's difficulties was the inadequacy of the pastors. So Paul explains to Timothy how to restore proper pastoral oversight. He sets forth the church's obligations in regard to honoring, protecting, rebuking, and selecting elders.

5:17 elders. This identifies the "bishop" (3:1) or overseer, who is also called pastor (Eph. 4:11). *See notes on 3:1–7; Titus 1:6–9.* **rule well.** Elders are spiritual rulers in the church. Cf. 1 Thess. 5:12,13; Heb. 13:7,17. **double honor.** Elders who serve with greater commitment, excellence, and effort should have greater acknowledgment from their congregations. This expression does not mean such men should receive exactly twice as much remuneration as others, but because they have earned such respect they should be paid more generously. **especially.** Means "chiefly" or "particularly." Implicit is the idea that some elders will work harder than others and be more prominent in ministry. **labor.** Lit. "work to the point of fatigue or exhaustion." The Gr. word stresses the effort behind

³⁰⁷MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Ti 3:1

³⁰⁸McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:453

Lit. literally

Gr. Greek

the work more than the amount of work. **word and doctrine.** Or better, “preaching and teaching” (*see note on 4:13*). The first emphasizes proclamation, along with exhortation and admonition, and calls for a heart response to the Lord. The second is an essential fortification against heresy and puts more stress on instruction.

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The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed [1 Pet. 5:1].

Peter begins by asserting his position; however, he doesn't call himself even an apostle here. He is speaking of the fact that he is an elder—“who am also an elder.” That means there were other men who were elders. The Greek word used here, *presbuteros*, is a word which is sometimes used in speaking of a person being an elder or older person. The Greek word which is translated “bishop” is *episkopos*, and it speaks of the office of the man, not the person of the man. It is the spiritual office of shepherding; the same word is used for “shepherd.” This is all that Simon Peter ever claimed to be—he calls himself a fellow elder. He never claimed a superior place above his brethren, but as a fellow elder he exhorts them.

“And a witness of the sufferings of Christ.” Peter was in a unique position because he was a witness of the sufferings of Christ.

“And also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.” In the past Peter saw that glory. In his second epistle, Peter identifies this as taking place on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter saw Him die yonder on Mount Calvary, and he saw Him transfigured yonder on the Mount of Transfiguration. That mount was probably in the north, and I have always felt that Mount Hermon could have been the place, although the geographical location is not important. What took place there is important, and Peter says that he was a witness of it. However, there is a glory that is coming in the future which will be greater than that—“the glory that shall be revealed.”

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5:1 elders ... I exhort. Times of suffering and persecution in the church call for the noblest leadership. The “elder” is the same leader as the “shepherd” (i.e., pastor, v. 2), and “overseer” (i.e., bishop, v. 2; *see note on Acts 20:28*). The word “elder” emphasizes their spiritual maturity. As in almost all other uses of the word (with the exception of Peter's reference to himself here and John's in 2 John 1 and 3 John 1), Peter wrote in the plural, indicating it was usual to have a plurality of godly leaders who oversaw and fed the flock. **fellow elder and a witness ... and ... partaker of the glory.** Peter loaded this exhortation to the elders with some rich motivation. First, there was motivation by identification with Peter, who refers to himself as a fellow-elder. As such, he could give relevant exhortation to the spiritual leaders. Second, there was motivation by authority.

³⁰⁹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Ti 5:17

³¹⁰McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:711

By noting that he had been an eyewitness of Christ's suffering, Peter was affirming his apostleship (cf. Luke 24:45; Acts 1:21,22). Third, there was the motivation by anticipation. The fact that Christian leaders will one day receive from the hand of Christ a reward for their service should be a stimulant to faithful duty. The basis of this anticipation was Peter's experience in observing the transfiguration of Christ (cf. Matt. 17:1-8; 2 Pet. 1:16). At that momentous event, he did partake of the Lord's glory.³¹¹

Matrimony

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³¹¹ MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Pe 5:1

³¹² MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Pe 5:1

anticipation was Peter's experience in observing the transfiguration of Christ (cf. Matt. 17:1–8; 2 Pet. 1:16). At that momentous event, he did partake of the Lord's glory.³¹³

And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan [Matt. 19:1].

“When Jesus had finished these sayings”—what sayings? The ones we have been considering in chapters 16–18. Having finished what He wanted to say in Galilee, He moved south and came into the borders of Judea, beyond Jordan, meaning the east bank of the Jordan River. The movement is in a physical and geographical sense now. Up yonder in Caesarea Philippi He announced that He was going to Jerusalem to die. He moved down into Galilee, and He spent time in that area around the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum was His headquarters, and He even crossed over into Gadara. Now He is on the border of Judea.

And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there [Matt. 19:2].

I want to put two words together and emphasize what has been emphasized before several times. One word is *multitudes* and the other word is *healed*. It was not just a few people that were healed; multitudes were healed. I am more and more impressed by this as time goes on. If you are going to be a faith healer, brother, you ought to go to the hospitals and empty them. That is what our Lord did when He passed by; if anyone wanted to be healed, they could be healed. Multitudes were healed!

MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Now the religious rulers come to Him with a question regarding divorce. Our Lord restates God's ideal for marriage and the grounds for divorce.

The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? [Matt. 19:3].

The Pharisees came to tempt or to *test* Him. They were after Him, trying to put Him in opposition to the Mosaic system. They brought a problem which is just as difficult today as it was then. “Is it lawful for a man to put away [divorce] his wife for every cause?” That is an equally live issue among Christians in our day.

Let me preface this a little by saying that God has given to all of mankind certain things for the welfare of the human family. For instance, He has given marriage for the protection of the home. Marriage is something which God has given to be a blessing to mankind whether saved or unsaved. Another example is that of capital punishment which God gave for the protection of a nation, to protect the lives of its citizens. Also God gave the sabbath law for the protection of the individual, that he might have one day of rest. God gave these laws to protect the individual, the family, and the nation. These were general laws which He gave to all mankind. Later on, He made them specific for His chosen people.

Now let's look at this question concerning marriage. Here it is in the smaller context of the nation Israel, of course. And we look at it today in the light of the contemporary Christian. “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?”

³¹³MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Pe 5:1

And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female [Matt. 19:4].

The Lord Jesus took them back to the very beginning, back to God's ideal of marriage. The Mosaic Law had permitted divorce on a broad basis: "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house" (Deut. 24:1).

As far as the Mosaic Law was concerned, a divorce was not as bad as was marriage to a stranger. For instance, if the priest's daughter married a stranger, she was shut out from the nation Israel. However, as time went on, the Mosaic Law was made meaningless, and the granting of divorce was done on the flimsiest pretexts, such as burning the bread. As a result, there was a great deal of discussion relative to divorce in our Lord's day.

And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?

Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder [Matt. 19:5–6].

This was God's original plan for man and woman before sin entered the human family. Divorce was not in God's original plan. Why? Because *sin* was not in God's original plan, and divorce is always a result of sin. Regardless of what you may say, there is sin in the relationship somewhere which causes divorce. So our Lord took them back to the original plan of God.

They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? [Matt. 19:7].

You ought to read Deuteronomy 24:1–4 to get the background for their question. Why did Moses permit divorce?

He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so [Matt. 19:8].

Why did Moses permit it? Because of the hardness of their hearts. You see, marriage was given to mankind, and it is the tenderest and the sweetest of human relationships. There is nothing like it. And, actually, marriage was to represent the relationship between Christ and the church. Therefore, only believers can set forth this high and holy relationship. However, when they fail, and bitterness and hardness of heart enter in, then that marriage becomes a hollow sham, and it is just a mockery of marriage. My friend, marriage is either made in heaven or in hell—there is no third place to make it. When marriage is made in the wrong place, it is in trouble to begin with. Even Christians find that marriage becomes a very shaky proposition.

Because of the hardness of the human heart, God permitted divorce. God is merciful to us—oh, how merciful! But His ideal is never divorce. I recognize that we are living in a culture which is very lax in this area. There are multitudes of divorced folk who will be reading this book. Let me repeat that the background of divorce is always sin. But, after all, all of us are sinners. Since God can forgive murderers, He can also forgive divorced folk. But we need to recognize that the root cause of divorce is sin.

Now our Lord is going to give something new—

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery [Matt. 19:9].

Adultery breaks the marriage relationship and provides the *one* ground for divorce. Somebody says to me, “Yes, but here is this poor Christian woman, married to a drunkard!” Or a fine Christian man is married to a godless woman. What about that? Well, believers may *separate* on other grounds, which seems to be the whole point of 1 Corinthians 7, but divorce is permitted on only one basis, adultery.

Divorce was granted for the purpose of permitting the innocent party to remarry. This rule is applicable only to believers; God is not regulating the lives of unbelievers but is holding them to the message of the cross first. God wants the unbeliever to come to Christ. He is lost whether he is married, divorced, or single. It makes no difference until he accepts Christ. The important thing to note is that for *believers* He puts down one ground for divorce: adultery.

Now suppose there is a believer whose spouse got a divorce on another ground. What about the innocent party? Well, if there has been adultery there, and in most cases there has been, then the innocent party is permitted to remarry. I believe that is the whole thought in this particular case.

Now, there is something else here that is important—

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19:1 the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. Perea was the name of the region just E of the Jordan River. It was not technically part of Judea, but the territory ruled by Herod the Great had included both regions, and it was commonly referred to this way. Christ’s ministry in Perea lasted only a few months. It was from here that He would make His final journey to Jerusalem just prior to the Passion Week (20:17–19).

19:3 Is it lawful. A hotly-debated difference of opinion existed between the Rabbis Shammai and Hillel (both near-contemporaries of Christ). The Shammaites interpreted the law rigidly, and permitted a man to divorce his wife only if she was guilty of sexual immorality. **for just any reason.** The Hillelites took a wholly pragmatic approach, and permitted a man to divorce his wife indiscriminately.

19:4 Quoted from Gen. 1:27; 5:2. Jesus’ challenge to the Pharisees echoed the question raised by Mal. 2:15: “But did He not make *them* one ...?” (cf. v. 6).

19:5 Quoted from Gen. 2:24 (*see note there*).

19:7 Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce. The Pharisees misrepresented Deut. 24:1–4. It was not a “command” for divorce, but a limitation on remarriage in the event of a divorce. While recognizing the legitimacy of divorce when a man “has found some uncleanness” (Deut. 24:1) in his wife (sexual sin, by Jesus’ interpretation in v. 9), Moses did not “command” divorce. *See note on Deut. 24:1–4.*

19:8 Moses ... permitted you to divorce. The stress is certainly on the word “permitted.” Thus Jesus clearly sides with the Shammai school of interpretation (*see note on v. 3*). **because of the hardness of your hearts.** The phrase underscores the truth that divorce is only a last-resort response to hard-hearted sexual immorality (v. 9).

19:9 sexual immorality. This is a term that encompasses all sorts of sexual sins. Both here and in 5:32, Jesus includes this “exception clause,” clearly permitting the innocent

³¹⁴McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:102-103

party in such a divorce to remarry without incurring the stigma of one who “commits adultery.” See notes on 5:31, 32.

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And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him [Mark 10:1–2].

We need to understand that they do not ask this question because they want an answer. They are asking Him the question in order to trap Him. They had their own viewpoint concerning marriage and divorce; so they pose this trick question: “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife?” It’s a clever question and was really a live issue at this time because Herod had put away his wife and married his brother Philip’s wife. John the Baptist had been beheaded because he had spoken out against it. So if Jesus answered no to their question, it would not only make Him contradict Moses, but it would bring Him into conflict with Herod. The death of Jesus was not to be determined on this issue. That’s very important to see. On the other hand, if He said yes to their question, they could accuse Him of being lax in His teaching. So now notice His method. It always was His method and it was a good one. He countered with a question.

And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?

And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away [Mark 10:3–4].

He knew they would have to say that because back in Deuteronomy 24:1–2 there was the Mosaic Law: “When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man’s wife.”

Moses permitted divorce, as you can see. Actually, it was not Moses’ intention nor was it God’s intention for a man or a woman to get a divorce over some little picayunish excuse. However, in time, the religious rulers interpreted it so that the wife’s burning the biscuits would be grounds for divorce.

Now our Lord goes back to that which is fundamental, and this is important to see. He turns it from a discussion of divorce to a discussion of marriage. And today that is the area into which we should move. I have so many questions from people asking about the grounds for divorce. When they are ready to get married, they never talk to the preacher. They are not interested in finding out whether he would approve or not; their only question is whether he will marry them. That is all they are concerned about.

The important thing to see here is that our Lord is going to discuss marriage with them. Notice how He handles it. He gives the reason God permitted divorce. It was because of sin that God granted divorce under the Mosaic Law.

And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.

But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.

For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;

And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.

³¹⁵MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mt 19:1

What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder [Mark 10:5–9].

What Jesus is saying here takes them back to God's ideal at the creation before sin entered the world. Divorce was not in His plan and program at that time. He had something better for man. It may likewise be said that murder was not in His plan, but murderers have been forgiven. Divorce is a sin, but divorced people can be forgiven. And I think that under certain circumstances divorced people can be remarried; that is, from a scriptural viewpoint. I don't know why we will forgive a murderer but often refuse to forgive a divorced person. We act almost as if he has committed the unpardonable sin. People who are saved after securing a divorce ought not to bear the stigma any more than any other sinner who has been saved. We are all sinners saved by grace. It just happens that divorce is their sin.

What He is saying in this section here is that marriage is a stronger tie than that of parent and child. A child may be disowned, and marriage may be broken by unfaithfulness. Jesus is showing here that marriage is something that God makes. God joins a couple together. This was the original intention of the Creator. Any violation of this is sin, but it is not the unpardonable sin, I can assure you.

The basic problem is marrying the wrong person. It looks to me like we are locking the stable after the horse is gone. There are people getting married who ought not to get married. This is the problem. The sin was that they got married in the first place. My Christian friend, marriage is something that God wants to arrange for you, if you will let Him.

And in the house his disciples asked him again of the same matter.

And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her.

And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery [Mark 10:10–12].

This is the strongest statement against divorce that is found in the Scripture. How is it to be interpreted? All the Scriptures on divorce should be brought together and considered before a proper induction can be made. The parallel passage in Matthew lists fornication as the one basis for divorce. Why did Mark omit this? Mark was writing to the Romans who did not know the Mosaic Law, while Matthew was writing for Israel who had and knew the Mosaic Law of divorce. So it must be considered in that light.

Romans 7:2 does not apply to the problem of divorce: "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband." In this passage Paul is using a well-established law, that a wife is bound to a living husband until death frees her, as an illustration of the believer's relationship to the principle of law. The Mosaic system took care of the unfaithful wife or husband. They were stoned to death according to Deuteronomy 22:22–24. Now today we don't stone them to death. If we did, there would be so many rock piles we wouldn't be able to get around them.

According to the Mosaic Law, a husband or wife who is guilty of adultery may be treated as dead by the other mate. Scripture does recognize one ground for divorce—unfaithfulness. The innocent party is free to marry, it would seem, from Christ's words.

The discussion of divorce and the blessing of the little children are brought together by both Matthew and Mark. It seems to me the Spirit of God is trying to tell us something here. The child is the innocent product of the marriage, and a divorce becomes doubly

evil because the little children suffer so in the divorce. It is amazing to see the number of young people from broken homes who get into trouble today. That is no accident, by any means. That is the way it works out.

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10:2 Pharisees. *See note on 2:16.* **came and asked Him ... testing Him.** The Pharisees hoped to publicly discredit Jesus' ministry. The resulting loss of popularity, they hoped, would make it easier for them to destroy Him. Also, Perea (*see note on v. 1*) was ruled by Herod Antipas—who had imprisoned John the Baptist for his views on divorce and remarriage (6:17, 18). The Pharisees no doubt hoped a similar fate would befall Jesus. **Is it lawful ... to divorce.** The Pharisees attempted to entrap Jesus with a volatile issue in first-century Judaism: divorce. There were two schools of thought, one allowing divorce for virtually any reason, the other denying divorce except on grounds of adultery (*see note on Matt. 19:3*). The Pharisees undoubtedly expected Jesus to take one side, in which case He would lose the support of the other faction.

10:3 “What did Moses command you?” Jesus set the proper ground rules for the discussion. The issue was not rabbinical interpretations, but the teaching of Scripture.

10:4 permitted. The Mosaic law, as the Pharisees were forced to concede, nowhere commanded divorce. The passage in question, Deut. 24:1–4, recognized the reality of divorce and sought to protect the wife's rights and reputation and also regulated remarriage. **certificate of divorce.** In this document, the husband was required to state the reason for the divorce, thus protecting the wife's reputation (if she were, in fact, innocent of wrongdoing). It also served as her formal release from the marriage, and affirmed her right to remarry (assuming she was not guilty of immorality). The liberal wing of the Pharisees had misconstrued Deut. 24 to be teaching that divorce was “permitted” for any cause whatsoever (citing as legitimate grounds such trivial events as the wife's ruining dinner or the husband's simply finding a more desirable woman), providing the proper legal paperwork was done. They thus magnified a detail, mentioned merely in passing, into the main emphasis of the passage.

10:5 the hardness of your heart. *See notes on 3:5; 6:52.* This refers to the flagrant, unrepentant pursuit of sexual immorality—divorce was to be a last resort in dealing with such hard-heartedness. The Pharisees mistook God's gracious provision in permitting divorce (under certain circumstances) for His ordaining of it.

10:6 from the beginning. Divorce formed no part of God's original plan for marriage, which was that one man be married to one woman for life (Gen. 2:24). **male and female.** Lit. “a male and a female,” Adam and Eve. Mark quoted from Gen. 1:27; 5:2.

10:7, 8 Jesus took the issue beyond mere rabbinical quibbling over the technicalities of divorce to God's design for marriage. The passage Christ quotes (Gen. 2:24) presents 3 reasons for the inviolability of marriage: 1) God created only two humans (*see note on v. 6*), not a group of males and females who could configure as they pleased or switch partners as it suited them; 2) the word translated “be joined” lit. means “to glue,” thus

³¹⁶McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:203-204

Lit. literally

reflecting the strength of the marriage bond; 3) in God's eyes a married couple is "one flesh," forming an indivisible union, manifesting that oneness in a child.

10:9 Therefore what God has joined together. Jesus added a fourth reason for the inviolability of marriage (*see note on vv. 7, 8*): God ordains marriages and thus they are not to be broken by man.

10:11, 12 Remarriage after a divorce—except for legitimate biblical grounds—proliferates adultery. The innocent party—one whose spouse has committed prolonged, hard-hearted, unrepentant adultery—may remarry without being guilty of adultery, as may a believer whose unbelieving spouse has chosen to leave the marriage (*see note on 1 Cor. 7:15*).

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For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband [Rom. 7:2].

A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives, but when the husband dies, she is completely discharged from the law of her husband. In other words, if he is dead, she is no longer married to him.

So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man [Rom. 7:3].

Some folk insist that divorce and remarriage is not permitted under any circumstances according to this verse. We need to thoroughly understand the background. What would happen under the Mosaic Law if a man or woman were unfaithful in marriage? Suppose a woman is married to a man who is a philanderer, and he is unfaithful to her. What happens? He is stoned to death. When the old boy is lying under a pile of stones, she is free to marry another, of course. In our day we cannot apply the Mosaic Law—we can't stone to death the unfaithful. And Paul is not giving us instructions on divorce and remarriage here; he will do that elsewhere. The point Paul is making here is that when a woman's husband dies, she is no longer a wife, she is a singlewoman again. This is, I think, a universal principle among civilized people. There are heathen people who put the wife to death when the husband dies, but civilized folk have never followed that practice.

Paul goes on to amplify the law of husband and wife. He brings into sharp focus her status in the case that her husband is alive and again in the case that the husband is dead.

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7:2, 3 These two verses are not a complex allegory, but a simple analogy, using marriage law to illustrate the point Paul just made about law's jurisdiction (v. 1). This passage is not teaching that only the death of a spouse frees a Christian to remarry; it is not teaching about divorce and remarriage at all. Both Christ and Paul have fully addressed those issues elsewhere (cf. Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:3–12; 1 Cor. 7:10–15).

³¹⁷MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mk 10:2

³¹⁸McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:689-690

7:3 The law that governs a married woman's actions no longer has any jurisdiction over her once her husband dies. Widows are free to marry again, and Paul even encourages younger ones to remarry as long as their potential mate is a believer (1 Cor. 7:39; 1 Tim. 5:14). Even the illegitimately divorced can marry again (*see notes on 1 Cor. 7:8, 9*).
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Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman [1 Cor. 7:1].

It is obvious that the Corinthian believers had written a letter to Paul concerning this problem. We do not have the question, but we do have Paul's answer. Paul has taken a long time to get to this. He first dealt with the divisions and the scandals in their midst. However, he has no reluctance in dealing with the subject of marriage, and he writes boldly and very frankly. Before we get into the text itself, I wish to deal with two introductory matters.

First there is the question: Was Paul ever married? If Paul was never married, then in his explanation he is simply theorizing. He is not speaking from experience. However, Paul did not do that. Paul always spoke from experience. It was not the method of the Spirit of God to choose a man who knew nothing about the subject on which the Spirit of God wanted him to write.

It has always been assumed that Paul was not married on the basis of the seventh verse: "For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that." If we are going to assume that Paul was not married, we need to pay attention to the verse that follows: "I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I." Someone will say, "He still says that he is unmarried." Granted. We know he was not married. But notice that he mentions two classes here: the unmarried and the widows (or widowers). He could have been unmarried or a widower.

It is difficult to believe that Paul had always been unmarried because of his background and because of who he was. Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin. In Acts 26:10 Paul says, "Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them." How could he give his *voice* against them? It was by his vote in the Sanhedrin, which means he was a member of the Sanhedrin. Since Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, he must have been a married man because that was one of the conditions of membership.

There was an insistence upon Jewish young men to marry. The Mishna said this should be at the age of eighteen. In the *Yebhamoth*, in the commentary on Genesis 5:2 it states: "A Jew who has no wife is not a man." I believe it is an inescapable conclusion that Paul at one time was a married man. He undoubtedly was a widower who had never remarried. In chapter 9 we read, "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" (1 Cor. 9:5). I think Paul is saying, "I could marry again if I wanted to; I would be permitted to do that. But

³¹⁹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ro 7:2

I'm not going to for the simple reason that I would not ask a woman to follow me around in the type of ministry God has given to me."

It is my conviction that in the past Paul had loved some good woman who had reciprocated his love, because he spoke so tenderly of the marriage relationship. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25).

I would like to give you a quotation from F. W. Farrar who writes in his *Life and Work of St. Paul*: "The other question which arises is, Was Saul married? Had he the support of some loving heart during the fiery struggles of his youth? Amid the to-and-fro contentions of spirit which resulted from an imperfect and unsatisfying creed, was there in the troubled sea of his life one little island home where he could find refuge from incessant thoughts? Little as we know of his domestic relations, little as he cared to mingle mere private interests with the great spiritual truths which occupy his soul, it seems to me that we must answer this question in the affirmative."

The position of many expositors is that Paul had been married and that his wife had died. Paul never made reference to her, but he spoke so tenderly of the marriage relationship I believe he had been married.

The second introductory matter is not a question but a statement. We need to understand the Corinth of that day. If we do not, we are going to fall into the trap of saying that Paul is commending the single state above the married state. One must understand the local situation of Corinth to know what he is talking about. Notice the first two verses again.

Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband [1 Cor. 7:1–2].

We need to understand Corinth. I have been to the ruins of ancient Corinth. Towering above those ruins is the mountain which was the acropolis, called Acro-Corinthus. The city was dominated by the Acro-Corinthus, and on top of it was the temple of Aphrodite. It towered over the city like a dark cloud. Today the ruins of a Crusader fort are there. When the Crusaders came, they used the stones from the temple of Aphrodite to build their fortress.

This temple was like most heathen temples. Sex was a religion. There were one thousand so-called vestal virgins there. In that temple you could get food, drink, and sex. Those vestal virgins were nothing in the world but one thousand prostitutes. Sex was carried on in the name of religion. That was the philosophy of Plato, by the way.

People tend to forget the immorality of that culture. A man once said to me, "Socrates wrote in a very lofty language." Yes, sometimes he did. He also told prostitutes how they ought to conduct themselves. The whole thought was to get rid of the desires of the body by satisfying them. That is heathenism. That came out in two basic philosophies of the Greeks. Stoicism said the basic desires were to be denied; Epicureanism said they were to be fulfilled all the way.

The wife in the Roman world was a chattel. She was a workhorse. A man generally had several wives. One had charge of the kitchen, another had charge of the living area, another was in charge of the clothes. Sex was secondary because the man went up to the

temple where the good-looking girls were kept. There they celebrated the seasons of fertility, and believe me, friend, that is what was carried on.

You will still find the same thing among the Bedouins in Palestine today. They have several wives, and it is a practical thing for them. One takes care of the sheep, another goes with the man as he wanders around, another stays back at the home base where they have a tent and probably a few fruit trees. He thinks he needs at least three wives.

Now Paul lifts marriage up to the heights, out of this degradation, and says to the Corinthians they are not to live like that. Every man is to have one wife, and every woman is to have her own husband. Paul lifted woman from the place of slavery in the pagan world, the Roman Empire, and made her a companion of man. He restored her to her rightful position. He was in Ephesus when he wrote to the Corinthians, and in Ephesus there was much the same thing in the awful temple of Diana. It was to the Ephesians that Paul wrote, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25).

Now I know somebody is going to say that he also told wives to obey their husbands. I would like to know where he said that. He did write, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord" (Eph. 5:22). Have you ever looked up the word *submit* to see what it means? To submit means to respond. Wives are to respond to their own husbands. The wife is to react to the man. Man is the aggressor. He initiates the expression of love, and the woman is the receiver. This is not a matter of sex alone; it involves a couple mentally, spiritually, psychologically, and physically. Man is the aggressor; woman is the receiver.

God created man and woman that way in the beginning. He created woman as the "helpmeet," a helper suitable for him or corresponding to him. She is the other part of man. When a husband says, "I love you," she answers, "I love you." When a man admits that he has a cold wife, he is really saying that he is a failure as a husband and that he is to blame for the condition.

Paul lifts woman from the slave state to that of a partner of man. Listen to the next verse:

Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband [1 Cor. 7:3].

She is to respond to him. He is to tell her that he loves her.

The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife [1 Cor. 7:4].

The man is not to run up to that temple of Aphrodite. That is sin. Love and sex are to take place at home. That is exactly what he is saying here. The only motive for marriage is love—not sex, but love. I am convinced that Paul had known the love of a good and great woman.

So many of the great men in Scripture knew the love of a woman. There are Adam and Eve, Jacob and Rachel, Boaz and Ruth, David and Abigail—it was Abigail who told David, "... the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God ..." (1 Sam. 25:29).

It is said of John Wesley that when he came to America he was not a saved man. He wrote, "I came to this country to convert Indians, but who is going to convert John Wesley?" The story goes that the crown had sent to America an insipid nobleman. Due to the terrible custom of that day, the nobility was entitled to marry the finest, and he had

married a woman of striking beauty and strong personality, who also was an outstanding Christian. Then there came into their colony this fiery young missionary. And these two fell in love. But she said, “No, John, God has called you to go back to England to do some great service for Him.” It was she who sent John Wesley back to England—to marry the Methodist church. Back in England Wesley was converted, and she was his inspiration. Behind every great man is a great woman.

Now Paul continues his guidelines for conduct in marriage.

Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.

But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment [1 Cor. 7:5–6].

He says this is not a commandment, but it is a guideline to follow so that Satan will not have an opportunity to tempt either member of the marriage relationship.

For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that [1 Cor. 7:7].

At this time Paul did not have a wife. He did not remarry. He was not taking a wife along with him on his travels.

There are people in the Lord’s work who have not married. They have made that kind of sacrifice—some for several years, some for their whole lifetime. You remember that the Lord Jesus said, “For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake ...” (Matt. 19:12).

When I began in the ministry, I attempted to imitate a man who was a bachelor. I thought that was the happiest state, but I soon learned that it wasn’t for me. I wanted a wife. Paul says that is all right—“every man hath his proper gift of God.”

I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, It is good for them if they abide even as I.

But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn [1 Cor. 7:8–9].

It is better to marry than to burn with passion.

COMMAND TO THE MARRIED

And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband:

But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife [1 Cor. 7:10–11].

Here is a commandment. Paul is putting it on the line. The wife is not to leave her husband, and the husband is not to leave his wife. If one or the other is going to leave, then they are to remain unmarried.

Now there was a new problem which presented itself in Corinth. After Paul had come and had preached the gospel to them, a husband in a family would accept Christ but the wife would not. In another family it might be that the wife would accept Christ and the husband would not. What were the believers to do under such circumstances?

But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away.

And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy [1 Cor. 7:12–14].

If one was married to an unsaved man or to an unsaved woman and there were children in the family, Paul said they should try to see it through. Paul says, “Stay right where you are if you can.”

But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace [1 Cor. 7:15].

If the unbeliever walks out of the marriage, that is another story. Then the believer is free. Now the question which is asked is whether that one is free to marry again. I believe that under certain circumstances Paul would have given permission for that. I do not think one can put down a categorical rule either way for today. I think that each case stands or falls on its own merits. I’m afraid this can easily be abused, even by Christians. I am afraid sometimes a husband or a wife tries to get rid of the other and forces them to leave in order that they might have a “scriptural ground” for divorce.

For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife? [1 Cor. 7:16].

This should be the goal of the wife. I know several women who were married to unsaved men and tried to win them for Christ. This also should be the goal of the husband who is married to an unsaved woman. Winning them for Christ should be uppermost in their consideration.

But as God hath distributed to every man, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. And so ordain I in all churches [1 Cor. 7:17].

Paul is advising people to stay in the situation in which they are. They are not to walk out of their marriage after they have heard and accepted the gospel. They are to stay married if the unbelieving partner will allow it.

This ought to answer the question for today. Unfortunately, there are some ministers and evangelists who have advised people who have had a divorce and have remarried to go back to their first mate after they had come to Christ. May I say, I can’t think of anything more tragic than that kind of advice. I know one woman who finally ended up in a mental institution because she followed the advice of some evangelist who told her to leave her second husband and her lovely Christian home and go back to a drunken husband whom she had previously divorced. How foolish can one be? We need to understand what Paul is saying here.

Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised.

Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God.

Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called [1 Cor. 7:18–20].

Paul now expands the application of this principle. It applies to other relationships in life. For instance, if when you are converted you belong to the circumcised, that is, if you are an Israelite, don’t try to become a Gentile. If you are a Gentile, don’t try to become an Israelite. Circumcision or uncircumcision is no longer important. Obedience to Christ is the issue now. The Israelite and the Gentile are one in Christ.

The whole point here is that in whatever state you find yourself when you accept Christ, stay right there. I have known many businessmen who get into some Christian organization after their conversion, and the next thing I know they come to me and say that they are thinking of giving up the business and going into full-time Christian work. My friend, if you are a successful businessman, God may have given you a gift to minister in that particular area. He may not intend for you to change and go into full-time Christian work. Let's go on and listen to what Paul says.

Art thou called being a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.

For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant [1 Cor. 7:21–22].

In that day there were slaves and freemen. If a person were a slave or a servant of a man, he was not to try to get loosed from that, thinking that God wanted him to be freed from his master.

I find today that there are many housewives who get the notion that they are to become great Bible teachers. They get so involved in it that they neglect their families.

I shall never forget the story I heard about the late Gypsy Smith. A woman came to him in Dallas, Texas, and said, "Gypsy Smith, I feel called to go into the ministry." He asked her a very pertinent question (he had a way of doing that), "Are you married?" She said that she was. "How many children do you have?" She answered that she had five. He said, "That's wonderful. God has called you into the ministry, and He has already given you your congregation!"

Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men [1 Cor. 7:23].

You have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Now don't be a slave to someone. Does this sound like a contradiction? Let me explain by an example. A cocktail waitress was converted by hearing the gospel on our radio broadcast. Everything about the Bible was brand new to her. She asked me a question about whether she should give up being a cocktail waitress because she just didn't feel right about it. I answered her that it was up to her. I said, "That is a decision that you must make. If you have a conviction about it, then give it up. If you want to know what I think about it personally, I think you ought to give it up. However don't give it up because I say so, but give it up if that becomes your conviction." She did give it up and found another job within a couple of weeks. She had been bought with a price; she was not to be a servant of man.

Brethren, let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God [1 Cor. 7:24].

This is the important consideration. When a person is converted, whatever he is doing, wherever he is, he is to remain in that position as long as he is free in his relationship to God. God must be first. "Therein abide with God." If his situation will not permit God to be first, then he should change the situation, as the cocktail waitress did.

³²⁰

7:1–11:34 This section comprises Paul's answers to practical questions about which the Corinthians had written him (7:1) in a letter probably delivered by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (16:17). The first of those questions had to do with marriage,

³²⁰McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 5:30-34

an area of trouble due to the moral corruption of the culture which tolerated fornication, adultery, homosexuality, polygamy, and concubinage.

7:1–7 Some had the notion that because of all the sexual sin and marital confusion, it would be better to be single, even more spiritual to be celibate. This could lead some falsely pious people to advocate divorce in order to be single. These verses elevate singleness, as long as it is celibate, but they in no way teach that marriage is either wrong or inferior.

7:1 touch a woman. This is a Jewish euphemism for sexual intercourse (see, e.g., Gen. 20:6; Ruth 2:9; Prov. 6:29). Paul is saying that it is good not to have sex, that is, to be single and celibate. It is not, however, the only good or even better than marriage (cf. Gen. 1:28; 2:18).

7:2 sexual immorality. There is a great danger of sexual sin when single (cf. Matt. 19:12). Marriage is God's only provision for sexual fulfillment. Marriage should not be reduced simply to that, however. Paul has a much higher view and articulates it in Eph. 5:22, 23. He is, here, stressing the issue of sexual sin for people who are single.

7:3 render ... affection due. Married believers are not to sexually deprive their spouses. While celibacy is right for the single, it is wrong for the married. The practice of deprivation may have been most common when a believer had an unsaved spouse (for more on unsaved spouses, *see notes on vv. 10–17*).

7:4 authority. By the marriage covenant, each partner is given the right over the spouse's body for the satisfaction of the other.

7:5 deprive. Lit. "stop depriving each other!" This command may indicate that this kind of deprivation was going on among believers, perhaps reacting to the gross sexual sins of their past and wanting to leave all that behind. Husbands and wives may abstain temporarily from sexual activity, but only when they mutually agree to do so for intercession, as a part of their fasting. **come together again.** Sexual intercourse is to be soon renewed after the spiritual interruption. **so that Satan does not tempt.** Cf. 1 Thess. 3:5. After the agreed-upon "time" of abstinence, sexual desires intensify and a spouse becomes more vulnerable to sinful desire. *See notes on Matt. 4:1–11; 2 Cor. 2:11.*

7:6 concession. A better translation of the Gr. would be "awareness" or "to have a mutual opinion." Paul was very aware of the God-ordained advantages of both singleness and marriage, and was not commanding marriage because of the temptation of singleness. Spirituality is not connected at all to marital status, though marriage is God's good gift (see 1 Pet. 3:7, "the grace of life").

7:7 as I myself. As a single person, Paul recognized the special freedom and independence he had to serve Christ (*see notes on vv. 32–34*). But he did not expect all believers to be single, nor all who were single to stay that way, nor all who were married to act celibate as if they were single. **gift from God.** Both singleness and marriage are God's gracious gifts.

7:8 unmarried ... widows. "Unmarried" is a term used 4 times in the NT, and only in 1 Corinthians (cf. vv. 11, 32, 34). This verse makes it clear that the unmarried and widows are distinct. Verse 11 identifies the divorced as the "unmarried" to be distinguished from "widows" (vv. 39, 40; single by death) and virgins (vv. 25, 28; never

Lit. literally

Gr. Greek

married). Each use of “unmarried,” then, refers to those formerly married, presently single, but not widowed. They are the divorced. It is likely these people who were formerly married wanted to know if they, as Christians, could or should remarry. **as I am.** Paul was possibly a widower, and could here affirm his former marriage by identifying with the unmarried and widows. His first suggestion is that they stay single because of its freedoms in serving the Lord (vv. 25–27, 32–34). *See notes on Anna in Luke 2:36–38.*

7:9 let them marry. The Gr. tense indicates a command, since a person can’t live a happy life and serve the Lord effectively if dominated by unfulfilled sexual passion—especially in that Corinthian society.

7:10 not I but the Lord. What Paul writes to these believers was already made clear by Jesus during His earthly ministry (Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:5–8; cf. Gen. 2:24; Mal. 2:16). **depart.** This word is used as a synonym for divorce, as indicated by the parallel use of the word “divorce,” in v. 11. Apparently, some Christians felt they should divorce their unsaved spouses, to live celibately or marry a believer.

7:11 remain unmarried. If a Christian divorces another Christian except for adultery (*see notes on Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:8, 9*), neither partner is free to marry another person. They should reconcile, or at least remain unmarried.

7:12 to the rest. Those not covered by the instruction of vv. 10, 11. **I ... say.** Not a denial of inspiration or an indication that Paul is giving human opinion, but simply a way of saying that Jesus had not spoken on this and God had not previously given revelation on the matter, as Paul was then writing.

7:12, 13 Some believers must have felt that being married to an unbeliever was somehow defiling. However, just the opposite is true (v. 14).

7:14 sanctified. This does not refer to salvation; otherwise the spouse would not be spoken of as unbelieving. The sanctification is matrimonial and familial, not personal or spiritual, and means that the unsaved partner is set apart for temporal blessing because the other belongs to God. One Christian in a marriage brings grace that spills over on the spouse—even possibly leading them to salvation. **children ... are holy.** The Christian need not separate from an unbeliever because of fear that the unbelieving spouse may defile the children. God promises the opposite. They would be unclean if both parents were unsaved, but the presence of one believing parent exposes the children to blessing and brings them protection. The presence of even one Christian parent will protect children from undue spiritual harm and they will receive many blessings, and often that includes salvation.

7:15 let him depart. A term referring to divorce (cf. vv. 10, 11). When an unbelieving spouse cannot tolerate the partner’s faith and wants a divorce, it is best to let that happen in order to preserve peace in the family (cf. Rom. 12:18). The bond of marriage is broken only by death (Rom. 7:2), adultery (Matt. 19:9), or an unbeliever’s leaving. **not under bondage.** When the bond is broken in any of those ways, a Christian is free to marry another believer. Throughout Scripture, whenever legitimate divorce occurs, remarriage is assumed. When divorce is permitted, so is remarriage. By implication, the permission for a widow to remarry (vv. 39, 40; Rom. 7:3) because the “bond” is broken, extends to this case where there is no more “bondage.”

7:16 Some may have been reluctant to let go of their unsaved spouse, who wanted out and was creating discord in the home—thinking they could evangelize the spouse by hanging on for the purpose of seeing that one converted. Paul says there are no such

assurances and it is better to divorce and be at peace (v. 15), if the unsaved partner wants to end the marriage that way.

7:17–24 Discontent was prevalent among these new believers in the Corinthian church. As noted up to this point (vv. 1–16), some wanted to change their marital status, some were slaves who wanted to be free, and some used their freedom in Christ to rationalize sinning. In a general response to that, this passage plainly repeats the basic principle that Christians should willingly accept the marital condition and social situations into which God has placed them and be content to serve Him there until He leads them elsewhere.

7:17 For the first of 3 times (vv. 20, 24), Paul states the principle of contentment which is required of all Christians.

7:18 called. As always in the epistles, this term refers to God's effectual call that saves (*see note on Rom. 8:30*). **circumcised ... uncircumcised.** With Judaizers demanding all Gentile believers in Christ to be circumcised (Gal. 5:1–6), and with some Christian Jews wanting to disassociate with Judaism and thus having a surgery to become circumcised (as addressed in rabbinic literature), Paul needed to clarify the issue by saying that neither was necessary. Figuratively, the idea is that when a Jew became a Christian, he was not to give up his racial and cultural identity in order to appear like a Gentile. Likewise, a Gentile was not to become culturally like a Jew (v. 19). Culture, social order, external ceremony have no bearing on spiritual life. What matters is faith and obedience.

7:21 while a slave. Paul was not approving all slavery, but is teaching that a person who is a slave is still able to obey and honor Christ (Eph. 6:5–8; Col. 3:23; 1 Tim. 6:1, 2). **Do not be concerned about.** In modern society, this seems an insensitive command to those who wrongly assume that freedom is some God-given right, rather than a preferable option.

7:22 the Lord's freedman. In the ways that truly count, no man is freer than a Christian. No bondage is as terrible as that of sin, from which Christ frees the believer. **Christ's slave.** Those who are not slaves, but free in the social sense, are in the spiritual sense made slaves of Christ in salvation (Rom. 6:22).

7:23 price. The blood of Christ (6:20; 1 Pet. 1:19). **slaves of men.** This refers to sinful slavery, i.e., becoming slaves to the ways of men, the ways of the world, and of the flesh. This is the slavery about which to be concerned.

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Anointing of the Sick

And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them.

And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching [Mark 6:5–6].

You see that He did not leave this area at this time but stayed in the vicinity. The first time He had been practically run out of town and had gone down to Capernaum to make

³²¹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. 1 Co 7:1

His headquarters there. This is a remarkable passage because it tells us He couldn't perform any mighty works there because of their unbelief.

The only limitation to omnipotence is unbelief. Faith is the one requirement to release the power of God in salvation. In the great chapter of Isaiah 53 that reveals God's great salvation, the prophet opens the chapter with: "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" (Isa. 53:1). Who will believe it? My friend, unbelief shuts off Omnipotence. Unbelief insulates and isolates the power of God. It still does that today!

He marvelled at their unbelief (v. 6). This is not the only time we notice that He marvels. In Matthew 8:10—"When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel"—He was speaking of the faith of the centurion.

Now we notice that He went round about the villages teaching. This is a wonderful lesson for Christian workers. There are certain men in God's work who do not want to go to a small place to minister. I've actually been criticized by some ministers and Christian workers for going to certain small churches instead of going to the larger ones. My feeling is that our Lord set us a tremendous example here when it says that He went about their villages. Imagine, friends, the Lord of Glory, the Son of God here on this earth ministering in little villages. He could have sent a telegram over to Rome and hired the Colosseum for a big meeting! Today we have men who are suffering from megalomania. They feel they have to have a big crowd. All of us need to learn a lesson from Jesus.

There is a story about Dr. C. I. Scofield, the man who was responsible for *The Scofield Reference Bible*. He had been invited to speak in a church in North Carolina. Because it was a rainy night, about twenty-five people came to the meeting. The young preacher leaned over and apologized to Dr. Scofield for the small number who had come to hear his preaching and teaching. Dr. Scofield replied, "Young man, my Lord had only twelve men in His school and in His congregation most of the time. If He had only twelve, who is C. I. Scofield to be concerned about a big crowd?"

6:5 He could do no mighty work there. Cf. Matt. 13:58. This is not to suggest that His power was somehow diminished by their unbelief. It may suggest that because of their unbelief people were not coming to Him for healing or miracles the way they did in Capernaum and Jerusalem. Or, more importantly it may signify that Christ limited His ministry both as an act of mercy, so that the exposure to greater light would not result in a worse hardening that would only subject them to greater condemnation, and a judgment on their unbelief. He had the power to do more miracles, but not the will, because they rejected Him. Miracles belonged among those who were ready to believe.³²²

And they went out, and preached that men should repent.

And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them [Mark 6:12–13].

They preached a message of repentance, and the miracles authenticated their message. This commission was limited to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It is not the pattern

³²²MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mk 6:5

for today. Repentance is part of the gospel message, however; it is contained in the command to *believe*.

The record of this incident is longer in the Gospel of Matthew and we go into more detail in our study of it in that Gospel. The fame of Jesus had spread throughout that area. Not only the common people but even Herod on the throne had heard of Jesus. Now we find this strange reaction on the part of King Herod. The murder of John the Baptist had taken place sometime before. I think it is recorded here to explain Herod's strange and superstitious reaction.

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6:12, 13 preached ... cast out many demons. Cf. v. 7. They were heralds of the gospel and had repeated success in expelling evil spirits from people. This demonstrated Christ's power over the supernatural world and confirmed His claim to being God.

6:12 repent. *See notes on 1:15; Matt. 3:2.*

6:13 anointed with oil ... sick. In Jesus' day olive oil was often used medicinally (cf. Luke 10:34). But here it represented the power and presence of the Holy Spirit and was used symbolically in relation to supernatural healing (cf. Is. 11:2; Zech. 4:1–6; Matt. 25:2–4; Rev. 1:4, 12). As a well known healing agent, the oil was an appropriate, tangible medium the people could identify with as the disciples ministered to the sick among them.

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And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou earnest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost [Acts 9:17].

What a change! He is still Saul of Tarsus, but now he is *Brother* Saul. He is not the enemy. He is a brother. Any person who loves the Lord Jesus Christ is a brother to any other believer. Unfortunately, I must add that brothers don't always act like brothers.

Saul is to receive his physical sight. Also, he is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. He is to be filled with the Holy Spirit for service. This is the experience which reveals itself in the life of the believer. He was baptized with the Holy Spirit on the Damascus road. In other words, he was saved on the Damascus road. But it wasn't until this man Ananias came to him that he was filled with the Holy Spirit. He is going to become a witness for the Lord Jesus. He will receive his physical sight and his spiritual sight.

And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized [Acts 9:18].

Now he is baptized with water as a sign and seal of his conversion. The water had nothing to do with his salvation. He had been baptized by the Holy Spirit—that is, he had been saved on the Damascus road. When Ananias had laid his hands on him, he had been filled with the Holy Spirit for service. And now he is baptized with water.

³²³McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:185

³²⁴MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Mk 6:12

9:17 laying his hands on him. *See note on 6:6. be filled with the Holy Spirit. See note on 2:4.* The Spirit had already been active in Paul's life: convicting him of sin (John 16:9), convincing him of the Lordship of Christ (1 Cor. 12:3), transforming him (Titus 3:5), and indwelling him permanently (1 Cor. 12:13). He was then filled with the Spirit and empowered for service (cf. 2:4, 14; 4:8, 31; 6:5, 8; *see also note on Eph. 5:16*). Saul received the Spirit without any apostles present because he was a Jew (the inclusion of Jews in the church had already been established at Pentecost) and because he was an apostle in his own right because Christ personally chose him and commissioned him for service (Rom. 1:1).³²⁶

9:17. Brother Saul—what words of encouragement these must have been to **Saul!** The first recorded man to call Saul a Christian brother was **Ananias**. A more complete statement of Ananias' words is given in 22:14-16. Ananias' apprehension of Saul was turned to love for Saul because of the Lord's directive. Ananias identified with Saul by **placing his hands on him**.

Saul's being **filled with the Holy Spirit** clearly followed his conversion (cf. 4:8, 31; Eph. 5:18).

9:18. In his healing from his blindness **something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again.** The word "scales" (*lepidēs*, from the verb *lepō*, "to peel") was used of the scales of fish and crocodiles. As in several previous conversions recorded in Acts, water baptism followed conversion (8:12, 38).

After this event Ananias disappeared from the narrative and is not mentioned again except in chapter 22 where Paul recounted his own conversion.

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³²⁵McGee, J. Vernon: *Thru the Bible Commentary*. electronic ed. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1981, S. 4:550-551

³²⁶MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, S. Ac 9:17

cf. *confer*, compare

³²⁷Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:377