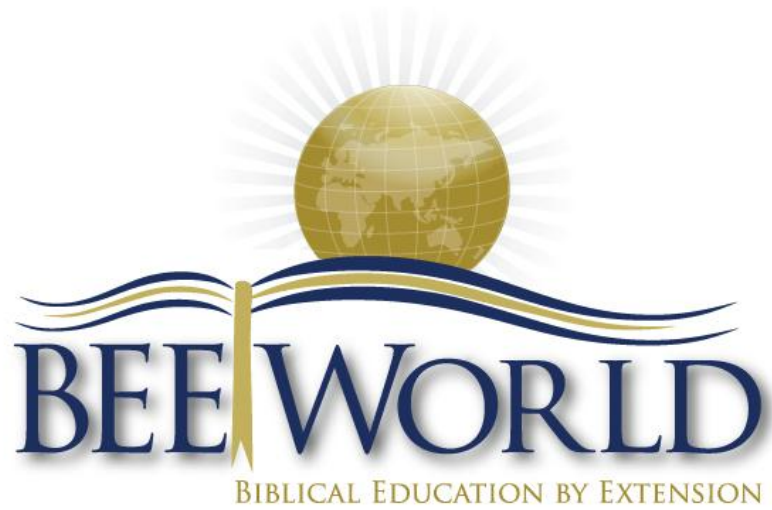


Doctrine TWO



Becoming Complete in Christ

Doctrine Two



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Course Introduction: Survey of Bible Doctrine 2

Description of the Course

You have completed the first part of the course on Bible doctrine. In reality, it is just the first half of a complete course on Bible doctrine. This second course completes a study of the topics in the textbook *Basic Theology* by Charles C. Ryrie. We trust the first course was informative and challenging—indeed, life-changing—to you and that you are now looking forward to completing your survey of Bible doctrine, including the study of such tremendous doctrines as the person of Christ and salvation.

Since ancient times the study of theology has been known as the “queen of sciences.” For any God-fearing man or woman, the Lord’s word on any subject is the starting place for forming an opinion or belief. Sadly, theology has become an afterthought in these modern times. As you continue your study of theology, you do well to recall the introductory words of Ryrie’s text:

Theology is for everyone. Indeed, everyone needs to be a theologian. In reality, everyone is a theologian—of one sort or another. And therein lies the problem. There is nothing wrong with being an amateur theologian or a professional theologian, but there is everything wrong about being an ignorant or a careless theologian. Therefore, every Christian should read theology.

The phrase *sound teaching* that Paul used in 2 Timothy 4:3 and Titus 1:9 means healthy teaching. Healthy doctrine or healthy theology is always expected to result in holy living. When Paul prayed for churches, he prayed for an increase in knowledge because he realized that this would produce holy living. Healthy theology is expressed not only in word but in fruitful living, and holy living must be based on healthy theology. How theology affects my life or your life is our personal and individual responsibility. To conform our lives to the image of Christ is the ultimate goal in studying theology, yet in the final analysis no book can do that. Only God and you can.

This course offers an overview of the major teachings of the Bible concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ, the salvation and security of the believer, the ministry of God the Holy Spirit, the biblical study of the church, and a study of the end times and future. Even though this is not a course on the evidences for the Christian faith, it will at times refer to historical and scientific evidence that supports the biblical view of the world and the truthfulness of the Scriptures. This course will also give special attention to some of the objections that have been raised against the central teachings of Christianity. Together with your study of Doctrine 1, this course will complete your study of the central teachings of Christianity.

This course was written by Dr. Joseph Dillow. It is based upon the textbook by Dr. Charles Ryrie called *Basic Theology*.

Units of Study

This course has four units. Each unit has three lessons.

Unit 1: The Savior

Lesson 1: The Person of the Redeemer, Part 1

Lesson 2: The Person of the Redeemer, Part 2

Lesson 3: The Atonement

Unit 2: Salvation

Lesson 4: The Election of the Believer

Lesson 5: Extent and Application of the Atonement

Lesson 6: The Eternal Security of the Believer

Unit 3: The Holy Spirit and the Church

Lesson 7: The Ministry of the Holy Spirit, Part 1

Lesson 8: The Ministry of the Holy Spirit, Part 2

Lesson 9: The Church

Unit 4: Last Things

Lesson 10: A Survey of Millennial Views

Lesson 11: The Rapture and the Tribulation

Lesson 12: The Eternal Destiny of Man

As you plan your study schedule, decide on what dates you want to finish each unit. You can then divide this time into study periods for each lesson.

We suggest that you try to do a lesson a week or three lessons per month. The lessons vary in length but you should allocate about four hours per lesson. You can do this if you study about one hour each day. At this rate, it will take you approximately eight months to complete the course. Many will desire to speed this up and do two or three lessons per week.

Lesson Organization

Please give careful attention to each part of the lesson:

- Title
- Lesson outline
- Lesson objectives
- Lesson assignments
- Lesson development

The title, outline, and objectives provide a preview of the lesson. Reviewing this preview will give you the big picture overview, or framework for the course and will help you understand how the pieces fit together.

The lesson assignments describe how and in what order to complete the lesson.

The lesson development follows the lesson outline. Its comments, suggestions, and questions all help you reach the lesson objectives. Be sure to check your answers with the ones given for the study questions. These will fix your attention once more on the main points of the lesson. This procedure is designed to make your learning more effective and long-lasting.

Recommended for Further Reading

This course will include readings in the following work:

- *Basic Theology* by Charles Ryrie.

Student Instructions

As you read through the course Table of Contents and Introduction, you saw that this course offers an overview of the major teachings of the Bible concerning the person and work of God, the Word of God, history, angels, man, sin, and other subjects. In order to benefit most from your study of this material, you should plan to work through the lessons in the order they are presented. In other words, we would encourage you to work through the course systematically, rather than choosing a topic in the middle of the course as a place to begin.

You should allow yourself a minimum of four hours of study time to complete each lesson. This would include doing the required reading, answering the questions, doing the exercises, and completing the study projects.

If you plan to teach this course to someone else later on, you may want to keep track of how many hours you needed to complete each lesson. In addition, you might wish to note any problems encountered or questions raised as you work through the course.

Course Design

Since most individuals taking this course are extremely busy people, we have designed each lesson with clearly defined steps for easy reference. Also, if you study the course and lesson objectives, you will know from the start which topics to spend the most time on.

The material covered in Lesson 1 is a review of what was discussed during the first seminar. Sometime between Seminar 1 and Seminar 2, review the contents of Lesson 1, do the exercises, and answer the questions if you have not already done so. The answers will be discussed during Seminar 2.

Your group leader will tell you whether the final examination is to be done by each student at home or together as a class.

Lesson Design

Several standard components are built into each lesson to facilitate your study and develop your skills. They are explained below so that you may recognize and use them to full advantage:

1. **Lesson Outlines** provide an overview of the sections of each lesson. In this way you can anticipate the flow and sequence of the various topics to be covered before you begin your study.
2. **Lesson Objectives** are provided to help you identify the most crucial parts of each lesson. They give you guidance in the effective use of your study time and will be used by your group leader for class discussion, so be prepared!
3. **Repetition and review** are woven into the course to help you learn new concepts.
4. **Questions** are posed from time to time in most lessons to help you interact with the material being covered. Whenever you see the heading “Question,” stop and write an answer in your Life Notebook. Check your answers with those provided at the end of each lesson.

5. **Study Projects** give you the opportunity to further examine concepts explored in a lesson. The projects will be discussed and evaluated during the seminar.
6. **Examination** is an important component of this course. There is an examination after each unit covering concepts learned in the unit. The exam results will contribute to your final course grade.

Materials Needed

To work through this course, you will need a Bible, preferably with cross-references, a copy of this workbook, and a personal notebook entitled Life Notebook for all written work. All the Scripture references and Scripture quotations in this workbook are from the Net Bible. Every time you see the heading “Question” or “Study Project,” you should respond by writing an answer in your Life Notebook.

We suggest that you divide your Life Notebook into two major sections: the first one-third should be reserved for your answers to all questions and written assignments given throughout the course. The remaining two-thirds of the notebook should be reserved for your study projects. (NOTE: If you would like to keep a separate notebook for this second half, please do so, as it may serve as a study commentary later on.) If at all possible, keep together all the work you do on a particular book or passage for future reference.

Reference books, such as a concordance and Bible dictionary, will also be helpful in the completion of some assigned work. Instructions will indicate when the use of supplementary reference books is advisable.

Your Questions about Theology

What questions would you like to have answered about theology? How do you expect to benefit by working through this course? Take a few minutes to write down your questions and expectations in your Life Notebook. Refer to this list periodically during the course to check your progress.

Course Grading System

Read through the grading system outlined below and be prepared to discuss it with your group leader. The group leader should designate someone to keep the records for the course.

1. The grading scale is intended to accomplish the following:
2. Help determine a **final grade** for the course
3. Identify **definite standards** for the completion of the course
4. Reflect a **balanced concern** for the student’s personal development in the areas of academics, faithfulness in attendance, and practical involvement
5. Serve as an **evaluation tool** in identifying areas of need and growth in the life of each student

Grading

The final grade is based upon four things:

Average of all exam scores 25%

Lessons completed 25%

Attendance 25%

Seminar Assignments 25%

Each area of the course (exams, lesson completion, attendance, and assignment completion) is given a 25% weighting.

The numerical grade you report to us is based upon the following:

94 – 100 = 1

85 – 93 = 2

75 – 84 = 3

65 – 74 = 4

Below 65 = 5. We no longer have a 6. The lowest score is a 5. We will record all current 6's as 5's.

To earn a certificate, a student must score a 75 or above (grade 1, 2, or 3). If he receives a four or a five, and wants to apply to retake the exam or do the missing work, we will do that on an individual basis.

Guidelines to Follow in Determining the Grade

- 1. Grade.** The final grade is determined on the basis of the minimum standards completed for **all** parts of the course.
- 2. Exams.** There are four unit examinations.
- 3. Workbook.** Completion of a lesson includes **all** related reading and written exercises and projects.
- 4. Attendance.** Attendance is impossible to make-up. The student should be personally counseled to determine if he or she should continue in further course work. If, however, reasons for absence are **valid**, credit can be given but only under extraordinary circumstances
- 5. Study Projects.** The student must complete all study projects based upon the stated instructions in the workbook and share the results of his study in the seminars as instructed by the facilitator.

Unit One: The Savior

I met my friend David several years ago at a church meeting. Because he was a regular at the church, I always assumed that he was a committed, practicing Christian. Then David moved to the southern part of the country for a while to take care of his ailing father.

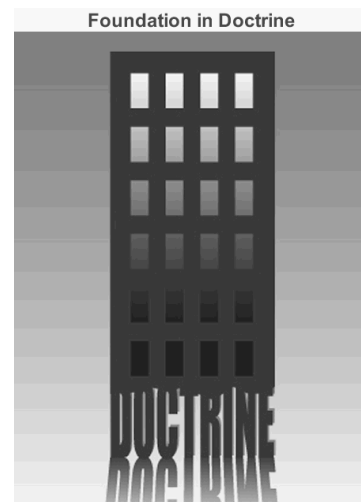
I didn't hear from him for several years, but when he returned to our town, he contacted me. We went out for lunch, and David started to tell me about how his views on life had shifted significantly over the past few years. He was doing a lot of reading about various religions, and he had chosen the best of each religion to form his own personal faith. He now had the following beliefs:

- Religion—Religions are just a way for societies and governments to keep people in line. They are all man-made methods for instilling fear in citizens to maintain a peaceful, controlled community.
- God—There is a God, but we all see Him differently, which explains why there are many religions in the world.
- Reincarnation—When we die, we come back as another person or animal.
- Religious leaders—Jesus, Buddha, Mohammad, and all the other major religious figures were all outstanding teachers with great insight. They all can provide us with equally good guidance for living.
- Truth—There is some truth in all religions. It is our duty as humans to interpret what is true for ourselves. What is true for you may not be true for me.

I was disappointed that my friend David had strayed so far from the Christian faith. He considered himself to be enlightened, but there was a great darkness in the words he spoke to me. As I thought back to his experience at our church, I realized that he had never been disciplined and that the teaching he received at that time was shallow and emotion-filled, not full of thought and reason.

As Christians, all of us have talked to people who believe like David. And at times, it can shake our own faith and make us wonder what we really believe and why we believe what we do. How do we know that people like David aren't right? As Christians, we have a responsibility to be able to explain not only *what* we believe but also *why* we believe it. That is where sound doctrine comes into play. It helps us explain not just what we as Christians believe, but why Christians hold to these truths.

A good foundation in doctrine can help make your faith unshakeable, even in times of trouble and hardship.



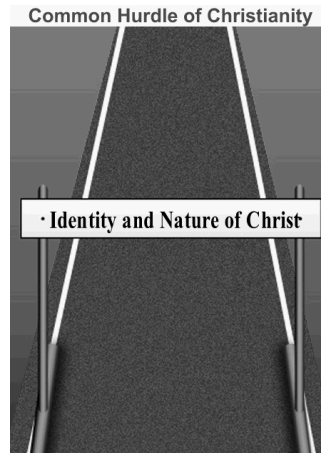
Christology and Soteriology

In this unit we will study the doctrines of Christology and soteriology. Christology is the study of Jesus Christ, and soteriology is the study of salvation. Through this unit, we will come to know better and appreciate more our Savior, who loves us and gave Himself for us. We do not study merely to gain a greater intellectual knowledge of Jesus Christ, but to fall more deeply in love with Him and gain a greater desire to serve Him wholeheartedly.

Lesson 1: The Person of the Redeemer, Part 1

Lesson Introduction

One common hurdle that we all face with Christianity is the identity and nature of Christ. Thinking men throughout the world will all agree that Jesus of Nazareth is the greatest teacher, leader, and influence for good that mankind has ever known. However, we as Christians claim that Christ is God. When dealing with a divine-human person, many difficulties arise that are beyond human comprehension and require exact study of the text to keep us from error.



Jesus and the Cults

My friend Janet and I used to enjoy walking around the neighborhood together. I knew that she had grown up in a Catholic family and that she went to her Catholic church occasionally, but not every week. One day when we were out for a walk, she said to me, “Did you know that the Bible is true?” She was smiling as I looked her in the eye and said, “Yes, I know it’s true, but how have you come to this conclusion?”

She went on to explain that she had been doing a lot of research but still had some questions. She asked me to come to her house after we walked to see if I could answer some of them. As I entered her kitchen, I saw that her table was filled with Bibles and other books and documents. She explained to me that in light of the birth of their first child, she and her husband were discussing what religious education their child would receive. Her husband had grown up as a Jehovah’s Witness, and Janet had grown up Catholic. She told me that her husband had secretly been going to a Jehovah’s Witness church and wanted her to join him. It was obvious that she was struggling with determining what was true.

As we sat down to discuss her questions, her husband came home from work. At first I thought he would join our discussion, which was going well. But, he joined us to tell us what was right and true from the Jehovah’s Witness point of view, not to have an open discussion on the subject. He asked me to explain who Christ is, and when I started to tell him that Christ was the Son of God, the Messiah and our Savior, he interrupted and said, “No, Christ is the archangel Michael, who took on a human form.” He started reading to us from his detailed notes and further explained that God created the archangel Michael, and the archangel created all things, took on the human form of Jesus, and once he died, his spirit returned to heaven again as the archangel Michael. He quoted Scripture verses like John 1:3 and interpreted them to say things that weren’t even related to what the text said.

Janet’s husband asked me several more questions, but he didn’t let me answer any of them fully before he told me I was all wrong. I felt sorry for my friend Janet. She was being forced to convert to a Jehovah’s Witness and was not allowed to think and discuss the biblical text for herself. I went home and prayed for her.

In this lesson, you will study Christ’s preexistence, incarnation, full deity, and perfect humanity. At certain points in the lesson we will compare orthodox Christian beliefs with the beliefs of other groups who study the life of Christ, such as Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: The Preexistence of Christ

Preexistence and Eternality

Preincarnate Activity

Topic 2: The Incarnation of Christ

The Means of the Incarnation

The Purposes of the Incarnation

Topic 3: The Person of Christ Incarnate

The Full Deity of Christ Incarnate

The Perfect Humanity of Christ Incarnate

Topic 4: The Hypostatic Union

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Know the importance of preexistence and eternity and the difference between the two
- Explain clearly the purposes of the Incarnation
- List the scriptural evidence for the deity of Christ from memory
- State accurately the orthodox doctrine of the union of the divine and human natures of Christ
- Summarize various heretical views of the hypostatic union throughout church history
- Apply these truths in your personal life to bring glory to Christ

Key Terms

Eternality—the doctrine that Jesus Christ existed not only prior to His birth but also has existed for eternity past and will continue to exist for eternity future.

Preexistence—the doctrine that Jesus Christ existed before His birth.

Hypostatic Union—the orthodox statement of the unity of the divine and human natures of Christ in such a way that there is no loss, no division, no separation, and no mixture of the divine and human natures and that results in one divine person.

Incarnation—the doctrine that the eternal Second Person of the Trinity took humanity on Himself. The Lord became flesh at His birth and thus possessed sinless humanity.

Nature—a complex of attributes. A nature differs from subsistence in that a nature is not an entity but only a term describing the conglomeration or assembly of attributes possessed by subsistence.

Subsistence—the fundamental idea of this word is the essential reality of a thing. It is based on a word (Gk. *hypostasis*) that originally means, “to stand under,” that led later to the ideas of basis and foundation. *Subsistence* was also used of legal contracts in which the *hypostasis* was the “title deed.”

Topic 1: The Preexistence of Christ

Understanding the relationship between Christ’s preexistence, His eternity, and His preincarnate activity is fundamental to an accurate understanding of the doctrine of Christ—His person and His work, who He is and what He came to do.

This topic is divided into the following subtopics:

- Preexistence and Eternality
- Preincarnate Activity

Preexistence and Eternality

Read Ryrie, chapter 40, “The Preincarnate Christ.”

QUESTION 1

Christology is the study of:

- A. The varying beliefs of Christians
- B. Archeological findings that support the New Testament
- C. Christ’s life on earth and work of salvation
- D. The person and works of Jesus Christ

QUESTION 2

The doctrine that Jesus Christ existed before His birth is _____.

QUESTION 3

The doctrine that Christ existed not only prior to His birth or even before Creation and that He existed always and eternally is the doctrine of eternity. (Check the definition of preexistence in the key terms section above.) *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Preexistence and eternity are essentially the same concept. True or False?

One aggressive cult (Jehovah’s Witnesses) has denied that John 1:1 teaches the full deity and eternity of Jesus Christ. As Ryrie points out, they translate the last portion of this verse as “the Word was a god” rather than “the Word was God.” They base this on the word *God* in the Greek text that is without the definite article. While it is true that words without the definite article are often properly translated with the indefinite article *a*, this is not always correct in the Greek language. Read Ryrie on the absence of the definite article in John 1:1 found at the end of this lesson.

QUESTION 5

How does Ryrie respond to the presence/absence of the Greek article?

- A. Ryrie states that the use of the noun *God* without the article is consistent with the rest of John’s writing.
- B. Ryrie points out that a noun without a preceding Greek article needs to be translated with the indefinite article *a*.
- C. Ryrie points out that some nouns that precede the verb often lack the definite article in Greek, such as in 1 John 4:16, “God is love.” The word *love* has no article, but it is surely not taught here “God is *a* love.”
- D. Ryrie thinks that the noun *God* in Greek does not need an article.

It is important not to place too much theological weight on the presence or absence of the article.

Preincarnate Activity

If Christ existed before He was born on earth, we may wonder what He did before His birth as Jesus of Nazareth. Many believe that He was most active as the Angel of the Lord.

QUESTION 6

Match the evidence for Christ's preincarnate nature with the verse that supports it.

| <i>Evidence</i> | <i>Scripture</i> |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| Christ's heavenly origin | Colossians 2:9 |
| His work as Creator | John 1:15-30 |
| His attributes and claim of deity | John 3:13 |
| His relationship to John the Baptist | Colossians 1:16 |

QUESTION 7

Why is it important that Christ is eternal? If Christ was *not* eternal, then: (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. He would not be God.
- B. The Trinity would not be eternal.
- C. Christ is a liar.
- D. He is not alive today.

QUESTION 8

Open your Life Notebook and think about the beliefs of my friend David. He said, "Jesus, Buddha, Mohammad, and all the other major religious figures were all outstanding teachers with great insight. They all can provide us with equally good guidance for living." In what ways do David's beliefs contradict the doctrines of preexistence and eternity? How would you explain the differences between your beliefs as a Christian and what David claims to be his personal truth?

Topic 2: The Incarnation of Christ

Now we come to the great miraculous history-changing event of the Incarnation itself: God came to earth in the flesh! What an amazing thing! What wonderful evidence of His love!

In this topic, we will study the incarnation of Christ with the following two subtopics:

- The Means of the Incarnation
- The Purposes of the Incarnation

The Means of the Incarnation

To prepare for this inspirational aspect of the life of Christ, read Ryrie, chapter 41, "The Incarnation of Christ."

Incarnation literally means "in the flesh" and is the doctrine that Christ became a human being. The Virgin Birth was the means of the Incarnation. The evidence for the Virgin Birth was recorded in several Scriptures.

QUESTION 9

Which of the following Scriptures state the evidence for the Virgin Birth? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Luke 1:30-35
- B. Matthew 1:18
- C. Galatians 4:4
- D. John 1:14

One of the questions that challenges Bible interpreters is the apparent contradiction between the genealogies of Christ presented in Luke and Matthew. We agree with Ryrie that the best explanation of the differing genealogies is that Matthew presents the genealogy of Christ through

Joseph back to Solomon, establishing Christ's *legal* right to the throne. Luke, on the other hand, presents the genealogy through Mary back to Nathan, another son of David, establishing Christ's *physical* lineage with David (see Lk 3:23-31, where this is expressly taught).

QUESTION 10

Open your Life Notebook. How are your lineage and heritage important to you and your family? Why do you think Jesus' lineage is of great importance to all of us as Christians?

The Purposes of the Incarnation

God explicitly predicted the Incarnation in the Old Testament. He miraculously fulfilled the prophecies of the Incarnation through the Virgin Birth. But the real value of the Incarnation is found in its purpose. Just coming to earth as a man was not enough. The crucial question is, "Why did God become man?" You will now explore this question through the following study.

QUESTION 11

Match the Scripture on the left with the seven purposes of the Incarnation on the right.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Purpose of the Incarnation</i> |
|------------------|--|
| John 1:18 | The death of an ordinary man would not pay for sin eternally, so the Savior must also be God |
| 1 Peter 2:21 | The only way man can see the Father is to know the Son |
| Hebrews 10:10-14 | Satan must be defeated in the arena he dominates, this world |
| Luke 1:31-33 | The earthly life of Jesus is held up to us as a pattern for our life today |
| 1 John 3:8 | God had to become man in order to be tested and then be a sympathetic Priest |
| Hebrews 4:14-16 | To occupy the throne forever requires that the occupant never die |

Topic 3: The Person of Christ Incarnate

The Lord Jesus Christ is the God-Man, a union of deity and humanity in one person. This raises certain questions for the student of the Scripture: How can Jesus be tired if He is God (Jn 4:6)? How can Jesus be omnipresent if He is man (Jn 3)? What was the self-consciousness of the baby Jesus? These and other questions will be discussed as we study "The Person of Christ Incarnate," in Ryrie, chapter 42.

This topic is divided into the following subtopics:

- The Full Deity of Christ Incarnate
- The Perfect Humanity of Christ Incarnate

The Full Deity of Christ Incarnate

To have a better understanding of this topic, please read Ryrie, chapter 42, "The Person of Christ Incarnate."

Because many religions and cults reject Christ's deity, every Christian must understand and be fully convinced of the deity of Jesus Christ. We should understand the others' objections and know how to refute them from the Scriptures. While true Christians have always held to the full deity of Christ, the scholars of the Christian church took several centuries to formulate an accurate theological description of His deity and humanity and how they unite in the God-Man. The final orthodox statement came at the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451).

When we assert that Jesus is God, some people, even Christians, might respond, “He is not God; He is the Son of God,” or “Jesus said the Father is greater.” In order to respond to these and other questions concerning Christ’s deity, you will study the biblical evidence that Jesus Christ is God.

Ryrie’s development of the biblical evidence can be summarized in the *syllogism* as follows (A syllogism is a form of deductive reasoning consisting of a major premise, a minor premise, and a conclusion). For example:

- MAJOR PREMISE:** A equals B
- MINOR PREMISE:** B equals C
- CONCLUSION:** Therefore A must equal C

Now, take that same type of reasoning and apply it to the reasoning that Christ is God.

- MAJOR PREMISE:** A person who performs works only God could do must be God.
- MINOR PREMISE:** Jesus Christ performed works that only God can perform.
- CONCLUSION:** Jesus Christ must be God.

Now, expand the line of reasoning to include several known facts about Christ.

- MAJOR PREMISE:** A person who possesses attributes only God could have, who performs works only God could do, who has been given names and titles that only God could have, and who claims to be God must be God.
- MINOR PREMISE:** Jesus Christ possessed attributes only God could have, performed works which only God could do, was given names and titles that only God could have, and claimed to be God.
- CONCLUSION:** Jesus Christ must be God.

QUESTION 12

If the major and minor premises are true, the conclusion must inevitably follow. Match the Scriptures that provide the major and minor premises to the evidence of the full deity of Christ incarnate.

| <i>Scriptures</i> | <i>The Major or Minor Premises</i> |
|----------------------|---|
| John 8:58; 17:5 | Minor Premise—God; Jesus claims to be God |
| Matthew 18:20; 28:20 | Minor Premise—Giving Life; He gives life to whomever He wishes |
| Matthew 16:21 | Major Premise—Attribute of Omniscience; He showed knowledge of things that could only be known if He were God |
| Mark 2:5-7 | Minor Premise—Son of God; The title our Lord used to designate Himself |
| John 10:36 | Major Premise—Attribute of Eternality; He claimed to exist from eternity past |
| John 10:30 | Minor Premise—Forgiveness; He forgives sins eternally |
| John 5:21 | Major Premise—Attribute of Omnipresence; He claimed to be everywhere present |

In the history of the church, various heretical groups, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Mormons, have used certain titles of Christ to prove that He is not coequal with God. These titles include “only begotten,” “Son of God,” and “Son of Man.”

QUESTION 13

According to Ryrie's teaching on the Son of God, when Jesus used the title *Son of God*, He implied that He was not God or that He was in some sense less than God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 14

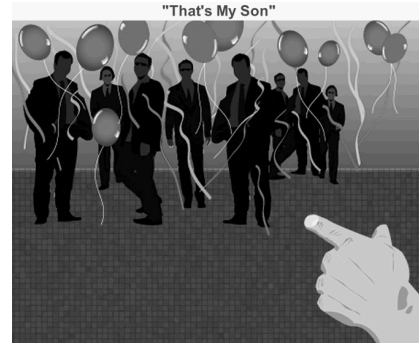
In John 5:17-18 Jesus claims to be the Son of God, and His enemies understand this to be a claim of complete equality with God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 15

Open your Life Notebook and answer this question. Let's say that you went to a party and one of the men you were speaking with pointed across the room and said, "That's my son." If you couldn't see the person he pointed to, what types of assumptions would you make about the person he pointed to? (Hint: What race, size, and nature would you assume that the son has?)

If you were to claim that an adult male in the room is your son, you are in no way implying that you are human and your son is something else. Rather you would be stating: (1) that your son is of the same essence, human essence, as yourself and is therefore no less a man than you are; and (2) that your son is not just of human essence in *general* but of YOUR human essence in *particular*. It is a strong statement of the coequality of you and your son.

Another designation of Christ is "only begotten." Some have misinterpreted this phrase to imply that Jesus Christ had a definite beginning. The Greek term *monogenes* means "of singular descent," giving the sense of "only begotten." But it can also mean "unique" or "incomparable." (F. Büchsel, "monogenes" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, 10 vols. [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-1976], 4:738.)



Hebrews 11:17 tells us that Isaac is the *monogenes* of Abraham. Clearly here it does not mean that Isaac is the only son, because Abraham had other sons, but it means Isaac is Abraham's unique and special son, through whom the promise of the seed has been fulfilled. Thus, when we are told in John 1:18 and John 3:16 that Jesus is God's *monogenes*, the implication is that He is God's unique and incomparable Son.

QUESTION 16

Why is Jesus called a Son if He had no beginning? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The use of the term stresses Jesus' *absolute equality* with the Father.
- B. "Son" stresses the *relationship of love* between the eternal Father and His eternal Son.
- C. The term implies the *eternal subordination* of the Son to the Father.
- D. The term implies Jesus has a literal physical birth because He is referred as "firstborn."

In a number of passages Jesus is referred to as "firstborn" (Gk. *prototokos*): Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15-18; Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 1:5. This Greek word can imply a literal physical birth, but usually does not. The term typically means something like "first in rank," with or without comparison with others (a firstborn son could be an only child). "My firstborn" and "the highest of the kings of the earth" are presented synonymously in Psalm 89:27, clearly referring to supreme rank and position. *Prototokos* can also have the sense of a special, close relationship, very similar to that of *monogenes*.

Monogenes stresses Christ’s absolutely unique and incomparable relationship with God the Father. *Prototokos* stresses the relationship of the risen Christ in His glorified humanity to man. Christ is the first in rank among us. He is the one with all of the rights of the firstborn, the inheritor of the promises. By virtue of our relationship with Him, we enter into those rights that are uniquely His.

Up to this point you have focused on the scriptural evidences that Jesus is God. Now you will focus on the scriptural basis for the humanity of Christ.

QUESTION 17

Think back to the story about Janet and her husband. If you were given the opportunity to speak to Janet’s husband and the guarantee that he would listen to you, what would you say to explain the biblical rationale for Christ’s deity? Record your thoughts in your Life Notebook.

The Perfect Humanity of Christ Incarnate

Read Ryrie, chapter 42, section II, “The Perfect Humanity of Christ Incarnate.”

The Scriptures clearly teach the full deity of Jesus Christ. At the same time they also teach His full humanity. The humanity of Christ is rarely denied today. Some seem to come close to a denial of the full humanity of Christ when they separate Jesus the man from the “Christ idea.” The Christ is not material to them. In the early centuries this heresy was called Docetism.

QUESTION 18

What are four proofs that Jesus Christ was fully human? Match the Scripture references with the appropriate statements.

| <i>References</i> | <i>Statements</i> |
|--------------------------|--|
| Matthew 4:2; John 4:6 | He had a human soul and spirit. |
| John 8:40 | He had human characteristics such as hunger, thirst and fatigue. |
| Luke 12:40; Matthew 9:27 | He was called human names, for example, “Son of Man” and “Son of David.” |
| Matthew 26:38 | He had a human body. |

Topic 4: The Hypostatic Union

If you think back to our story about my friend David, he fully understood that Jesus was human. In fact, he held Jesus on a pedestal as far as humans are concerned. But he had difficulty understanding and believing that Jesus was also divine. It didn’t make sense to him. How can someone be both human and divine? Aren’t all beings classified as one or the other?

One of the most common reasons for misunderstanding the person of Christ is the apparent impossibility that divine and human natures simultaneously exist in one being. Understanding the relationship of His two natures is difficult. We cannot fully comprehend such a union of opposites as human and divine, but we can profit greatly from reflection on the issues.

But we must also ask, “Why should we care about accurately presenting this doctrine? What is the relevance to our life and ministry?” In this topic, we will address both the doctrine and its relevance. But first what does this doctrine involve?

The union of the human and divine natures occurs in such a way that there is no loss, no change, no separation or division, and no transfer of the properties of one nature to another.

In the history of the church, this union has been called the hypostatic union.

Read Ryrie, chapter 42, section III, “The Union of Deity and Humanity in Christ Incarnate.”

Many heresies arose in the ancient church because they failed to combine all of these elements in their doctrinal statement concerning the person of Christ.

A proper biblical statement of the person of Christ involves four things:

1. He possesses true and proper deity.
2. He possesses true and proper humanity.
3. His divine nature and human nature are united in one person.
4. The union of the human and divine natures occurs in such a way that there is no loss, no change, no separation or division, and no transfer of the properties of one nature to another.

These four points constitute the doctrine of the hypostatic union. The heresies which arose in the ancient church resulted because of their failure to combine all these elements in their doctrinal statement concerning the person of Christ. A statement about the deity and humanity of Christ was formulated by the Council at Chalcedon in AD 451, and since then it has been the definitive statement on the subject.

QUESTION 19

Which words in the following Scriptures state that Jesus Christ has both a divine and a human nature? Match the Scripture reference on the left with the correct phrases on the right.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Description of Christ</i> |
|--------------------|--|
| Philippians 2:6-11 | The Eternal Life that was with the Father |
| John 1:1-14 | Form of God, sharing in a human nature |
| Romans 1:2-5 | The Word was God, the Word became flesh |
| 1 John 1:1-3 | Descendant of David according to the flesh, appointed Son of God |

QUESTION 20

How does Ryrie define “a nature”?

- A. A nature represents the essence of a person.
- B. A nature represents the person’s personality.
- C. A nature is a description of all that a person is.
- D. A nature is a complex of attributes.

QUESTION 21

Read the section in Ryrie, chapter 42, section IV, on the “The History of the Doctrine of the Hypostatic Union.” Match the heresy on the left with its description on the right.

| <i>Heresy</i> | <i>Description</i> |
|-----------------|---|
| Docetism | Christ did not have a human spirit, only a divine spirit (the “Logos”) |
| Ebionism | Jesus had a beginning |
| Arianism | Christ only seemed to be human but He really was not |
| Apollinarianism | Christ had only one nature, a mixture. The divine was not totally divine and the human was not totally human. |
| Nestorianism | Christ had two natures: Deity took the appearance of servant and humanity had the form of Godhead |
| Eutychianism | Christ was the natural son of Joseph and Mary |

QUESTION 22

A modern expression of Docetism is Christian Science; of Arianism is Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses. What non-Christian sects in your culture have embraced these ancient heresies? Open your Life Notebook and record any experiences you may have had or cults you know about. Come prepared to discuss this at your accountability group.

QUESTION 23

My friend David told me that Jesus is not God, but he was a good man. He says the Scriptures prove this because Jesus died, and God cannot die; Jesus was tired and thirsty, and God cannot be tired and thirsty; and Jesus himself said, "The Father is greater than I." Based upon what you have learned about the hypostatic union how would you respond to him? Open your Life Notebook and record your answer. Come prepared to discuss this question in your accountability group.

Lesson 1 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Which Scripture best supports the doctrine of Christ's Eternality?

- A. Isaiah 7:14
- B. Matthew 16:15-16
- C. John 3:16
- D. John 8:58; 17:5

QUESTION 2

When we assert that Jesus is God, some people, even Christians, might respond, "He is not God; He is the Son of God," or "Jesus said the Father is greater." What are the biblical evidences that affirm Jesus Christ is fully God? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. He possesses attributes that only God has—Matthew 18:20; John 11:38-44.
- B. He performs works that only God can do—John 5:21; 11:43.
- C. He was given the names and titles of Deity—John 10:36.
- D. He claimed to be God—John 1:1; 10:30; 20:28.
- E. He claimed to be the Son of God, and His enemies understand this to be less than God—John 5:17-18.

QUESTION 3

Which sentence best describes the Chalcedon statement? This statement:

- A. Permitted the division of Christ into two selves
- B. Taught the uniting of the two persons into one person without mixture
- C. Taught the uniting of the two natures into one person
- D. Allowed for the transfer of properties from one nature to the other

QUESTION 4

Which statement describes an important result of the Council of Chalcedon?

- A. The deity of Christ was affirmed and communicated.
- B. The human and divine natures of Christ were clarified.
- C. The eternal Logos took the place of the human spirit in Jesus.
- D. The perfection of Christ in His human state was completely verified.

QUESTION 5

When Jesus is referred to as "firstborn" (Gk. *prototokos*: Rom 8:29; Col 1:15-18; Heb 1:6; Rev 1:5), which of the following statements accurately reflects the definition of the term "firstborn"? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. It typically means something like "first in rank," with or without comparison with others.
- B. This Greek word can imply a literal physical birth, but usually does not.
- C. It meant that Jesus was the first child that Mary ever bore.
- D. Jesus was the "firstborn" of the created spirits that roam the earth.

QUESTION 6

Which of the following statements indicate the purpose of the incarnation of Christ? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. To reveal God to us
- B. To provide an effective sacrifice for sin
- C. To destroy the works of the Devil
- D. To demonstrate His miraculous power
- E. To provide an example for us through His life on earth

QUESTION 7

In theology, which statement best describes the way a subsistence differs from a nature? A subsistence is physical and a nature is:

- A. Omniscient
- B. A complex of attributes
- C. A person or being
- D. Spiritual or emotional

QUESTION 8

Which statement best describes the Mormon error about Christ? The Mormons are similar to the ancient

- A. Nestorians who believed Christ was two persons
- B. Arians who denied the deity of Christ
- C. Docetists who believed that Christ only *appeared* human
- D. Ebionites who denied Christ's deity because of His physical birth

QUESTION 9

The terms *preexistence* and *eternality* both mean that Jesus will live forever. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

What is the significance of the New Testament assertion that Jesus Christ is *monogenes* of the Father? The assertion

- A. Contrasts Christ's person with the Mormon assertion that He is *prototokos* of the Father
- B. Stresses Christ's unique and incomparable relationship with the Father
- C. Supports the Arian view that Christ had a beginning
- D. States that God only had one child and Jesus had no siblings

Lesson 1 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

D. The person and works of Jesus Christ

QUESTION 2: Preexistence

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5:

C. Ryrie points out that some nouns that precede the verb often lack the definite article in Greek, such as in 1 John 4:16, "God is love." The word love has no article, but it is surely not taught here "God is a love."

QUESTION 6:

| <i>Evidence</i> | <i>Scripture</i> |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| Christ's heavenly origin | John 3:13 |
| His work as Creator | Colossians 1:16 |
| His attributes and claim of deity | Colossians 2:9 |
| His relationship to John the Baptist | John 1:15-30 |

QUESTION 7:

A. He would not be God.

B. The Trinity would not be eternal.

C. Christ is a liar.

D. He is not alive today.

QUESTION 8: *Your answer*

QUESTION 9:

A. Luke 1:30-35

B. Matthew 1:18

QUESTION 10: *Your answer*

QUESTION 11:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Purpose of the Incarnation</i> |
|------------------|--|
| John 1:18 | The only way man can see the Father is to know the Son |
| 1 Peter 2:21 | The earthly life of Jesus is held up to us as a pattern for our life today |
| Hebrews 10:10-14 | The death of an ordinary man would not pay for sin eternally, so the Savior must also be God |
| Luke 1:31-33 | To occupy the throne forever requires that the occupant never die |
| 1 John 3:8 | Satan must be defeated in the arena he dominates, this world |
| Hebrews 4:14-16 | God had to become man in order to be tested and then be a sympathetic Priest |

QUESTION 12:

| <i>Scriptures</i> | <i>The Major or Minor Premises</i> |
|----------------------|---|
| John 8:58; 17:5 | Major Premise—Attribute of Eternality; He claimed to exist from eternity past |
| Matthew 18:20; 28:20 | Major Premise—Attribute of Omnipresence; He claimed to be everywhere present |
| Matthew 16:21 | Major Premise—Attribute of Omniscience; He showed knowledge of things that could only be known if He were God |
| Mark 2:5-7 | Minor Premise—Forgiveness; He forgives sins eternally |
| John 10:36 | Minor Premise—Son of God; The title our Lord used to designate Himself |
| John 10:30 | Minor Premise—God; Jesus claims to be God |
| John 5:21 | Minor Premise—Giving Life; He gives life to whomever He wishes |

QUESTION 13: False**QUESTION 14:** True**QUESTION 15:** *Your answer***QUESTION 16:**

A. The use of the term stresses Jesus' absolute equality with the Father.

B. "Son" stresses the relationship of love between the eternal Father and His eternal Son.

QUESTION 17: *Your answer***QUESTION 18:**

| <i>References</i> | <i>Statements</i> |
|--------------------------|--|
| Matthew 4:2; John 4:6 | He had human characteristics such as hunger, thirst and fatigue. |
| John 8:40 | He had a human body. |
| Luke 12:40; Matthew 9:27 | He was called human names, for example, "Son of Man" and "Son of David." |
| Matthew 26:38 | He had a human soul and spirit. |

QUESTION 19:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Description of Christ</i> |
|--------------------|--|
| Philippians 2:6-11 | Form of God, sharing in a human nature |
| John 1:1-14 | The Word was God, the Word became flesh |
| Romans 1:2-5 | Descendant of David according to the flesh, appointed Son of God |
| 1 John 1:1-3 | The Eternal Life that was with the Father |

QUESTION 20: D. A nature is a complex of attributes.**QUESTION 21:**

| <i>Heresy</i> | <i>Description</i> |
|-----------------|---|
| Docetism | Christ only seemed to be human but he really was not |
| Ebionism | Christ was the natural son of Joseph and Mary |
| Arianism | Jesus had a beginning |
| Apollinarianism | Christ did not have a human Spirit, only a Divine Spirit (the "Logos") |
| Nestorianism | Christ had two natures: Deity took the appearance of servant and humanity had the form of Godhead |
| Eutychianism | Christ had only one nature, a mixture. The divine was not totally divine and the human was not totally human. |

QUESTION 22: *Your answer***QUESTION 23:** *Your answer*

Lesson 1 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

D. John 8:58; 17:5

QUESTION 2:

A. He possesses attributes that only God has—Matthew 18:20; John 11:38-44.

B. He performs works that only God can do—John 5:21; 11:43.

C. He was given the names and titles of Deity—John 10:36.

D. He claimed to be God—John 1:1; 10:30; 20:28.

QUESTION 3:

C. Taught the uniting of the two natures into one person.

QUESTION 4:

D. The perfection of Christ in His human state was completely verified.

QUESTION 5:

A. It typically means something like “first in rank,” with or without comparison with others.

B. This Greek word can imply a literal physical birth, but usually does not.

C. It meant that Jesus was the first child that Mary ever bore.

QUESTION 6:

A. To reveal God to us

B. To provide an effective sacrifice for sin

C. To destroy the works of the Devil

E. To provide an example for us through His life on earth

QUESTION 7:

B. A complex of attributes

QUESTION 8:

C. Docetists who believed that Christ only *appeared* human.

QUESTION 9:

False

QUESTION 10:

B. Stresses Christ’s unique and incomparable relationship with the Father.

The Article in John 1:1

More important than the article are other grammatical factors and the wider textual and biblical context. In light of this, one possible reason why the noun *God* is without the article is that John is stressing *quality* rather than *identity*. He would, therefore, be speaking of Christ's nature, not seeking to identify Him. Of the fifty-three examples of anarthrous (without article) predicate nouns preceding the verb in the Gospel of John, at least forty of them emphasize the qualitative nature of the noun (Philip B. Harner, "Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, pp. 82–83. See also John 1:14; John 9:24).

From this perspective, we might translate the verse something like this: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was, in His essence, deity." (Cf. Kenneth Wuest, *The New Testament: An Expanded Translation*, one-volume ed. [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1961], p. 209. Other reasons could be given for maintaining the translation "the Word was God," but this is sufficient to make the point against the absence of the article.)

While it is thus true that the absence of the article does not establish the teaching that Jesus is "a" god, it also prevents the understanding that Jesus is "the" God. Such a translation would place the phrase in contradiction with the preceding one, "He was with God," which obviously distinguishes Him from the Father in some sense.

By omitting the article, John has distinguished Jesus from the Father but at the same time has emphasized His essential quality as deity (Harner, pp. 84–87). John apparently had the deity of Christ in mind, contrary to the mistranslation by the Jehovah's Witnesses.

It should also be noted that the Jehovah's Witnesses violate their own rules in verse 1 itself when they fail to translate the first two Greek words, as "in a beginning," since the word *beginning* is anarthrous. Likewise, in John 1:18 the word *God* is without the article, yet they themselves translate, "No one has seen God at any time."

Lesson 2: The Person of the Redeemer, Part 2

Lesson Introduction

This lesson will bring you into the important topics of the work of Christ: His self-emptying, His sinlessness, His resurrection, and His ascension and post-ascension ministries. In Lesson 1, you studied the person of Christ. In this lesson, you will study the work of Christ, and you will explore questions such as, What exactly does it mean that Christ is a priest? What are the practical applications of Christ's priesthood for us today? What does "Christ emptied Himself" mean? When Jesus said, "The Father is greater than I," does this mean that Jesus is less than God? If Jesus is God, is He able to sin? If He is unable to sin, how can His life and example have any relevance to sinful man?

As you may recall, in Lesson 1, I introduced my friend David. He was longing for and seeking spiritual truth but had come to some unconventional conclusions. One of these conclusions is that although he admits Jesus was a great teacher, David believes that Jesus was only a man. As a man, Jesus had no power over death and, therefore, cannot have risen from the grave. When I asked David if he thought Jesus led a perfect life, he answered, "Jesus was very good, as good as they get, but he was not perfect. Perfection can only be reached when one reaches a state of nirvana. Even though Jesus didn't seem to yearn for anything, I don't believe He reached this state." David believed that Jesus was only one reincarnation away from being a monk who achieved nirvana.

A pivotal Christian belief is that Christ rose from the dead. We also believe that He lived a humble and perfect life. In this lesson we will study why we believe in the Resurrection and the Ascension as well as Christ's sinless life here on earth.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: The Work of Christ
 - Christ as Prophet
 - Christ as Priest
 - Christ as King
- Topic 2: The Self-Emptying of Christ
 - The Meaning of the Concept
 - The False Meanings of the Concept
- Topic 3: The Sinlessness of Christ
 - The Testimony to Christ's Sinlessness
 - The Testing of Christ's Sinlessness
- Topic 4: The Resurrection of Christ
 - The Importance of the Resurrection
 - The Evidence for the Resurrection
 - The Results of the Resurrection
- Topic 5: The Ascension of Christ
 - Description of the Ascension
 - Significance of the Ascension
- Topic 6: The Post-Ascension Ministries of Christ
 - His Present Ministry
 - His Future Ministry

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- State Christ's three major offices: prophet, priest, and king
- Explain the self-emptying of Christ
- Defend the sinlessness of Christ
- Present the importance, evidence, and results of Christ's resurrection
- Explain the significance of Christ's ascension
- List the three aspects of Christ's present ministry and His future ministry

Key Terms

Dispensation—the way God works out His purpose in a distinguishable period of time. God has administered His world in different ways during different periods. His rule for man before the Fall differed radically from His rule after the giving of the Mosaic Code and from His method of rule today.

Dispensationalism—a system of theology that stresses the need to interpret all Scripture according to the intended meaning of the original author. The distinguishing features of this system are: (1) a literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecy, (2) a distinction between Israel and the church as different peoples of God with different promises and purposes, and (3) a unification of Scripture around the theme of God's glory and His rule rather than around the salvation of man (as in covenant theology).

Kenosis—A Greek word translated “made Himself nothing” or “emptied Himself” in Philippians 2:7. According to Ryrie, when applied to Christ it refers to His humiliation whereby He “emptied Himself of retaining and exploiting His status in the Godhead and took on humanity in order to die.”

Impeccability—The doctrine that Christ could not have sinned, i.e., He was not able to sin.

Peccability—The teaching that Christ could have sinned, i.e., He was able to sin.

Topic 1: The Work of Christ

In Lesson 1, we studied the person of Christ. Now we turn to the topic of the work of Christ. It is helpful to consider the work of Christ under the threefold division of prophet, priest, and king. These are sometimes known as the “offices” of Christ. By “office” we mean a commission from God the Father. In this topic, we will examine each of the offices of Christ in detail. And we will answer the questions about how Christ as prophet speaks to men from God, how Christ as priest speaks to God for men, and how Christ as king is promised, predicted, proffered, rejected, and realized.

This topic is divided into the following subtopics:

- Christ as Prophet
- Christ as Priest
- Christ as King



Christ as Prophet

Before proceeding, you should read in chapter 43 Ryrie's discussion of "Christ as Prophet."

QUESTION 1

Why is it true that Christ is a prophet? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Christ claimed Himself to be a prophet (Mt 13:57; Mk 6:4; Lk 4:24; 13:33).
- B. Christ came to proclaim God's message to men.
- C. Moses predicted a coming of a prophet, and that prediction is ultimately fulfilled in Christ (Deut 18:15; Acts 3:22-24).
- D. Christ was anointed to be a prophet when He took His office.
- E. The ordinary people of Christ's day acknowledged Him as a prophet.

QUESTION 2

According to Ryrie, what are the manners that characterize Christ as a prophet? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. He taught as the occasion arose.
- B. His teaching was unsystematic.
- C. His teaching was profusely illustrated.
- D. His teaching made use of questions.
- E. His teaching was authoritative.

QUESTION 3

Which methods in Christ's teaching ministry can be applied in our preaching/teaching ministry today? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Make use of illustration.
- B. Use questions to bring discussion and understanding.
- C. Be authoritative.
- D. It is unnecessary to prepare a teaching lesson or a sermon.
- E. Teach as an occasion arises in our daily life.

Christ's ministry was largely an itinerant one. During the last three years of His life the majority of His time was spent in the training of the Twelve. He lived, slept, and ate with them. His technique for "follow up" was essentially to be "with them." He could immediately respond to a situation or question with appropriate teaching.

A particularly relevant application of Christ's teaching method is found in our homes. When we live with children, we quickly realize that their spiritual interest and questions rarely coincide with our plans. Often they want to talk at the most inconvenient times. Usually the biblical content we feel they need at a given moment does not interest them. Yet if we are patient, prayerful and trusting in God, He eventually gives us the opportunities to teach the spiritual truth needed. But it is in response to the occasion of the child's need rather than the determined plan of the parent. God has a way of moving the lives of both new converts and children to create a need for certain information. Then is the time to be available and to teach.

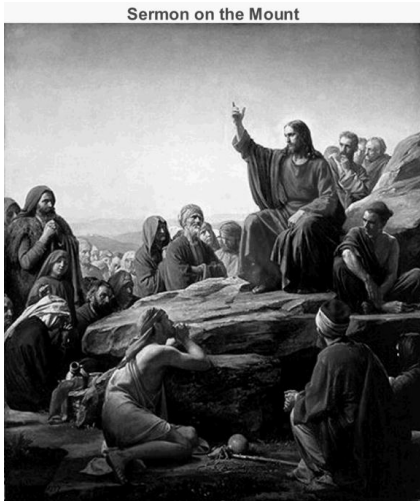
QUESTION 4

According to Ryrie's "Teachings of Christ," found in chapter 43, section I.C, why are the teachings of Christ the most difficult part of the entire Bible to interpret accurately? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Christ taught with regard to three different dispensations of God's program for this world—the law, the church, and the kingdom.
- B. It is often difficult to distinguish which dispensation Christ's teaching was related to.
- C. The teachings of Christ included many illustrations, stories, warnings, and predictions.
- D. Christ's instructions are humanly impossible to achieve and must be interpreted within the realm of human capability.

Sermon on the Mount

The Sermon on the Mount is the first of the three great prophetic discourses of Christ. While it has application to believers today, there is considerable debate as to whether it should be interpreted only for today or also for the coming kingdom. Read again Ryrie on the topic of the "Sermon on the Mount." (Chapter 43, Section I.C)



QUESTION 5

Which of the following describe Ryrie's view of the Sermon on the Mount? The sermon is (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. An exposition about how to achieve salvation
- B. An explanation of what was required to prepare for the Davidic kingdom
- C. A blueprint for Christian living for all times and people
- D. A repentance call for those who disassociated inner change from God's requirements
- E. One of the most detailed ethical codes in the Bible

The Lord Jesus had just announced that the kingdom was "near" in Matthew 4:17. In the Sermon on the Mount, He taught His disciples (Mt 5–7) the principles of this kingdom. Ryrie suggests that just as the Old Testament Law is not imposed on believers today, *possibly* not all of the laws of the kingdom are necessarily for us today. Of course, much of the morality of the Sermon on the Mount is repeated elsewhere in the New Testament and thus is required of believers in the church age. Furthermore, all Scripture is profitable (2 Tim 3:16-17) and has applications for believers of all ages.

QUESTION 6

According to the dispensational view of the Sermon on the Mount, distinguishing between the dispensation today and the dispensation of the coming kingdom makes these passages more understandable and applicable. Match the following passages with its related interpretations.

| <i>Scriptures</i> | <i>Interpretations</i> |
|-------------------|---|
| Matthew 5:21-22 | This does not happen today. In the coming kingdom, however, judgment will be immediate. Believers who languish in carnality will be judged more quickly and severely. |
| Matthew 5:33-37 | To apply this literally in our world today would invalidate any legal contract in which you give your personal guarantee. In the kingdom under the rulership of a perfect and omniscient judge, only the spoken word is required. |
| Matthew 5:39-42 | No one today can bring a man to court on account of anger in his heart. Only the external act is punished in our world today. Apparently, in the coming kingdom, when we have a King who knows our hearts (Jn 2:24), men can be brought to court not only for their behavior but also for their attitudes and thoughts. |
| Matthew 7:19 | Taken literally and applied for today, this would prohibit pension plans and savings for retirement. In the coming kingdom the Lord Jesus is our retirement plan, but today this would be impossible to apply in some societies. |
| Matthew 6:19-21 | This applies to the coming kingdom, where we will be under the authority of a righteous, omniscient, and omnipotent King who executes immediate and just judgment. It is difficult to see how this could be intended for the present evil and corrupt age. |

Olivet Discourse

The second major prophetic sermon which Christ gave is the Olivet Discourse (Mt 24–25). Read again Ryrie on the topic “Olivet Discourse.” (Chapter 43, I.C)

QUESTION 7

By the time the message of the Olivet Discourse was given, it was quite clear that the Jewish leaders had rejected the kingdom and Christ Himself had introduced the church as a part of God’s program (Mt 16:18). This meant that the kingdom was scratched from God’s program forever.

True or False?

Upper Room Discourse

The Last Supper



The final major prophetic discourse by Christ is called the Upper Room Discourse.

Ryrie details five new things given by Christ in the Upper Room Discourse. Read again Ryrie on the topic “Upper Room Discourse,” (Chapter 43, I.C). These characterized the new dispensation of the church in contrast to the old dispensation of the Law.

QUESTION 8

Please match the Scripture verses with the new things that happen in the new dispensation.

| <i>Reference</i> | <i>New Things</i> |
|------------------|----------------------|
| John 13:34 | New Helper |
| John 14:1-3 | New basis for prayer |
| John 14:16 | New hope |
| John 14:17-20 | New command |
| John 16:24-26 | New relationships |

His Fulfillment of Prophecy

Among the most convincing evidences for Christ’s deity are the many prophecies fulfilled. Over sixty specific predictions related to the coming of the Messiah were fulfilled in the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ as Priest

An extensive amount of material in the New Testament presents Christ as our priest. We have only one priest, the high priest, the God-Man Jesus Christ (1 Tim 2:5), who is “holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens” (Heb 7:26), and intercedes for us. Read again in chapter 43, section II, Ryrie’s “Christ as Priest.”

Christ is priest according to the order of Melchizedek, who was a great king-priest. Christ, born of the tribe of Judah, can never be a Levitical priest. Thus God arranged ahead of time with another order of priests, the order of Melchizedek. There are similarities between Aaronic priests and Christ as priest in the order of Melchizedek in respect to both His person and His work.

QUESTION 9

Ryrie summarizes the features of the Melchizedekian priesthood. Which of the following are Ryrie's major points? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. It was a royal priesthood. Melchizedek was a king as well as a priest.
- B. It was unrelated to ancestry.
- C. It was timeless. It has no recorded beginning or ending.
- D. It was superior to the Aaronic order.
- E. Its authority was over a kingdom with no boundaries.

QUESTION 10

In what ways does Christ function like a Melchizedekian priest? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Like Melchizedek, He is a king.
- B. He receives our obeisance.
- C. He intercedes for us.
- D. He forgives us.
- E. He blesses us.
- F. He protects us.

QUESTION 11

Open your Life Notebook. Answer the following questions: What does it mean to you that Christ as our High Priest intercedes for us daily? Read Hebrews 4:14-16. What comfort can you draw from this passage? How does it apply to your daily Christian life?

Christ as King

The New Testament presents Christ not only as the greatest prophet and high priest, but also as our king. When Christ came to earth, He offered a kingdom to Israel. The fact that the kingdom of Israel was not established has led to much interpretive confusion. Maybe, as some have suggested, the kingdom was established but in a different form. Perhaps the kingdom was redefined as a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men.

Such an approach, however, violates the principle of the normal interpretation of Scripture. The normal interpretation leads us to the conclusion that Christ was actually offering the restoration of the Davidic kingdom. The problem was that the Pharisees had so completely perverted this doctrine that the spiritual and inward aspects of the kingdom had been completely neglected. Thus, Jesus clarified and corrected, but He never redefined the meaning of the predictions in the Old Testament.

There is no reason to believe that the kingdom He offered was not the kingdom which had been promised throughout the Old Testament, i.e., the predicted restoration of the kingdom to Israel. But because the king was rejected, the messianic, Davidic kingdom was (from a human viewpoint) postponed.

Ryrie organizes the kingship of Christ around five words: promised, predicted, proffered, rejected, and realized. Read "Christ as King." (Chapter 43, section III)



QUESTION 12

Match the Scriptures with its related reference to the five phases of the messianic kingdom.

| <i>Scriptures</i> | <i>Reference</i> |
|--|------------------|
| 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Isaiah 9:7 | Rejected |
| Luke 1:32-33; Matthew 2:2; 4:17; 10:5-7; 27:11; John 12:13 | Predicted |
| Matthew 11:16-19; 12:24 | Established |
| Matthew 19:28; 21:43 | Offered |
| Matthew 19:28; 25:31; Acts 1:6; 3:19-21; Revelation 19:15 | Postponed |

QUESTION 13

Open your Life Notebook and write your response to the following situation. Like the Jewish people, my friend David doesn't believe that Jesus is the Messiah because He never ruled over the nation of Israel. Based on what you read in Ryrle, how would you respond?

Topic 2: The Self-Emptying of Christ

Many times the great doctrinal statements in the New Testament were formulated in response to false teaching or to illustrate and enforce practical application of biblical truth. This is wonderfully illustrated in the doctrine of the *kenosis*, or the “self-emptying” of Christ. The concept is taught in Philippians 2:7. But what is the true meaning of the concept? The question has been discussed throughout the history of the church. In this topic, we will evaluate the true meaning of the concept of the *kenosis* and its false meaning.

This topic is divided into two subtopics:

- The Meaning of the Concept
- The False Meanings of the Concept

The Meaning of the Concept

In preparation for this important doctrine, read Ryrle chapter 44.

Read Philippians 2:1-11. Why was the *kenosis* such a powerful illustration in this situation? Keep in mind that the theme of Philippians 2 is to exhort the Christians in Philippi to unity and love for one another. A key to bringing this about is humility and looking out for the interests of others. Paul points out that Jesus Christ illustrates supreme humility in the act of setting aside His own interests and rights by becoming a servant. The distance from the “form of God” to “death on a cross” is infinite. Therefore, no longer should the Philippians insist on their “rights” in view of this example.



QUESTION 14

The key words Ryrie discusses in this passage are *hyparchon*, *morphe*, and *schema*. Match each word with its proper definition.

| Key Words | Definition |
|-----------|--|
| Hyparchon | Refers to that which is outward, i.e., it refers to appearance. |
| Morphe | An indefinite occurrence of being. Jesus existed from eternity and had no beginning |
| Schema | An exact representation. It connotes “that which is intrinsic and essential to the thing.” |

Ryrie’s discussion of various conservative views of the *kenosis* is excellent. He points out that evangelicals have often tried to define the doctrine of the *kenosis* in terms of what limitations Christ experienced in His earthly state. As a result, such definitions as “a veiling of his pre-incarnate glory,” or “the voluntary nonuse of certain divine attributes” entered into conservative theological discussion. But the passage in Philippians 2 does not discuss any of these things.

QUESTION 15

According to Ryrie, the definition of *kenosis* is that Christ emptied Himself of His status in the Godhead and took on humanity in order to die. *True or False?*

The False Meanings of the Concept

Read Ryrie on this subtopic, “False Meanings of the Concept,” found in chapter 44, section III.

QUESTION 16

Which of the following are the **false** meanings of the concept of the *kenosis*? The *kenosis* means: (Select all that apply.)

- A. Our Lord actually gave up some or all of His attributes of deity.
- B. Christ appeared as a man by disguising His deity.
- C. Christ left His preincarnate position and took on a servant-humanity.
- D. Christ took on humanity in addition to his deity.

QUESTION 17

Open your Life Notebook and reflect upon the concept of the *kenosis*. Using Christ as our example, what is God telling us about how our attitudes and actions should be?

Topic 3: The Sinlessness of Christ

The Scriptures affirm the sinlessness of Jesus Christ. But there is debate over the issue of whether Christ *could* have sinned or not. The position that Christ could have sinned is called peccability (*posse non peccare*). A position that holds to the view of the sinlessness of Christ is called impeccability—that He could not have sinned (*non posse peccare*). Clearly, the weight of evidence is on the side of the impeccability of Christ.

This topic is divided into the following subtopics:

- The Testimony to Christ’s Sinlessness
- The Testing of Christ’s Sinlessness

The Testimony to Christ’s Sinlessness

The sinlessness of Christ means He never sinned during His life on earth—infancy, boyhood, adolescence, and manhood. He never did anything that violated the Mosaic Law or anything that displeased God, He kept the Father’s commandments, and He was holy. As we can see through our studies in this topic, the Scriptures affirm the sinlessness of Christ. At this time read chapter 45, “The Sinlessness of Christ,” sections I and II in Ryrie.



QUESTION 18

Match the Scripture verse with its related evidence of the sinlessness of Christ.

| <i>Scriptures</i> | <i>Evidence</i> |
|-----------------------|---|
| Luke 1:35 | Christ did not commit any sin, nor was deceit ever found in His mouth. |
| 2 Corinthians 5:21 | He challenged His enemies to show that He was a sinner, which they could not do. |
| 1 Peter 2:22 | He was holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and He was without sin. |
| Hebrews 7:26; 4:15 | He “knew no sin.” |
| John 8:29 | Our Lord was announced as a holy Child. |
| John 8:46 | Christ claimed to do always those things that pleased the Father. |
| John 15:10 | He kept the Father’s commandments. |

Among evangelical conservatives, the issue of the sinlessness of Christ is firmly affirmed. But there is debate on the question of whether or not He could have sinned.

QUESTION 19

The concept that Christ could not have sinned is called_____.

QUESTION 20

The concept that Christ could have sinned, whether He did or not, is called_____.

The Testing of Christ’s Sinlessness

At this time read chapter 45, “The Sinlessness of Christ,” section III in Ryrie.

QUESTION 21

The rationale for believing that Christ was peccable is that if Christ could not have sinned, then _____. (Select all that apply.)

- A. His temptations weren't real.
- B. He wasn't truly human.
- C. He could not be a sympathetic high priest.
- D. He didn't withstand all temptations, only those He'd overcome.

QUESTION 22

The rationale for Christ's impeccability is that temptation does not mean that Jesus was susceptible. *True or False?*

Topic 4: The Resurrection of Christ

The central, differentiating doctrine of Christianity is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without the Resurrection everything essential about Christianity fails, as testified by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15. In preparation for this important study, read chapter 46 in Ryrie, "The Resurrection and Ascension of Christ," and then ask the Lord to touch your life anew with the wonder and significance of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This topic is divided into the following subtopics:

- The Importance of the Resurrection
- The Evidence for the Resurrection
- The Results of the Resurrection

The Importance of the Resurrection

Some neo-orthodox theologians say, "I believe in the Resurrection, but I do not believe in the empty tomb." In other words, what they try to say is "My faith in the Resurrection is what is important, not whether or not it actually happened. By believing it, my experience of God is enriched, my hope for the future is established, and the meaning of my life is lifted above the mundane struggles of human existence."

QUESTION 23

According to 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, the gospel is based on two core premises: (1) that Christ died for our sins, and (2) that He rose again from the dead. His resurrection is part of the gospel or good news message because, according to Scripture, it declared: (Select all that apply.)

- A. That His sacrificial death did indeed satisfy (propitiate) the demands of a holy and just God (Rom 4:25)
- B. That He was indeed the Son of God, sharing equally in the divine nature with the Father (Rom 1:4)
- C. That He was the firstfruits of a resurrection in which all believers will share (1 Cor 15:20)
- D. That He was human
- E. That He was tempted as we are
- F. That He was coming back to earth to destroy the Antichrist

The Evidence for the Resurrection

It is important that you understand all of the evidence available to support the reality of the Resurrection. Ryrie has discussed the evidence of Christ’s resurrection from two aspects: His appearance to many and the events that must have been caused by His resurrection. Please read Ryrie on “The Evidences for Christ’s Resurrection,” in chapter 46, section I.B.



QUESTION 24

According to the Scriptures, how does the attitude of the disciples prior to the Resurrection reveal that they are reliable witnesses? Match the Scripture with the attitudes of the disciples and their reliability as witnesses.

| <i>Scriptures</i> | <i>Attitudes and Reliability</i> |
|-------------------|--|
| John 20:25 | Thomas says he will not believe unless he sees. It reveals an attitude of unbelief and skepticism. |
| Luke 24:21-25 | John carefully analyzed the evidence of the empty tomb. He believed only when he “saw” the unmolested grave clothes. |
| John 20:5, 8 | The disciples “had hoped” (past tense). This reveals that they had given up hope. |

QUESTION 25

Which of the following is evidence of the resurrection of Christ? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The holiday of Easter
- B. The appearances
- C. The empty tomb
- D. The apostles’ changed lives
- E. The Day of Atonement
- F. The change in the day of worship

QUESTION 26

My friend David believes that Christ lived on earth, but he doesn’t believe that Christ rose from the dead. David cites a common Jewish argument that there was a conspiracy to hide Christ’s body and that the disciples “made up” stories about Christ after His death. What evidence do we have that contradicts David’s belief? Record your answer in your Life Notebook.

The Results of the Resurrection



Perhaps an even more convincing piece of evidence than the ones Ryrie has mentioned is the transformed lives of the apostles. These men were broken and dejected. They had given up hope; some were cynical and skeptical. Yet they became a flaming band of revolutionaries who transformed the course of civilization!

Something happened in their lives that transformed them. They all went to their deaths fully convinced that they had seen their Lord and Master raised from the dead, and they died martyrs' deaths affirming their belief that He was none other than God incarnate in human flesh. Such dramatic transformation requires a dramatic cause. The explanation they gave for their fanatical devotion to Christ was that they had seen Him in the power of His resurrection.

QUESTION 27

With the resurrection of Christ there appeared for the first time in history a new kind of resurrected body. Before the event, all resurrection bodies were a restoration to the former earthly body. Match the Scriptures with the characteristics of Christ's resurrected body.

| <i>Scriptures</i> | <i>Characteristics</i> |
|----------------------------------|--|
| John 20:20 | He could enter closed rooms without opening doors. |
| John 20:25-29; Revelation 5:6 | With His resurrected body, He breathed on the disciples. |
| Luke 24:30-33, 41-43 | His resurrected body had flesh and bones, which proved that He was not merely a spirit showing itself. |
| John 20:22 | His wounds inflicted by crucifixion can be seen in His resurrected body. |
| Luke 24:39-40 | There was link between His former earthly body and His resurrected body; people recognized Him. |
| John 20:19 | He had the capacity (though not the need) to eat. |
| Luke 24:15, 36 | He could appear and disappear at will. |

QUESTION 28

Open your Life Notebook. Write a sermon or teaching outline on the evidence and results of Christ's resurrection.

Topic 5: The Ascension of Christ

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament made prophetic statements concerning the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ Himself spoke about His ascension prior to the event (Jn 7:33; 14:12, 28; 16:5). Many other Scriptures that tell the present exaltation of Christ presuppose the Ascension. Ryrie states that the Ascension "marked the end of the period of Christ's humiliation and His entrance into the state of exaltation."

In this topic, we will study the following subtopics:

Description of the Ascension

Significance of the Ascension

Description of the Ascension

To have a better understanding of this topic, please read Ryrie, chapter 46, “The Ascension.”

QUESTION 29

Christ’s ascension occurred on the Bethany side of the Mount of Olives; it took place as a cloud moved Him gradually upward. *True or False?*

Significance of the Ascension

Read Ryrie, chapter 46, section II.D, on “The Significance of the Ascension.”

QUESTION 30

Open your Life Notebook. Imagine that you are on a long trip (a mission) to a foreign land. For some of you, this may be a true statement. In this land, there are different rules and behavioral norms than in your home country. Now imagine that your mission in this foreign land is complete. How would you feel about going home? In this light, explain the significance of Christ’s ascension.



Topic 6: The Post-Ascension Ministries of Christ

After the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ into heaven, He began His present ministry until His second coming. At His second coming, He will carry out His future ministry. This topic will explore the fascinating aspects of His present ministry and His future ministry.

This topic is divided into the following subtopics:

- His Present Ministry
- His Future Ministry

His Present Ministry

We often forget that Christ’s work on our behalf did not cease with the Cross. He is active today as the Head of His body, as our High Priest to intercede for us, and as a preparer of a place for us. Now read Ryrie, chapter 47, “The Post-Ascension Ministries of Christ.”

QUESTION 31

According to Ryrie, what are the three ministries Christ is doing at the present? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. As the head of the church
- B. As the high priest who intercedes for us
- C. As the comforter
- D. As the preparer who is preparing a place in heaven for us

QUESTION 32

According to Ryrie, what are the three ministries of Christ as the high priest to us? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. He sympathizes with His people and grants them grace.
- B. He rules the world, sitting at the right hand of the Father.
- C. He intercedes for His people.
- D. He is the forerunner of His people.



His Future Ministry

In the future, Jesus will raise the dead, reward His people, and rule the world. We will discuss these aspects more fully in the lessons on eschatology. Here we will have a brief discussion on the topic. Please read Ryrie, chapter 47, on the topic “Future Ministry.”

QUESTION 33

Match the Scripture with its related future ministry of Christ.

| <i>Scriptures</i> | <i>Future ministry</i> |
|-----------------------|--|
| John 5:28-29 | He will reward His people. |
| John 5:22, 27 | Unbelievers will be judged at the Great White Throne. |
| 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 | Believers will be judged by Him at the judgment seat of Christ. |
| Revelation 20:11-15 | He will judge all people. |
| 1 Corinthians 4:5 | He will take the reins of government and rule the nations of this world. |
| Revelation 19:15 | He will raise the dead. |

QUESTION 34

Open your Life Notebook. Write your responses to the following exercise:

In Lessons 1 and 2, we have focused on the person of Christ. Based on these two lessons, list as many terms as you can to describe Jesus Christ. After listing the terms, write a prayer of gratitude to God for all that Christ has been, is doing, and will do for us.

Conclusion

This completes our study of the person of the Redeemer. We hope that your knowledge of Him as well as your love for Him has increased. This may be a good time to meditate on ways to apply what you have learned of Him in these lessons. Your study will continue with the great things that Jesus Christ has done for you through your salvation and the atonement.

Lesson 2 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Which is **NOT** one of the things that characterized Christ's manner as a prophet?

- A. He taught as the occasion arose.
- B. Much of His teaching was done in secret.
- C. His teaching was profusely illustrated.
- D. His teaching made use of questions.
- E. His teaching was authoritative.

QUESTION 2

Which is **NOT** one of the similarities between Melchizedek's and Christ's priesthoods?

- A. Both were a royal priesthood.
- B. Both were timeless.
- C. Both were based in Jerusalem.
- D. Both were superior to the Aaronic order.
- E. Both were a priest with no record of beginning or end.

QUESTION 3

Which is **NOT** one of the phases of Christ's kingdom, according to Ryrie?

- A. Predicted
- B. Offered
- C. Postponed
- D. Hidden
- E. Established

QUESTION 4

Which statement best describes the teaching of the *kenosis* passage in Philippians 2:5-11? This passage

- A. Shows that Jesus was the Son of Man
- B. Shows that Christ emptied Himself of His status in the Godhead
- C. Refers to the fact that Jesus is king of the Jews
- D. Describes the deity of Jesus Christ and the power He demonstrated
- E. Describes the humanity of Jesus Christ and the humility of His life

QUESTION 5

The position that Christ could not have sinned is called impeccability. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

Why is the Resurrection pivotal to our beliefs as Christians?

- A. To show God's power
- B. So that He is greater than other prophets
- C. Because He ministers to us today
- D. Dying is human; coming back to life is divine
- E. Without the Resurrection, there is no gospel

QUESTION 7

Which of the following are the indicators of the resurrection of Christ? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The empty tomb
- B. Change in the day of worship
- C. The Day of Pentecost
- D. The eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ
- E. The Day of Atonement

QUESTION 8

Which of the following best describes Jesus' present ministry as priest?

- A. He helps, encourages, and intercedes for us.
- B. He helps, intercedes for us, and is our forerunner.
- C. He indwells us, encourages us, and intercedes for us.
- D. He is our forerunner, intercessor, helper, and encourager.

QUESTION 9

Which Scripture teaches that Christ's future ministry is to rule the world?

- A. Revelation 19:15
- B. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
- C. 1 Corinthians 3:11-15
- D. John 3:16

QUESTION 10

According to 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, the gospel is based on two core premises: (1) that Christ died for our sins, and (2) that He rose again from the dead. His resurrection is part of the gospel or good news message because, according to Scripture, it declared: (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. That His sacrificial death did indeed satisfy (propitiate) the demands of a holy and just God (Rom 4:25)
- B. That He was indeed the Son of God, sharing equally in the divine nature with the Father (Rom 1:4)
- C. That He was the firstfruits of a resurrection in which all believers will share (1 Cor 15:20)
- D. That He was human
- E. That He was tempted as we are
- F. That He was coming back to earth to destroy the Antichrist

Lesson 2 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

- A. Christ claimed Himself to be a prophet (Mt 13:57; Mk 6:4; Lk 4:24; 13:33).
- B. Christ came to proclaim God's message to men.
- C. Moses predicted a coming of a prophet, and that prediction is ultimately fulfilled in Christ (Deut 18:15; Acts 3:22-24).
- E. The ordinary people of Christ's day acknowledged Him as a prophet.

QUESTION 2:

- A. He taught as the occasion arose.
- B. His teaching was unsystematic.
- C. His teaching was profusely illustrated.
- D. His teaching made use of questions.
- E. His teaching was authoritative.

QUESTION 3:

- A. Make use of illustration.
- B. Use questions to bring discussion and understanding.
- C. Be authoritative.
- E. Teach as an occasion arises in our daily life.

QUESTION 4:

- A. Christ taught with regard to three different dispensations of God's program for this world—the law, the church, and the kingdom.
- B. It is often difficult to distinguish which dispensation Christ's teaching was related to.

QUESTION 5:

- B. An explanation of what was required to prepare for the Davidic kingdom
- D. A repentance call for those who disassociated inner change from God's requirements
- E. One of the most detailed ethical codes in the Bible

QUESTION 6:

| <i>Scriptures</i> | <i>Interpretations</i> |
|-------------------|---|
| Matthew 5:21-22 | No one today can bring a man to court on account of anger in his heart. Only the external act is punished in our world today. Apparently, in the coming kingdom, when we have a King who knows our hearts (Jn 2:24), men can be brought to court not only for their behavior but also for their attitudes and thoughts. |
| Matthew 5:33-37 | To apply this literally in our world today would invalidate any legal contract in which you give your personal guarantee. In the kingdom under the rulership of a perfect and omniscient judge, only the spoken word is required. |
| Matthew 5:39-42 | This applies to the coming kingdom, where we will be under the authority of a righteous, omniscient, and omnipotent King who executes immediate and just judgment. It is difficult to see how this could be intended for the present evil and corrupt age. |
| Matthew 7:19 | This does not happen today. In the coming kingdom, however, judgment will be immediate. Believers who languish in carnality will be judged more quickly and severely. |
| Matthew 6:19-21 | Taken literally and applied for today, this would prohibit pension plans and savings for retirement. In the coming kingdom the Lord Jesus is our retirement plan, but today this would be impossible to apply in some societies. |

QUESTION 7: False

QUESTION 8:

| <i>Reference</i> | <i>New Things</i> |
|------------------|----------------------|
| John 13:34 | New command |
| John 14:1-3 | New hope |
| John 14:16 | New Helper |
| John 14:17-20 | New relationships |
| John 16:24-26 | New basis for prayer |

QUESTION 9:

- A. It was a royal priesthood. Melchizedek was a king as well as a priest.
- B. It was unrelated to ancestry.
- C. It was timeless. It has no recorded beginning or ending.
- D. It was superior to the Aaronic order.

QUESTION 10:

- A. Like Melchizedek, He is a king.
- B. He receives our obeisance.
- D. He forgives us.
- E. He blesses us.

QUESTION 11: *Your answer***QUESTION 12:**

| <i>Scriptures</i> | <i>Reference</i> |
|--|------------------|
| 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Isaiah 9:7 | Predicted |
| Luke 1:32-33; Matthew 2:2; 4:17; 10:5-7; 27:11; John 12:13 | Offered |
| Matthew 12:24; 11:16-19 | Rejected |
| Matthew 21:43; 19:28 | Postponed |
| Matthew 19:28; 25:31; Acts 1:6; 3:19-21; Revelation 19:15 | Established |

QUESTION 13: *Your answer***QUESTION 14:**

| <i>Key Words</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
|------------------|--|
| hyparchon | An indefinite occurrence of being. Jesus existed from eternity and had no beginning |
| morphe | An exact representation. It connotes "that which is intrinsic and essential to the thing." |
| schema | Refers to that which is outward, i.e., it refers to appearance. |

QUESTION 15: True**QUESTION 16:**

- A. Our Lord actually gave up some or all of His attributes of deity.
- B. Christ appeared as a man by disguising His deity.
- D. Christ took on humanity in addition to his deity.

QUESTION 17: *Your answer*

QUESTION 18:

| <i>Scriptures</i> | <i>Evidence</i> |
|------------------------|---|
| Luke 1:35 | Our Lord was announced as a holy Child. |
| 2 Corinthians 5:21 | He “knew no sin.” |
| 1 Peter 2:22 | Christ did not commit any sin, nor was deceit ever found in His mouth. |
| Hebrews 4:15; 7:26; | He was holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and He was without sin. |
| John 8:29 | Christ claimed to do always those things that pleased the Father. |
| John 8:46 | He challenged His enemies to show that He was a sinner, which they could not do. |
| John 15:10 | He kept the Father’s commandments. |

QUESTION 19: Correct answers include:

Impeccability

Non posse peccare

QUESTION 20: Correct answers include:

Peccability

Posse non peccare

QUESTION 21:

A. His temptations weren’t real.

B. He wasn’t truly human.

C. He could not be a sympathetic high priest.

QUESTION 22: True**QUESTION 23:**

A. That His sacrificial death did indeed satisfy (propitiate) the demands of a holy and just God (Rom 4:25).

B. That He was indeed the Son of God, sharing equally in the divine nature with the Father (Rom 1:4).

C. That He was the firstfruits of a resurrection in which all believers will share (1 Cor 15:20).

QUESTION 24:

| <i>Scriptures</i> | <i>Attitudes and Reliability</i> |
|-------------------|--|
| John 20:25 | Thomas says he will not believe unless he sees. It reveals an attitude of unbelief and skepticism. |
| Luke 24:21-25 | The disciples “had hoped” (past tense). This reveals that they had given up hope. |
| John 20:5, 8 | John carefully analyzed the evidence of the empty tomb. He believed only when he “saw” the unmolested grave clothes. |

QUESTION 25:

B. The appearances

C. The empty tomb

D. The apostles’ changed lives

F. The change in the day of worship

QUESTION 26: *Your answer*

QUESTION 27:

| <i>Scriptures</i> | <i>Characteristics</i> |
|----------------------------------|--|
| John 20:20 | There was link between His former earthly body and His resurrected body; people recognized Him. |
| John 20:25-29; Revelation 5:6 | His wounds inflicted by crucifixion can be seen in His resurrected body. |
| Luke 24:30-33, 41-43 | He had the capacity (though not the need) to eat. |
| John 20:22 | With His resurrected body, He breathed on the disciples. |
| Luke 24:39-40 | His resurrected body had flesh and bones, which proved that He was not merely a spirit showing itself. |
| John 20:19 | He could enter closed rooms without opening doors. |
| Luke 24:15, 36 | He could appear and disappear at will. |

QUESTION 28: *Your answer***QUESTION 29:** True**QUESTION 30:** *Your answer***QUESTION 31:**

- A. As the head of the church
- B. As the high priest who intercedes for us
- D. As the preparer who is preparing a place in heaven for us

QUESTION 32:

- A. He sympathizes with His people and grants them grace.
- C. He intercedes for His people.
- D. He is the forerunner of His people.

QUESTION 33

| <i>Scriptures</i> | <i>Future ministry</i> |
|-----------------------|--|
| John 5:28-29 | He will raise the dead. |
| John 5:22, 27 | He will judge all people. |
| 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 | Believers will be judged by Him at the judgment seat of Christ. |
| Revelation 20:11-15 | Unbelievers will be judged at the Great White Throne. |
| 1 Corinthians 4:5 | He will reward His people. |
| Revelation 19:15 | He will take the reins of government and rule the nations of this world. |

QUESTION 34: *Your answer*

Lesson 2 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

B. Much of His teaching was done in secret.

QUESTION 2:

C. Both were based in Jerusalem.

QUESTION 3:

D. Hidden

QUESTION 4:

B. Shows that Christ emptied Himself of His status in the Godhead.

QUESTION 5: True

QUESTION 6:

E. Without the Resurrection, there is no gospel.

QUESTION 7:

A. The empty tomb

B. Change in the day of worship

C. The Day of Pentecost

D. The eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ

QUESTION 8:

D. He is our forerunner, intercessor, helper, and encourager.

QUESTION 9:

A. Revelation 19:15

QUESTION 10:

A. That His sacrificial death did indeed satisfy (propitiate) the demands of a holy and just God (Rom 4:25)

B. That He was indeed the Son of God, sharing equally in the divine nature with the Father (Rom 1:4)

C. That He was the firstfruits of a resurrection in which all believers will share (1 Cor 15:20)

Lesson 3: The Atonement

Lesson Introduction

Our friends have a beautiful daughter with the lovely name of Faith. They adopted her several years ago.

Faith's birth mother died when she was only a few days old. Her birth father was very poor, unable to pay someone to nurse Faith, and unable to afford expensive infant formula. He did all he could for his infant daughter, but it wasn't enough. He didn't have what was necessary to sustain her, to save her life. Only a mother's milk would do.

By the time Faith's father realized that all of his efforts would be for naught and brought her to an orphanage, Faith was nearly dead.

The people at the orphanage had the resources to feed Faith, and they slowly nursed her back to health. Our friends learned about her and made plans to adopt her.

In preparation for bringing Faith home, her adoptive mother induced lactation so she would be able to give Faith a mother's milk even though she had not recently given birth herself. When Faith came home, she was still small and thin, but my friend's plan worked; soon, Faith was eagerly drinking her new mother's milk and growing stronger and more resistant to illness because of the immunities the milk gave her.

We too were hopelessly lost before we believed. No effort on our own part or anyone else's would have saved us. But finally we approached the throne of grace and we were saved. We were adopted by our heavenly Father and became part of a new family. God gives us what we need to survive, and as we take in His Word and embrace this new life in the family of God, we become strong and can resist the temptations of sin.

Our friends could not just walk into the orphanage and take Faith home. They had to follow a particular process before she became their daughter. Likewise, there is a process by which we are adopted into God's family. In Lesson 3, you will learn about that process.

The central meaning of Christ's death can perhaps be captured in five basic doctrines:

1. Substitution for sinners
2. Redemption in relation to sin
3. Reconciliation in relation to man
4. Propitiation in relation to God
5. Justification for our sins

Not to emphasize these five, or not to insist on their basic importance to a proper understanding of the meaning of the death of Christ, is to pervert the biblical concept. For example, it is proper and biblical to view the death of Christ as a great display of the love of God and to see it as an example for us to be self-sacrificing (Jn 15:13; Rom 5:8). But if these were the only meanings of the death of Christ, there would be no eternal value in it. Christ's death must provide a substitution and a payment for sin. So we must understand these basic doctrines because they form the saving and eternal meaning of the death of our Lord.

In this lesson, you will begin by studying God's motives for salvation. I often hear people say, "If God is so good, why would He allow people to go to hell?" But the apostles saw the reality of the situation. They wondered how a holy God could possibly save people who turn away from Him

and disobey over and over again. They wondered why God was so good to them. In Topic 1, we'll focus on the doctrine of salvation, including why and how God saves us.

Christ suffered greatly while He was here on earth. Watching movies that depict Christ's beatings and crucifixion makes me wonder if Christ had to suffer quite that much. Could God have spared Him some of the agony? But God had His reasons for the humiliation and pain that His Son experienced. In Topic 2, we'll discuss the suffering of Christ, particularly in His final days on earth, and how those sufferings fulfilled God's purpose and prophecy.

Once we understand why Christ had to suffer, the next question we ask is, Did He have to die? Wasn't there any better way for God to save us other than the killing of His own Son? In Topic 3, we'll focus on the death of Christ, including why He had to die and how His death paid for our sins and reconciled us with God.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: The Introduction to Salvation
 - The Motives for Salvation
 - The Biblical Terminology of Salvation
- Topic 2: The Passion of Christ
 - The Purpose of the Passion
 - The Outline of the Passion
- Topic 3: The Meaning of Christ's Death
 - Substitution for Sinners
 - Redemption from Sin
 - Reconciliation in Relation to the World
 - Propitiation in Relation to God
 - Justification

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Explain the meaning of the term *salvation* and apply that knowledge to some problem passages
- Explain how substitution, reconciliation, redemption, propitiation, and justification shattered the barrier between God and mankind

Reading Assignment

Your readings from Ryrie for this lesson are chapters 48–52. You may read them now or as indicated in the lesson.

Topic 1: The Introduction to Salvation

Why would God want to save sinners? And why would He give His only begotten Son to die for human beings in order to save them? What are God's motives for salvation? How important is it for us to understand salvation? What does the term *salvation* mean? This topic will explore the answers to those questions and explain the meaning of the term *salvation*, then apply that knowledge to some problem passages.

This topic is divided into the following subtopics:

- The Motives for Salvation
- The Biblical Terminology of Salvation

The Motives for Salvation

Read Ryrie, chapter 48, “Some Introductory Considerations,” then answer the following questions.

QUESTION 1

Ryrie discusses three tenses of salvation, past, present, and future. Match the tense with the action that is associated with that tense.

| <i>Tense</i> | <i>Action</i> |
|--------------|--|
| Past | Salvation from the presence of sin in heaven. |
| Present | Sanctification and preservation of the believer. |
| Future | The moment one believes. |

QUESTION 2

In the section called “The Motives for Salvation,” (chapter 48, section II) Ryrie also tells us why God would want to save sinners. Match the Scripture references with the motives the Scriptures express.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Motives</i> |
|-----------------------|---|
| John 3:16; Romans 5:8 | To demonstrate God’s love. |
| Ephesians 2:7 | To display God’s grace throughout eternity. |
| Ephesians 2:10 | So a people would do good works and thus provide a glimpse of God’s goodness. |

The Biblical Terminology of Salvation

The biblical terminology of salvation occurs both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. It would be difficult to find a word or idea that is richer and more varied in meaning than the biblical concept of salvation. Its breadth is so sweeping, and its intended aim so magnificent, that in many contexts the words used defy precise definition.

Yet these difficulties have not thwarted numerous interpreters from assuming, often without any contextual justification, that the words used invariably mean “deliverance from hell.” It may come as a surprise that that usage would have been the least likely meaning to come to the mind of a reader of the Bible in the first century. Indeed, according to hundreds of occurrences of the verb *to save* and the noun *salvation* in the Old Testament, it is debatable that the words *ever* have that meaning!

It is important that we understand that the term *salvation* in the Bible includes more than just final deliverance from hell. Theologians customarily refer to salvation as including three tenses: past, present, and future. Our past salvation is deliverance from the penalty of sin rendered possible by Christ’s death on the cross. Our present salvation is more properly called sanctification and refers to deliverance from difficulty, temptation, and the power of sin. Our future salvation refers to our final deliverance from the presence of sin and into enjoyment of fellowship with God in heaven.

Now please read Ryrie, chapter 49, “The Biblical Terminology,” if you have not done so. Then answer the following questions:

QUESTION 3

The meaning of salvation in the Old Testament is different from that in the New Testament. The saints of the Old Testament were saved by keeping the law, but salvation in the New Testament is by faith. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

The words for salvation in New Testament refer to many kinds of deliverance. Match each Scripture with the kind of salvation it names.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Salvation</i> |
|------------------|------------------------|
| Matthew 9:22 | From eternal damnation |
| Acts 27:20 | From danger |
| Hebrews 5:7 | From death |
| Romans 5:9 | From disease |

QUESTION 5

The way of salvation in the Old and the New Testaments is the same. Match the aspect of salvation on the left with its definition on the right.

| <i>Aspect of Salvation</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
|---------------------------------|---|
| The shed blood of Christ | The basis of salvation in the OT and NT |
| Faith | The content of faith in the OT |
| God | The means of salvation in the OT and NT |
| Progressively revealed prophecy | The content of faith in the NT |
| The crucified and risen Savior | The object of faith in the OT and NT |

QUESTION 6

Open your Life Notebook and write your reflections about the tenses of salvation and the kinds of salvation named in the New Testament. Are we saved from disease, danger, death, and damnation only in the future tense of our salvation? Or is there a sense in which these forms of salvation also come to us in the present? Ryrie notes that sometimes deliverance comes through the agency of humans. In what ways does God, through the agency of humans, bring deliverance from disease and danger within the community of believers?

Topic 2: The Passion of Christ

Passion means suffering. The passion of Christ particularly means the sufferings of Christ in the last hours of His earthly life from the Last Supper to the Crucifixion. In this topic, we will focus on the passion of Christ. In order to understand fully the necessity of the sufferings of Christ, we will need to review some materials from “Doctrine 1” and try to answer the questions: What is the reason for Christ to suffer? Why is it necessary for Christ to die? Then we will look in detail at the outline of the passion—the trial, the day, and the method of crucifixion.

As the basis for this portion of our study, you need to read Ryrie’s textbook, chapter 50.

This topic is divided into two subtopics as follows:

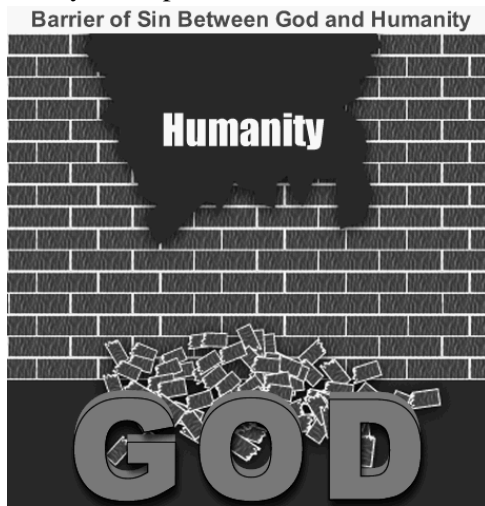
- The Purpose of the Passion
- The Outline of the Passion



The Purpose of the Passion

If you have not read Ryrie, chapter 50, “The Passion of Christ,” please do so now.

It may be helpful at the outset of this lesson to recall the barrier that sin constructed between God and humanity. This was explained in Lesson 10 of BEE’s Doctrine One in a slightly different format. We will adapt the basic concepts to fit Ryrie’s treatment of the subject.



The purpose of the death of Christ was to destroy that barrier of sin. Throughout this lesson we want to show how the finished work of Christ removed each of the bricks in the barrier illustrated above and therefore opened a way of access for sinful humanity to a holy God.

All of the bricks in the barrier above, taken together, are the basis of the doctrine of total depravity.

Many non-Christians misunderstand the doctrine of total depravity and think that it means they are rotten to the core. Instead, total depravity means that every area of a person’s being—intellect, emotion, and will—is affected. Ryrie says that depravity renders humans unable to please God, love God, or understand spiritual truth apart from divine enablement.

QUESTION 7

According to Ryrie, chapter 50, “The Need for His Passion,” depravity means that people cannot and never do perform actions that are good in the sight of God or other people. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

Open your Life Notebook and write about someone you know who is unsaved but who does wonderful good works. How is it that this individual can perform good works while being totally depraved?

QUESTION 9

In your Life Notebook, write about this question: If our works cannot merit God’s saving favor, what is the value of performing good works? Ephesians 2:10 provides some insight into this question.

QUESTION 10

According to Ryrie, chapter 50, “The Person of the Passion,” the Incarnation was necessary because God has declared that the penalty for sin has to be death. Since God cannot die, there had to be an Incarnation so there would be a human nature to experience death and thus pay the penalty for sin. *True or False?*

QUESTION 11

Choose the THREE correct answers below. Hebrews 2:14-15 refers to one reason why Jesus became man, and Hebrews 2:17 gives two more. The reason Jesus became a man was to

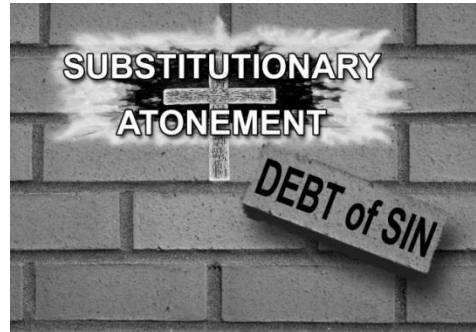
- A. Destroy him who holds the power of death
- B. Become a merciful high priest
- C. Demonstrate God's love to the world
- D. Make atonement for our sins
- E. Give us an example of holy life

The Outline of the Passion

Please read again Ryrie, chapter 50, "The Outline of the Passion."

QUESTION 12

Open your Life Notebook. Write a paragraph about why you need a Savior. Once you have written that paragraph, write a prayer of thanksgiving for the suffering and persecution that Christ faced for you.



Topic 3: The Meaning of Christ's Death

There is possibly nothing more important to theology than an accurate understanding of the meaning of Christ's death. This is particularly true since the influx of theological liberalism in the twentieth century. Theological liberals, being offended by such ideas as substitution for sin and the wrath of God, have attempted to remove these "offensive" elements from the pages of the Bible. In so doing, they have taken away the gospel's power and trivialized the most significant event of the cosmos as a "moral example" rather than a substitution for sinners.

In his typically concise manner, Ryrie does an excellent job of summarizing some of the critical elements in understanding the meaning of the death of Christ. He convincingly exposes the fallacy of some modern reinterpretations and reestablishes the traditional view. We need to study his analysis carefully, with an open heart to the biblical truth in submission to the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Only with a firm grasp of these tremendous truths can we see the crucial importance of personal evangelism and accurately state the gospel message to a lost world. In addition, as we marvel at God's work on our behalf, our hearts should be stirred by His matchless grace!

In this topic, your reading assignment is Ryrie, chapters 51 and 52.

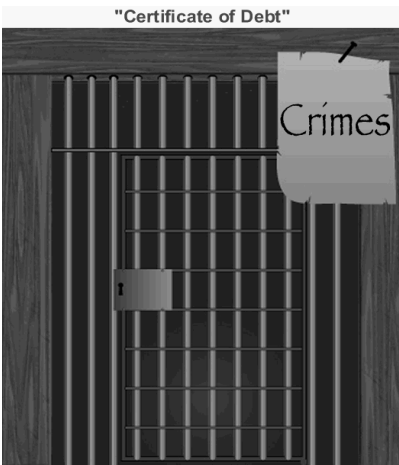
This topic is divided into five subtopics:

- Substitution for Sinners
- Redemption from Sin
- Reconciliation in Relation to the World
- Propitiation in Relation to God
- Justification

Substitution for Sinners

Read Ryrie, chapter 51, section I, “A Substitution for Sinners,” if you have not done so.

The first brick in the barrier is what we might call personal sins, or “the debt of sin.” In the ancient world, when a person was sent to prison, a papyrus was nailed to the door of the cell. On



that piece of paper all of the prisoner’s crimes were listed.

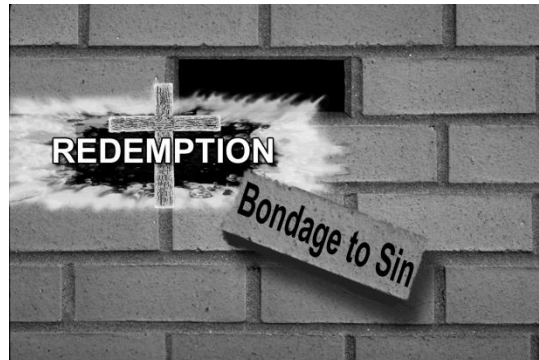
This document was called the “certificate of debt.” Paul applies the same concept to believers who similarly stand under the enormous debt of personal sins (Col 2:14).

Imagine that you sin only ten times a day. That adds up to 3,650 sins a year or 219,000 sins over an average lifetime! Each sin is recorded on that papyrus, your own personal “certificate of debt.” Someone must pay this overwhelming debt for us. In other words, we need a substitute.

In Colossians 2:13b-14 we read, “He nonetheless made you alive with him, having forgiven all your transgressions. He has destroyed what was against us, a certificate of indebtedness expressed in decrees opposed to us. He has taken it away by nailing it to the cross.”

When that certificate of debt, with our sins written upon it, was nailed to the prison door—the place of punishment—Christ suffered as a substitute for us, and our certificate of debt was nailed to the cross where its sum of charges against us was fully paid by our substitute.

Some theologians contend that the Bible does not teach substitutionary atonement. They say that Christ died for our benefit, but not in our place. To address this objection, Ryrie discusses the meaning of two prepositions, *anti* and *huper*. He contends that the ways these two words were used in the Bible and in ancient literature make it clear that what Christ accomplished was substitutionary atonement, also called vicarious atonement.



QUESTION 13

Open your Life Notebook. In chapter 51, “Objections to Substitutionary Atonement,” Ryrie writes that some theologians object to the doctrine of vicarious atonement because it “makes the innocent Christ suffer for the wicked.” Ryrie agrees that vicarious atonement does this: “This is absolutely true,” he writes, “and essential to atonement.” What critics consider objectionable, Ryrie regards as necessary for God’s plan of redemption. Tell why you think it was necessary for our redemption that the innocent Christ suffer in our place rather than just on our behalf.

QUESTION 14

Those who deny the substitutionary nature of Christ’s atonement appeal to the Greek preposition *huper* to support their case. *True or False?*



When a prisoner in the ancient world had fully paid the penalty, the warden came to release the prisoner. The warden tore the certificate of debt listing the prisoner's offenses off the door and wrote a Greek word across it: *tetelestai*. As Christ hung on the cross, His last word, as He screamed to the Father, was *tetelestai* (Jn 19:30).

This Greek word means "it is finished, accomplished, completed, and brought to an end." Jesus accomplished all of the Father's work that He came to do (Jn 17:4; 19:28); it was finished. And the main aspect of that finished work was the full payment for our debt of sin. Interestingly, this Greek word was also used in that day for a bill that had been paid (James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, "*teleo*" in *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1930], p. 630), where it might be

rendered "paid in full." Thus, the first brick of the barrier between God and humanity was removed.

Redemption from Sin

Read Ryrie, chapter 51, section II, "A Redemption In Relation To Sin," if you have not done so.

Humanity is not only in debt; it is in bondage. It is in bondage to sin's power and its penalty.

In order to solve this problem of slavery to sin, humanity needed a redeemer to remove the next brick from the barrier. The aspect of Christ's work that shattered this brick is called redemption.

One of the words used in relation to the Old Testament concept of redemption is *kopher*.



QUESTION 15

In Exodus 21:28 and 30:12, the noun form of the Hebrew word *kopher* refers to the sum paid to redeem a forfeited life. *True or False?*

Ryrie points out in chapter 52, section II, "A Redemption in Relation to Sin," that there are four words used in the Greek New Testament for redemption. Each one contributes something distinctive to the doctrine.

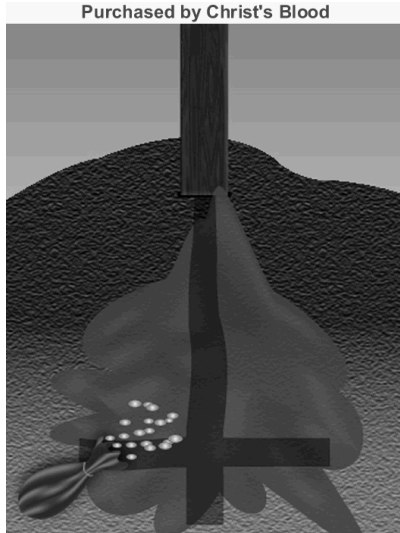
QUESTION 16

Match each Greek word of redemption to its related nuance.

| Word | Nuance |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| Agorazo | To buy out of market (Gal 3:13; 4:5) |
| Exagorazo | To release by ransom (Tit 2:14) |
| Peripoioumai | To keep safe (Acts 20:28) |
| Lutroo | To buy something (1 Cor 6:20) |

All of the above verbs convey the idea of purchase. We have been purchased by a ransom price, the blood of Jesus Christ, out of the slave market of sin, Satan, and the law. The believers in the ancient world could hardly have found a more appropriate word to communicate the meaning of the death of Christ. It has been estimated that nearly two-thirds of the population of the Roman Empire were slaves. Probably an even higher percentage of Christians came from these ranks.

Freedom from slavery was a common concern. But in the death of Christ an even higher freedom was offered.



In the ancient world, elaborate religious conditions were prescribed for setting a slave free. The formalities were given religious sanction by the following process. The owner of the slave was required to pay a ransom price to a deity in one of the temples. When that ransom price was paid, the slave was released. Where did the owner get the money for this? The slave saved money for years and gave it to the owner. The owner, in turn, placed it into the temple treasury, and the priests issued a certificate of manumission.

In the New Testament parallel, Jesus is the master who purchased us. Instead of our paying for our own sins, the payment price was offered by our new master Himself, with His own blood. Jesus is not only the master but also the deity. By His own blood, He purchased us for Himself.

QUESTION 17

Under “A Redemption in Relation to Sin,” (chapter 51, section II.B) Ryrie points out that a Greek word *agorazo* is used in a number of passages in the New Testament. According to Ryrie, what are the teachings of the passages in which the word *agorazo* is used? (See 2 Pet 2:1; Rev 5:9-10; 1 Cor 6:19-20.)

God _____ our redemption with the blood of Jesus.

Humanity’s desperate situation in slavery and the need for a redeemer is the central tragedy of human history. We are literally slaves of Satan in a slave market of sin. The Scriptures are very clear that there is only one way out of this dilemma. We need a redeemer who is not himself in that slave market, but who can redeem all humanity out of it.



QUESTION 18

Which of the following is **NOT** included in the doctrine of redemption? Refer to “The Doctrine Summarized” in Ryrie, chapter 51.

- A. People are redeemed from something; namely, from the marketplace or slavery of sin.
- B. People are redeemed by something; namely, by the payment of a price, the blood of Christ.
- C. People are redeemed through something; namely, the gift of the Holy Spirit signified by speaking in tongues.
- D. People are redeemed to something; namely, to a state of freedom.

We must remember that just because Christ has paid the ransom price and freed all humanity from the slave market of sin, not all people have chosen to avail themselves of this ransom and to be set free.

A story is told of a young man who was convicted of murder in the United States many years ago. He had very wealthy and influential parents who were able to obtain a stay of execution from the governor of the state. They eventually persuaded the governor to grant their son a pardon. This man was sitting on “death row” awaiting execution when he received the fantastic news that his crime had been pardoned. He was a free man and could leave the prison! To everyone’s surprise, he rejected the pardon and said, “I am guilty. I deserve to die and I want to die.”

All attempts at persuasion failed. His parents urged and pleaded with him to change his mind. Finally, in an effort to keep him from being executed, the family took the case all the way to the highest court in the land. After that court heard the case, they issued the following ruling: a pardon is not a pardon until it is accepted by the one for whom it was intended. So the man went to his death, not because he had no alternative but because he refused to accept the pardon.

So it is with people in relation to God. Those who spend eternity separated from God in bitter anguish of soul and body do so not because there is no alternative but because they refuse to accept the alternative that God has provided. But when a person accepts that pardon, that individual is forever free!

There are many all around us who are interested in a pardon from the guilt and weight of their sin. They want freedom from the slavery under which they labor. Those of us who have come to know the Redeemer are under a solemn obligation to preach the good news of redemption to a world full of slaves.

Reconciliation in Relation to the World

Now read Ryrie, chapter 51, section III, “A Reconciliation in Relation to the World,” if you have not done so.

Because of sin, people have another problem: Humanity has become God’s enemy. All those portraits of an angry God in the Old Testament have some truth to them. God is righteously angered by our sin and rebelliousness. As a result, humanity has become His adversary. But the focus of the Bible is on God’s desire for fellowship. What is needed is a restoration of friendly relations, a removal of the enmity between God and man. We need reconciliation. In His finished work on the cross, Christ reconciled us to God, removing another brick from the barrier between us and God.

While the meaning of reconciliation is generally agreed upon, the intended object of reconciliation has been debated. Some argue that God is the one who is reconciled to humanity; others argue that humanity is reconciled to God, and still others believe that both man and God are reconciled.

QUESTION 19

According to Ryrie’s discussion in “The Object of Reconciliation,” humanity is the intended object of reconciliation. *True or False?*

Take a moment and read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. This passage has led some to teach a **universal salvation** because it talks about a universal reconciliation of the “world” to God. Ryrie answers this by pointing out that the passage also teaches an individual reconciliation (see 2 Cor 5:20). If the world has already been reconciled and if people in the world must individually be reconciled, Paul is obviously using the term in different senses.

Ryrie stresses that the universal reconciliation changes the position of the world objectively from being in an un-saveable condition to a savable one. In other words, because of reconciliation, it is now *possible* for the entire world to be saved. Whether or not individuals will be saved, however, depends upon whether or not they are personally reconciled to God by faith.

QUESTION 20

Which of the following reflects Ryrie's teaching on universal reconciliation?

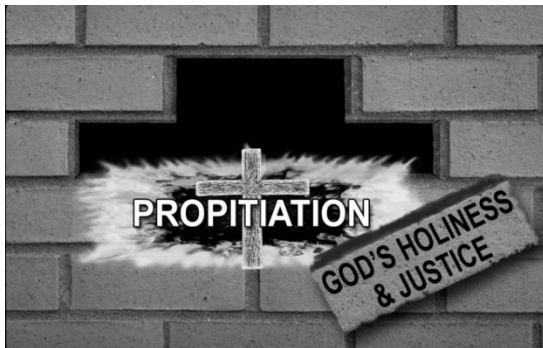
- A. Universal reconciliation changes the world from an unsavable condition to a savable one.
- B. Universal reconciliation reconciles every individual to Christ.
- C. Universal reconciliation is a heretical teaching of universalists.
- D. Universal reconciliation means that belief in Christ is not necessary for salvation.

This distinction between the objective and judicial universal reconciliation and the need for individual reconciliation helps to explain passages like Colossians 1:21-22:

And you were at one time strangers and *enemies in your minds* as expressed through your evil deeds, but now he has reconciled you by his physical body through death to present you holy, without blemish, and *blameless before him*.
(emphasis added)

Why were people enemies in their minds? If we view God as against us and condemning us, God becomes our enemy. We neither like Him nor want to submit to someone who is wrathful or accusing toward us. But, due to the death of Christ, the wrath of God has been removed and God has placed all people in a reconcilable position. When we believe, we see that God is no longer accusing us, and the hostility we feel toward Him disappears. When that happens, a subjective reconciliation has occurred in the mind of an individual believer.

All believers were objectively reconciled to God at the point in time they trusted Christ as Savior.



At that moment their objective position was changed from being God's enemy to being God's friend. But not all believers *feel* reconciled. Why? It is because they have not taken seriously the statements that God no longer counts our sins against us.

Give your attention to this amazing good news:

In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, *not counting people's trespasses [sins] against them*. (2 Cor 5:19a, emphasis added)

God no longer holds believers' sins against them. The reconciliation has neutralized His anger.

QUESTION 21

Open your Life Notebook. Because of reconciliation, a removal of enmity has occurred. God is now "for us" and not against us. Do you view God as your friend? Or do you view Him as a member of the secret police, always spying on your sins and greatly displeased with your performance? Relate this to various Scriptures that come to mind. Come prepared to share your thoughts at your accountability group.

We may summarize the doctrine of reconciliation as follows. A study of the New Testament passages (Rom 5:10; 11:15; 1 Cor 7:11; 2 Cor 5:18-20; Eph 2:16; Col 1:20-21) reveals that the basic meaning of reconciliation is to change the relationship between two parties by removing the enmity between them. Also, two different reconciliations are presented.

First, there is the objective reconciliation of the world, which was accomplished for all peoples for all time at Calvary (2 Cor 5:19; Rom 5:11). God did not change, nor did the world change, but the *relationship between God and the world changed*. The barrier between God and humanity erected by sin was judicially destroyed, and God is therefore free to demonstrate mercy where judgment is deserved. This reconciliation was the work of God alone, and humanity had no part in it.

And second, there is a reconciliation not only of the world (universally), but also of sinners individually. This is both objective, in that the individual sinner is removed from the wrath of God, and subjective, in that the attitude of hostility that the individual feels is changed because the individual has accepted God's forgiveness. When sinners see that God loves them and accepts them, their subjective feeling toward God is transformed.

That is the reconciliation referred to in 2 Corinthians 5:20. God has entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation. It is a ministry of evangelism: a ministry in which we tell people of their new standing with God and ask them to take advantage of their reconcilable position, a ministry in which we tell them that God loves them and has opened the way for them to come to Him. As we discharge this ministry, we are "Ambassadors of Christ."

Propitiation in Relation to God

Read Ryrie, chapter 51, section IV, "A Propitiation in Relation to God," if you have not done so.

Another major obstacle standing between God and humanity is the fact that God is holy and just. His holy character is inflamed with wrath against sin, and His divine justice requires a penalty to be paid. These two aspects of God's character must be satisfied if sinful humanity is ever going to have eternal fellowship with holy God.

Once again, it is only by God's matchless grace that this massive brick in the barrier between God and humanity can be removed. God has removed this brick by offering His only Son as a propitiation for sin.

Propitiation brings humanity out from under the wrath of God through satisfying God's righteousness and justice. *Redemption* brings us out of slavery to sin, Satan, and the law through the payment of a ransom. *Substitutionary death* brings us out from under the immense burden of the debt of sin. These three aspects of the work of Christ have torn down the barrier produced by sin. But even with the barrier gone, the *relationship* between people and God must be established. This is the work of *reconciliation*.

QUESTION 22

According to Ryrie in chapter 51, "A Propitiation in Relation to God," what does propitiation mean?

- A. God's provision for us
- B. Releasing from sins' captivity
- C. Knowing what our future holds
- D. Turning away God's wrath

In order to really understand the meaning of propitiation, we must go back to the tabernacle in the wilderness, where divine instructions for worship were first given. It was in this tent that God

established His presence and condescended to meet with the priests and with Moses. An elaborate ritual was prescribed involving sacrifices and offerings which taught Israel that the only way to approach God was through the shedding of the blood of an innocent substitute.



There were two divisions to the tabernacle: the holy place, which was frequented daily by the priests; and the holy of holies, into which only the high priest entered once a year on the Day of Atonement. Inside the holy of holies was a box, the Ark of the Covenant. Over the ark, the statues of two angels hovered, symbolizing the presence of God looking down into the box.

When God looked down into the box, what did He see? Three items were placed in the ark: the manna, the rod, and the stone tablets. The manna reminded Israel of God's provision for their needs but particularly of their ungrateful rejection of that very provision. The rod

reminded them of their rebellion against Aaron's leadership (Num 16–17). The stone tablets revealed God's holiness.

People rejected the Ten Commandments when Moses was on the mountain in the presence of God. The people below were worshipping a golden calf. The gross sins of the people angered Moses so much that, when he returned, he cast the tablets to the ground and smashed them to pieces. Later God rewrote them on stone and had them placed inside the ark as a symbol of man's rejection of God's holiness.

The ark, therefore, contained the physical representations of the total sinfulness of man:

- The manna, man's rejection of God's provisions
- Aaron's rod, man's rejection of God's leadership
- The tablets of the law, man's rejection of God's holiness

For 364 days each year, the angels looked down upon man's sin, and the wrath of God was provoked. For 364 days, God saw only sin and rejection, and His divine wrath was incensed. But on one day each year, something amazing happened. On this one day, and only on this day, the high priest of Israel was permitted inside the holy of holies to sprinkle blood on the lid of the box (Lev 16:14). On this day, known as the Day of Atonement, when God looked down at the ark, what did He see? Did He see humanity's sin and rejection? No! He saw blood; the blood of the animal covered the sin of man. On this one day God's wrath was appeased. Justice could now say, "I'm satisfied because the death penalty has been paid." Holiness said, "I'm no longer offended because man's sin has been covered from my eyes and I see only the blood of an innocent substitute who paid the penalty which my justice requires."

The lid of that box was called the "mercy seat" (Ex 25:22; Lev 16:2). This golden lid of the ark was the place where man's sin was covered by blood, and he could now meet God through the mediation of the sacrifice.

QUESTION 23

According to Ryrie in chapter 51, “The Distinction between Propitiation and Expiation,” what is the difference between *expiation* and *propitiation*?

- A. Expiation covers our sins; propitiation pays for them.
- B. Expiation pays the penalty for our sins, propitiation covers them up.
- C. Expiation ignores our sins, propitiation acknowledges them.
- D. Expiation covers up our sins, propitiation ignores them.

QUESTION 24

According to Ryrie in chapter 51, “An Important Practical Point,” God’s wrath is satisfied because of Christ’s death; then what do we need to do to satisfy God?

- A. Perform deeds
- B. Teach His word
- C. Sacrifice greatly
- D. Nothing

The passage Romans 3:25-26 presents an interesting dilemma. Is Christianity inherently unfair because millions died before Christ? The answer to the objection is that God did not punish the sins of those who died before Christ. How can this be just? It might be merciful, but it is not just, and God must be both. It is just because their sins were covered by the same sacrifice that Christ offered for our sin. We look back to the cross, and they looked forward to it.

We are perplexed at how a loving God could send anyone to hell, but the thing that astounded Peter and amazed Paul was that a just God could send anyone to heaven.

The word translated *propitiation* is the Greek word *hilasterion*. Ryrie mentions that this same word is used in Hebrews 9:5 for the mercy seat of the ark. Christ is our mercy seat. As God looks down on the blood of our innocent substitute, He does not see sin but a covering. As a result, His wrath is appeased, and He is satisfied—He is propitiated.

Through propitiation another brick in the barrier has been removed. God’s wrath has been appeased; His justice has been satisfied.

Justification

Now read Ryrie, chapter 52, section I, if you have not done so. Ryrie, chapter 52, “Some Results of Salvation,” lists several more aspects of the work of Christ. Perhaps the word *justification* is one of the most important words in the New Testament. In this lesson, we will focus on the topic of justification.

On the basis of reconciliation, redemption, substitution, and propitiation, our guilt has been removed and the condition of hostility eliminated. But Jesus said that before a man could enter heaven, he had to be “perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5:48). Yet every member of the human race has had the sin of Adam imputed to his account. As a result, we stand behind Adam, as our federal head, as having sinned like him.

Our sin may be forgiven, but we certainly lack the perfect righteousness that is required for fellowship with a perfectly righteous and holy God. Furthermore, the law requires not only a penalty for its violation but a perfectly righteous life. Forgiveness removes the difficulty of the penalty, but the requirement of an obedient life must also be satisfied. God’s answer to this barrier is what the New Testament calls justification.

When Ryrie speaks of changing sinners into righteous people, we need to remember that he is speaking *forensically*, that is, legally. It is not that a change of personal life has occurred to such an extent that they are perfect in their behavior. Rather, God gives them freely the righteousness of Christ.

QUESTION 25

Open your Life Notebook. Ryrie explains in chapter 52 that in justification we are declared righteous; yet we still sin. Paul writes about his struggle with sin in Romans 7. Also consider 1 John 1:5-10, in which believers are told not to walk in the darkness but also that they are lying if they say they are without sin. How do we walk in the light as sinful people? As believers, what is our position before God as we engage in this struggle?

In the outworking of this gift of righteousness, Ryrie enumerates “The Procedure in Justification,” drawing five steps from Romans 3:21-26.

1. The plan centered on Jesus Christ.
2. The prerequisite is faith.
3. The price for our sins is the blood of Jesus.
4. Our position is with Christ; through Him our sins are covered.
5. God pronounces us as holy because we are justified by Christ.

QUESTION 26

In your Life Notebook, summarize in your own words the meaning of each step of justification. This would be an excellent outline for a sermon or Bible study.

While Ryrie’s discussion is helpful, it seems a bit confusing to say that God changes the sinner into a righteous person. It would be better to say He *imputes* (or reckons or credits) righteousness to the sinner. As Ryrie himself says, *dikaioo*, to justify, means to “declare righteous” and not to make righteous. Part of Ryrie’s difficulty is that he is attempting to avoid the idea that justification produces a “legal fiction”—that people who really are not righteous are declared to be so.

A better solution is to emphasize what Ryrie only vaguely hints at—the active as well as the passive obedience of Christ. The law required a penalty when it was violated. Christ’s passive obedience, His death on the cross, satisfied the just requirement that the penalty be paid. But more than that is needed. Not only must the penalty be paid; we must also live a perfect life because the law requires both.

How is this accomplished? This leads us to the real meaning of what precisely was imputed to us in the justifying act—the righteousness of Christ. Christ was not only our substitute in the payment of the law’s penalty; He was also our substitute in the living out of the law’s perfect requirements. He not only died for us, He obeyed for us. His perfect obedience—His righteousness—was substituted for our life, just as His death was substituted for our death!

QUESTION 27

Read the section titled “The Basis for the Believer’s Family Fellowship” in Ryrie, chapter 52. Open your Life Notebook and write about the practice of confession and forgiveness in your congregation. Do the leaders in your congregation encourage people to confess to and forgive one another? Are there formal procedures for confession and forgiveness in some cases? How is your congregation’s practice of confession and forgiveness influenced by the congregation’s understanding of believers’ justification in God’s sight? In your experience, do the practices of confession and forgiveness help to restore fellowship among sinful members of God’s body? If you have a story of fellowship being restored because people struggled through confession and forgiveness together, tell that story to your accountability group.

QUESTION 28

Open your Life Notebook and write a one or two paragraph statement about what Jesus Christ did for us as Christians and for the whole world.

What we have discussed in this lesson is the central teaching on the finished work of Christ. Think of it: in His infinite love God has provided a substitute for our certificate of debt, He has purchased us out of the slave market of sin, He has made us His friend, He has satisfied His own wrath at our sin, and He has declared us righteous, acquitted before His own tribunal! Salvation is clearly a work of God for humanity, which we merely receive as a gift.

Key Biblical Concepts

1. Substitution—Mark 10:45
2. Redemption—1 Peter 1:18
3. Reconciliation—2 Corinthians 5:18-21
4. *Huper* = “in place of”—Philemon 13
5. Propitiation—1 John 2:2
6. Justification—Romans 3:24
7. Regeneration—Titus 3:5
8. Adoption—Galatians 4:5
9. End of the law—2 Corinthians 3:7-11
10. Union with Christ—Romans 6:1-14

Conclusion

As believers we are assured of a place in heaven because of all that Jesus did for us. God sacrificed His own Son as a substitute for us in order to pay for our sins. Because of what Christ did for us, we are justified in God’s sight, reconciled to Him, and adopted into His family. Our Lord and Savior paid the price for our eternal salvation. Thanks be to the God who saves!

Lesson 3 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Salvation in the Bible includes more than just final deliverance from hell. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

Which of the following is **NOT** one of the reasons Ryrie gives for God wanting to save sinners?

- A. Saving sinners was the greatest and most concrete way God could demonstrate His love.
- B. Salvation gives God a display of His grace throughout all eternity.
- C. God wanted a people who would fight Satan on His behalf.
- D. God wanted a people who would do good works in this life and thus give the world a glimpse of His goodness.

QUESTION 3

Which of the following is **NOT** an argument for the substitutionary atonement?

- A. God is too holy to be involved in sin.
- B. The Old Testament sacrificial system involved transfer of guilt to a substitute.
- C. The preposition *anti* always means “in the place of.”
- D. The preposition *huper* can mean either “for the benefit of” or “in place of.”

QUESTION 4

Active obedience of Christ refers to His death when God laid on Christ the sins of the world.

True or False?

QUESTION 5

Colossians 2:14 indicates that through the substitutionary death of Christ, our debt was paid in full. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

Christ has paid the ransom price. Therefore, everyone is freed from the slave market of sin. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

Expiation is the concept of repairing what is wrong, removing guilt. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

Propitiation appeases God’s wrath. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

Following God’s Law is necessary for our salvation. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

Which statement about our righteousness is correct? We are righteous before God when we...

- A. Say and do good things
- B. Have faith in Jesus Christ
- C. Ask for God’s forgiveness
- D. Pay for our own sins

Unit One Exam

QUESTION 1

Preexistence is the doctrine that Jesus Christ

- A. Existed before His birth
- B. Has a divine nature
- C. Lives in our time
- D. Existed always in all times

QUESTION 2

Eternality is the doctrine that Jesus Christ

- A. Existed before His birth
- B. Has a divine nature
- C. Lives in our time
- D. Existed always in all times

QUESTION 3

Incarnation means that

- A. Humans can live forever
- B. Humans have God-like powers
- C. God became human
- D. Christ saved us from our sins

QUESTION 4

Which of the following statements is **NOT** a purpose for the incarnation of Christ?

- A. He gave us a clearer picture of God.
- B. He wanted to live among us.
- C. He gave us an example to follow.
- D. He provided a perfect sacrifice for our sin.

QUESTION 5

The Chalcedon statement:

- A. Permitted the division of Christ into two selves
- B. Taught the uniting of the two persons into one person without mixture
- C. Taught the uniting of the two natures into one person
- D. Allowed for the possible transfer of the properties of one nature to the other

QUESTION 6

Which of the following statements about the human and divine nature of Christ is *heresy*?

- A. Christ has both fully divine and perfectly human natures.
- B. Christ possesses divine attributes such as eternity, omnipotence and omnipresence.
- C. When Christ was on earth, He had human attributes such as emotions, hunger, and pain.
- D. Christ's human and divine natures were separate, and He could choose which form to take.

QUESTION 7

When the New Testament asserts that Jesus Christ is *monogenes* of the Father, it:

- A. Stresses that God only had one son
- B. Stresses Christ's unique relationship with the Father
- C. Explains that Jesus is "first in rank"
- D. Supports the Arian view that Christ had a beginning

QUESTION 8

Christ holds three major titles. They are:

- A. Son, savior, sacrifice
- B. Redeemer, resurrected, king
- C. Priest, rabbi, teacher
- D. Prophet, priest, and king

QUESTION 9

The three great discourses of Christ are:

- A. The Sermon on the Mount, the Upper Room, and Olivet discourses
- B. The Beatitudes, the Sermon on the Mount, and the Olivet discourse
- C. The Lord's Prayer, the Beatitudes, and the Temple discourse
- D. The Upper Room, Fishing Boat, and Olivet discourses

QUESTION 10

The *kenosis* means that Christ

- A. Had greater knowledge than anyone else who ever lived
- B. Came to earth to die, only to prove God's power over death
- C. Spoke prophetically at gatherings in order to reveal his true identity
- D. Emptied Himself of His status in the Godhead and took on humanity

QUESTION 11

The concept that Christ could not have sinned is called_____.

QUESTION 12

Our faith is based on two essential facts: (1) Christ died and (2) He

- A. Was buried
- B. Faced temptation
- C. Lives
- D. Did good

QUESTION 13

Which of the following statements is considered to be evidence for Christ's resurrection?

- A. Hundreds of eye witnesses saw him alive after His death.
- B. No one knows where He is buried and His body can't be located.
- C. We know that the cross was used as a form of punishment in that day.
- D. He is God's Son, so there's no way that He can die forever.

QUESTION 14

Christ's ascension was significant because he rode home on a cloud and no one had ever seen such a magnificent sight. *True or False?*

QUESTION 15

Christ's PRESENT ministry to us includes His headship of the church, His preparation of a place for us, and His

- A. Answering of our prayers
- B. Love and caring for people on earth
- C. Forgiveness of our sins
- D. Intercession for us as high priest

QUESTION 16

Salvation in the Bible includes more than just final deliverance from hell. *True or False?*

QUESTION 17

The Greek term *anti* is interpreted to mean that Jesus came to die in our place, as our substitute. *True or False?*

QUESTION 18

Why do we need to be reconciled to God?

- A. Because the devil controls this world and God cannot even look upon us.
- B. Because we ignored God for so many years before turning to Christ.
- C. Because of what we did to Jesus when He was here on earth.
- D. Because our sin has created a state of estrangement from God.

QUESTION 19

To be *redeemed* by Christ means that we

- A. Are free because Christ paid for our sins
- B. Will go to heaven because of Christ's sacrifice
- C. Can be saved by faith in Christ
- D. Are no longer responsible for our sins

QUESTION 20

Propitiation means the removal of sin or guilt from man. *True or False?*

QUESTION 21

To *justify* means only that our sins were taken away. *True or False?*

QUESTION 22

Which of the following statements is a primary reason why God would want to save sinners?

- A. Because He wanted to rescue us from the devil.
- B. To display His grace throughout all eternity.
- C. Because Jesus convinced Him to save us.
- D. To remove all the good people from earth before it is destroyed.

QUESTION 23

An important benefit of Christ's death is the inauguration of the faith and righteousness principles to replace the law and works principles of salvation. *True or False?*

QUESTION 24

Because Christ died for our sins, we no longer need to obey the Ten Commandments. *True or False?*

QUESTION 25

When someone becomes a believer, that person is adopted into God's family, the church. *True or False?*

Lesson 3 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

| <i>Tense</i> | <i>Action</i> |
|--------------|--|
| Past | The moment one believes. |
| Present | Sanctification and preservation of the believer. |
| Future | Salvation from the presence of sin in heaven. |

QUESTION 2:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Motives</i> |
|-----------------------|---|
| John 3:16; Romans 5:8 | To demonstrate God's love. |
| Ephesians 2:7 | To display God's grace throughout eternity. |
| Ephesians 2:10 | So a people would do good works and thus provide a glimpse of God's goodness. |

QUESTION 3: False

QUESTION 4:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Salvation</i> |
|------------------|------------------------|
| Matthew 9:22 | From disease |
| Acts 27:20 | From danger |
| Hebrews 5:7 | From death |
| Romans 5:9 | From eternal damnation |

QUESTION 5:

| <i>Aspect of Salvation</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
|---------------------------------|---|
| The shed blood of Christ | The basis of salvation in the OT and NT |
| Faith | The means of salvation in the OT and NT |
| God | The object of faith in the OT and NT |
| Progressively revealed prophecy | The content of faith in the OT |
| The crucified and risen Savior | The content of faith in the NT |

QUESTION 6: *Your answer*

QUESTION 7: False

QUESTION 8: *Your answer*

QUESTION 9: *Your answer*

QUESTION 10: True

QUESTION 11:

A. Destroy him who holds the power of death

B. Become a merciful high priest

D. Make atonement for our sins

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13: *Your answer*

QUESTION 14: True

QUESTION 15: True

QUESTION 16:

| <i>Word</i> | <i>Nuance</i> |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| Agorazo | To buy something (1 Cor 6:20) |
| Exagorazo | To buy out of market (Gal 3:13; 4:5) |
| Peripoioimai | To keep safe (Acts 20:28) |
| Lutroo | To release by ransom (Tit 2:14) |

QUESTION 17:

Correct answers include:

Paid for

Purchased

Bought

QUESTION 18:

C. People are redeemed through something; namely, the gift of the Holy Spirit signified by speaking in tongues.

QUESTION 19: True

QUESTION 20:

A. Universal reconciliation changes the world from an unsavable condition to a savable one.

QUESTION 21: *Your answer*

QUESTION 22:

D. Turning away God's wrath

QUESTION 23:

B. Expiation pays the penalty for our sins, propitiation covers them up.

QUESTION 24:

D. Nothing

QUESTION 25: *Your answer*

QUESTION 26: *Your answer*

QUESTION 27: *Your answer*

QUESTION 28: *Your answer*

Lesson 3 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2:

C. God wanted a people who would fight Satan on His behalf.

QUESTION 3:

A. God is too holy to be involved in sin.

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5: True

QUESTION 6: False

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8: True

QUESTION 9: False

QUESTION 10:

B. Have faith in Jesus Christ.

Unit One Exam Answers

QUESTION 1:

A. Existed before His birth

QUESTION 2:

D. Existed always in all times

QUESTION 3:

C. God became human.

QUESTION 4:

B. He wanted to live among us.

QUESTION 5:

C. Taught the uniting of the two natures into one person

QUESTION 6:

D. Christ's human and divine natures were separate and He could choose which form to take.

QUESTION 7:

B. Stresses Christ's unique relationship with the Father

QUESTION 8:

D. Prophet, priest, and king

QUESTION 9:

A. The Sermon on the Mount, the Upper Room, and Olivet discourses.

QUESTION 10:

D. Emptied Himself of His status in the Godhead and took on humanity

QUESTION 11:

Correct answers include:

Impeccability

Non posse peccare

QUESTION 12:

C. Lives

QUESTION 13:

A. Hundreds of eye witnesses saw Him alive after His death.

QUESTION 14: False

QUESTION 15:

D. Intercession for us as high priest

QUESTION 16: True

QUESTION 17: True

QUESTION 18:

D. Because our sin has created a state of estrangement from God.

QUESTION 19:

A. Are free because Christ paid for our sins

QUESTION 20: False

QUESTION 21: False

QUESTION 22:

B. To display His grace throughout all eternity

QUESTION 23: True

QUESTION 24: False

QUESTION 25: True

Unit Two: Salvation

One of the most profound doctrines in the Bible is the doctrine of salvation. In the three lessons that follow, you will enter into the mysteries of election and predestination. How can God be sovereign in election and yet allow you to be truly responsible for your eternal destiny? The Bible teaches that Christ died for all people and that assurance is to be found only in looking to Christ and not in a contemplation of our works.

Perhaps one of the most important subjects to be addressed in this unit is the subject of eternal security. Is it possible for true Christians to lose their salvation? These and other questions related to eternal security will be addressed in Lessons 4 through 6.

Unit Outline

Lesson 4: The Election of the Believer

Lesson 5: Extent and Application of the Atonement

Lesson 6: The Eternal Security of the Believer

Unit Objectives

When you have completed this unit, you will be able to:

- State and define the decree of God
- Respond to various objections to the decree
- Defend the doctrine of unlimited atonement
- Explain the relationship between the gospel and baptism, repentance, surrender, and perseverance
- Counsel believers who struggle with assurance of salvation
- Interpret key passages that seem to teach that salvation can be lost
- Explain the Calvinist and Armenian views of the security of the believer
- Defend the doctrine of eternal security

Lesson 4: The Election of the Believer

Lesson Introduction

Those of us who are parents often know what our children are going to do. And sometimes we can prompt them to make certain decisions. But as parents we also know that our children have minds of their own. They make decisions of their own accord, even when we wish they would decide otherwise.

My daughter, for example, is very predictable. If she is getting dressed for an important celebration, she might bring two dresses to me. “Which one do you think I should wear? The pink one or the blue one?” If I say I like the blue one, she will get a very thoughtful look on her face, and then she will say, “I’m going to wear the pink one.”

I love my daughter, and I know her well. I know that when she asks my preference she will choose the opposite.

Does my knowledge of what she will choose mean that I make her choose one thing or the other? Not at all! She’s making her own choice every time.

Though God foreknew His people and knew that they would believe in Him while others would not, He did not make any of them choose to believe or not to believe.

If my daughter asks my preference and I really prefer the blue dress, I can tell her the pink dress is pretty, and then she will choose the blue one. That way our choices will match. Does that mean she didn’t really choose the blue dress? Not at all! Either way, she has made the decision of her own accord.

If God singles someone out as His elect, He chooses that person, but still that person chooses Him. The believer decides to believe.

Of course, God is very different from human parents, so examples from our family life can provide only imperfect illustrations of His nature and His ways. But sometimes our human relationships give us a glimpse into the way God the Father relates to us, His children.

Without question, one of the most difficult biblical concepts for us to understand is the doctrine of election. We must approach this subject with submissive hearts and with ears that are very attentive to what the Scriptures say. It is vital for our Christian growth that we wrestle with this theme.

In this lesson we will explore the great themes of predestination, election, and divine foreknowledge. These themes introduce some perplexing questions, such as: Why does God permit evil? If God has planned everything, how can my will be truly free? These issues are beyond the grasp of our finite minds, and believers should not frustrate themselves by trying to fully comprehend them. The wonderful reality is that we have the privilege to worship a God whose ways express His eternal and unlimited nature.

Lesson 4 covers three topics. First, you will learn about the doctrine of the decree of God—what the decree is and how election fits into it. Then you will explore four common objections to the doctrine of election and learn how Ryrie addresses those objections. Finally, you will consider several ways the decree of God is an encouragement to us—how it provides assurance of salvation and can comfort us and lead us to praise God.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: The Doctrine of Election
 - Definition of the Decree of God
 - According to the Counsel of His Own Will
 - For His Own Glory
 - Whatever Comes to Pass
 - His Eternal Purpose
- Topic 2: Objections to the Doctrine of Election
 - It Is Fatalistic
 - It Is Inconsistent with Human Freedom
 - It Makes God the Author of Sin
 - It Takes Away All Motive for Human Effort
- Topic 3: Practical Responses to the Decree
 - It Is the Assurance of Our Eternal Salvation
 - It Is a Doctrine of Great Comfort
 - It Produces Praise in Our Hearts

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to:

- Define the divine decree of God, predestination, election, and foreknowledge
- Clarify the distinctive emphases of, and list relevant Scriptures for, the theological concepts of predestination, election, and foreknowledge
- Discuss responses to the issues of evil in the world and humans' freedom of choice as these issues relate to God's decree
- Know the Scripture references of key biblical passages related to this lesson and explain their relevance

Key Terms

Assurance of Salvation—Though the doctrines of eternal security, preservation, and perseverance all teach the same bottom-line conclusion (namely, that the true believer will not lose salvation), assurance is a different doctrine. It is the realization of the truth of eternal security or perseverance. A secure salvation is a true fact whether one realizes it or not. Thus, believers have security whether or not they have assurance.

Divine Decree—*Divine decree* is a theological term referring to God's comprehensive and eternal plan for both the world and its history. The decree of God is His plan for everything, and it contains many smaller decrees. Decreeing and foreordaining are synonymous theological concepts, and they both emphasize sovereignty rather than free will.

Election—Election emphasizes God's free choice of individuals to salvation (the election of Christ, Israel, or angels is not under consideration here). When Paul uses the verb, he uses it in the middle voice, indicating that God's choice was made freely and for His own purposes (1 Cor 1:27-28; Eph 1:4). Election is unconditional and individual.

Eternal Security—Eternal security is the work of God that guarantees that the gift of salvation, once received, is forever and cannot be lost. The concept of eternal security emphasizes God's activity in guaranteeing the eternal possession of the gift of eternal life. It relates to those the Holy Spirit regenerates, and its truth does not rest on feelings or experiences. Preservation is quite similar to eternal security in emphasizing the work of God in preserving the believer in salvation.

Perseverance, the term generally used in Calvinism, labels the fifth point in Calvin's theology, the "final perseverance" of the saints. It means that believers "can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved" (Westminster Confession, XVII, I).

Foreknowledge—Foreknowledge is God's foresight concerning future events. Because God is omnipotent, He will ensure that future events happen. The word *proginosko* is used (a) of prior, temporal knowledge (Acts 26:5; 2 Pet 3:17); (b) of God's relation to Israel (Rom 11:2); (c) of Christ's sacrifice (Acts 2:23; 1 Pet 1:20); and (d) of God's people today (Rom 8:29; 1 Pet 1:2).

Predestination—To predestine is to preplan a destiny. The word *proorizo* means to mark off beforehand. The death of Christ and its meaning were predestined by God (Acts 4:28; 1 Cor 2:7). God's elect are predestined to adoption (Eph 1:5), to an inheritance (Eph 1:11), and to ultimate conformity to Christ (Rom 8:28-29).

Fatalism versus Predestination—There is a fundamental difference between fatalism and the Christian doctrine of divine predestination. Predestination includes both the means and the end in the divine decree, whereas fatalism only looks at the end.

Topic 1: The Doctrine of Election

Your reading assignment from Ryrie for this lesson is chapter 54. You may read it now or read sections as they are indicated later in the lesson.

The subject of the decree of God leads us into some profound considerations regarding the nature and working of God. It is also an area of theology that causes some of our greatest problems in understanding the God we worship, the God who rules over us.

We begin our discussion of this perplexing yet fruitful subject by stating the definition of *God's decree* found in the Westminster Confession of Faith:

His eternal purpose according to the counsel of His own will, whereby for His own glory He has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

Note that there are four aspects of this definition:

1. "His eternal purpose"
2. "According to the counsel of His own will"
3. "For His own glory"
4. "Whatsoever comes to pass"

The Definition of the Decree of God

Read the section on "Background Terminology" in Ryrie, chapter 54.

QUESTION 1

These Scriptures tell us about God's decree: Ephesians 1:11; Deuteronomy 32:39; Acts 5:1-11; Philippians 2:30; Romans 1:24, 26, 28; and 1 Corinthians 10:27. Which of the following are true of God's decree? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. When people sin it is because God has ordained that they will do so.
- B. God usually works through the natural laws that He has ordained.
- C. Sometimes God expects people to make choices on the basis of what seems right.
- D. Because God is sovereign, He causes everything that happens.
- E. God's plan includes all things, but His relationship to specific events varies.

According to the Counsel of His Own Will

QUESTION 2

Open your Life Notebook and look up Ephesians 1:11-12 and Romans 9:10-13. Then summarize the teaching of Scripture regarding God's sovereign will.

For His Own Glory

On a starry night nearly three thousand years ago a young shepherd gazed upward into the night sky. He was crushed with a sense of his own insignificance and exclaimed, "Of what importance is the human race, that you should notice them?" (Ps 8:4a). This thought has been in the minds of people since they first began to think about the final significance of human life. They ask, Why are things the way they are? If there is a God, why did He create the universe? Why did He create me? What is the purpose and the ultimate meaning of my existence?

According to Psalm 8, the two secondary purposes for creation are: (1) to crown humans with glory and honor and (2) to establish humans as rulers over creation.

According to the Bible, a primary activity of humans is to proclaim the glory of God, to "declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples" (Ps 96:3). Many passages, including Isaiah 48:11, Revelation 4:11, and 1 Corinthians 10:31, stress that the ultimate purpose of creation is to glorify God.

In 1 Corinthians 10:31, Paul states that all we do should bring honor (glory) to God. To "glorify" means to honor, respect, and ascribe glory to someone. When we say that the purpose of the decree is to glorify God, we mean that the decree should cause people to respect and honor God. It is important to remind ourselves that giving honor or glory implies that the recipient is worthy of our attention and obedience. Glorifying God, then, includes obeying Him. Every decision, every thought, and every action should be evaluated in terms of God's ultimate glory. Do my decisions, thoughts, and actions bring honor to God through me? Whatever God does, or permits to be done, is for His glory, not ours.



QUESTION 3

The main purpose of God's creation is to proclaim God's _____.

Whatever Comes to Pass

All Christians acknowledge that we worship a sovereign God. He is the ruler of all things and the Lord of history. But how detailed is His rule? It is sometimes argued that in the moral and spiritual realm the decree of God is not all-inclusive. Thus, it is said, when it comes to free choice, God has not decreed in advance what those choices will be, but rather only the *general* outline of people's lives. People are then free to make the detailed decisions of life such as whom they will marry, what job they will take, and whether or not they will decide to believe in Christ for salvation.

QUESTION 4

Match each Scripture on the left with the statement on the right that tells what the Scripture teaches about the kinds of events that are determined by God.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Events</i> |
|---------------------|---|
| Ephesians 3:10-11 | The coming of the Son of God is included in God's decree. |
| Psalms 2:7-9 | It is through the church that God's wisdom will be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. |
| Philippians 2:12-13 | God gives us the desire to obey Him, but it is up to us to do the obeying. |

The Efficient and Permissive Decree

In considering these themes, it is helpful to note that there are two parts of the eternal decree: the decree to effect (efficient decree) and the decree to permit (the permissive decree).

Understanding God's efficient and permissive decree is very important for understanding how God exercises his sovereignty. Some people believe that because God is sovereign, He causes everything. After all, how can He be sovereign if things happen that He does not cause?

Another example from family life might help us to answer this question.

Parents have sovereignty in the home. They set the rules and they can compel good behavior. But few parents dictate their children's every move.

If I want my daughter to go the store to buy bread, and then return in fifteen minutes, I can go with her to the store to be sure she makes the purchase quickly and returns on time. In this case I would be effecting her obedience—and effecting the appearance of the bread in time for dinner. Or I might decide to allow her to go alone, telling her I would like her home in fifteen minutes, but letting her decide whether she will obey me. Perhaps I know that she has a habit of reading magazines at the store and is unlikely to return in time. In this case, by permitting her to decide whether to obey, I am permitting her disobedience.

Of course, when she disobeys, consequences may follow. Perhaps she will come home after the family has sat down to dinner, so she will not have her dinner that night. Or I might decide to extend grace to her, letting her have dinner, but telling her that I love her and want her to come home quickly so she will be safe. All of these are possibilities in a home where the parents are sovereign.

And so God deals with His world. Sometimes He causes things to happen. And sometimes He allows things to happen.

Efficient decree refers to those things God purposes to do; in other words, those things for which He personally assumes responsibility and that He will accomplish. The key Scripture is Isaiah 46:10.

Permissive decree refers to those things that God's decree permits. This includes sin and evil, as is evidenced in the key Scripture Acts 14:16 and in numerous other passages (e.g., Ps 78:29; 106:14-15).

It should be noted that the distinction between the efficient decree and the permissive decree has no relation to the certainty of the events. They are two sides of the same coin. All events embraced in the decree of God are equally certain to occur whether He has determined to bring them about by His own power (efficient decree) or simply to permit their occurrence through the agency of His creatures (permissive decree). He effects the good; He permits evil. He is the author of one but not of the other.

The Certainty of God's Decree

Whatever God has foreordained will certainly come to pass. This includes everything relating to the efficient decree and to the permissive decree.

QUESTION 5

When God causes something to happen, we call this event part of His _____ decree.

QUESTION 6

When God allows something to happen but doesn't directly cause it, we call this event part of His _____ decree.

QUESTION 7

Open your Life Notebook and write about a time in your own life or your community when you saw God's efficient decree at work. Then write about a time in your life or your community when you saw God's permissive decree at work. Why did you conclude that God's efficient decree was at work in the one case and His permissive decree was at work in the other case?

His Eternal Purpose

Read Ryrie, chapter 54 on "The Doctrine of Election."

QUESTION 8

According to Ryrie (under "Direct Terminology" in chapter 54), which of the following statements are true of election? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. It is God's free choice of individuals to salvation.
- B. It is limited to the elect people and to ensure their future destiny.
- C. Some are elected to damnation just as some are elected to salvation.
- D. It is unconditional and individual.
- E. It excuses unbelievers from rejecting Christ.

QUESTION 9

In the section on "Foreknowledge" in chapter 54, Ryrie discusses the debate over how much relationship exists in the word *foreknowledge*. This is a difficult discussion. Read Acts 2:23; 26:5; Romans 8:29; 11:2; 1 Peter 1:2, 20; and 2 Peter 3:17. Open your Life Notebook and describe in your own words what each verse says about God's foreknowledge.

QUESTION 10

After reading the section "Opposite Terminology" in Ryrie, chapter 54, match the term with its meaning:

| <i>Term</i> | <i>Meaning</i> |
|-------------|--|
| Preterition | Foreordination to damnation |
| Retribution | The passing over of those not elected to salvation |
| Reprobation | Deserved punishment |

Topic 2: Objections to the Doctrine of Election

Prepare yourself for this study by reading the sections on "Objections to the Doctrine of Election" in Ryrie, chapter 54.

Through history, many objections to the doctrine of election have been raised. In this study we will consider some of the more common ones.

It Is Fatalistic

When John discussed the doctrine of election with the people of his congregation, some were alarmed. “If God has predestined some to believe, the work is done,” they asked. “Why have we been risking the criticism of our friends to spread the good news?”

John smiled as he looked around the room. He knew the stories there provided the answer to the question.

“Ruth,” he said, speaking to a woman sitting to his right, “when did you first know about the gospel?”

“Oh,” she said, “my neighbor became ill and lost her home, and her friends took her in and nursed her back to health. I was so impressed, I asked her to tell me about these friends. Then she began to tell me about how they had come to believe in Jesus.”

Ramon nodded his head. “I was amazed when my uncle sought reconciliation with a business partner who had stolen money from him. He told me he had begun to follow the One who says to love our enemies.”

Arlene chimed in, too. “I was sitting on the bus one day worried about my grandfather, who was dying, when a woman sitting next to me reading her Bible began to tell me about the gospel.”

“So,” John said, “do you know now why we must show and tell people about the way of Christ? Would any of you have believed if no one had?”

Some say that the doctrine of divine decree is nothing more than fatalism. Fatalism is the belief that what is going to happen is going to happen, regardless of the means. The doctrine of divine predestination, on the other hand, asserts that what is going to happen will happen by certain means for which human beings are responsible. Furthermore, the accomplishment of these objectives is under the control of a loving and personal God and is not a product of blind chance.

Predestination includes both the means and the end in the divine decree, whereas fatalism only looks at the end.

QUESTION 11

Open your Life Notebook and explain how the story of John’s congregation clarifies the difference between fatalism and the Christian doctrine of predestination. When finished, read in the key-terms section at the beginning of this lesson, “Fatalism Versus Predestination” for further information.

QUESTION 12

Look up Acts 2:23; 4:27-28; Luke 23:34. Open your Life Notebook. What do these passages teach about the relationship between divine determination and human responsibility? About God’s forgiveness?

QUESTION 13

Read the lesson note at the end of this lesson titled “Avoiding Fatalism in the Christian Life.” Open your Life Notebook and describe some ways in which believers are the means by which God accomplishes His just and loving ends.

It Is Inconsistent with Human Freedom

There is perhaps no more fundamental objection to the doctrine of divine decree than that it is inconsistent with human freedom. People who make this objection argue that the doctrine of election conflicts with human beings' moral freedom and with specific scriptural statements that assert that individuals are responsible for their deeds. While there are no final solutions to this apparent difficulty, there are a number of perspectives that should prove helpful.

According to numerous passages throughout the Bible, people have done things that God had decreed as certain to happen, and yet God held them morally responsible for doing so.

The biblical writers never tried to harmonize this apparent inconsistency between human responsibility and divine sovereignty. Neither should we. Yet we need to remember that our inability to harmonize two truths that appear to be contradictory does not mean that they necessarily are contradictory.

A good example of two truths that seem contradictory but in reality are not comes from the field of electrodynamics and quantum physics. Light appears to behave in two entirely different ways. When light is being emitted or absorbed, it behaves as if it is composed of particles. Yet when light is traveling through space, it appears to behave as if it is composed of waves. The problem is that it is physically impossible for light to be both wave and particle at the same time.

In *The Universe and Dr. Einstein*, Lincoln Barnett has made the following comment: "By itself, neither concept (wave or particle) suffices to explain light, but together they do. Both are necessary to describe the reality, and it is meaningless to ask which is really true." (Lincoln Barnett, *The Universe and Dr. Einstein*, New York: Bantam, 1948, p. 32.) In a similar way, when we consider the problems of divine sovereignty and human free will, we should recognize that the Scripture teaches that both are true; therefore, there is no real contradiction here, only the appearance of one.

The free will of human beings is included in the decree. The God who has ordained all events has also ordained humans' freedom of choice (which theologians sometimes call free agency) in the midst of these events. This freedom is as certain as anything else (e.g., Mt 23:37; 1 Cor 9:17; 1 Pet 5:2; Phm 14). Humans' free choices have been included in the decree as the means by which certain things are brought about—things that God has rendered certain.

It is very confusing when the terms *election*, *predestination*, and *divine decree* are equated with an external compulsion on an individual to behave in a certain way. God's election and divine predestination have nothing to do with this idea. When individuals make choices, they do so freely.

QUESTION 14

Which of the following statements are true? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. God has a right to do anything that is consistent with His nature.
- B. God does not know who is going to be saved.
- C. Human beings are responsible for the decision to believe or not to believe.
- D. God has planned the answers to my prayers.
- E. Humans bear the consequences of their free choice.

QUESTION 15

Look up Philippians 2:12-13. Open your Life Notebook and answer the following questions. What does this passage tell us about the interworking relationship between divine sovereignty and free choice? Why should we be careful to make godly choices?

It Makes God the Author of Sin

Sometimes people argue that a holy God cannot permit the occurrence of sin. It is said that because such a decree would render the occurrence of sin certain, He would be responsible for whatever His act renders certain.

Although sin is indeed certain because God permitted sin in His decree, it does not logically follow that God is responsible for whatever His decree renders certain. A just judge, for example, may pronounce a sentence on a criminal, and in doing so he may cause the criminal and his friends to have wicked or bitter thoughts. Yet the judge himself would be guiltless, as God is when He exercises His justice.

Because sin is included in the divine decree, sometimes people conclude that God does not exist. We can see this in the following **INCORRECT** syllogism:

MAJOR PREMISE: If God exists, He is omniscient, omnipotent, and good.

MINOR PREMISE: Sin and suffering exist.

CONCLUSION: Therefore, God does not exist.

The syllogism is explained in this way: Because God (if He existed) would be omniscient, He would know that sin and suffering exist. Because He would be omnipotent, He would have the power to do something about it. Because He would be holy and good, He would not allow sin and suffering to exist. Given that reasoning and the fact that sin and suffering do exist, the logical conclusion is that God does not exist.

In order to respond to this objection to the divine decree, we need to consider an alternative perspective on the major premise. The omniscient God is infinitely wise; He knows all things that will be and all things that could have been. Because He is infinitely wise, the plan that He has chosen to put into effect must be the best of all possible plans. It must be the most loving and the most holy of all, even though we are not yet able to perceive all of its interrelations. We can see this in the following **CORRECT** syllogism:

MAJOR PREMISE: If God exists, He is omniscient, omnipotent, and good.

MINOR PREMISE: God knows all things that will be and all things that could have been.

CONCLUSION: Because God is infinitely wise and good, His plan is the best of all possible plans.

Sometimes we can see the beauty of God's wisdom and of His patience with sinners in our own congregations. Can you think of someone in your congregation who once was unkind, even doing injury to others in the community, and now is walking with God and showing God's love to others? If God excluded such sinners from our midst so they could not harm us, how would they ever come to believe? And what if God had kept each of us away from the community of the saints before we believed? How would we have heard the word of life?

God does not promise us that we will never suffer from evil and persecution. But He does promise to comfort and sustain us in the midst of it. And it is important to remember that He also was subject to the suffering that was included in His divine decree. He also paid the penalty for sin on the cross.

Just because God does not prevent all evil does not mean that He cannot. The fact that He is not presently preventing all evil does not mean that He will not do so in the coming age. We know that God, because He is holy, does not want sin and suffering to exist. He is allowing sin and suffering in the current age in order to bring about the higher good of redemption.

In all of these matters we must move in our thinking from what we do not know to what we know. God has chosen to reveal some things, and these we can know. For example, He has

clearly told us in His Word of His love, and He has revealed His love perfectly, both by becoming a man and by dying on the cross in the person of Jesus Christ. In the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, perfect love is fully demonstrated. After focusing on what Jesus has said and has done, we know that we can confidently trust such a God, even though at times there may seem to be inconsistencies in His perfect will.

QUESTION 16

Which of the following statements are true? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. God has a fair and just purpose for allowing sin and evil to exist in the current age.
- B. God cannot prevent sin and evil from happening in the lives of His people.
- C. God knows all things that will be and all things that could have been.
- D. God can bring about good in the midst of tragic situations caused by sin and evil.

It Takes Away All Motive for Human Effort

It is sometimes claimed that if a person is certain that an event will happen, this knowledge acts as a motive for the individual to neglect the means of attaining it. A moment's reflection, however, reveals that this is not true according to reason or experience. The more certain one is that one will be successful, the more motivated one is to put in the effort to achieve that success. On the other hand, the less hope one has of achieving a goal, the less motivation there is to exert the effort to accomplish it.

Furthermore, this objection assumes that God has determined the end without reference to the means. But the reverse is true! The events in God's divine decree are all determined in connection with the means for bringing them about. God has decreed that all humans will live by means of eating food. If any person refuses to eat, that person will die. God has also ordained that humans will be saved by means of faith. If a person refuses to believe, that person will perish.

QUESTION 17

If God has already predetermined that someone will become a believer, then we need not witness to people in our community because God will save them anyway. *True or False?*

This lesson names four objections to the doctrine of election. They are:

- It equals fatalism.
- It is inconsistent with human freedom.
- It makes God the author of sin.
- It takes away all motivation for human effort.

QUESTION 18

Open your Life Notebook. Imagine that a friend challenged you with each of the four objections to the doctrine of election listed above. How would you answer each objection?

Topic 3: Practical Responses to the Decree

There are at least three very significant and practical results of contemplating the profound truth of the divine decree. It provides assurance of our eternal salvation, it is a doctrine of great comfort, and it produces praise in our hearts.

It Provides Assurance of Our Eternal Salvation

If God has decreed all things, then those whom He decreed to be saved will be saved. Yet this does not negate believers' responsibility, within the plan of God, to preach the gospel to all

people (Mt 28:19). Anyone who has been saved through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior was decreed by God to be saved. The immutability of God’s decree is a comforting assurance; it is impossible for a Christian to lose eternal salvation (Rom 8:29-39).

QUESTION 19

Read Romans 8:29-30. Paul mentions five logical steps in effecting the decree of salvation. Match the step number with its respective step.

| <i>Step Number</i> | <i>The Step</i> |
|--------------------|---|
| Step 1 | God called His people. |
| Step 2 | God justified His people. |
| Step 3 | God glorified His people. |
| Step 4 | God predestined His people to be conformed to the image of His Son. |
| Step 5 | God foreknew His people. |

It Is a Doctrine of Great Comfort

A sovereign God is in charge of our lives. According to Romans 8:28, God causes all things to work together for good for those who love Him and who have been called according to His purpose. There is nothing—no circumstance, no trouble, no testing—that can separate us from God’s love (Rom 8:38-39).

When trouble is all around, this is not a sign that God has abandoned the world. Rather, in the midst of this fallen world, God sustains His people with a peace that passes understanding (Phil 4:7). He comforts those who mourn and promises peacemakers that they will be called children of God (Mt 5:1-12). Though we may grieve, we need not despair, for God is holding all things together (Col 1:17).



It Produces Praise in Our Hearts

It is interesting that after an extended discussion of the doctrines of election and predestination in Romans 9–11, Paul’s response in Romans 11:33-36 was not to challenge God’s justice but to erupt with heartfelt praise.

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how fathomless his ways!

For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Or who has first given to God, that God needs to repay him?

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever! Amen.

As long as people are under the illusion that they have contributed something to their own salvation or that they have merited or earned it in some way, they will be forever strangers to the doctrine of grace. A believer’s heart needs to be gripped by the fact that God has chosen the believer unconditionally and eternally, independent of any good works or qualities on the part of the believer. Only when one has understood grace in this way can one be truly grateful.

QUESTION 20

Open your Life Notebook. Imagine someone who believes that one must earn God's favor. And now imagine someone who knows that God's grace is completely undeserved. Explain the differences in how these two people might approach God.

Key Biblical Concepts

Look up the following Scripture references and familiarize yourself with them. The material in this lesson is based on these concepts, so be prepared to explain how each reference supports its related concept:

1. God's choice is not based on foreseen good works—Romans 9:10-18.
2. God's decree includes everything and is according to His counsel—Ephesians 1:11.
3. God's election of believers is in eternity past—Ephesians 1:4.
4. God foreknew His people, chose them, and called them—Romans 8:28-30.
5. Believers are secure in God's hand—John 10:28-29.
6. God's will is that those who believe will have eternal life—John 6:38-40.
7. God will continue His good work in the lives of His people—Philippians 1:6.

Conclusion

The decree of God is taught in the Scriptures. God has planned the universe and its existence. Though it is impossible to understand God's plan fully, it is imperative that believers submit their intellect, heart, and will to His sovereign will. A person's resistance will not affect the certainty of God's decree, but it will lead to bitter frustration. However, if people submit to the beautiful truths of the decree, they will glorify God forever!

Lesson 4 Self Check

QUESTION 1

The word *predestination* means

- A. God knew all the decisions that we would ever make.
- B. God has prepared a place for us in heaven.
- C. God has preplanned all the events that happen in the world.
- D. God has preplanned our ultimate destiny.

QUESTION 2

God's election alone does not result in the salvation of people. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

According to Ryrie, which one of the following statements is true of predestination?

- A. Just as some are predestined to salvation, others are predestined to damnation.
- B. Predestination includes all things; it is a synonym for the total plan of God.
- C. God's elect are predestined to adoption into God's family.
- D. Those who will live a good life are predestined to be saved.

QUESTION 4

According to Ryrie, which of these concepts is *not* contained in Scripture?

- A. Reprobation
- B. Retribution
- C. Preterition
- D. Election

QUESTION 5

Because God allows sin to exist, individuals are *not* responsible for their sins. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

God holds human beings responsible for the means of bringing His decree about. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

According to Romans 8:28, everything that happens to me is good. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

John Calvin taught that some are predestined to be saved and some are predestined to be damned. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

Ryrie discusses three major viewpoints on election. Which of these viewpoints does Ryrie hold to?

- A. Corporate election
- B. Foresight election
- C. Individual, pretemporal election
- D. Double election

QUESTION 10

According to Ryrie, which description best conveys the view of individual, pretemporal election?

- A. God chooses individuals to receive His special grace and eternal salvation.
- B. God elects on the basis of unforeseen faith.
- C. All are elect in Christ, although unbelievers do not know that yet.
- D. The good deeds that we do on earth count toward winning eternal salvation.

Lesson 4 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

- B. God usually works through the natural laws that He has ordained.
- C. Sometimes God expects people to make choices on the basis of what seems right.
- E. God's plan includes all things, but His relationship to specific events varies.

QUESTION 2: *Your answer*

QUESTION 3: Glory

QUESTION 4:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Events</i> |
|---------------------|---|
| Ephesians 3: 10-11 | It is through the church that God's wisdom will be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. |
| Psalms 2:7-9 | The coming of the Son of God is included in God's decree. |
| Philippians 2:12-13 | God gives us the desire to obey Him, but it is up to us to do the obeying. |

QUESTION 5: Efficient

QUESTION 6: Permissive

QUESTION 7: *Your answer*

QUESTION 8:

- A. It is God's free choice of individuals to salvation.
- B. It is limited to the elect people and to ensure their future destiny.
- C. Some are elected to damnation just as some are elected to salvation.
- D. It is unconditional and individual.

QUESTION 9: *Your answer*

QUESTION 10:

| <i>Term</i> | <i>Meaning</i> |
|-------------|--|
| Preterition | The passing over of those not elected to salvation |
| Retribution | Deserved punishment |
| Reprobation | Foreordination to damnation |

QUESTION 11: *Your answer*

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13: *Your answer*

QUESTION 14:

- A. God has a right to do anything that is consistent with His nature.
- C. Human beings are responsible for the decision to believe or not to believe.
- D. God has planned the answers to my prayers.
- E. Humans bear the consequences of their free choice.

QUESTION 15: *Your answer*

QUESTION 16:

- A. God has a fair and just purpose for allowing sin and evil to exist in the current age.
- C. God knows all things that will be and all things that could have been.
- D. God can bring about good in the midst of tragic situations caused by sin and evil.

QUESTION 17: False

QUESTION 18: *Your answer*

QUESTION 19:

| <i>Step Number</i> | <i>The Step</i> |
|--------------------|---|
| Step 1 | God foreknew His people. |
| Step 2 | God predestined His people to be conformed to the image of His Son. |
| Step 3 | God called His people. |
| Step 4 | God justified His people. |
| Step 5 | God glorified His people. |

QUESTION 20: *Your answer*

Lesson 4 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

D. God has preplanned our ultimate destiny.

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3:

C. God's elect are predestined to adoption into God's family.

QUESTION 4:

A. Reprobation

QUESTION 5: False

QUESTION 6: True

QUESTION 7: False

QUESTION 8: False

QUESTION 9:

C. Individual, pretemporal election

QUESTION 10:

A. God chooses individuals to receive His special grace and eternal salvation.

Lesson 4 Notes

Avoiding Fatalism in the Christian Life

Sometimes believers take a fatalistic approach to Christian living. For example, a fatalistic reading of Matthew 26:11 (“You will always have the poor with you”) will lead the believer to conclude that poverty is inevitable and that Jesus was telling His hearers to worship him instead of trying to do something about poverty. But Jesus was referring to Deuteronomy 15:1-11, where, before hearing that “the poor will never cease from the land” (v 11), God’s people were told, “there should not be any poor among you, for the LORD will surely bless you in the land that he is giving you as an inheritance, if you listen carefully to him to keep scrupulously this whole commandment that I am giving to you today” (vv 4-5). Apparently God knew that His people would not be careful to follow all these commands, so He instructed them to be openhanded to the “needy, and the poor in your land” (v 11).

Lesson 5: Extent and Application of the Atonement

Lesson Introduction

At a church my family used to attend, the entire summer revolved around the annual Harvest Festival, a weeklong series of revival meetings. Each day during Harvest week, residents of the neighborhood were invited to evangelistic luncheons inside the church building and children could attend Vacation Bible School. Each evening neighbors crowded under a tent set up in a vacant lot to hear choirs perform and enthusiastic ministers preach. At each of these events, an altar call was issued and many would go forward.

In these years I was teaching adults in a literacy program in the church building. Every year during Harvest, some of my students would tell me, “I went forward at Harvest one year, but it didn’t work. I went back to my old ways.” I would respond by telling them a story.

“Before I was a Christian,” I would say, “I used to drink too much with my friends, and I fought with my brother all the time. After I learned the gospel and professed faith in Christ, I continued to drink for a while, and my brother and I still fought. Gradually I realized that my drinking was not pleasing to God, and I stopped. Over a year later I learned that I should pray for someone who insults me rather than insulting him back, and when I followed this practice my relationship with my brother was healed.”

“So,” I would ask the students, “When did I become a Christian?” After hearing their responses I would say, “I became a Christian when I believed.”

It was a new idea to them all.

I began to wonder about our Harvest events and how the gospel was presented there. Had my students understood the gospel at all? Or had they just gone forward during the altar call because they wanted to shed some bad habits and thought God would help them do that? And what of the children? The children’s workers would conduct an altar call by telling children to raise their hand if they wanted to “ask Jesus into their heart.” What did this mean, and how did it relate to the gospel?

Each day of Harvest we celebrated the number who believed, but after Harvest was over, very few joined our congregation or even stayed in touch with the evangelistic team, despite the team’s best efforts at follow-up. What had happened?

Meanwhile, one of the evangelists started a home for men who were trying to stop using drugs. No more than six men lived there at any one time, and the evangelist invested many hours in teaching each of them. From this home emerged several strong followers of Christ who joined local congregations and inspired others because of the deep transformation God had worked in them.

Stories of evangelism and transformation such as these abound, and they raise many questions about the nature of Christ’s sacrifice and our salvation.

In this lesson we will cover some concepts that have been sources of conflict in the history of the church. Did Christ die for all people without exception, or did He die only for the elect?

We will also discuss the debate regarding additions to the gospel: Must we be baptized in order to be saved? Is it necessary to submit to the lordship of Christ as a condition of eternal life? What is the role of repentance in our salvation?

In Topic 1, we will begin with the extent of the Atonement. Then, in Topic 2 we will study the four aspects of the salvation process under the title of the application of salvation. Last, in Topic 3, we will consider the controversy about the various requirements that need to be met before a person can actually possess the gift of eternal life and be declared just by God (justification). Is our gospel truly good news?

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: The Extent of the Atonement
 - Exegetical Considerations
 - Theological Considerations
 - An Evaluation
- Topic 2: The Application of Salvation
 - Conviction
 - Calling
 - Regeneration
 - Faith
- Topic 3: What Is the Gospel?
 - Presenting the Gospel
 - Stating the Content of the Gospel

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you should be able to:

- Understand the difference theologically between unlimited and limited atonement, and defend your view
- Explain the four aspects of the salvation process
- Explain the relationship between the gospel and baptism, repentance, and surrender of life

Definitions of Key Terms

Atonement—A biblical word meaning to provide a sacrifice or payment that satisfies the righteous justice of a holy God.

Unlimited atonement—the doctrine that Christ died for the sins of all people without exception.

Limited atonement—the doctrine that Christ died only for the sins of the elect.

Ordo salutis—a Latin phrase meaning “order of salvation.”

Lordship salvation—the view that in order to be saved, one must submit to Christ’s lordship, receiving Him as both Savior and Lord.

Memory Verse

In this lesson you are to memorize 1 John 2:2 which states the extent of the Atonement. Be prepared to quote it from memory.

Reading Assignment

Read Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, chapters 55, 56, and 58.

Topic 1: The Extent of the Atonement

If you have not already done so, read Ryrie, chapter 55, “The Extent of the Atonement.”

As the Protestant Reformation spread throughout Europe in the sixteenth century, the work of John Calvin had an enormous impact. Many think that his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* is one of the great achievements of modern literature. While not all would agree with his conclusions or with the polemical tone in which he presented his arguments, his deep piety and theological insight have served as a model for theological and exegetical study ever since.

One of the doctrines of Calvinism was probably not believed by John Calvin himself—the doctrine of limited atonement. This doctrine was introduced by Theodore Beza, who seems to have concluded that Calvin’s doctrine of predestination logically leads to the notion that Christ’s death was intended only for the elect. In other words, Beza believed that Christ did not die for the sins of the whole world, but only for the sins of the elect.

Through the labors of the English Puritans this doctrine was systematized in the Westminster Confession of 1643, a document that has for the past three and a half centuries given balance and depth to the Protestant faith throughout the world. However, not everything that Calvin or the English Puritans taught is widely accepted. Perhaps no doctrine has been received with greater skepticism than the doctrine of limited atonement.

Theologian Louis Berkhof writes that there is only one pertinent question related to the extent of the atonement: “Did the Father in sending Christ, and did Christ in coming into the world, to make atonement for sin, do this with the design or for the purpose of saving only the elect or all men?” If this were the right question, Ryrie contends, then the answer would be clear—that the atonement is limited, for we know that not all people are saved. But, Ryrie insists, Berkhof is not asking the right question.

Ryrie then poses his own question: “Did Christ purpose by coming into the world to make provision for the *eternal* salvation of all people, realizing that the Father would mysteriously draw the elect to Himself and allow others to *ignore or turn away from* the provision made?” It is true, Ryrie concedes, that some people *will ignore or turn away from* God’s provision, but God made provision for those people nonetheless.

QUESTION 1

Match each Scripture to what it says about the extent of the Atonement.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>The Extent of the Atonement</i> |
|------------------|---|
| 1 Timothy 2:3-4 | God so loved the world that He gave His Son so that the world might be saved. |
| 2 Peter 3:9 | The Lord does not want anyone to perish. |
| John 3:16-17 | God desires everyone to be saved. |

QUESTION 2

According to Ryrie in chapter 55, “Some Important Affirmations,” people who believe in unlimited atonement are universalists. *True or False?*

Exegetical Considerations

Jesus loves me

This I know

For the Bible tells me so

Little ones to Him belong

They are weak but He is strong

Yes, Jesus loves me

Yes, Jesus loves me

Yes, Jesus loves me

The Bible tells me so

To many children in the world, these familiar words, written in 1862 by Anna Bartlett Warner, bring comfort and security in the knowledge that God loves them. But if we believe that Jesus' atonement was only for the elect, and if we don't know whether these children are among the elect, how can we in good conscience teach them this song?

No, Ryrie explains, Jesus' atonement was not only for the elect. He died for everyone. The atonement was unlimited. Some will reject God's gift, but Jesus was the ransom for all nonetheless.

QUESTION 3

Each of the Scripture passages below supports unlimited atonement, but theologians who believe in limited atonement offer a different interpretation. Match each passage with something Ryrie has to say about that passage in chapter 55, "Exegetical Considerations."

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Ryrie's Argument</i> |
|-----------------------|---|
| 2 Peter 2:1 | Peter says that Jesus paid the price of redemption even for false teachers who are not among the elect. |
| 1 John 2:2 | If this verse refers only to the elect, then no supporter of limited atonement could tell his children that God loves them. |
| 1 Timothy 2:3-6; 4:10 | Although the word <i>world</i> does not always refer to all people, "no dictionary gives it the meaning of 'only the elect.'" |
| John 3:16 | God is the Father of all people even though not all are in the redeemed family; likewise, Christ is the Savior of all people even though not all are saved. |

QUESTION 4

According to Ryrie in chapter 55, "The Views," the belief that Christ died to secure salvation for the elect is the doctrine of _____ atonement.

Theological Considerations

Limited Atonement

Those who hold the limited atonement view use several categories of Scripture passages as support. One category of passages is related to the concept of Christ dying "for His people." For example, in Matthew 1:21, the angel states that Christ will save His people from their sins. In John 10:11-15, He portrays Himself as the good shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep. In John 15:13, Jesus does not speak of dying for the whole world, but for one's friends. Acts 20:28 and Ephesians 5:25 speak of Christ giving up His life for the church.

A second set of passages have to do with the intercessory work of Christ. It is argued, regarding John 17, for example, that because Christ intercedes only for the elect, they are the only ones for whom He died. Some would contend that because Christ's intercession and sacrifice are both priestly activities, they should be viewed as simply two aspects of His atoning work. Proponents of this view also note that the Old Testament priest interceded for those for whom he offered sacrifice; since Christ is the fulfillment of the Aaronic priesthood, they contend that what was true of the Old Testament priest must also be true of Him.

A third set of passages concerns the nature of the Atonement. Supporters of limited atonement claim that Jesus' giving of His life as a ransom suggests a limited atonement (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45); a ransom, they contend, automatically frees those for whom it is intended. If Christ were a ransom for all alike, then all people would be saved.

Charles Hodge and others see a logical connection between election and limited atonement. Hodge writes:

If God from eternity determined to save one portion of the human race and not another, it seems to be a contradiction to say that the plan of salvation had equal reference to both portions; that the Father sent his Son to die for those whom He had predetermined not to save, as truly as, and in the same sense that He gave Him up for those whom He had chosen to make the heirs of salvation. (Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952], vol. 2, 548.)

Summary of arguments for limited atonement:

1. Many passages convey the concept of Christ dying "for His people."
2. Because Christ intercedes only for the elect, they are the only ones for whom He died.
3. A ransom automatically frees those for whom it is intended.
4. There is a logical connection between election and limited atonement.

Unlimited Atonement

The unlimited-atonement position holds that the Atonement makes possible the salvation of all people. Christ died for all persons, but only those who accept His atoning work are saved. Proponents of this view cite passages that refer to Christ's death in universal terms, by saying, for example, that He died for the sin "of the world" (e.g., Jn 1:29). Other passages, like John 3:16-17, refer to Christ's coming in universal terms. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, speaks of Christ as dying for all. In 1 Timothy 4:10, he says that God is the "Savior of all men, especially of believers," apparently indicating that God is the Savior of everyone in a general sense, and of the elect in a particular sense. Hebrews 2:9 demonstrates that Christ died for everyone because He tasted "death on behalf of everyone." We read in 1 John 2:1-2 that "Jesus Christ the righteous... is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the whole world." In 1 Timothy 2:6, Paul states that Christ "gave Himself as a ransom for all."

Another class of passages appears to indicate that some of those for whom Christ died are not saved and will perish. One of the best examples is 2 Peter 2:1, in which Peter speaks of false teachers as being in some sense "bought" by Christ.

Other texts (Mt 24:14; 28:19; Acts 1:8; 17:30; Tit 2:11) refer to God's desire that the gospel be proclaimed to all people everywhere. Proponents of unlimited atonement argue that if Christ died only for the elect, the offer of salvation that God wants us to make to all people cannot be a sincere and honest one.

Summary of arguments for unlimited atonement:

1. Christ died for all people, but only those who believe in Him for eternal life are eternally saved.



2. Some of those for whom Christ died are not saved and will perish.
3. God desires that the gospel be proclaimed to all people everywhere.
4. If Christ died only for the elect, we cannot sincerely convey His offer of salvation to all people.

QUESTION 5

According to Ryrie in chapter 55, “The Views,” the belief that Christ’s atonement makes possible the salvation of all people is the doctrine of _____ atonement.

QUESTION 6

Open your Life Notebook. There are many issues on which Bible-believing theologians disagree. Scholars on both sides of the issue point to Scripture passages in favor of their position and argue that their own side is clearly right. What is your position on the debate between limited and unlimited atonement? Explain why you believe as you do.

An Evaluation

As was already mentioned, 1 Timothy 4:10 appears to speak of the Savior in two senses: general and specific. This would mean that Christ died for all people in order to make salvation *possible* for all (He is the Savior of the world in a general sense). But on the other hand He makes salvation *certain* for believers (He is the Savior in a specific sense). We can understand 1 John 2:2 in the same way: In other words, Christ’s death was *sufficient* to pay the penalty of sin for all men but it is *efficient* only for those who believe. This would be a possible response to Hodge’s objection above.

Regarding the attempt to link Christ’s intercessory work with His sacrificial work, the same line of reasoning can apply. For example, in John 17 Christ prays a special intercessory prayer for the elect, indicating that He is especially concerned for them and that, by implication, He is about to give Himself in a special way for them. But He was also concerned in a more general sense for the non-elect, even though He did not pray for them in John 17.

As for praying for the non-elect, on the cross Christ asks the Father not to hold the sin of crucifying Him against those who were in favor of His death. Also, in Matthew 5:44, Jesus encourages believers to pray for their enemies. Paul, in 1 Timothy 2:1-2, urges that prayers “be offered on behalf of all people” (see also Rom 9:3; 10:1-2).

As far as God’s purpose for sending Christ into the world is concerned, John 3:17 and 1 John 4:14, as well as other passages, indicate that He did so in order for the world to be saved. Paul, in 1 Timothy 2:3-6, agrees with this and also adds that Christ “gave Himself as a ransom for all.” The context of 1 Timothy 2:1-4 indicates that the “all” should be understood as referring to all people, and not just to all of the elect.

Those holding to limited atonement would say that if Christ had truly borne the sins of all people by substitution, then there would be nothing left for divine justice to punish. Ryrie answers that the atonement has freed God to unconditionally accept those who personally accept Christ’s provision for their sins. So the atonement is sufficient to satisfy God’s justice regarding the sins of the whole world (see 1 Jn 2:2), but no individual’s account is settled until that individual believes in Jesus Christ (Lk 19:10; Jn 3:18, 36; Eph 2:1, 12; Rom 1:19-32).

Arguments for doctrinal positions can be made on the basis of logic and on the basis of direct statements of Scripture. Usually arguments draw on both logic and Scripture to some degree, but lean mostly in one direction or the other. Review the arguments for **limited atonement** above. In

the following questions, indicate whether each argument rests more on logic or more on Scripture. (Write “logic” or “Scripture” in the blank after each statement.)

QUESTION 7

Christ died only for “His people.” _____

QUESTION 8

The intercessory work of Christ in John 17 was for believers only. _____

QUESTION 9

A ransom frees only those for whom it was intended, so Christ was a ransom only for the elect.

QUESTION 10

If election includes only one part of humanity and not the other, it is contradictory to say that the Atonement was for both parts of humanity. _____

Now review the arguments for **unlimited atonement**. In the following questions, indicate whether each argument rests more on logic or more on Scripture. (Write “logic” or “Scripture” in the blank after each statement.)

QUESTION 11

Christ died for all, believers and unbelievers alike. _____

QUESTION 12

Christ died for the unsaved. _____

QUESTION 13

Believers must present the gospel to all people everywhere. _____

Even though the Bible says our sins are forgiven, we can still be disciplined for our sins, just as a parent would discipline a child. Our sins can also lead to a loss of fellowship with our heavenly Father, just as sin can hinder a close relationship between a parent and child. Sometimes our sins have unpleasant consequences of their own—for example, an employer who abuses workers may find that the workers do not do their best work, and people who engage in sexual immorality may contract certain diseases. Also, sin sometimes leads to unwelcome consequences within the congregation: Jesus and Paul both tell us (in Mt 18:15-17 and 1 Cor 5:1-13) that the congregation should discipline believers who persist in sin.

Therefore, we must be careful about how we present the Atonement to people. When we teach that because of the death of Christ we no longer experience any negative judgment from God, we are in danger of distorting the New Testament. Christians *can* experience negative penalties. What they cannot experience, though, is loss of salvation.

QUESTION 14

Open your Life Notebook. Read Matthew 18:15-17, which contains a process for challenging a believer who persists in a particular sin, and 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, in which Paul tells the Corinthian church that they must expel a believer who is committing sexual immorality with his stepmother. What does 1 Corinthians 5:5 say about the offender’s eternal destiny? If your congregation has an established practice of church discipline, how does the process work? What are the goals of the process for the person who is being disciplined? What are the goals for the congregation as a whole? (See also 2 Thess 3:10-15.)

Topic 2: The Application of Salvation

If you have not already done so, stop now and read Ryrie, chapter 56, “The Application of Salvation,” noting especially his definition of, and comments on, the *ordo salutis*. As Ryrie points out, the order of these events is not really important, although conviction would normally precede the other steps. It is more important to stress that calling and regeneration are works of God alone, according to Ryrie, while conviction and conversion involve human responsibility as well.

The four aspects of the salvation process would provide an excellent outline for an evangelistic message. As you study Ryrie and answer the questions below, you may choose to draw up a tentative outline of such a message.

Conviction

Before we can be saved, we must first become aware of our need for salvation. Our Lord spoke of a work of the Holy Spirit that is intended to make us aware of our sin and of our need for the righteousness of Christ (Jn 16:8-11).

Read Ryrie’s discussion of this conviction and answer the following questions.

QUESTION 15

Matthew 18:15 says that conviction always results in the acceptance of truth. *True or False?*

QUESTION 16

According to Ryrie, only the elect are convicted. *True or False?*

Calling

The second step in the application of salvation is the call of God. Ryrie points out that there is a general call to the elect and non-elect, but a special call to the elect. This special call to those, whom He has chosen to bring to faith and eternal salvation, is sometimes referred to as the Father’s effectual drawing of people to faith in His Son. Our Lord Jesus Christ was referring to this call when He spoke these words:

But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out...This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day. ... No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me *draws him*; and I will raise him up at the last day...Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. (Jn 6:36-37, 39-40, 44, 47, NKJV)

There has been much discussion about what Jesus meant by “draws him.” Clearly, it does not mean to force. More likely it has to do with revealing the truth in such a way that a person sees that truth in a new light and embracing that truth comes to believe in Jesus Christ. This is likely what Paul had in mind when he wrote these words in 2 Corinthians 4:3-6:

But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake. For it is God who commanded light to shine out of

darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (NKJV)

QUESTION 17

Open your Life Notebook. What do you think Jesus meant when He said “no one comes to me unless the Father who sent Me draws him”? What would you say to the person who finds it hard to accept what Jesus says because it seems so unfair of God to “draw” some people, but not all people?

QUESTION 18

Look up 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 and then answer the following questions in your Life Notebook: How is the grace of God at work in this special calling of God? Does God’s love and grace demand that He should call all people equally in this special sense?

God effectually calls His chosen ones to eternal salvation, however, as Ryrie points out; God has called His chosen ones to more than simply entering His Kingdom as important as that is.

QUESTION 19

In chapter 56, “Calling,” Ryrie points out that God calls us to something more than merely claiming our ticket of admission to heaven. Match each Scripture with each calling of the believer.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Calling</i> |
|----------------------|----------------|
| 1 Corinthians 1:9 | Fellowship |
| 1 Peter 2:9 | God’s kingdom |
| Galatians 5:13 | Light |
| 1 Thessalonians 4:7 | Liberty |
| 1 Thessalonians 2:12 | Holiness |

QUESTION 20

Open your Life Notebook. Ryrie writes that God calls believers to fellowship, light, liberty, holiness, and His kingdom. What does it mean to be called to both liberty and holiness?

Regeneration

The term *regeneration* (*palingenesis*, literally, to generate again) appears in Titus 3:5 as a description of the cleansing and spiritual renewal that occurs at the moment a person believes in Jesus Christ for eternal life. Water baptism is a symbolic picture of this cleansing renewal. The idea of regeneration is also conveyed by the use of terms related to birth. Jesus referred to regeneration when he told Nicodemus (Jn 3:3) that he must be “born again” (*gennaō anōthen*). The phrase *born again* may also be translated as “born from above.” This translation emphasizes the sovereign role of God in bringing about the experience of regeneration. In John 1:12-13, the term *born* (*gennaō*) refers to the act of regeneration which results from believing in Jesus Christ. In 1 Peter 1:23, another Greek word (*anagennaō*) receives the translation “born again.” All of these words describe the complete spiritual change that occurs when Christ enters the life of an individual (Trent C. Butler, *Holman Bible Dictionary*. [Nashville, Tenn.: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991]). Perhaps the most concise way to view the new birth is in connection with the gift of eternal life. When a person is born again from above, God in effect brings forth new life—eternal life—God’s life within those who believe in His Son for that life. In view of this new life—His life, which God has brought forth—He sees the believer as His very own child! (Jn 1:12).

QUESTION 21

Match the aspect of regeneration with the correct Bible passage.

| <i>Aspect of Regeneration</i> | <i>Bible Passage</i> |
|--|----------------------|
| The meaning of regeneration | Titus 3:7 |
| The means of regeneration (believe => born of God) | John 1:12-13 |
| The specific person in the Godhead who regenerates believers | Ephesians 2:9-10 |
| The assurance of regeneration | John 3:3 |
| The potential of regeneration | Titus 3:5 |
| The relationship of regeneration and faith | Acts 16:31 |
| The fruit of regeneration | John 3:8 |

QUESTION 22

According to Ryrie in chapter 56, “Regeneration”:

- A. Regeneration precedes faith.
- B. Faith precedes regeneration.
- C. We cannot know the chronological relationship between faith and regeneration.
- D. Regeneration and faith occur at the same moment.

Faith

According to Ryrie, “faith means confidence, trust, to hold something as true. Of course, faith must have content; there must be confidence or trust about something. To have faith in Christ unto salvation means to have confidence that He can remove the guilt of sin and grant eternal life.”

The word “faith” was a term used and understood in everyday language during the times the New Testament was written. Today, we may use *believe* in the sense of *to wish* or *hope against all reason to hope*. However, in the New Testament it meant to be convinced or persuaded that someone spoke the truth when he spoke or made a promise to do something. Some argue that when the Bible says the demons believe and tremble (Jas 2:12), it implies that our faith needs to be more than the faith of demons. What we may be overlooking, however, is that if the belief of demons could result in the salvation of the demons they would be saved. But Christ did not die for demons or offer demons eternal life if they believe. He died for mankind and offers mankind eternal life if they believe!



When a person jumps out of an airplane he should have a parachute to take him safely to the ground. Because he trusts the parachute he will jump from the plane of his own free will. He is relying completely on the parachute. If the parachute fails, he will fall to his death. Saving faith in Christ alone is like the jumper’s faith in a parachute. Saving faith forsakes any other hope except for that which is provided in Christ Jesus. Several Scriptures reinforce this view (Jn 3:16; 14:6; 6:47; 1 Jn 5:11-13).

QUESTION 23

Open your Life Notebook. Many people identify themselves as Christians but often have a misunderstanding of the gospel. Perhaps when you ask them how they know they have eternal life, they answer, “Because I try to be a good person.” In other words, they believe that their works can save them. If you know of someone like this who later came to believe, tell the story of this person’s conversion. If you don’t know someone like this, tell how you would explain the gospel to such a person.

QUESTION 24

Read “A Journey into Faith” found at the end of this lesson. Open your Life Notebook. Is it possible to have saving faith without being able to point to a specific moment at which you came to that faith? If you know someone who believes the gospel but cannot point to a specific conversion moment, write about that person’s journey into faith.

Topic 3: What Is the Gospel?

If you have not already done so, read Ryrie, chapter 58, “What is the Gospel?”

In this important chapter, Ryrie discusses various “additions” to the gospel. Because we are charged with the responsibility of telling people how they can escape damnation and find eternal life, it is important that we present the gospel correctly. If we present the gospel incorrectly, we have told people that God said one thing, when in fact He said another, and will have represented God incorrectly.

Presenting the Gospel

Ryrie begins his discussion with areas of confusion regarding how the gospel is presented. He refers to six fallacies in the presentation of the gospel:

1. That the gospel primarily concerns something other than sin
2. That there are different gospels for different age groups
3. That the truth is something other than the Word of God
4. That the evangelist’s cleverness will convict the unbeliever
5. That the evangelist’s charm will ensure favorable results
6. That certain procedures will produce conversions

QUESTION 25

Open your Life Notebook. Think about the way you and members of your congregation present the gospel to unbelievers and to children in the congregation. Do you fall into any of the fallacies in presentation that Ryrie describes in chapter 58, “Some Fallacies in the Presentation of the Gospel”? How so? How can your presentation change so you will be presenting the gospel more purely?

Stating the Content of the Gospel

Throughout church history, various groups have added conditions to faith in Christ alone according to the gospel. Ryrie mentions three common “additions.”

Baptism

Perhaps there is no addition more common than that of baptism. Please read Ryrie, chapter 58, “Fallacies in Stating the Content of the Gospel.”

People who claim that baptism is a necessary condition of salvation often cite Acts 2:38. Ryrie’s explanation of this verse is that the Greek preposition *eis* can also be translated “because of” or “on the basis of,” as it is in Matthew 12:41. Although Ryrie’s solution to this problem is possible, *eis* is only rarely translated “because of.” But there is more about Acts 2:38 to cause us to doubt the claim that baptism is required for salvation. The verse contains two commands: repent and be baptized, and two results: forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit. It is impossible, on the basis of this text alone, to discern which result is connected with which command. We have to go elsewhere in Acts to determine whether baptism precedes the gift of the Spirit and the forgiveness of sins.

QUESTION 26

Match each Scripture, on the left, with what it reveals about conditions for salvation, on the right.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Salvation</i> |
|------------------|--|
| Romans 3:28 | Salvation is free to anyone who wants it. |
| Romans 4:1-6 | Abraham was reckoned righteous because of his faith, not his deeds. |
| Romans 4:9-12 | We cannot take credit for our salvation because it is a gift from God, not a result of good things we have done. |
| Ephesians 2:8-9 | Abraham was reckoned righteous before he was circumcised, not after. |
| Titus 3:5 | God saved us because of His mercy, not because of good things we had done. |
| Revelation 22:17 | Our righteousness in God’s sight comes through faith, not obedience. |

QUESTION 27

Open your Life Notebook. Read Acts 10:44-48 and explain what this tells us about the chronological relationship between salvation and baptism.

Repentance

Ryrie points out that another addition people sometimes make to the gospel of grace is the work of repentance. They teach that in order to be saved, people must turn from all of their sins that they know about, or at least from the visible sins that are easily identifiable. It is certainly true that all who believe Christ for salvation should turn from all sin; the question is whether that turning from sin is a condition of becoming a Christian.

The word translated “repentance” is used in several ways in the Old and New Testaments.

The word used in the Old Testament for “repentance” is the Hebrew word *shub* (pronounced “shove”). It means “to return.” When the Old Testament prophets spoke to the nation and asked them to “repent” they were addressing the nation and tell them to turn from their sin and return from exile.

QUESTION 28

Please read the following passages: Hosea 14:1; Acts 13:24; Jeremiah 14:1; Malachi 3:7; 2 Chronicles 7:14; Romans 11:26-27; Luke 3:3; Acts 3:19-27; Matthew 3:2. They all refer to repentance in some way. To view a discussion on these passages read “Repentance of the Nation,” at the end of this lesson. Open your Life Notebook and record your thoughts on the following questions: Is the repentance called for national (for Israel as a nation) or individual? What does the forgiveness of sins refer to? Is it a national forgiveness in the sense of returning from exile or is it a personal forgiveness in order to enter heaven? Give some reasons for your conclusions.

QUESTION 29

Open your Life Notebook. Based upon your reading of the articles on repentance (found at the end of this lesson), what is a possible relationship between personal and national forgiveness of sins?

QUESTION 30

Another usage of the word “repent” is found in the following passages: Luke 15:11-32; 2 Corinthians 7:10; 12:21; Revelation 2:5; 3:3. Please read these passages and then open your Life Notebook. Record your thoughts on these questions: Who is being addressed? Believers or unbelievers? What is the outcome of the repentance: restoration to fellowship for a believer or escape from eternal condemnation?

For further discussion on these passages, read “A Call to Restoration to Fellowship,” at the end of this lesson.

QUESTION 31

A final application of “repentance” in the New Testament is found in these passages: Luke 3:3; Acts 10:2; 11:14, 18; 17:30. Open your Life Notebook and record your thoughts on these questions. Does repentance in these verses result in salvation or lead to it? Was Cornelius saved when he repented?

For further discussion on these passages, read “Repentance is a Preparatory Stage Leading to Saving Faith.”

Ryrie notes that the Greek word translated “repent” (*metanoeo*) means “to change one’s mind.” According to Ryrie, repentance is a genuine change of mind that affects the life in some way. The change of mind that is necessary for becoming a Christian is not a change of mind about sin but a change of mind about Christ. It is beginning to see Christ for who He really is: the Son of God, the Savior of humankind.

QUESTION 32

Open your Life Notebook. Ryrie teaches that repentance is a change of mind about Christ that affects the life in some way. When you believed, how was your life affected? Were there particular sins that you were convicted of and turned from almost immediately? Were there others that you put aside only later? Are there areas of sin that you still struggle with? Know that even the apostle Paul struggled with sin, and yet he was saved.

Surrender of Life

Does one have to make Christ Lord of his life or be willing to do so in order to be saved? Does the lack of commitment to the lordship of Christ over the years of one’s life mean a lack of saving faith? Some would say that both repentance and surrender are essential parts of saving faith.

Ryrie disagrees. He points out that in 2 Peter 2:7, Lot is named as a righteous man, but there is no biblical evidence that he submitted himself to the lordship of Christ. In Acts 19:5-6, the people believed and were baptized. But it wasn't until two years later that they surrendered to the lordship of Christ in the matter of giving up their magical practices. According to Acts 19:18, they were definitely believers. They knew they should give up their magical practices, but did not do so immediately, and yet they were saved.

QUESTION 33

After reading carefully Ryrie's section on the fallacy of making surrender of life a part of the gospel, indicate which statements below Ryrie would agree with. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. True believers will bear fruit.
- B. People should submit to the lordship of Christ after they come to believe.
- C. True believers will never lack commitment.
- D. Surrender of life at the point of salvation is not a necessary part of saving faith.
- E. Discipleship is a prerequisite for salvation.

QUESTION 34

Open your Life Notebook. In two or three paragraphs state your position regarding the question of surrender of life to Christ's lordship. Is a commitment of the will necessary to gain salvation? Do you agree or disagree with Ryrie? Why?

Key Biblical Concepts

Memorize the following key biblical concepts and their related Scripture references. Be prepared to explain how each reference supports its related concept:

1. God has reconciled the world to Himself—2 Corinthians 5:19.
2. Christ's death is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world—1 John 2:2.
3. Christ's redemption is intended for all people—1 Timothy 2:3-6.
4. God's call to the elect leads to their salvation—Romans 8:30.
5. Conviction of the Holy Spirit makes us aware of our sins and our need for salvation—John 16:8-11.
6. Saving faith involves both conviction and assurance—Hebrews 11:1-2.

Conclusion

Ryrie emphasizes that salvation is a free gift and that to be saved we must simply reach out in faith and accept it. If we say that baptism, repentance, or surrender of one's life to Christ's lordship are necessary for salvation, we are making additions to the pure gospel of grace.

Lesson 5 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Ryrie claims that faith and regeneration have to occur at the same moment. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

Ryrie teaches that intellectual faith is a product of tradition or education that cannot save; he says that saving faith, on the other hand, is a conviction, a product of the working of the Holy Spirit. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

Ryrie believes that if God's Spirit is at work convicting an individual of sin, then sooner or later that person will believe. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

According to Ryrie, repentance means a genuine change of mind, and it is a changing of the mind about Christ (instead of about sin) that is necessary for salvation. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

Ryrie claims that submission to Christ's lordship is not necessary for salvation. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

Which of the following is an argument for limited atonement?

- A. Christ died for all people, but only those who believe in Him are eternally saved.
- B. Because Christ intercedes only for the elect, they are the only ones for whom He died.
- C. Some of those for whom Christ died are not saved and will perish.
- D. Christ's atonement applies only to people who surrender their lives to Him by repenting from their sins.

QUESTION 7

Which of the following is an argument for unlimited atonement?

- A. Christ died for all people, but only those who believe in Him are eternally saved.
- B. Christ died for all people, and all people will be saved.
- C. A ransom automatically frees those for whom it is intended.
- D. The intercessory work of Christ in John 17 was for believers only.

QUESTION 8

Which of the following is Ryrie's position on the *ordo salutis*, or way of salvation?

- A. The order of the events in salvation is an essential element of Christian doctrine.
- B. The Reformed statement of the *ordo salutis* is correct when it says that regeneration precedes faith.
- C. Regeneration and faith must occur at the same moment.
- D. Of the events in the *ordo salutis*, calling, regeneration, and conviction are solely of God; conversion involves humans as well.

QUESTION 9

What sort of presentation of the gospel would Ryrie be most likely to approve?

- A. The gospel primarily concerns something other than sin.
- B. There are different gospels for different age groups.
- C. Certain procedures will produce conversions.
- D. People need to be saved from their sin.

QUESTION 10

According to Ryrie, which of the following is a necessary condition of salvation?

- A. Baptism
- B. Faith in Christ alone
- C. Surrender of life
- D. Repentance

Lesson 5 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>The Extent of the Atonement</i> |
|------------------|---|
| 1 Timothy 2:3-4 | God desires everyone to be saved. |
| 2 Peter 3:9 | The Lord does not want anyone to perish. |
| John 3:16-17 | God so loved the world that He gave His Son so that the world might be saved. |

QUESTION 2: False

QUESTION 3:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Ryrie's Argument</i> |
|-----------------------|---|
| 2 Peter 2:1 | Peter says that Jesus paid the price of redemption even for false teachers who are not among the elect. |
| 1 John 2:2 | Although the word <i>world</i> does not always refer to all people, "no dictionary gives it the meaning of 'only the elect.'" |
| 1 Timothy 2:3-6; 4:10 | God is the Father of all people even though not all are in the redeemed family; likewise, Christ is the Savior of all people even though not all are saved. |
| John 3:16 | If this verse refers only to the elect, then no supporter of limited atonement could tell his children that God loves them. |

QUESTION 4: Limited

QUESTION 5: Unlimited

QUESTION 6: *Your answer*

QUESTION 7: Scripture

QUESTION 8: Logic

QUESTION 9: Logic

QUESTION 10: Logic

QUESTION 11: Scripture

QUESTION 12: Scripture

QUESTION 13: Scripture

QUESTION 14: *Your answer*

QUESTION 15: False

QUESTION 16: False

QUESTION 17: *Your answer*

QUESTION 18: *Your answer*

QUESTION 19:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Calling</i> |
|----------------------|----------------|
| 1 Corinthians 1:9 | Fellowship |
| 1 Peter 2:9 | Light |
| Galatians 5:13 | Liberty |
| 1 Thessalonians 4:7 | Holiness |
| 1 Thessalonians 2:12 | God's kingdom |

QUESTION 20: *Your answer*

QUESTION 21:

| <i>Aspect of Regeneration</i> | <i>Bible Passage</i> |
|--|----------------------|
| The meaning of regeneration | Titus 3:5 |
| The means of regeneration (believe => born of God) | John 1:12-13 |
| The specific person in the Godhead who regenerates believers | John 3:8 |
| The assurance of regeneration | John 3:3 |
| The potential of regeneration | Titus 3:7 |
| The relationship of regeneration and faith | Acts 16:31 |
| The fruit of regeneration | Ephesians 2:9-10 |

QUESTION 22:

D. Regeneration and faith occur at the same moment.

QUESTION 23: *Your answer*

QUESTION 24: *Your answer*

QUESTION 25: *Your answer*

QUESTION 26:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Salvation</i> |
|------------------|--|
| Romans 3:28 | Our righteousness in God's sight comes through faith, not obedience. |
| Romans 4:1-6 | Abraham was reckoned righteous because of his faith, not his deeds. |
| Romans 4:9-12 | Abraham was reckoned righteous before he was circumcised, not after. |
| Ephesians 2:8-9 | We cannot take credit for our salvation because it is a gift from God, not a result of good things we have done. |
| Titus 3:5 | God saved us because of His mercy, not because of good things we had done. |
| Revelation 22:17 | Salvation is free to anyone who wants it. |

QUESTION 27: *Your answer*

QUESTION 28: *Your answer*

QUESTION 29: *Your answer*

QUESTION 30: *Your answer*

QUESTION 31: *Your answer*

QUESTION 32: *Your answer*

QUESTION 33:

A. True believers will bear fruit.

B. People should submit to the lordship of Christ after they come to believe.

D. Surrender of life at the point of salvation is not a necessary part of saving faith.

QUESTION 34: *Your answer*

Lesson 5 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3: False

QUESTION 4: True

QUESTION 5: True

QUESTION 6:

B. Because Christ intercedes only for the elect, they are the only ones for whom He died.

QUESTION 7:

A. Christ died for all people, but only those who believe in Him are eternally saved.

QUESTION 8:

C. Regeneration and faith must occur at the same moment.

QUESTION 9:

D. People need to be saved from their sin.

QUESTION 10:

B. Faith in Christ alone

Lesson 5 Articles

A Journey Into Faith

Since the time my children were very small, my spouse and I have watched for opportunities to tell them about God's good gift of salvation. When they were tiny, if they were having a hard day I would sing them a little song to teach them about God's unconditional love and my love for them too: "I love you when you're happy, and I love you when you're sad. I love you when you're acting nice and when you're being bad. I love when you're dancing and playing and crying and even when you're fighting with your friends"—here I would change the words to name things they had been doing recently; then I would finish the song—"I love you all the time"—and I would hug them and say, "You know who else loves you all the time? God does."

As the children became older and could understand more, I gradually added more information, and now and then I would tell them the whole gospel story.

One year on the night before Easter, my older daughter wanted to talk about salvation. I told her the gospel again and asked if she believed this. "Yes," she said without hesitation. She understood the gospel, and she could explain it back to me. I told her that a follower of Jesus is someone who believes this truth and knows that it is Jesus' atoning death, not the person's own good behavior that provides salvation. Then I asked her if she was a follower of Jesus. "Yes," she said. I went to bed happy that night, confident that my daughter believed and probably had for some time.

The next day her Sunday school teacher told the children the gospel and asked the children to raise their hand if they wanted to accept Christ. My daughter did, and later she told me about it. That summer she went to Vacation Bible School, where again teachers asked children to raise their hand if they wanted to accept Christ. She raised her hand again. Finally she told me that she'd raised her hand many times because she wanted to be sure she did it right.

It was time to tell the gospel story again and ask if she believed it. The answer again: "Yes." And again I told her that a follower of Jesus is someone who believes this truth and knows that it is Jesus' atoning death—not his or her own good behavior—that saves. Was she a follower of Jesus? "Yes," she was.

Repentance of the Nation

The older commentaries and Bible dictionaries are almost unanimous in saying that repentance is part of conversion, understanding Jesus' primary message as how a person could be converted and go to heaven when he dies. We must ask, "What was new about that?" Personal forgiveness was available through the temple and sacrificial system. What is wrong with asking sinners to mend their ways! If that is all that Jesus meant, it seems that he would have been heralded as a national hero. To start asking *the nation* to repent, however, is another matter and bound to raise the ire of the nation's religious leaders. While repentance in the Gospels certainly has a personal moral aspect, N. T. Wright has forcefully called our attention to the fact that the primary focus of Jesus' calls to repentance are addressed to the nation, not individuals, and that repentance is what the nation must do if they are to escape national catastrophe, which occurred in AD 70 because they refused to repent.

This is what John referred to when he said, "Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Luke makes it clear that this repentance was a national call to the nation to repent (Acts 13:24). This is consistent with the many calls to Israel to turn to God expressed in the prophets. Hosea calls to the nation "Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God. For your sin has been your downfall!" (Hos 14:1). A national forgiveness of sins, "take away all iniquity" is associated with this prophetic call to repent. Similarly the prophets cry to the fallen nation (Jer 3:3; 4:1; Isa 30:15; Mal 3:7).

These prophetic calls echo those of John the Baptist to the nation and do not refer to individual conversion in order to go to heaven when one dies. Repentance is what Israel must do if her exile is to come to an end. Deuteronomy spoke of Israel returning to Yahweh with her whole heart and that this would be a condition for forgiveness and return from exile (Deut 30:2, 8). Thus, when Jesus said, "Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand," he was calling the nation to repent and receive national forgiveness. The ax said John, "is laid at the root of the trees" (Mt 3:10). If the nation repented, they could avoid the "wrath to come," the temporal wrath which the Roman armies would bring upon the nation unless they changed their ways. The forgiveness of sins was a virtual equivalent for "return from exile." Certainly a personal dimension was involved. As individuals repented they joined the believing remnant which Jesus was calling out.

That judgment in this sense was temporal and national rather than individual and eternal is evident from passages like Luke 13:5 and Matthew 12:41.

For a contemporary illustration of a national call to repentance, suppose the President says, "Unless we repent as a nation, God will bring judgment"? (If he were a prophet, he would say, "Unless you repent!"). The language of hell is being used but he is talking about a temporal consequence.

A precise Old Testament parallel to the idea of a national repentance is,

and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land. (2 Chr 7:14, NASB)

As a final illustration consider Luke 24:47:

and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. (NASB)

As Luke will demonstrate in the book of Acts, the kingdom embraces the Gentiles as well as Israel and this announcement to the Gentiles of the eschatological coming of the kingdom, i.e., "the forgiveness of sins," serves as a precursor to volume 2 of Luke's two volume work. We

consistently understand “repentance for forgiveness of sins” here to refer to the “true and final” forgiveness of sins, the new world order, future establishment of the kingdom of God, the ultimate return from exile (Rom 11:26-27). Luke picks up this theme in Acts 1:6 “and so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, ‘Lord, is it at this time You are **restoring the kingdom to Israel?**’”(NASB, emphasis added). This theme is found in Acts 3:19-21,

Therefore **repent** and return, so **that your sins may be wiped away**, in order *that times of refreshing may come* from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until **the period of restoration of all things** about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time. (NASB, emphasis added)

The “times of refreshing” and “the restoration of all things” refer once again to the prophetic promises of the restoration of the Davidic Theocracy as in Acts 1:6. This ultimate return from exile will not be achieved unless a generation of Israel repents so that their sins may be wiped away and their final restoration secured. This is the message John the Baptist announced when he came preaching “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Lk 3:3).

How does repentance of the nation relate to individual forgiveness of sins? Obviously individuals within the nation had to repent (turn from their personal sins) to join the restored Israel whom John and Jesus addressed. However, repentance only signaled their intention to “Prepare the way of the Lord” and “make his paths straight” (Mt 3:3). By repenting they were joining the believing remnant which was awaiting the Messiah. The judgment which the nation would avoid by this mass individual repentance was AD 70. “The ax” John said, “is laid at the root of the trees” (Mt 3:10). However, this repentance saved no one from eternal damnation. Only personal faith in Jesus could do that. As in the case of Cornelius, who repented before he believed but was not saved, their repentance led to salvation when they believed on Christ. Repentance in this sense was a requirement for the Jews to identify with the new people of God. That is why repentance is never mentioned by Paul in the book of Romans as a condition of salvation. Israel’s day had passed. Repentance is a preparatory step which can lead to saving faith, but it is faith alone apart from repentance which is the agency of salvation.

A Call to Restoration to Fellowship

A second category of meaning for repentance is when it is applied to believers who need to confess their sin or are challenged to follow Christ as his disciple. When we sin and desire restoration to fellowship, we must confess our sins (1 Jn 1:9). This is the thrust of Paul's call to repentance in 2 Corinthians 7:10 (NKJV): "Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation." The "salvation" in view is not going to heaven, but is a deliverance from suffering, loss from Paul, i.e., discipline in time; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Revelation 2:5; 3:3. Both Calvin and Luther noted that the entire life of the believer was to be one of repentance.

The parable of the prodigal son illustrates this usage. Here a son is being restored to fellowship with his Father (Lk 15:11-32). Many other examples could be cited.

When Jesus spoke of the joy in heaven over one "sinner" who repents, he was not speaking of salvation from hell, but restoration to fellowship (Lk 15:7, 10). A "sinner" was not a non-Christian but rather one of the *amhertes*, the "people of the land." They are sinners in the Pharisaic sense of those who do not keep the legalistic minutiae of pharisaic regulation.

John addressed the church at Ephesus with these words.

Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—**unless you repent.** (Rev 2:5, NASB, emphasis added)

These are true believers who have had good works and have persevered under trial (Rev 3:2-3). However they have fallen from their initial love for Christ and have become carnal (Rev 3:4). They are called upon to "repent," that is, confess their sin and do the deeds they did when they were initially born again. Repentance here manifestly leads to a restoration of the believer to his personal walk with Christ, and not escape from hell.

Repentance Is a Preparatory Stage Leading to Saving Faith

Sometimes “repentance” refers to turning from sin as a preparatory stage prior to saving faith for the individual or the nation (Mt 4:17; Lk 3:3), or possibly, a challenge to “get right with God” (Mt 12:41).

In cases in the Bible where the call to repentance is addressed to unbelievers we must ask, “What is the effect of this repentance?” It is often assumed without discussion that when an unbeliever repents, it is a means of his salvation and that repentance and the forgiveness of sins to escape eternal judgment are inseparably connected, repentance simply being the flip side of faith. Repentance can lead to forgiveness, but it is not a condition for receiving eternal pardon. We suggest that the New Testament does not support the notion that repentance is a means to salvation from hell, but it does teach that repentance can lead to it. In Acts 11:18, for example, we are told that repentance *leads to* life, it is a precursor to faith.

When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, “Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance **that leads** to [Gk. *eis*, “to, toward”] life.” (NASB)

Like the law, it is a tutor which “leads” to Christ (Gal 3:24, NASB).

Consider for example, Luke 3:3 (NASB),

And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for [Gk. *eis*, “toward”] the forgiveness of sins;

The preposition *eis* translated “for” in this verse regularly signifies purpose in the sense of “in order to.” The standard lexicon ascribes this meaning to Luke 3:3. Luke does not say repentance obtains forgiveness, but it could lead to it. He explains in the next verse that national repentance as a preparatory stage to national forgiveness of sins will “MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT” (Lk 3:4, i.e., prepare for restoration from exile). There is nothing novel about this view.

Another example of this might be Acts 17:30 where Paul announced to the Athenians that God was calling upon all men to repent, i.e., to prepare their hearts by getting rid of idols. It is clear that Paul preached faith because we are told some men joined him and believed (Acts 17:34). Repentance prepared the way for faith and does not equal it and it not necessary in every instance for faith. God wants all men to repent of their wrong ideas. This will not save them, but places them on a path toward believing.

Another illustration of this usage is the case of Cornelius. He was a God-fearer and had obviously repented and turned toward God (Acts 10:2) but was not “saved” until later (Acts 11:14). Repentance moved him in the direction of salvation but did not save him.

The concept of repentance as leading to salvation but not causing it is found in numerous passages of the New Testament.

Lesson 6: The Doctrine of Eternal Life

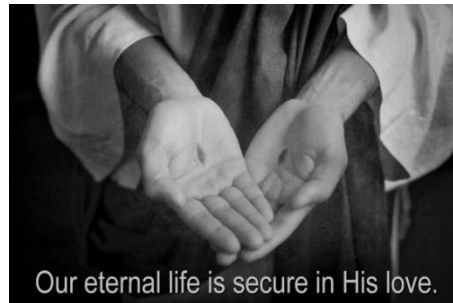
Lesson Introduction

The apostle Paul told Titus, his young son in the ministry, “But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine” (Tit 2:1, NKJV)—*that is, which contribute to good spiritual health.*

One teaching from the Bible which will help all God’s children through the uncertainties and troubles of life and the fear and repulsiveness of death, is the doctrine of eternal life which is the gift of God to all who believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, for that gift. The confidence that this life is eternal and is unconditionally guaranteed contributes immeasurably to the spiritual health of every Christian.

Some feel this kind of guarantee and the sense of security it produces might be unhealthy. Perhaps some would take advantage of the grace of God and live in ways which would not honor Christ.

When we try to run this lifetime race without the confidence that we are unconditionally guaranteed eternal life, frustration, depression, and even “spiritual suicide” can plague our spiritual lives. A young teenage girl who took her life left this note to her parents before she hanged herself, “*Mom and Dad have never said anything to me about having to get good grades. In fact, we rarely talked about it. But I know they do not want, nor could they tolerate a failure. And if I fail in what I do, I fail in what I am. Goodbye.*” This note is typical of the notes many young people who commit suicide leave their family and friends. But it could easily be a note many Christians leave their Lord and their Christian family, when they experience sin and failure in their Christian life. They give up or drop out as Christians because they believe God does not want nor could He tolerate a failure!



The doctrine of eternal life is God’s promise to the child of God that he need never fear being separated from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Our eternal life is forever secure in His love.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: Eternal Life Is Eternal
 - Choosing the Correct Term
 - We Are Secure in the Father’s Love
 - We Are Secure in the Son’s Love
 - We Are Secure in the Holy Spirit’s Love
- Topic 2: Objections to the Doctrine of Eternal Life
 - Why Not Continue in Sin?
 - Some Problem Passages
- Topic 3: The Doctrine of Assurance
 - The Lack of Assurance
 - Gaining Assurance

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you should be able to:

- Clearly explain from Scripture that eternal life is unconditionally guaranteed
- Defend with integrity the biblical truth that eternal life is unconditionally guaranteed
- Interpret key passages which seem to teach that eternal salvation can be lost
- Encourage believers who struggle with assurance of salvation
- Preach a sermon or teach a class on the subject, “Nothing can separate us from the love of God.”

Reading Assignment

Read Ryrie, chapter 57, “The Security of the Believer.”

Topic 1: Eternal Life Is Eternal

Years ago we had a wonderful family in our church who had four of their own children, and then chose to become foster parents. Foster parents serve as parents in cooperation with the state which seeks to place children from troubled homes or backgrounds in good foster homes. Foster children are not adopted children, but simply come and live in a good foster home for a period of time while they or their parents work through their troubled lives. This good Christian family had a desire to minister the love of Christ in their role as foster parents. In the course of time they received a preteen child from the state. For a couple of years things seemed to be going very well, but as this foster child grew older she became more rebellious. Eventually her rebellion began to affect the family in a very negative way. Eventually, with their own children suffering from the violent outbursts and unruly behavior of this foster child, the parents were forced to make a very hard decision. They chose to return the foster child to the state, to be placed in another foster home.

A primary reason why foster children are so mentally and emotionally unstable is because they live without the security in which natural and adopted children derive confidence, peace, and joy. This is the kind of security created by parents who can truly say to their children, “I will always love you no matter what happens!” “You will always be my boy or my girl, and I will never give up on you!” “Regardless of how you turn out, you will always be a part of our family. If you lack a strong godly character, I may disinherit you, but I will never disown you!”

God is our Father! The Bible says that those of us who have believed in Jesus Christ have become the children of God! (Jn 1:12). Our heavenly Father knows that all of His children will have to endure the uncertainties and troubles of life, as well as face the fear and repulsiveness of death. He wants all His children to be confident that they are eternally secure in His love.

In chapter 57, Dr. Ryrie’s explanation about why a believer can be confident of his or her eternal security is excellent, but some expansion would be helpful. The material below expands on what Dr. Ryrie has written. The questions that follow each section will draw upon both the material below and Dr. Ryrie’s material. The questions are designed to help the student assimilate these truths into his own thinking and the living out of his Christian life.

Can we be sure that we are forever secure in the Father’s love? Dr. Ryrie says, “Yes.” The reasons for this will be summarized in the subtopic to follow.

Choosing the Correct Term

Read Ryrie, chapter 57, “Definitions and Distinctions.”

QUESTION 1

Open your Life Notebook. Have you ever doubted or counseled with people who, because of their sin and failure as Christians, doubted that they were eternally saved and on their way to heaven if they died? Describe the spiritual and emotional turmoil you or they were experiencing at the time. Do you believe God wants His children to experience this kind of turmoil if they sin and fail Him? What kind of spiritual and emotional experience does God desire of His children, young and old, who have sinned and failed Him? (see 1 Jn 1:8-10; also read Psalm 51, which King David wrote after his adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah the Hittite).

QUESTION 2

According to Ryrie in “Definitions and Distinctions,” the term that most accurately represents the biblical language for the guarantee of the believer’s final arrival in heaven is:

- A. Perseverance
- B. Preservation
- C. Perfection
- D. Predestination

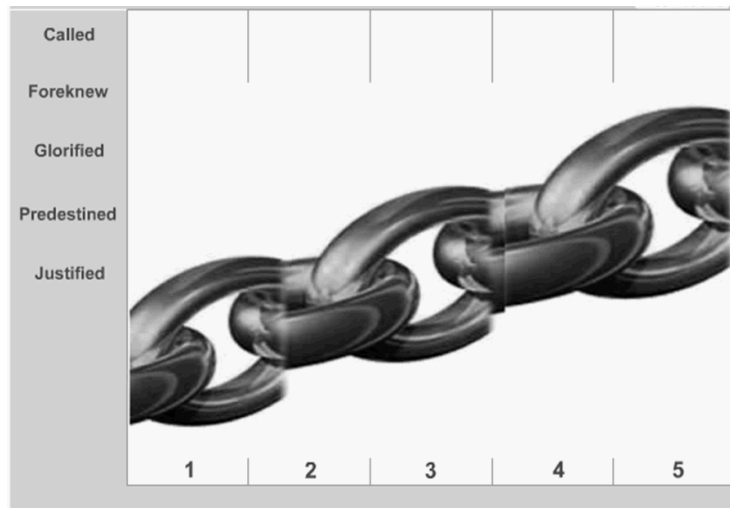
We Are Secure in the Father’s Love



Please read Ryrie, chapter 57, “The Reasons for Eternal Security.” The first thing that should make us secure in our heavenly Father’s love is hearing from Him what He “purposed” or determined for us long before we were ever born.

Please read Romans 8:29-30. Notice that in these verses there are five things God does over a period of time which seem to be linked in a golden chain. We might think of them as golden because they are so valuable to every believer.

The links connect every item in the chain. Whatever happened to those whom he foreknew, happens to those whom he will glorify. Notice that this last link in the golden chain is still future from our perspective. However, the past tense is used in God’s Word because, from His perspective, it is as certain as something that has already happened. If just one of His children is not glorified, His eternal purpose will not have been realized!



The second thing that should make us secure in our Father’s love is the realization that these are not the plans of a wishful thinker or of someone hoping against all odds that it will turn out—these are the plans of almighty God.

QUESTION 3

Select the order in which the links go as they correspond to the terms

- A. Sanctification, predestination, justification, calling, glorification
- B. Calling, predestination, sanctification, justification, glorification
- C. Foreknowledge, calling, justification, sanctification, glorification
- D. Foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, glorification

QUESTION 4

Read the following verses of Scripture, then match that Scripture with a sentence on the right that should leave every believer confident that God will make sure all His children will be glorified as He has purposed.

| <i>Scripture Reference</i> | <i>Sentence</i> |
|----------------------------|--|
| Isaiah 14:24 | Nothing can separate us from the love of God. |
| Romans 8:31 | No one is great enough to take us away from God. |
| Romans 8:38-39 | He is able to keep us until we are safely in His presence. |
| 2 Timothy 1:12 | No one is able to overcome God. |
| John 10:29 | God’s purpose shall stand. |

As Dr. Ryrie points out, “no one” means *no one*, including the individual believer himself. Behind our heavenly Father’s determined plan to glorify each and every one of His children is the power to do what He purposes to do.

The third thing that should make us secure in our Father’s love is that He has not kept His purposes for us secret, but has openly announced them in the form of a promise each believer could personally appropriate to himself.

QUESTION 5

Open your Life Notebook. Read John 3:14-16 and John 5:24 and list four things that God *promises* those who believe in Jesus and who believe that He is the one sent by God for the eternal salvation of every person who believes in Him.

Finally, remember that these things which contribute so much to our sense of eternal security are not the plans, power, and promises of an impersonal force we call God, but they spring from the heart of a loving God, whom we have learned to call our heavenly Father.

QUESTION 6

Open your Bible to Ephesians 1:3-6. Read and meditate on this passage. How do these verses connect our security with the Father’s love? Write down your thoughts in your Life Notebook.

QUESTION 7

Match the following Scriptures with a characteristic of our loving heavenly Father that should encourage a sense of eternal security in His children.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Characteristic</i> |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| John 10:29 | The Father's Power |
| Romans 8:29-30 | The Father's Promise |
| Ephesians 1:3-6 | The Father's Adoption |
| John 3:16 | The Father's Purpose |

We are not foster children that He will send away because we have become disobedient, or even unruly. We are adopted sons and daughters who will be glorified together with Him in His heavenly home one day. If we become disobedient, unruly, or even hostile as His believing children, He will discipline us out of love; in some severe instances He may even disinherit us, but He will never disown us. We are His children and we will spend eternity in glory with Him.

We Are Secure in the Son's Love.

Some people find it difficult to believe that God has unconditionally guaranteed every believer final arrival in heaven simply because he or she has believed in Jesus Christ for eternal salvation. You ask those who object to this, why they find it so difficult, and invariably it all comes down to one reason—Sin! Not so much “little sins,” otherwise no one would be eternally saved. Rather, it is the “big sins” and the “persistent sins” that they believe will keep believers or professing believers out of heaven. The truth of the matter is that any sin, big or little, persistent or committed just once, would keep us from being glorified in heaven if it were not for one thing—the work of the Son of God on the cross.

Read Hebrews 9:24-26; 10:11-12.

QUESTION 8

In the book of Hebrews our Lord Jesus Christ is compared to an Old Testament priest who constantly had to sacrifice animals. Every year he entered the Holy of Holies with the blood of a sacrificial lamb to temporarily cover the sins committed by the children of Israel during that year. However, the high priestly work of our Lord Jesus Christ stands in contrast to this daily and yearly work of the priests of Israel. Open your Life Notebook and list six ways the high priestly ministry of Jesus Christ differed from the high priest's ministry in the Old Testament.

Example:

1. He entered into heaven itself.
2. He offered Himself.
3. He offered Himself once.
4. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.
5. He offered one sacrifice for sins forever.
6. He sat down at the right hand of God.

Read 1 John 2:1-2.

QUESTION 9

There are sins for which Jesus did not sacrifice Himself on the cross. *True or False?*

Every sin that has ever or will ever be committed has been paid for with our Savior's blood. The idea that somehow there are certain present or future sins, serious or repeated sins, which His death cannot cover, is an affront to the work of the Son of God who shed His blood, not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world.

Because of His work on the cross, Jesus could promise His sheep, including future Gentile sheep who would also be trusting in Him to save them, that He would keep them eternally secure.

QUESTION 10

Read John 10:28. What things does Jesus promise to His sheep? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Eternal Life
- B. They shall never perish
- C. Neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand
- D. They can remove themselves from the Father's hand

QUESTION 11

Could Jesus make such promises if His sheep could sin in some way that would require Him to send them to Hell?

Think About It

If our salvation is not secure, how could Jesus say about those to whom He gives eternal life, "and they shall never perish" (John 10:28, NKJV)? If even one man or woman receives eternal life and then forfeits it through sin or apostasy, will they not perish? And by doing so, do they not make Jesus words a lie? — Charles Stanley, Pastor

We Are Secure in the Holy Spirit's Love.

There is much that could be said about all the Holy Spirit has done to make us eternally secure. Dr. Ryrie briefly touches on four things. However, the last of those four things, the "Sealing of the Holy Spirit," is more directly related to God's unconditional guarantee to everyone who believes in Jesus Christ that they will surely arrive in heaven one day. Therefore, we will consider the "Sealing of the Holy Spirit" in more detail.

There is nothing in our physical world that is guaranteed to last forever. Our cars are rusting away, our homes are falling apart, our clothes are wearing out, our roads are breaking up, our food spoils, and our bodies are wasting away. Given enough time, everything we value or build will end up spoiled or in ruin. There is only one thing on this earth right now that is guaranteed never to die, rust, wear out, break up, fall apart, or spoil, and that is those who have come to believe in Jesus Christ for eternal life. Our bodies will die, to be raised again one day as a new body fashioned for eternity. But one thing is guaranteed to pass from this world into the world to come without ever dying, being spoiled, or ruined in some way; that is, we who have believed in Jesus Christ for eternal life. How can we be sure of that?—the sealing of the Holy Spirit.



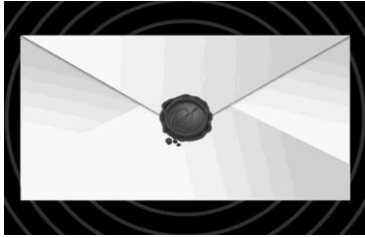
Read carefully the following passages:

- 2 Corinthians 1:21-22
- Ephesians 1:13-14
- Ephesians 4:29-31

QUESTION 12

Using the above passages, match the following questions with the correct answer.

| <i>Question</i> | <i>Answer</i> |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Who is the seal? | The Holy Spirit |
| Who does the sealing? | All believers in Jesus Christ |
| Who does not do the sealing? | God, the Father |
| Who is sealed? | The moment a person believes in Jesus Christ |
| When does this sealing happen? | The believer |



Our being sealed does not depend on how we measure up, nor is the seal broken if we sin. Furthermore, it does not depend upon our desires or actions. All believers are sealed with the Holy Spirit by God, the Father, when they believe!

What does it mean to be “sealed with the Holy Spirit”? In New Testament times the word “seal” was used in three primary ways.

- First, sealing was the last thing that was done prior to delivering something. It guaranteed the contents were in order, and the work of preparing the contents was complete. (Example: Preparing a box of fruit to be delivered across town.)
- Second, sealing something was done to prevent someone from tampering with the contents. The seal provided protection from any kind of corruption. (Example: a letter or document.)
- Third, sealing something was done to indicate ownership. (Example: A royal seal identified the contents as belonging to the king.)

QUESTION 13

Using the above information about sealing in New Testament times, check the correct answers the following question: “What does it mean to be sealed with the Holy Spirit?” (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The sealing with the Holy Spirit indicates that the work of securing our eternal salvation is complete. Our sin has been paid for by Jesus on the cross and we have been given eternal life. We have been declared just in the sight of God. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit, indicating that everything is in order and the work is done.
- B. The sealing with the Holy Spirit indicates that we belong to God. We are His purchased possession. No one except God has the right to open and use what He has sealed.
- C. The sealing with the Holy Spirit indicates that all we have become in Christ—a new person born again, born from above—is sealed with a seal that cannot be broken, guaranteeing that the contents cannot be corrupted or tampered with in any way.
- D. The sealing of the Holy Spirit guarantees that we will never fall into serious sin, habitual sin, or utterly fail in our Christian life.
- E. The sealing of the Holy Spirit guarantees that we can live like the Devil and never experience any earthly or eternal consequences for our sin and evil.

Why can God unconditionally guarantee that everyone who believes in Jesus Christ will surely arrive in heaven one day? Can the seal of God the Holy Spirit be broken? Our eternal security is as good as God the Holy Spirit.

QUESTION 14

Consider the phrase “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” It clearly seems to point to future things promised by God, but depending upon the Holy Spirit to protect us so we can one day lay hold of those things that have been promised. What might be some of the promises signified by the phrase “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise”? Match the Scriptures on the left with the correct answer on the right.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Correct Answer</i> |
|-------------------|---|
| Hebrews 11 | The promise of better things to come |
| John 14:1-3 | The promise of an inheritance that is reserved in heaven for us |
| 1 Peter 1:4 | The promise of things God has prepared for those who love Him, which no man could imagine |
| 1 Corinthians 2:9 | The promise of a home in heaven |

QUESTION 15

In Ephesians 1:13-14, we read that we have been “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.” (NKJV) The sealing of the Holy Spirit will last until we are redeemed or delivered—body and spirit—into His presence to lay hold of the full potential of the eternal life He has given us. *True or False?*

Topic 2: Objections to the Doctrine of Eternal Life

The doctrine of eternal life raises some significant questions. Are there not other Scriptures which seem to contradict it? Is it not possible that such a doctrine would lead to moral laxity? Does this give assurance to a person who is not living a committed Christian life? Bible scholars have come to different conclusions about all of these issues. As you can tell, Dr. Ryrie and the writer of this course have concluded that the Scriptures do teach this wonderful doctrine. However, the student will have to make up his own mind on these issues. In view of this, it would be appropriate at this point to consider some of the main concerns this teaching has raised in the minds of thoughtful Christians. Topic 2 will involve a consideration of some of these objections.

Why Not Continue in Sin?

The most widely raised objection to the teaching that the gift of eternal life is unconditionally guaranteed is that it rightly leads believers to the conviction they are eternally secure. The result is that if they are convinced they are eternally secure and surely going to heaven regardless of what happens or what they do, then what incentive is there for them to strive to live the Christian life, and if necessary to endure hardship for Christ? Those who raise this objection often use phrases like, “If it is true that once saved always saved, then we might as well sin to our heart’s content.”

So if our Lord Jesus Christ has unconditionally guaranteed our safe arrival in heaven one day, then what is our motivation for living a godly Christian life? There are many reasons why believers should obey their Lord and endure hardship as Christians. It is in these reasons that Christians should find their motivation to forsake sin and live godly productive lives that please the Lord Jesus Christ. Nowhere in the Bible are believers in Jesus Christ to be motivated by the fear of being thrown into hell if they do not perform as expected.

QUESTION 16

Read the passages below and then match the motivation on the right with the Scripture on the left.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Motivation</i> |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1 John 4:9-11 | Desire to hear our Lord's approval and assurance of reward |
| Mark 10:28-30 | Desire to be crowned by our Lord for a life well lived for Him |
| Hebrews 12:5-12 | Desire to be blessed in our earthly lives |
| Matthew 25:14-20 | Gratitude and love |
| 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 | Desire to reign with Christ in His eternal kingdom; fear of being denied that opportunity |
| 2 Timothy 2:11-13 | Desire for our Lord's rewards, fear of losing potential rewards and the eternal opportunities associated with them |
| 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 | Fear of being chastised or disciplined |

In 1 Timothy 4:8, the apostle Paul brings all these potential blessings and benefits together in a sweeping statement that should continue to move the heart of any Christian who is weighing the value of whether to please God or please the flesh.

For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come. (NKJV)

Bodily exercise has some value, but commitment to living a life pleasing to God promises benefits and blessings in *this life* and in *the life to come*.

QUESTION 17

Open your Life Notebook. Looking back over your own Christian life, what things have motivated you as a Christian? What biblical motivations have been missing in your service for Christ? In view of what the Bible teaches, how should you redirect your thinking about what motivates you as a Christian?

Some Problem Passages

Read Ryrie, chapter 57, "Some Problem Passages."

Problem passages are usually not as problematic as they may at first seem to be. Part of the problem is that we approach passages in Scripture with a lot of preconceived theological and cultural baggage that we tend to read into the passage. Three things may help in dealing with these so-called problem passages.

1. Sometimes our theology is wrong or inadequate. We may need a theological overhaul or, at least, a tune up to help us refine our theology. For example, how seldom do we hear preaching on rewards or reigning with Christ, yet these are major theological truths found in the Bible.
2. We need to read the passage carefully, being willing to take another look at terms we have come to understand in very specific ways. For example, our understanding of terms like "soul" and "spirit", "saved" or "salvation", "heir" or "inherit," are often conditioned by our culture or our religious background so that their true meaning is easily overlooked. We often ignore lexical background and the various meanings and nuances of a term, as well as the context in which the word is used. Regardless of what language we speak, we need to be aware that sometimes words in our language convey ideas or thoughts to us that may or may not accurately represent the language of the Bible. Translators work hard to faithfully represent the meaning of a biblical word. However, if possible, it would be wise to look at

how a specific word is used in other passages which will help enrich our own understanding of how that word or phrase could be understood in the passage we are studying.

3. The best way to eliminate these interpretative difficulties is to study carefully the context of a passage. Always allow the passage to speak louder than our theology. Seek out a normal literal understanding of a passage after considering the historical and grammatical context of the passage. Most of the so-called problem passages related to the eternal security of a believer are really not problematic once we have looked carefully at the context!

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; John 15:1-6; Hebrews 5:10-6:12, and answer the following questions.

QUESTION 18

The phrase “you have fallen from grace” in Galatians 5:4 means:

- A. To fall away or lose their salvation
- B. To try and use grace as an excuse for sin
- C. To fall away from God’s grace and love
- D. To attempt to be justified by the law

QUESTION 19

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. As you read the context, what do you think it means to be “disqualified for the prize”? Record your thoughts in your Life Notebook.

QUESTION 20

Read John 15:1-11. The reference in verse 6 speaks of those who are cast into the fire and are burned. Is the context of this passage speaking about salvation or fellowship? How might 1 Corinthians 3:15 relate to this passage? Open your Life Notebook, record your thoughts and come prepared to discuss at your accountability group.

Please reread Dr. Ryrie’s explanation of Hebrews 6:1-8 (chapter 57, section V.C) then read and think about Hebrews 5:11–6:9 and “The Dangers of Not Going on to Maturity at the end of this lesson.”

QUESTION 21

After reading “The Dangers of Not Going on to Maturity,” open your Life Notebook and list the characteristics of those who face the danger of “falling away.” Do you think these phrases refer to Christians or non-Christians? Why or why not?

QUESTION 22

In this passage in Hebrews 5:11–6:9 the critical question is the meaning of “fall away.” Consider the context carefully. Read again Hebrews 5:11-14. What was their problem? Consider Hebrews 6:1 and note the exhortation there. Do you think that falling away could be related to failure to heed this exhortation? If so, what would falling away mean?

QUESTION 23

In Hebrews 6 the author lists several consequences that come upon those who fall away. Which of the following four consequences is *not* found in Hebrews 6?

- A. They cannot be brought to repentance.
- B. They openly shame the Son of God.
- C. They will be judged and severely disciplined.
- D. They will lose their eternal salvation.

Topic 3: The Doctrine of Assurance

How important is this matter of assurance? As has been said, assurance is the realization that one possesses eternal life! It is the realization that the gift of eternal life is unconditionally guaranteed. If a believer fails to realize that eternally life is unconditionally guaranteed, then his spiritual and emotional health will fail. He will lack that sense of security that every child of God needs in order to thrive as a Christian. Even a believer's sense of gratitude to God for salvation is at stake, for how can we be thankful for a salvation about which we are uncertain? Assurance is a top priority in ministering to the lives of God's people.

The Lack of Assurance

Read Ryrie, chapter 57, "The Doctrine of Assurance." Dr. Ryrie says, "Assurance is the realization that one possesses eternal life." Every believer who has understood and believed the gospel has realized, at least at the moment of belief, that he or she possesses eternal life. When Jesus says, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life" (Jn 6:47, NKJV), implicit in His statement is that the person believing in Him believes He will give him or her eternal life. If the believer is uncertain about having this life forever, then it can be assumed the person did not believe the promise of Jesus and, therefore, is not eternally saved.

This initial assurance, which is fundamental to saving faith, is more of a certainty of life everlasting—of going to heaven—than a fully developed realization of the truth of the doctrine of eternal life taught in the Scriptures to those who already believe. Under this topic we want to consider the broader need of believers who may lack assurance of their eternal salvation.

As Dr. Ryrie notes, many believers in Jesus Christ for eternal life lack assurance of their eternal salvation. Many times in my own pastoral experience I have counseled with people who lack assurance of their salvation.

QUESTION 24

Using, if possible, your own words, write out in your Life Notebook the four reasons, suggested by Ryrie (chapter 57, section II), why people lack assurance of salvation. Which of these reasons have you encountered most often in your ministry? From your personal experience, can you think of any other reasons why people lack assurance of their salvation?

Gaining Assurance

So, how can we minister to those who lack assurance of their salvation?

A first approach would be to revisit passages in God's Word that emphasize belief in Jesus Christ for eternal salvation. This will help take the focus off what a person has done or not done that has led to the feeling of uncertainty about his or her salvation, and put the focus back on Christ and the person's faith in Him, which results in eternal salvation. In the next question are a few passages that could be helpful.

QUESTION 25

Which of the following passages have you used to assure yourself or others of eternal salvation? Are there other verses that you have found helpful?

- John 3:16-18, 36
- John 5:24
- John 6:47
- John 11:25-27
- Acts 16:31
- Romans 4:5
- Ephesians 2:8-9
- James 1:18

A second approach, especially where sin or wrongdoing has created a lack of assurance, is to hold up the mirror of Christ.

A believer comes to you for counsel about his salvation. He is distraught about the lack of fruit in his life and cannot bring himself to believe that he is truly saved. What approach would you suggest for counseling this man in regard to his assurance of salvation? How then are we to comfort the troubled soul who lacks assurance of salvation? There is perhaps no better way than to follow the method employed by the apostle Paul in Romans 8:31-39. Here the apostle asks four questions, each beginning with the word “who.”

QUESTION 26

List the four questions the apostle Paul asked.

What is striking about all four of these questions is that Paul never asks the believer to look inward and test for evidences of regeneration, as so many Christian leaders would require today. Rather, in answer to all four questions he directs the reader to Christ. A believer may lack subjective assurance due to doubt, trials, or even due to an inconsistent Christian life. However, for the sincere Christian, the Bible does not ask him to examine his life but to look outward to Christ. Attention must be focused on Christ and the answers Paul gives to the four questions above. This gives the objective foundation from which subjective feelings of assurance can flow.

Finally, the doctrine of eternal life and the security it should engender in a believer, as presented in this lesson, must move from the classroom to the pulpit to the hearts of God’s people. Eternal life is a doctrine that must be taught and taught well. While it may be objective truth, it is truth that governs to some extent the spiritual, mental, and emotional health of every Christian.

What about the danger of assuring a person who professes to be a Christian, but whose profession is clearly false? How do we know that his or her profession is clearly false? Inevitably the answer would be because of some sin or failure in the professing person’s life.

QUESTION 27

What are some of the things that are often observed in a believer's life that would lead others to think the individual is not a real Christian? Below are a few things frequently highlighted to suggest someone is not a real Christian. Can you think of any others?

- Failure to attend church
- Unwillingness to confess Christ openly
- Apathy toward the Word of God and spiritual matters
- Committing adultery, drunkenness, etc
- Worldliness

Such sins and failures, while inviting God's displeasure and judgment on a Christian's earthly life, do not constitute a basis for saying someone is a false professor. But then someone will say, "Doesn't the Bible say, 'by their fruits you shall know them'?" The questioner understands this to mean we can know that they are false professors by the way they live!

QUESTION 28

Read Matthew 7:15-23 where this phrase "by their fruits you shall know them" occurs, then match the following questions with the correct answers.

| <i>Questions</i> | <i>Answers</i> |
|---|--|
| Whose fruit are the people of God to inspect? | That they believe in Jesus Christ. |
| How will they be dressed? | Prophets or those who proclaim the Word of God. |
| What kind of religious works will they be doing? | They will prophesy, cast out demons, and do many wonders in the name of Christ. |
| So what kind of bad fruit do false prophets produce? | They shall not enter the kingdom unless they do the will of the Father. |
| What will be their final destiny? | They speak what is untrue, twisted, perverted, and contrary to the Law or Word of God. It is in this way that they practice lawlessness. |
| What is the will of the Father (see John 6:29 for the good work the Father wills for people to do)? | They will appear winsome and appealing. |

Based on their works, these false prophets would have qualified to be pastors in many churches. What is going on here is that they, like Judas, lacked the one thing that every person who enters into the kingdom of the Messiah will need: eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. In Matthew 7, the false prophets Jesus was referring to did not believe in Jesus Christ, and the fruit that betrayed their false profession was not their works, but their words. They were unbelieving prophets who lead people down the broad path to destruction (Mt 7:12-14). Furthermore, apart from becoming a new creation in Christ Jesus, "all our so-called 'right acts' are like a menstrual rag in your sight." (Is 64:6) before the Messiah. No wonder Jesus will one day say to them,

Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness! (Mt 7:23, NKJV)

This is a passage of Scripture that is frequently quoted to support the thinking of many Christians that if we do not bear good fruit (interpreted as good works) we are false professors. Our end will be that our Lord will cut us down and throw us into the fires of hell. Those who use this passage in this way, erode believers' assurance and tear down the doctrine of eternal life. Sadly, most of

those who quote and use this passage in this way, have probably failed to look carefully at the context!

False professors do exist. However, a false professor is not someone who lacks good works. To the contrary it is someone who claims to follow Christ, but who, in reality, lacks faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for eternal life.

Key Biblical Concepts

1. John 6:47—A simple promise
2. Romans 8:29-30—The golden chain
3. John 10:28-29—Secure in His hand
4. Romans 8:33—No charge against us
5. 1 John 2:1—Our Advocate
6. Titus 3:5—New birth
7. Ephesians 4:30—Sealing
8. John 6:38-40—The will of the Father

Conclusion

Read Luke 10:20.

We live in a day when Christians everywhere are hungry to experience the supernatural power of God. Miracles, healings, and speaking in tongues will quickly garner a huge crowd if they can be pulled off convincingly. The disciples of Jesus, on the other hand, were being entrusted with the real deal—the supernatural power of God to back up their ministry. But as exciting as that was, it does not compare with something far more exciting and leading to joy that is literally out of this world. He said, “but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven” (Lk 10:20, NKJV).

The doctrine that eternal life is unconditionally guaranteed to all who believe in Jesus for that life and the resulting assurance that our eternal salvation is indeed eternally secure is one of the greatest sources of joy and peace in the Christian life. Let’s be quick to share it with other brothers and sisters who deserve to hear and be assured of this wonderful truth—*ETERNAL LIFE IS, FIRST AND FOREMOST, LIFE THAT IS ETERNAL!*

Lesson 6 Self Check

QUESTION 1

The high priestly work of the Lord Jesus Christ differs significantly from the work of Israel's high priest in the following ways. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. He worked only on weekends; they worked every day.
- B. He wore special garments made by angels; they wore priestly garments made by men.
- C. He sat down after His offering; they continued to stand.
- D. His sacrifice removed sin forever; their sacrifices could not remove sin even for a day.

QUESTION 2

The falling away in Hebrews 6 refers to:

- A. Loss of salvation
- B. Departure from the path leading to maturity
- C. Departure from a false profession
- D. Loss of eternal reward

QUESTION 3

The links in the golden chain are:

- A. Sanctification, predestination, justification, calling, glorification
- B. Calling, predestination, sanctification, justification, glorification
- C. Foreknowledge, calling, justification, sanctification, glorification.
- D. Foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, glorification.

QUESTION 4

According to Ryrie, eternal security depends upon the Son of God because:

- A. He indwells us, He works out His purpose in us, and He infuses us with His power.
- B. He prays for us, He regenerates us, and He seals us.
- C. He died for us, and He prays for us.
- D. He loves us, He baptizes us in the Spirit, and He elects us to eternal life.

QUESTION 5

According to Ryrie, the term that most accurately represents the biblical language for the guarantee of the believer's final arrival in heaven is:

- A. Perseverance
- B. Preservation
- C. Perfection
- D. Predestination

QUESTION 6

The phrase "you have fallen from grace" in Galatians 5:4 means:

- A. To fall away or lose their salvation
- B. To try and use grace as an excuse for sin
- C. To fall away from God's grace and love
- D. To attempt to be justified by the law

QUESTION 7

What role does our Lord Jesus Christ assume on behalf of Christians accused by Satan before God?

- A. The role of Savior
- B. The role of Helper
- C. The role of Advocate
- D. The role of Intercessor

QUESTION 8

Which of the following motivations should **NOT** motivate a believer in Jesus Christ according to the Word of God?

- A. Perceived opportunity to get what you want—money, status, a way out of your present situation
- B. Christ's work on your behalf and His unfailing love for you
- C. Fear of losing potential rewards and the eternal opportunities associated with them
- D. The potential of receiving a crown of appreciation from the Lord Jesus Christ

QUESTION 9

Which of the following are ways we might encourage those who lack assurance of their eternal salvation? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Revisit passages of Scripture that emphasize believing in Jesus Christ for eternal salvation
- B. Point out the good works in their lives that provide evidence that they are Christians
- C. Hold up the mirror of Christ in their salvation and remind them that nothing can separate them from His love
- D. Compare them to other Christians who obviously are not doing as well in their Christian life

QUESTION 10

According to Hebrews 6, if Christians fall away and become apostate, what will likely happen to them?

- A. They will be judged with the purpose of restoring them to fruitfulness.
- B. They will lose their Christian family and friends.
- C. They will end up in Hell.
- D. They will turn to alcohol or drugs.

Unit Two Exam

QUESTION 1

Man must glorify God only in major decisions and areas of behavior. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

God's permissive decree includes the evil acts of evil men. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

God's decree in the moral and spiritual realm is not all inclusive. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Fatalism looks only at the end. Predestination includes the means and the end. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

Since God has determined to permit sin, individuals are not responsible for their sin. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

God can use evil to accomplish good. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

Ryrie claims that faith and regeneration have to occur at the same moment. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

Intellectual faith is the product of tradition or education which cannot save. Saving faith, on the other hand, is a conviction, a product of the working of the Holy Spirit. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

Ryrie believes that if God's Spirit is at work convicting an individual of sin, then sooner or later that person will believe. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

According to Ryrie, repentance means a genuine change of mind, and it is a changing of the mind about Christ (instead of about sin) that is necessary for salvation. *True or False?*

QUESTION 11

Regarding surrender of life as part of the gospel, Ryrie claims that commitment of life is not a necessary part of faith or the gospel. *True or False?*

QUESTION 12

God's eternal decree includes the following four items: "His eternal purpose," "According to the counsel His own will," "For His own glory," "He has foreseen whatsoever comes to pass." *True or False?*

QUESTION 13

The eternal decree is general and does not necessarily include all the minute details of our lives. *True or False?*

QUESTION 14

The eternal decree includes the sinful acts of sinful men. *True or False?*

Questions 15–25, Key Biblical Concepts

Single answer multiple choice. Match the correct passage with its descriptive statement.

QUESTION 15

God's choice is not based on foreseen good works.

- A. Romans 8:28-30
- B. Romans 9:10-18
- C. Ephesians 1:4
- D. Ephesians 1:11

QUESTION 16

God's decree includes everything and is according to counsel.

- A. Romans 8:28-30
- B. Romans 9:10-18
- C. Ephesians 1:4
- D. Ephesians 1:11

QUESTION 17

This passage speaks of the working out of the foreknowledge of God.

- A. Romans 8:28-30
- B. Romans 9:10-18
- C. Ephesians 1:4
- D. Ephesians 1:11

QUESTION 18

This passage teaches concerning God's election of believers in eternity past.

- A. Romans 8:28-30
- B. Romans 9:10-18
- C. Ephesians 1:4
- D. Ephesians 1:11

QUESTION 19

Christ's redemption is intended for all men.

- A. 2 Corinthians 5:19
- B. 1 Timothy 2:4-6
- C. John 16:8-11
- D. 1 John 2:2

QUESTION 20

Conviction of the Holy Spirit makes us aware of our sins and our need for salvation.

- A. 2 Corinthians 5:19
- B. 1 Timothy 2:4-6
- C. John 16:8-11
- D. 2 Peter 2:1

QUESTION 21

Christ died for the false teachers who are not among the elect.

- A. 2 Corinthians 5:19
- B. 1 Timothy 2:4-6
- C. John 16:8-11
- D. 2 Peter 2:1

QUESTION 22

God has reconciled the world to Himself.

- A. 2 Corinthians 5:19
- B. John 16:8-11
- C. 2 Peter 2:1
- D. 1 John 2:2

QUESTION 23

Christ's death is a propitiation for the sins of the whole world.

- A. 1 Timothy 2:4-6
- B. John 16:8-11
- C. 2 Peter 2:1
- D. 1 John 2:2

QUESTION 24

This passage is sometimes called "the golden chain."

- A. John 17:15-24
- B. Romans 8:29-30
- C. Romans 8:33
- D. Ephesians 4:30

Lesson 6 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1: *Your answer*

QUESTION 2:

B. Preservation

QUESTION 3:

D. Foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, glorification.

QUESTION 4:

| <i>Scripture Reference</i> | <i>Phrase</i> |
|----------------------------|---|
| Isaiah 14:24 | God's purpose shall stand |
| Romans 8:31 | No one is able to overcome God |
| Romans 8:38-39 | Nothing can separate us from the love of God |
| 2 Timothy 1:12 | He is able to keep us until we are safely in His presence |
| John 10:29 | No one is great enough to take us away from God |

QUESTION 5:

The four things that God promises those who believe in Jesus:

1. They shall not perish.
2. They shall have everlasting life.
3. They shall not come into judgment.
4. They have passed from death into life.

QUESTION 6: *Your answer*

QUESTION 7:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Characteristic</i> |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| John 10:29 | The Father's Power |
| Romans 8:29-30 | The Father's Purpose |
| Ephesians 1:3-6 | The Father's Adoption |
| John 3:16 | The Father's Promise |

QUESTION 8: *Your answer*

QUESTION 9: False

QUESTION 10:

- A. Eternal Life
- B. They shall never perish
- C. Neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand

QUESTION 11:

In John 10, the Jewish aristocracy had challenged Jesus to prove conclusively that He is the Son of God. But rather than point to one of His great miracles or one of His awesome sermons, He points to His ability to keep, guard, and preserve His sheep! This was the greatest proof that He was indeed the Son of God. Why was He so certain He could keep them? Because as He made clear in John 10:15, "I lay down my life for the sheep." Shouldn't we share the confidence of our shepherd? Isn't His work enough to save every one of His children, even if they utterly sin and fail Him?

QUESTION 12:

| <i>Question</i> | <i>Answer</i> |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Who is the seal? | The Holy Spirit |
| Who does the sealing? | God, the Father |
| Who does not do the sealing? | The believer |
| Who is sealed? | All believers in Jesus Christ |
| When does this sealing happen? | The moment a person believes in Jesus Christ |

QUESTION 13:

A. The sealing with the Holy Spirit indicates that the work of securing our eternal salvation is complete. Our sin has been paid for by Jesus on the cross and we have been given eternal life. We have been declared just in the sight of God. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit, indicating that everything is in order and the work is done.

B. The sealing with the Holy Spirit indicates that we belong to God. We are His purchased possession. No one except God has the right to open and use what He has sealed.

C. The sealing with the Holy Spirit indicates that all we have become in Christ—a new person born again, born from above—is sealed with a seal that cannot be broken, guaranteeing that the contents cannot be corrupted or tampered with in any way.

QUESTION 14:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Correct Answer</i> |
|-------------------|---|
| Hebrews 11 | The promise of better things to come |
| John 14:1-3 | The promise of a home in heaven |
| 1 Peter 1:4 | The promise of an inheritance that is reserved in heaven for us |
| 1 Corinthians 2:9 | The promise of things God has prepared for those who love Him, which no man could imagine |

QUESTION 15: True**QUESTION 16:**

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Motivation</i> |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1 John 4:9-11 | Gratitude and love |
| Mark 10:28-30 | Desire to be blessed in our earthly lives |
| Hebrews 12:5-12 | Fear of being chastised or disciplined |
| Matthew 25:14-20 | Desire to hear our Lord's approval and assurance of reward |
| 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 | Desire to be crowned by our Lord for a life well lived for Him |
| 2 Timothy 2:11-13 | Desire to reign with Christ in His eternal kingdom; fear of being denied that opportunity |
| 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 | Desire for our Lord's rewards, fear of losing potential rewards and the eternal opportunities associated with them |

QUESTION 17: *Your answer***QUESTION 18:**

D. To attempt to be justified by the law

QUESTION 19: *Your answer***QUESTION 20:** *Your answer***QUESTION 21:** *Your answer***QUESTION 22:** *Your answer***QUESTION 23:**

D. They will lose their eternal salvation

QUESTION 24: *Your answer***QUESTION 25:** *Your answer***QUESTION 26:**

(1) Who can be against us (Rom 8:31)? His answer is no one, because Christ gave Himself for all of us, and therefore God will graciously give us all things. (2) Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen (Rom 8:33)? His answer is no one, because God, the only One who could bring such a charge, has already rendered His verdict: justified! (3) Who is he that condemns (Rom 8:34)? His answer is no one, because Christ has paid the penalty for sin and is at the right hand of God right now interceding for us. (4) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ (Rom 8:35)? His answer is no one, because Christ loves us.

QUESTION 27: *Your answer*

QUESTION 28:

| <i>Questions</i> | <i>Answers</i> |
|---|--|
| Whose fruit are the people of God to inspect? | Prophets or those who proclaim the Word of God. |
| How will they be dressed? | They will appear winsome and appealing. |
| What kind of religious works will they be doing? | They will prophesy, cast out demons, and do many wonders in the name of Christ. |
| So what kind of bad fruit do false prophets produce? | They speak what is untrue, twisted, perverted, and contrary to the Law or Word of God. It is in this way that they practice lawlessness. |
| What will be their final destiny? | They shall not enter the kingdom unless they do the will of the Father. |
| What is the will of the Father (see John 6:29 for the good work the Father wills for people to do)? | That they believe in Jesus Christ. |

Lesson 6 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

C. He sat down after His offering; they continued to stand.

D. His sacrifice removed sin forever; their sacrifices could not remove sin even for a day.

QUESTION 2:

B. Departure from the path leading to maturity

QUESTION 3:

D. Foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, glorification.

QUESTION 4:

C. He died for us and He prays for us.

QUESTION 5:

B. Preservation

QUESTION 6:

D. To attempt to be justified by the law

QUESTION 7:

C. The role of Advocate

QUESTION 8:

A. Perceived opportunity to get what you want—money, status, a way out of your present situation

QUESTION 9:

A. Revisit passages of Scripture that emphasize believing in Jesus Christ for eternal salvation

C. Hold up the mirror of Christ in their salvation and remind them that nothing can separate them from His love

QUESTION 10:

A. They will be judged with the purpose of restoring them to fruitfulness.

Unit Two Exam Answers

QUESTION 1: False

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4: True

QUESTION 5: False

QUESTION 6: True

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8: True

QUESTION 9: False

QUESTION 10: True

QUESTION 11: True

QUESTION 12: True

QUESTION 13: False

QUESTION 14: True

QUESTION 15: True

QUESTION 16:

B. Romans 9:10-18

QUESTION 17:

D. Ephesians 1:11

QUESTION 18:

A. Romans 8:28-30

QUESTION 19:

C. Ephesians 1:4

QUESTION 20:

B. 1 Timothy 2:4-6

QUESTION 21:

C. John 16:8-11

QUESTION 22:

D. 2 Peter 2:1

QUESTION 23:

A. 2 Corinthians 5:19

QUESTION 24:

D. 1 John 2:2

QUESTION 25:

B. Romans 8:29-30

Lesson 6 Article

The Danger of Not Going on to Maturity—Hebrews 5:11–6:12

Please reread Hebrews 5:11–6:9. Another interpretation of Hebrews chapter 6 might be called the-danger-of-not-going-on-to-maturity view. In this writer’s opinion, it best considers the immediate context of Hebrews chapter 6 which actually begins in Hebrews 5:11. These Hebrew Christians were not ready for the deep truth the author was about to reveal about the high priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The reason is that they had become “sluggish in hearing” (Heb 5:11). They were at a point in their Christian life where they should have been “teachers,” but instead they were like infants “needing milk” and who were unable to receive teaching from God’s Word that was like “solid food” (Heb 5:12-13). They had not progressed in their Christian life because they had not used the truth they had received to choose ways of thinking and make decisions that were good (Heb 5:14). What the author writes next in chapter 6 is born out of a concern to motivate these Christians to go on to maturity, realizing the very real dangers of remaining immature Christians. (Remember that in the original New Testament there were no chapter or verse breaks. These were added later for our convenience. The problem is sometimes they can suggest a break in the train of thought when none is intended. This is the case here between chapters 5 and 6!)

So he continues, “Therefore we must progress beyond the elementary instructions about Christ” (Heb 6:1). These are some of the first truths they learned as Jews and cut their teeth on as new Christians. But then he goes right to the point of why he was writing and what he hoped for his readers. “Therefore. . . move on to maturity” (Heb 6:1). Some translations use the word perfection or completion, but the word often means maturity which best fits the context. The author of Hebrews wanted these believers to go on to maturity in anticipation that they would live out their Christian lives in a way that would be pleasing to God and, therefore, be able to lay hold of all He promises to believers who follow His Son.

How were they to do this? Not by going back to their Jewish roots and the fundamental beliefs of their Jewish religion, which was still looking for a Messiah-King and Savior (Heb 6:2). They had, through faith in Jesus as their Messiah and Savior, begun to build upon that foundation, taking hold of new truth that opened the door to even greater opportunities than they could have ever anticipated under the Old Covenant. To go on to maturity and fully experience all the potential of their new life in Jesus Christ was something God truly wanted for them and was granting them physical life to attain (Heb 6:3). However, if they ignored what God desired for them and refused to go on to maturity which held the promise of so much potential and blessing, they would be in serious danger as believers in Jesus Christ. What kind of danger? Again read Hebrews 6:4-7 (NKJV).

“For it is impossible for those who were. . .” Dr. Ryrie in his treatment of this passage makes clear that these are born-again people. The descriptive phrases, “who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,” could only be describing true Christians. These are not “professing Christians” as some assert to protect their theological viewpoint, but “possessors” of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. The author of Hebrews does not expect a debate over whom he is pointing his remarks. Rather, he expects all believers who may be in danger of falling away from the pathway leading to maturity and choosing the way of least

resistance, to weigh heavily the dangerous consequences of their actions. What kind of dangerous consequences does he have in mind?

First, it is impossible to renew them to repentance. Hebrews 6:4-5a could be translated this way:

For it is impossible to renew to repentance those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come, and have fallen away *from the pathway leading to maturity and chosen the way of least resistance*. (author's paraphrase, emphasis added)

Why is it impossible? Because as they go the way of least resistance born out of their immaturity, their hearts become increasingly hardened to all attempts by other Christians to woo them back to the pathway leading to maturity. They have “settled in” to a life that is self serving and self absorbed. As a pastor, I have seen this happen time and again over my thirty-six years of pastoral ministry. Furthermore, one thing becomes clear, just as the writer of the book of Hebrews says, barring some kind of judgment from God (see below), it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. They have no desire to turn away from their self-focused way of life, seeking harmony and intimacy with their heavenly Father.

Second, “they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.” If they reject the pathway leading to maturity and chose the way of least resistance, they will, in effect, be rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ, just as their forebears had done when they cried out, “Crucify Him!” By their actions they will be shaming Jesus, saying He is no longer worthy to be followed as their Messiah, Savior, and Lord! This is a serious breach of trust and an offense to God.

Third, judgment and severe discipline is certain (Heb 6:7-8). A human father severely disciplines a son who disgraces the family by speaking and living in ways that show contempt for his status and privilege as a son. How much more will our heavenly Father discipline His children who shame His eternally begotten Son by speaking and living in ways that show contempt for their status and privilege as “sons” of God.

Human efforts will not result in such an immature and “backslidden” Christian “being renewed again unto repentance.” But what is impossible for men is not impossible with God. In the figure of an earthly field, the field which drinks in the rain bears useful fruit (Heb 6:7). In such a scenario, the field enjoys divine blessing. On the other hand, “if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned” (Heb 6:8, NKJV). In that day as in ours, the burning of a field to remove unwanted and unfruitful growth was a common sight. It is important that we remember that when a farmer burns a field, he is not attempting to destroy the field, but to destroy the thorns and briars that have grown up on the field. Furthermore, in burning the field, he is also seeking to prepare the field so that it will be able to produce growth that will be useful to the farmer. What a powerful illustration of how God deals with His children who refuse to move on to maturity and have chosen the way of least resistance. Such a life of a child of God will result in a lot of worthless growth that must be cleared before that life will be ready to repent and go on to maturity and to fruitfulness as a Christian.

Such judgment and discipline from our heavenly Father can be a terrifying experience, but it yields the “peaceable fruit of righteousness.” It is a mark of a loving and gracious heavenly Father. His children need to be careful that they do not forsake and fall short of what He, out of his grace, desires to produce in their lives (Heb 12:4-15, NKJV).

The writer of the book of Hebrews hoped that his warning, written under the inspiration of a gracious and loving God, will be sufficient to move these Hebrew Christian brothers and sisters

forward toward maturity and toward laying hold of all God has prepared for those whom He has saved through faith in His Son Jesus Christ.

“But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner” (Heb 6:9, NKJV).

Unit Three: The Holy Spirit and the Church

Unit Introduction

Two great topics make up our study in this unit: the Holy Spirit and God's plan for the church. The Holy Spirit is God, our Helper. Only by the Spirit's work in us are we transformed into the likeness of our Lord and made profitable in service to Him. Lessons 7 and 8 concern the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

The church is Christ's bride and our spiritual family. Understanding the role of the local congregation in God's grand design for human history will promote unity and strength in our corporate testimony for Jesus Christ. Lesson 9 concerns the church.

In the heart of every pastor and church leader are two concerns that our study of the Holy Spirit will prepare us to address. First, we want to protect our people from the false teaching of the cults outside the church and from unbalanced teaching about the Christian life within the church. Lessons 7 and 8 strive for clear, balanced teaching on the Holy Spirit, which, when mastered, will enable us to teach with authority and to safeguard the people in our congregations.

Second, every pastor and church leader should want to serve the Lord with integrity and authenticity. Lesson 9 addresses the topic of the church. As a church leader, ask yourself how your congregation would be different if its people embraced a truly biblical view of ecclesiology, the study of the church.

Note that we will not discuss everything in each chapter of Ryrie, but questions on the self tests and unit exam may come from any part of Ryrie.

Unit Outline

Lesson 7: The Ministry of the Holy Spirit, Part I

Lesson 8: The Ministry of the Holy Spirit, Part II

Lesson 9: The Church

Unit Objectives

When you have completed this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain with greater confidence key passages regarding the Holy Spirit and God's plan for the church
- Evaluate accurately doctrines about which there is diversity of opinion
- Define and explain the following concepts related to the Spirit: indwelling, anointing, sealing, baptizing, and filling
- Define and explain the following concepts related to the church: definition, relation to the kingdom, principles or practices, government, qualified leadership, ordinances, and worship
- Pattern your life according to a greater understanding of the ministry of the Spirit

Lesson 7: The Ministry of the Holy Spirit, Part I

Lesson Introduction

There was a time in my life when I missed what might have been wonderful blessings. I was a new believer, having heard the gospel from members of a Pentecostal church. At that church I received solid teaching on many points of doctrine, and I will always be grateful for that. But some things I wish were different. One was the way the members of this congregation criticized non-Pentecostal churches, calling them “dead” churches.

When I moved to another city for a year of voluntary service, I needed to find a church to attend. Instead of joining my housemates on Sunday morning at a “dead church,” I went to a Pentecostal church in town. There were no young people near my age at the Pentecostal church, and I found it difficult to become involved in the life of the congregation. It was a lonely year for me.

Some twenty years later, I am a member of the same sort of church my housemates had attended. It is anything but dead! It is a place where the fruit of the Spirit—“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal 5:22-23)—flows freely even though the gifts of the Spirit that the Pentecostal congregation associated with Spirit baptism (principally speaking in tongues) do not.

I have often wondered what blessings I missed during that year when I closed myself off from this part of Christ’s body.

The question of who the Holy Spirit is and what the Spirit’s role is in our individual lives and in our congregations has produced much debate over the centuries of Christian history. In this lesson we will study the Holy Spirit’s person and His ministry in the lives of the Old Testament saints, of our Lord Jesus, and of ourselves as believers today.

To prepare for our study you may read chapters 59 through 64 in Ryrie now, or wait until the appropriate section in the lesson.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: The Holy Spirit Is a Person and Is God

The Holy Spirit Is a Person

The Holy Spirit Is God

Topic 2: The Holy Spirit’s Work in Old Testament Times and in the Life of Christ

The Holy Spirit in Old Testament Times

The Holy Spirit in the Life of Christ

Topic 3: The Holy Spirit Indwelling Believers

The People Indwelt and the Permanence of Indwelling

Some Problems Concerning the Indwelling of the Spirit

Topic 4: The Holy Spirit Sealing Believers

Topic 5: The Holy Spirit Baptizing Believers

The Argument That Spirit Baptism Occurs at Conversion

Explicit Biblical Information

The Argument That Spirit Baptism Occurs after Conversion

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you should be able to:

- Defend the personhood of the Holy Spirit and give scriptural evidence for the fact that the Holy Spirit is God
- Explain the Holy Spirit's work in the Old Testament and in the Life of Christ
- Define and explain the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and specify its timing and its relationship to the anointing of the Holy Spirit
- Define and explain the sealing of the Spirit, telling who are sealed, when they are sealed, who seals them, for how long they are sealed, and the ramifications of sealing
- Explain the issues involved with Spirit baptism

Topic 1: The Holy Spirit Is a Person

If you have not already read Ryrie, chapter 59, "Who Is the Holy Spirit?" do so now.

Ryrie structures his discussion around two statements: the Holy Spirit is a person, and the Holy Spirit is God.

The Holy Spirit Is a Person

From the early years of its history the church has taught that the Holy Spirit is a person, the third person of the Trinity. But in the course of history, groups have arisen who do not accept this teaching. The Jehovah's Witnesses, for example, teach that the Holy Spirit is merely an impersonal force and that the Bible uses figures of speech to describe this force.

Ryrie assembles considerable New Testament evidence that the Holy Spirit is a person:

1. The Holy Spirit possesses and exhibits the attributes of a person.
2. The Holy Spirit exhibits the actions of a person.
3. The Holy Spirit receives attributions that would be given only to a person.
4. The Holy Spirit relates as a person to other persons.
5. Grammatical clues in the New Testament point to the Holy Spirit's personhood.



QUESTION 1

Ryrie explains that the Holy Spirit exhibits attributes of a person. Which of the following attributes does Ryrie provide biblical evidence for? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The Holy Spirit has intelligence.
- B. The Holy Spirit controls believers' every action.
- C. The Holy Spirit shows feelings.
- D. The Holy Spirit has a will.

QUESTION 2

Ryrie explains that the Holy Spirit exhibits the actions of a person and receives attributions that would be given only to a person. Match each Scripture verse (on the left) with the action or attribution it describes (on the right).

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Action or Attribution</i> |
|------------------|---|
| John 16:13 | The Holy Spirit convicts of sin. |
| John 16:8 | The Holy Spirit intercedes. |
| Matthew 12:31 | The Holy Spirit can be blasphemed. |
| Ephesians 4:30 | The Holy Spirit can be resisted. |
| Romans 8:26 | The Holy Spirit can be lied to. |
| Acts 7:51 | The Holy Spirit can be grieved. |
| Acts 5:3 | The Holy Spirit guides us into truth by hearing, speaking, and showing. |

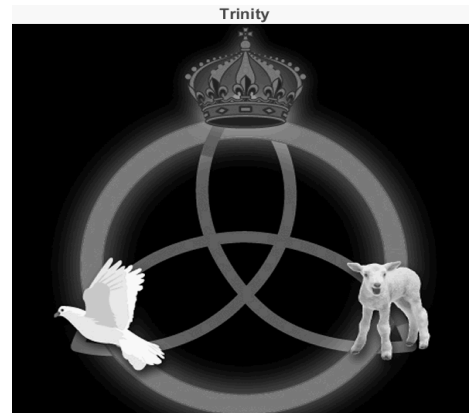
QUESTION 3

Open your Life Notebook. Imagine that you are responding to a letter from a friend who believes that the Holy Spirit is merely a force and not a person. Using Ryrie's points in chapter 59, write to your friend about how the Holy Spirit relates to other persons—to the apostles, to Jesus in particular, and within the Trinity. Explain to your friend how this shows that the Holy Spirit is not merely a force.

The Holy Spirit Is God

Ryrie also asserts convincingly from Scripture that the Holy Spirit is God. The Holy Spirit's:

1. Names in Scripture show deity
2. Names are those that belong to God alone
3. Actions are those that only God can perform
4. Associations with the other persons of the Godhead demonstrate deity.



QUESTION 4

Open your Life Notebook. The word *Trinity* appears nowhere in the Bible, but the reality of the Trinity is found throughout Scripture. Read Ryrie's argument that the Holy Spirit is God, and glean from that discussion evidence for the Trinity, the three-in-one Godhead. Write about how the passages Ryrie cites point to the Trinity without using the word *Trinity*.

Topic 2: The Holy Spirit's Work in Old Testament Times and in the Life of Christ

If you have not yet read Ryrie, chapter 60, "The Holy Spirit in Old Testament Times," and chapter 61, "The Holy Spirit in the Life of Our Lord," do so now.

Although the Holy Spirit "came" at Pentecost and began a new ministry among God's people at that time, Pentecost was not the first time the Holy Spirit appeared on the scene. Rather, the Holy Spirit is eternal, just as God the Father and Christ the Son are eternal.

The Holy Spirit in Old Testament Times

Ryrie explains that the Holy Spirit was active in creation; revealed God’s message to His people through the prophets and through David the psalm writer, and worked among God’s people in a variety of ways in the centuries before Pentecost.

There were differences, however, between the Holy Spirit’s work before Pentecost and the Holy Spirit’s work after Pentecost. Before Pentecost the Holy Spirit’s ministry was primarily to Israel, it did not include such activities as the indwelling and baptizing of believers, and it was not permanent within any specific individual.

QUESTION 5

Regarding the doctrine of the Trinity in the Old Testament, Ryrie would say that:

- A. In Old Testament times the Holy Spirit was a vital energy, not a person.
- B. The Old Testament lays out the doctrine of the Trinity in detail.
- C. The Holy Spirit did not begin working among people until Pentecost.
- D. The Old Testament does not reveal the doctrine of the Trinity, but it does convey the idea that the Holy Spirit is a person working among God’s people.

The Holy Spirit in the Life of Christ

In his discussion of the Holy Spirit’s role in the life of Christ, Ryrie takes up several important themes.

First, Jesus was announcing His prophetic role when He said at the beginning of His public ministry: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and regaining of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Lk 4:18-19). He was connecting His own teaching to the teachings of the prophets, whose words His listeners knew well. To understand the significance of this announcement, it is important to understand the role of the prophets in Old Testament times: they called God’s people to “act justly and love mercy,” to be a sign of God’s ways to the surrounding peoples.

Restoring Sight to the Blind



Second, Jesus performed some miracles in the power of the Holy Spirit and others in His own power. Ryrie focuses especially on the miracle of restoring sight to the blind, which was a sign that Jesus was the Messiah.

Third, Ryrie takes up the question of the unpardonable sin of blasphemy of the Spirit, a sin that, he says, can no longer be committed today because it requires the visible presence of Christ on earth. He offers the conversion of the apostle Paul as evidence that blasphemy is forgivable.

QUESTION 6

Using section A, “The Aspects of the Ministry of the Spirit” in Ryrie, chapter 61, match each Scripture reference (on the left) to the ministry of the Spirit in Christ’s life that the reference describes (on the right).

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Ministry of the Spirit in Christ’s Life</i> |
|------------------|---|
| Luke 4:1 | Christ was anointed with the Spirit. |
| Hebrews 1:9 | Christ rejoiced in the Spirit. |
| Luke 10:21 | Christ was empowered by the Spirit throughout His life. |
| Isaiah 42:1-4 | Christ was filled with the Spirit. |

QUESTION 7

Before opening your Life Notebook, read Luke 4:18-19. Ryrie points out that at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, He announced His prophetic role. The release of captives, healing of the blind, and liberation of the oppressed that Jesus proclaims are thus linked to the prophets' admonitions to God's people in Old Testament times. Ryrie emphasizes that Jesus physically restored sight to blind people and that this was a sign that He was the Messiah. In what ways did Jesus' coming also result in release of captives and liberation of people who were oppressed?

Topic 3: The Holy Spirit Indwelling Believers

This section and the next ("The Holy Spirit Sealing Believers") are especially important in the discussion of eternal security. Ryrie explains that these two works of the Holy Spirit assure believers that their eternal salvation and relationship with God can never be broken.

If you have not read Ryrie, chapter 62, "The Spirit Indwelling," do so now.

The People Indwelt and the Permanence of Indwelling

When a young man in my congregation recently testified about his faith before heading away to college, he said, "I haven't lived a perfect Christian life. At times I've fallen out of God's grace." Perhaps he really understood that God's grace is not dependent on our behavior and was speaking only figuratively, but I was thinking that perhaps it was time for the young man to have a theological check-up.

We know that God is holy, so we can easily become convinced that the Holy Spirit does not dwell within us when we are sinful. But it is God's unconditional love and the Holy Spirit's continuing presence with us in our sinful state that makes the gospel so amazing.

As Ryrie points out, Paul makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 5-6 that even believers living in gross sin are indwelt by the Spirit. Indeed, it is on the basis of this indwelling that he exhorts them to holy living.

Paul takes up this question of our sin and God's grace in Romans 6. Some must have asked him, "Shall we continue to sin in order that grace may abound?" (Rom 6:1, NKJV). "Absolutely not!" responded Paul (Rom 6:2, 15). We must pursue holiness—not so that we will be acceptable to God but because God has already accepted us.

QUESTION 8

In section I, "The People Indwelt" in chapter 62, Ryrie argues which of the following regarding the indwelling of the Spirit? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. All believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
- B. If someone is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit, that person is unsaved.
- C. When we sin after coming to faith, we must confess so the Holy Spirit can return to us and live in us again.
- D. Believers continue to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit even when they sin.

QUESTION 9

Open your Life Notebook. How do you know that you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit? Are victory over sin and a feeling that God is near signs that the Holy Spirit is in you? What about those times when you struggle with sin and God seems far from you? How do you know the Spirit is in you then?

Some Problems Concerning the Indwelling of the Spirit

Ryrie now takes up some problematic passages regarding the indwelling of the Spirit. First he discusses Acts 5:32, where Peter refers to the Holy Spirit as the One “whom God has given to those who obey Him.” This would seem to indicate that holy living is a prerequisite for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Ryrie points out, however, that in this context, Peter was referring to “obedience to the faith,” as Paul put it in Romans 1:5. In other words, belief, not holy living, is a prerequisite for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.



Next Ryrie discusses cases in which the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is temporary. He dispatches with these quickly, indicating that they all occurred before Pentecost; after Pentecost, he explains, the economy of the Spirit is different.

Then Ryrie turns to the case of the Samaritans. Some have suggested that because God gave the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans some time after they believed, indwelling must come after salvation; therefore, they say, not all believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. But Ryrie explains that this was a special situation unique to the Samaritans: “This delay and God’s use of Peter and John in conveying the gift of the Spirit saved the early church from having two rival mother churches.” The normal pattern for the giving of the Spirit can be found in the story of Cornelius’s household, who were given the Spirit the moment they believed.

At first glance, Acts 19:1-6 appears to also give us an example of people receiving the Holy Spirit some time after believing, but in this case the “believers” were believers in the message of John the Baptist. Once they also believed in Christ, they received the Holy Spirit.

Finally, Ryrie takes up the relationship between indwelling and anointing. Like indwelling, he writes, the anointing of the Holy Spirit is something that abides in all believers.

QUESTION 10

According to Ryrie, which of these situations is evidence that the Holy Spirit begins to indwell us at some time after conversion?

- A. When Peter refers to the Holy Spirit as the One “whom God has given to those who obey Him” (Acts 5:32)
- B. When God gave the Holy Spirit to the Samaritans
- C. When a group of people whose story is told in Acts 19:1-6 received the Holy Spirit some time after believing
- D. None of the above

QUESTION 11

According to Ryrie, all believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but only some are anointed by the Holy Spirit. *True or False?*

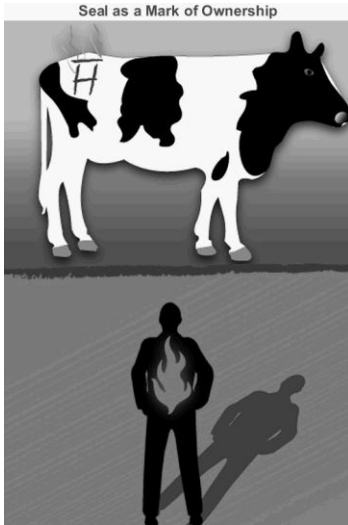
QUESTION 12

Open your Life Notebook. At a Bible study several women were discussing the teachings of a local preacher. “Some of what he said didn’t sound quite right to me,” one said, “but Brother Jones has the anointing.” These women believed that some Christians are anointed by the Holy Spirit and others are not, and that preachers who were anointed have a special word from God. Based on section E, “What Is the Relation of Indwelling to Anointing” in chapter 62, would Ryrie agree with their conclusion? How did these women’s belief in a special anointing for Brother Jones prevent them from being like the Berean Christians, who examined “the scriptures carefully every day to see if these things were so” (Acts 17:11)?

Topic 4: The Holy Spirit Sealing Believers

If you have not read Ryrie, chapter 63, “The Spirit Sealing,” do so now. Be sure to read all Bible references as they are cited.

Ryrie puts forth many of the same propositions in this chapter as in the last. He writes that all believers are sealed, that this blessing is realized at the time of conversion, and that its duration is until the fullness of our salvation is realized in glory.



Three main verses—2 Corinthians 1:22 and Ephesians 1:13; 4:30—support Ryrie’s propositions without major controversy. Ryrie compares the seal of the Holy Spirit to a pledge or earnest money that is paid to ensure that both buyer and seller will complete a transaction in the future.

John Stott helps us to understand the significance of being sealed:

A seal is a mark of ownership and of authenticity. Cattle, and even slaves, were branded with a seal by their masters, in order to indicate to whom they belonged. But such seals were external, while God’s is in the heart. He puts his Spirit within his people in order to mark them as his own. (John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society, The Message of Ephesians* [InterVarsity Press, 1979], 48–49)

The seal of the Holy Spirit, as a first installment, is a guarantee that the “final payment” on our redemption will be paid. There is no danger of default. Our eternal destiny is absolutely secure.

QUESTION 13

Which of the following statements reflects Ryrie’s teaching on the role of the Holy Spirit in sealing?

- A. The Spirit may be the agent of sealing, the sphere of sealing, or both.
- B. The Spirit is the agent of sealing but not the sphere of sealing.
- C. The Spirit is the sphere of sealing.
- D. The Spirit is neither the agent nor the sphere of sealing.

QUESTION 14

According to section V, “The Ramifications of Sealing” in Ryrie, chapter 63, because of the sealing of the Holy Spirit, we can be certain of which of the following? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. God possesses us.
- B. God purposes to keep us until the day of our full redemption.
- C. We are God’s as long as we do not grieve the One who sealed us.
- D. We have a secure salvation.

QUESTION 15

Open your Life Notebook. How certain are you personally, on the basis of the weight and clarity of the New Testament pictures of the indwelling and sealing of the Holy Spirit, that God assures believers that their saving relationship in Christ can never be broken? Are you certain, unsure, or doubtful? Explain your response briefly.

Topic 5: The Holy Spirit Baptizing Believers

If you have not read Ryrie, chapter 64, “The Spirit Baptizing,” do so now. Be sure to read all Bible references as they are cited.



The Holy Spirit Baptizing Believers

We will look at two views in our discussion: the view that Spirit baptism occurs at the time of conversion (that is, at the time someone initially believes in Christ as Savior) and the view that Spirit baptism occurs at some time subsequent to the time of conversion.

The Argument That Spirit Baptism Occurs at Conversion

Ryrie represents a large body of people who believe that Spirit baptism (1) is a nonrepeatable, nonexperiential event; (2) takes place at the moment of belief in Christ as Savior; and (3) places a believer into the body of Christ forever.

Ryrie goes on to mention four main reasons why there is confusion on this subject: (1) an unclear conception of the body of Christ, (2) overemphasis on water baptism, (3) the association of Spirit baptism with a second blessing, and (4) confusion between the baptizing and filling of the Spirit.

In light of these four themes, let us take the time to assemble the biblical evidence and information on this doctrine as the basis for further discussion and interaction with Ryrie.

Explicit Biblical Information

It must be recognized at the outset that there is relatively little direct evidence in Scripture for Spirit baptism. Therefore, we must be careful not to say more or less than what is in the Bible.

The seven verses that make explicit reference to Spirit baptism are: Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16 (*en pneumati hagio*); 1 Corinthians 12:13 (*en heni pneumati*).

We can make several indisputable statements about these verses:

1. All the verses except 1 Corinthians 12:13 refer explicitly to the day of Pentecost (the first five verses are merely repetitions of the one promise of Holy Spirit baptism; Acts 11:16 refers to the promise after the fact).

2. The Greek phrase referring to Spirit baptism is in every case the same, except for the addition of the word *heni* to the phrase *en pneumatī* in 1 Corinthians 12:13.
3. All of the citations, except for 1 Corinthians 12:13, are taken from the Gospels or Acts.

Day of Pentecost

The account in Acts 2 says that as the people waited, “tongues spreading out like a fire appeared to them and came to rest on each one of them,” and they, being filled with the Spirit, spoke in tongues. The Lord anticipated this event and called it Spirit baptism (Acts 1:5). Peter in Acts 2 explained the event as the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, wherein it is said that the Lord would pour out His Spirit on all humanity. Peter then further clarified in Acts 2:38-39 that reception of the Spirit is contingent on belief.

We make four observations about the Pentecost story as it relates to Spirit baptism:

1. The events of the day of Pentecost, insofar as they are the fulfillment of prophecy and are the Lord’s initial sending of the Spirit to His people, are unique, one-time events.
2. Receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) means being baptized in the Holy Spirit.
3. The believers gathered at Pentecost spoke in tongues.
4. Not all who later believed spoke in tongues.

On the basis of Acts 1–2, then, we can say that the baptism of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost was a unique outpouring of the Spirit on all believers. Whatever else it may mean, Pentecost was the time when the church was established and when the first believers were thus made members of the church.

The Meaning of 1 Corinthians 12:13

Because 1 Corinthians 12:13 is the only passage in the Epistles that relates explicitly to Spirit baptism, we need to be especially clear about what it means.

The first word of the verse is “for,” meaning “because,” so we must look to verse 12 to see the relationship between the two passages. When we do this, we see that the focus in this passage is on believers’ unity, or oneness, in Christ (see also Eph 4:3-4). It is clear, therefore, that in verse 13, Paul’s purpose was not to expound on the doctrine of Spirit baptism. This baptism was something the believers in Corinth apparently knew, and he referred to it as the reason they were one body in Christ: because they were baptized in one Spirit and made to drink of one Spirit. No more, no less.

The question for us is how the Spirit baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:13 relates to the baptism on the day of Pentecost. The language of 1 Corinthians 12:13 makes it virtually certain that Paul is referring to the Pentecost event. Yet these Corinthians were not in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and, therefore, were not baptized in the Spirit on that day. Indeed, they were certainly not even believers on the day of Pentecost. Therefore, somehow they were baptized in the Spirit in a way that is related to the Spirit baptism of Pentecost and yet somehow different from and subsequent to it.

This verse is not an exhortation but a statement of fact. Paul is telling the Corinthians that all of them are in the body of Christ—Jews and Gentiles, enslaved people and free people. Their common membership in the body is a connection stronger than the most divisive of economic, political, or ethnic divisions. This is true on the basis of their conversion, not on the basis of each believer’s spiritual walk subsequent to conversion.

Combining these observations, we see that 1 Corinthians 12:13 teaches that Spirit baptism since Pentecost (1) happens at conversion, (2) places a believer in the body of Christ, and (3) is somehow a participation in the Spirit baptism of Pentecost.

Since Pentecost, a person who believes is added to the body of Christ. This addition to the body is accomplished through Spirit baptism. So it is related to the Spirit baptism on Pentecost but cannot be the same as with the original disciples. The new believer merely enjoys the benefits of the body that is already established.

So far in our investigation we can thus say that Spirit baptism is that event whereby the Lord Jesus baptizes believers once and for all in the Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion, with the result that they are placed in the body of Christ.

QUESTION 16

Which of the following are characteristics of Spirit baptism discussed by Ryrie in section II of chapter 64, “Characteristics of the Spirit’s Baptizing”? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Spirit baptism is operative only in this dispensation.
- B. Spirit baptism occurred in both Old and New Testament times, but in different ways.
- C. In this dispensation all believers experience Spirit baptism.
- D. Spirit baptism occurs at conversion and is not later repeated.

QUESTION 17

Open your Life Notebook. In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul told the Corinthians that Spirit baptism binds together people who were at odds with one another in Corinth. What political, ethnic, or economic divisions in your community sometimes seem too strong to overcome? How can believers in your community, knowing that Spirit baptism binds them together in the body of Christ, be a witness to the world of God’s self-giving love?

The Argument That Spirit Baptism Occurs After Conversion

In the last section of Ryrie’s chapter 64, he discusses the view that Spirit baptism occurs subsequent to salvation to give believers special power for Christian living. A more modern variation of this theology of subsequent Spirit baptism holds to a “two-stage” view: that a believer is baptized in the Spirit and placed into the body of Christ at conversion (1 Cor 12:13), and that after salvation the believer may again be baptized in the Spirit for power (Mt 3:11; Mk 1:8; Lk 3:16; Jn 1:33). In the first baptism, the Holy Spirit (the agent) baptizes believers into the body of Christ (the sphere); in the second baptism, Christ (the agent) baptizes believers in the Holy Spirit (the sphere).

Whether they hold to a one-stage or two-stage view, people who believe that Spirit baptism occurs subsequent to salvation tend to maintain that churches lack vitality and growth if believers are not seeking and experiencing a baptism of the Spirit.

Ryrie rejects this view. He contends that both Christ and the Spirit are the agents of Spirit baptism and that both the Spirit and the body are the sphere into which believers are baptized. How can it be that the Holy Spirit is both an agent and a sphere of baptism? This is like the Spirit’s ministry in sealing, Ryrie explains. The Holy Spirit is both the agent who seals us and the sphere into which we are sealed. Both the sealing and the baptism occur at conversion.

Key Biblical Concepts

1. The personhood of the Spirit: 1 Corinthians 2 indicates that the Holy Spirit has intelligence (knows the things of God and teaches people); Ephesians 4:30 shows that the Holy Spirit has feelings (can be grieved); 1 Corinthians 12:11 says that the Holy Spirit has a will.

2. The deity of the Spirit: In Psalm 139, the Holy Spirit is omnipresent; Matthew 28:19-20 puts the Holy Spirit on the same level as the Father and the Son; in Acts 5:1-5 Peter asks why Ananias lied to the Spirit and to God, making them the same.
3. The indwelling of the Spirit: Romans 8:9 says directly that if the Spirit of God dwells in you, you are in the Spirit—that is, a believer. Therefore, indwelling happens at the time of initial faith in Christ as Savior.
4. The sealing of the Spirit: Ephesians 1:13 says that when you believed, you were sealed. Thus sealing takes place at the time of initial faith in Christ as Savior.
5. The baptism of the Spirit: 1 Corinthians 12:13 says that all were baptized by the Spirit and that this baptism is the basis for our unity as a body. Thus baptism takes place at the time of initial faith in Christ as Savior.

Conclusion

Though there are exegetical and theological implications, connotations, and difficulties in this discussion, it seems best to understand all the verses involved as saying that Spirit baptism is that event whereby every person, at the moment of belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, becomes a member forever of the body of Christ. The indwelling, abiding, anointing, and sealing of the Holy Spirit are all associated with this event, but placement in the body of Christ is the main point of Spirit baptism.

In the midst of this detailed discussion we must not forget that Paul's concern is for a proper diversity in the body and a proper use of the various Spirit-given gifts, on the basis of the unity we have in the Spirit. We are always to seek the unity of the body in love through the application and outworking of our diverse gifts by the direction of the Spirit.

QUESTION 18

Open your Life Notebook. It is ironic that Spirit baptism, to which Paul points to emphasize believers' unity in 1 Corinthians 12:13, has become one of the greatest points of division in the body of Christ. People on either side of this debate often treat each other as though they are not part of the body of Christ. With Paul's admonition about our common Spirit baptism in mind, write about how we can avoid separating from other believers on the basis of doctrines that are not essential to salvation. How can we embrace fellow believers with whom we disagree on doctrines such as this one?

Lesson 7 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Which of the following does Ryrie present as evidence that the Holy Spirit is God?

- A. The Holy Spirit's names in Scripture show deity.
- B. The Holy Spirit has intelligence.
- C. The Holy Spirit shows feelings.
- D. The Holy Spirit has a will.

QUESTION 2

Which of the following best represents Ryrie's position on the Holy Spirit's work in the production of Scripture?

- A. In some books of the Bible, the human authors' will got in the way of what God wanted to communicate.
- B. The Holy Spirit essentially wrote the books of the Bible; the human authors were not agents in the process except that their hand accomplished the physical act of writing.
- C. The Bible's authors acted as agents, but they were carried along by the Spirit so that their will did not interfere with what God wanted to communicate.
- D. When we read Scripture, we must carefully distinguish between the words of God and the words of the human authors.

QUESTION 3

The Holy Spirit's ministry in people during Old Testament times was different from the Spirit's ministry in believers today. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Which of the following is Ryrie's position on the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit?

- A. It is impossible to commit the unpardonable sin of blasphemy of the Spirit today because to commit it requires the visible presence of Christ on earth.
- B. If we observe the Holy Spirit's work in the form of miracles and say that the miracles were performed by Satan's power, we are committing blasphemy of the Spirit.
- C. People who commit the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit should be disfellowshipped to protect the purity of the congregation.
- D. We must be careful of what we say in anger so that we don't inadvertently blaspheme the Holy Spirit.

QUESTION 5

In Acts 5:32, we read that Peter referred to the Holy Spirit as One "whom God has given to those who obey Him." According to Ryrie, what does this tell us about obedience and the Spirit's indwelling?

- A. The Holy Spirit comes to us when we believe, but we must live obediently to keep the Spirit's presence with us.
- B. Obedience in Acts 5:32 is "obedience to the faith"; in other words, God gives the Holy Spirit to those who believe.
- C. When we repent of our sins and begin to live righteously, God sends the Holy Spirit to us.
- D. Belief and holy living go hand in hand; one who does not live in a holy manner must not truly believe.

QUESTION 6

What is Ryrie's position on the sealing of the Holy Spirit in Old Testament times?

- A. Because Old Testament saints were both secure and indwelt, they must also have been sealed.
- B. During Old Testament times, circumcision conveyed the sealing of the Holy Spirit.
- C. During Old Testament times, faithful adherence to the Ten Commandments conveyed the sealing of the Holy Spirit.
- D. Sealing is a ministry of the Holy Spirit that is not mentioned in the Old Testament.

QUESTION 7

The sealing of the Holy Spirit assures believers that their salvation cannot be lost. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

According to Ryrie, the main effect of Spirit baptism is the believer's personal spiritual power. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

Which of the following is true about 1 Corinthians 12:12-13?

- A. This passage emphasizes the importance of seeking the second blessing of Spirit baptism.
- B. This passage points to Spirit baptism to illustrate the oneness of the body of Christ.
- C. This passage establishes the importance of the gifts of the Spirit that come with Spirit baptism, like prophesy and speaking in tongues.
- D. This is the most important of many passages in the Epistles that explicitly address Spirit baptism.

QUESTION 10

Which of the following represents Ryrie's position on the Holy Spirit's activity at conversion?

- A. The Holy Spirit is the only agent of baptism at conversion, and the body of Christ is the only sphere into which believers are baptized.
- B. Christ is the only agent of baptism at conversion, and the Spirit is the only sphere into which believers are baptized.
- C. Both Christ and the Holy Spirit are agents of baptism at conversion, and both the body of Christ and the Holy Spirit are spheres into which believers are baptized.
- D. The Holy Spirit's activity occurs after salvation, at the time of baptism in the Spirit.

Lesson 7 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

- A. The Holy Spirit has intelligence.
- C. The Holy Spirit shows feelings.
- D. The Holy Spirit has a will.

QUESTION 2:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Action or Attribution</i> |
|------------------|---|
| John 16:13 | The Holy Spirit guides us into truth by hearing, speaking, and showing. |
| John 16:8 | The Holy Spirit convicts of sin. |
| Matthew 12:31 | The Holy Spirit can be blasphemed. |
| Ephesians 4:30 | The Holy Spirit can be grieved. |
| Romans 8:26 | The Holy Spirit intercedes. |
| Acts 7:51 | The Holy Spirit can be resisted. |
| Acts 5:3 | The Holy Spirit can be lied to. |

QUESTION 3: *Your answer*

QUESTION 4: *Your answer*

QUESTION 5:

- D. The Old Testament does not reveal the doctrine of the Trinity, but it does convey the idea that the Holy Spirit is a person working among God's people.

QUESTION 6:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Ministry of the Spirit in Christ's Life</i> |
|------------------|---|
| Luke 4:1 | Christ was filled with the Spirit. |
| Hebrews 1:9 | Christ was anointed with the Spirit. |
| Luke 10:21 | Christ rejoiced in the Spirit. |
| Isaiah 42:1-4 | Christ was empowered by the Spirit throughout His life. |

QUESTION 7: *Your answer*

QUESTION 8:

- A. All believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit.
- B. If someone is not indwelt by the Holy Spirit, that person is unsaved.
- D. Believers continue to be indwelt by the Holy Spirit even when they sin.

QUESTION 9: *Your answer*

QUESTION 10: D. None of the above.

QUESTION 11: False

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13: A. The Spirit may be the agent of sealing, the sphere of sealing, or both.

QUESTION 14:

- A. God possesses us.
- B. God purposes to keep us until the day of our full redemption.
- D. We have a secure salvation.

QUESTION 15: *Your answer*

QUESTION 16:

- A. Spirit baptism is operative only in this dispensation.
- C. In this dispensation all believers experience Spirit baptism.
- D. Spirit baptism occurs at conversion and is not later repeated.

QUESTION 17: *Your answer*

QUESTION 18: *Your answer*

Lesson 7 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

A. The Holy Spirit's names in Scripture show deity.

QUESTION 2:

C. The Bible's authors acted as agents, but they were carried along by the Spirit so that their will did not interfere with what God wanted to communicate.

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4:

A. It is impossible to commit the unpardonable sin of blasphemy of the Spirit today because to commit it requires the visible presence of Christ on earth.

QUESTION 5:

B. Obedience in Acts 5:32 is "obedience to the faith"; in other words, God gives the Holy Spirit to those who believe.

QUESTION 6:

D. Sealing is a ministry of the Holy Spirit that is not mentioned in the Old Testament.

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8: False

QUESTION 9:

B. This passage points to Spirit baptism to illustrate the oneness of the body of Christ.

QUESTION 10:

C. Both Christ and the Holy Spirit are agents of baptism at conversion, and both the body of Christ and the Holy Spirit are spheres into which believers are baptized.

Lesson 8: The Ministry of the Holy Spirit, Part II

Lesson Introduction

Daniel was studying to be a pastor. One evening when he was talking with a friend about his future ministry, he said, “I will never sweep the floor in the church. Sweeping the floor would undermine my dignity as the pastor.”

His friend was taken aback. “But there is no job in the church that is without dignity!”

Who was right?

When Paul writes about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, he emphasizes the importance of each gift and the value of those who exercise each gift. In his beautiful discourse on Christian unity, he compares our physical bodies to the body of Christ:

On the contrary, those members that seem to be weaker are essential, and those members we consider less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our unrepresentable members are clothed with dignity, but our representable members do not need this. Instead, God has blended together the body, giving greater honor to the lesser member, so that there may be no division in the body, but the members may have mutual concern for one another. (1 Cor 12:22-25)

Now it may be that when Daniel becomes a pastor, he will delegate the sweeping to a member of the congregation so he can concentrate on preparing sermons and training leaders, but this may simply be a matter of prudent management. There is no lack of dignity in any of the tasks required to care for the body, and there is no lack of dignity in the people who perform each task.

And if Daniel should decide to sweep the floor himself, he will be following the example of his Lord, who served His disciples by washing their dirty feet.

In Lesson 7, you learned that the indwelling, anointing, and baptizing of the Holy Spirit are simultaneous events, taking place at the moment of saving faith. But what about the ministry of the Spirit to believers after conversion? We know from Philippians 2:13 that God is at work in us, and we know from John 14:16-17 that the Holy Spirit is the divine helper and is with us forever. Here in Lesson 8 we learn about the ministry of the Spirit that enables us to serve the body of Christ, the church.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: The Holy Spirit Gifting

- The Definition of Spiritual Gifts
- The Distribution of Spiritual Gifts
- The Discovery and Development of Spiritual Gifts
- The Description of Spiritual Gifts

Topic 2: The Holy Spirit Filling

- What It Means to Be Spirit-filled
- Characteristics of Being Spirit-filled
- How to Become Spirit-filled

Topic 3: Other Ministries of the Holy Spirit

- Teaching
- Guiding

Assuring
Praying
Sanctifying

Topic 4: The History of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you should be able to:

- Define the term *spiritual gift* and discuss the distribution and development of the gifts
- Name the various spiritual gifts and assess which of these are gifts that you have
- Explain what Spirit filling is and discuss its relationship to the development of spiritual maturity
- Discuss the need for the Holy Spirit’s ministries of teaching, guiding, assuring, praying, and sanctifying. Explain how these ministries operate and what their result is in the lives of believers
- Recount the key events in the history of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, touching on developments before the Council of Nicaea, from the Council of Nicaea to the Reformation, and since the Reformation

Topic 1: The Holy Spirit Gifting

Read Ryrie, chapter 65, “The Spirit Gifting.” Be sure to have a Bible open so you can read each reference as it is cited in this chapter.

Now read four chapters of Scripture—Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4; 1 Peter 4—noting what each teaches about spiritual gifts.

QUESTION 1

Open your Life Notebook. After reading Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and 1 Peter 4, list ten observations about spiritual gifts on the basis of these readings. (A list of gifts counts as only one observation.) Did anything in these passages surprise you?

The Definition of Spiritual Gifts

Ryrie defines spiritual gift as “a God-given ability for service.”

A spiritual gift is not a natural talent, like a talent for writing or a talent for athletics, though a spiritual gift can be related to a natural talent. For example, a talented writer with the spiritual gift of teaching may write books that are used for Christian education.

Nor is a spiritual gift the same as an office. A leader of a group of young mothers may have the gift of pastoring even though she is not serving as a pastor of a congregation.

Whether or not our spiritual gifts are related to our natural talents and whether or not they are connected to a specific office, it is important to discover what our gifts are and to use them for edifying service in the body of Christ.

In Questions 2–7, indicate whether each of the following is a characteristic of a natural talent or a spiritual gift (in the blank write “natural talent” or “spiritual gift”).



QUESTION 2

Given by God through our parents _____

QUESTION 3

Benefits the body of Christ in particular _____

QUESTION 4

Evidently given at conversion _____

QUESTION 5

Given at birth _____

QUESTION 6

Benefits humankind generally _____

QUESTION 7

Given by God independently of parents _____

QUESTION 8

Open your Life Notebook. Consider your own abilities and decide whether they are natural talents or spiritual gifts. List these abilities in two columns with the headings “Natural Talents” and “Spiritual Gifts.”

The Distribution of Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual gifts are given to all believers. Ephesians 4:11 teaches that Christ gives gifts for the benefit of His church and that He gives them to all believers at conversion. Ryrie notes that dignity is thereby given to each person’s work in the church, however insignificant that work might seem. The gifts operate as believers serve the body with dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Every believer has at least one spiritual gift, Ryrie explains, but not every congregation will have every gift operating within it. Furthermore, not every generation will have all the gifts. Some gifts, Ryrie argues, were foundation gifts, necessary only in the early years of the church when the church was being established. However, each congregation and each generation will have the gifts necessary for the full and healthy functioning of the body of Christ in that time and place.

QUESTION 9

According to Ryrie in “The Distribution of Spiritual Gifts,” which of the following statements about the distribution of spiritual gifts are true? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. They are distributed to all believers.
- B. They are distributed by the Holy Spirit at will.
- C. They are distributed to the body of Christ as a whole.
- D. They are distributed by the risen, ascended Christ.

QUESTION 10

Open your Life Notebook. Ryrie teaches that certain spiritual gifts, called the foundation gifts, were operative only during the early years of the church when the church was being established, and that they are no longer necessary today. But throughout history, the church has been established in new places where people have just begun to hear the Word of God. In cases like these, might the foundation gifts still be operational? Why or why not?

The Discovery and Development of Spiritual Gifts

Many churches in the United States use “spiritual gifts inventories,” written tests that help believers discover their spiritual gifts. This leaves some believers feeling paralyzed, wary of serving in any way that is not a perfect match with their identified spiritual gifts; others are overwhelmed after discovering their gifts this way, worried that they will never find the time or courage to use all of their gifts to serve the body. Still, when used properly, spiritual gift inventories can be helpful in providing a general idea of where believers should focus their time and energy.

Ryrie suggests an entirely different approach. “Gifts are both discovered and developed by activity,” he writes. When we become active in serving the body, we learn about where our gifts lie, and then we can develop those gifts. Observation and evaluation by others as we minister are especially helpful. Their feedback can reassure us that we are indeed gifted in a particular area, or it can show us that we are not, in which case our fellow believers can encourage us to serve in another capacity. In this regard it is important that church leaders provide as many learning and serving opportunities as possible.

Fear holds many people back from getting involved. Faith is God’s corrective to fear, but how can we encourage faith? These five ideas may prove useful for church leaders.

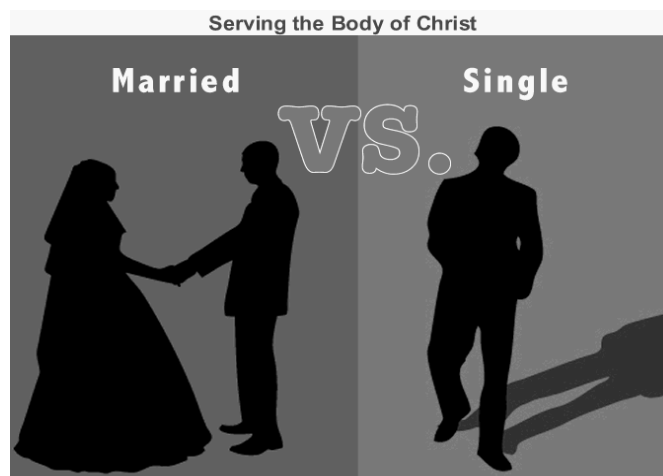
1. Challenge others to become involved in ministry on the basis of your observations about their possible spiritual gifts.
2. When you challenge people to become involved, tell them exactly what you are asking them to do and for how long, so that they can pray about their involvement with enough information.
3. Present your challenge in the context of friendship when possible. People who feel that you know and esteem them are much more likely to overcome the fear barrier. People who feel that you are personally committed to helping them succeed will respond to your loyalty with loyalty.
4. Ryrie writes about being a steward of our single or married state. Paul is a clear example of the fact that the single life of ministry has difficulties, but is less complicated during hard times. Those who are married and very involved in ministry face a unique set of pressures, but have the opportunity to minister in ways that singles cannot (1 Cor 7:25-35).
5. Ryrie suggests being willing to do anything for God. God always fills the open heart with good things.

One good starting point for service is Ryrie’s list of commands that are given to all believers. When we exhort one another, give faithfully to the work of the church, and practice kindness, for example, we learn whether we are particularly effective as exhorters, givers, or extenders of mercy. If I learn that I have the spiritual gift of showing mercy, I may cultivate that gift, perhaps by learning about my community’s criminal justice system and using that knowledge to extend kindness to former prisoners who are joining the church. But I should still heed the commands given to all believers; I should continue to give to the church and to exhort fellow believers when the situation requires it.

QUESTION 11

Using Ryrie's discussion of spiritual gifts in "Be Active in the Lord's Work," match each command given to all believers with the spiritual gift that makes some believers particularly adept at following that command.

| <i>Command</i> | <i>Spiritual Gift</i> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Serve one another (Gal 5:13) | Showing mercy |
| All give (2 Cor 9:7) | Exhortation |
| Be kind (Eph 4:32) | Faith |
| All witness (Acts 1:8) | Teaching |
| Great Commission (Mt 28:19) | Evangelism |
| Exhort one another (Heb 10:25) | Giving |
| Walk by faith (2 Cor 5:7) | Ministering |



QUESTION 12

Open your Life Notebook. Ryrie notes that both singleness and marriage are spiritual gifts. In what ways does singleness make some of us particularly available or able to serve the body? In what ways does marriage do this? In your congregation, are both single and married people active in service, or are there obstacles that make it difficult for people from one group or the other to be involved?

The Description of Spiritual Gifts

To help others discover their spiritual gifts, it is necessary to have a good understanding of what the spiritual gifts are. The main passages where spiritual gifts are specifically mentioned in the New Testament are Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; Ephesians 4:7-16; 1 Peter 4:10-11.

Ryrie lists eighteen gifts and gives brief descriptions of their unique features. He identifies apostleship, prophecy, distinguishing spirits, and wisdom and knowledge as foundational or early church gifts that are not given in the present period of church history.

Although Ryrie suggests that miracles, including healings, and tongues and interpretations of tongues may no longer be operative today, he does not say so definitively. In the case of miracles, he emphasizes that not all people are healed and that it is unwise to neglect human means for healing, like a doctor's care, while waiting for divine healing. Regarding tongues, Ryrie rejects uninterpreted tongues (such as a private prayer language) as unfruitful, and he reminds readers

that Paul did not equate speaking in tongues with Spirit baptism as Pentecostals do. Furthermore, Paul gave specific instructions so the exercise of gifts like tongues and prophecy would not cause disorder during worship.

QUESTION 13

Match each Scripture passage with what that passage teaches about spiritual gifts.

| <i>Scripture Passage</i> | <i>Teaching About Spiritual Gifts</i> |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1 Corinthians 12:7 | Gifts are to be exercised with love. |
| 1 Corinthians 12:20, 25 | Gifts confer honor on all members of the church. |
| 1 Corinthians 12:22-24 | Gifts are for the common good. |
| 1 Corinthians 13 | Gifts are given to unify the church. |

QUESTION 14

Open your Life Notebook. It's no accident that Paul's famous "love chapter" (1 Cor 13) is tucked in the middle of his lengthy discussion of the exercise of spiritual gifts in the church (1 Cor 12; 14). Read these three chapters and observe how the Corinthian believers allowed division to creep into the church as they exercised the very gifts that Christ gave for their edification and unity. What words would you use to name the sinful attitudes that led the Corinthian believers to use the gifts so wrongly? How is love a remedy for these attitudes? What does your congregation need to learn from these chapters?

Topic 2: The Holy Spirit Filling

If you have not yet done so, read Ryrie, chapter 66, "The Spirit Filling." Be sure you understand Ryrie's position on each issue and the evidence he presents for it.

What It Means to Be Spirit-Filled

The filling of the Spirit is considered by many to be the key to living the Christian life, but *Spirit-filled* is a term that is used in several different ways, depending on who is using it. For these reasons we must be careful to understand this doctrine clearly.

Ryrie explains that there are two kinds of filling. One kind is an immediate filling for a temporary purpose, as we read about in Luke and Acts and in the Old Testament (e.g., Num 11:25-26; Judg 3:10; 1 Sam 10:6, 10; Ezk 2:2). Paul mentions the other kind of Spirit filling in Ephesians 5:18, which is worded as an imperative: "Do not get drunk with wine... but be filled with the Spirit." This command is generally considered to be part of the guidelines for living the Christian life every day.

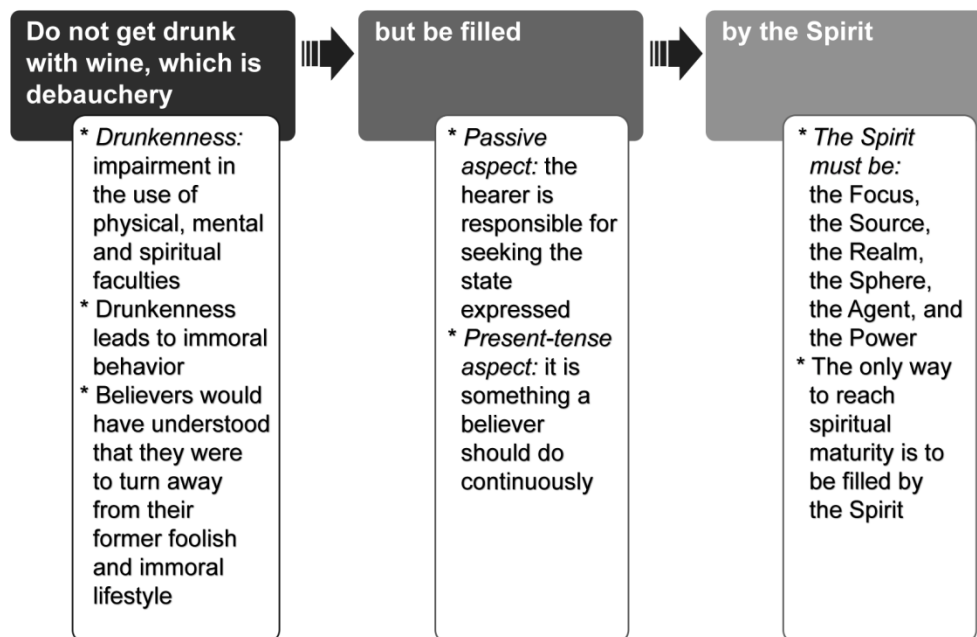


The most important factor in understanding Ephesians 5:18, as with any biblical text, is its context, both immediate and extended.

The common Old Testament picture of drunkenness is impairment in the use of physical, mental, and spiritual faculties, resulting in immoral behavior (e.g., Job 12:25; Ps 107:27; Prov 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-6; Hos 4:11). Paul’s readers, therefore, would have immediately understood him to mean that they should turn away from their former foolish and immoral lifestyle.

The passive aspect of the exhortation “be filled” implies that the hearer is responsible for seeking the state expressed in the verb. The present-tense aspect suggests that this is something a believer should do continually.

The ultimate effect of the phrase “by the Spirit,” is that the Spirit must be the focus, the source, the realm, the sphere, the agent, and the power in any successful spiritual walk. The way to reach spiritual maturity is to be filled by the Spirit.



QUESTION 15

The church I attended when I was a new believer taught that Spirit-filled people are those who have experienced Spirit baptism, which they believed people receive as a “second blessing” at some specific moment subsequent to conversion. Once people receive this second blessing, the church taught, they are Spirit-filled permanently. Given what Ryrie says about spirituality and maturity in “Some Ramifications of the Concept” in chapter 66, how do you think he would respond to the view that a believer becomes Spirit-filled at a precise moment after conversion and remains so throughout life? Record your thoughts in your Life Notebook.

Characteristics of Being Spirit-Filled

The fruit of the Spirit, Ryrie explains, is essentially Christlikeness. But when we consider the character of Christ, we must look beyond the surface. Sometimes we tend to emphasize those aspects of Christ’s character that we find most appealing and to deemphasize other aspects. Just as loving parents show both tenderness and protective sternness to their children, Christ showed

his love with tenderness at times and with challenge at others. “Meekness,” Ryrie points out, “is gentleness but does not mean weakness.”

Ryrie also points to evangelistic involvement, praise, worship, thanksgiving, and mutual submission as characteristics of the Spirit-filled life.

QUESTION 16

On a number of occasions recorded in Acts, when believers were filled with the Spirit, large numbers of conversions occurred. Referencing “Evangelistic Involvement,” match the Scripture passage with the event it describes.

| <i>Scripture Passage</i> | <i>Event</i> |
|--------------------------|--|
| Acts 2:41 | Multitudes of men and women turned to the Lord after the filling of the disciples. |
| Acts 5:14 | Many in Antioch were converted after Barnabas was filled with the Spirit. |
| Acts 6:7 | Three thousand believed after the filling on the Day of Pentecost. |
| Acts 11:24 | A number of priests believed after Spirit-filled helpers were chosen. |

QUESTION 17

Open your Life Notebook. Why do you suppose the filling of the Spirit sometimes has such dramatic evangelistic effect? Is a believer’s display of the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22-23)—a part of your conversion story? Or the conversion story of anyone you know?

How to Become Spirit-Filled

Ryrie points out that the filling of the Spirit is not the direct result of prayer. Prayer is certainly involved, insofar as our whole spiritual life involves prayer. But one does not pray to receive the filling of the Spirit.

This is contrary to the popular view that a person is either filled with the Spirit or not, that it is all or nothing: You pray to be filled with the Spirit, and God answers immediately because filling believers with the Spirit is His will. But then when you sin, you are no longer filled with the

Spirit Filling Not a Direct Result of Prayer



Spirit. You must confess that sin and again pray to be filled. And so you go, being filled, then unfilled; filled, then unfilled. This view of how the Spirit works is false.

Ryrie says instead that maturing believers grow in the fullness of the Spirit. Believers need not expect instantaneous success or special experiences; rather, we grow over time and develop spiritual maturity as we persevere in faith.

When we sin, our growth toward greater fullness and maturity can be affected. If we recognize the sin quickly and confess it, we continue in our growth almost as if we had not sinned. If we begin to walk more consistently in sinful ways, our growth in the Spirit slows down, and if we walk in that direction too long, we may lose our desire for the things of the Spirit.

But if we progressively fill our lives with that which is spiritual, we will come to the point where our lives are so permeated by the Spirit that we can be called “full of the Spirit,” truly spiritually

mature. How do we fill our lives with that which is spiritual? Colossians 3:12-17 provides many-faceted guidance. We must exercise compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and freely offering forgiveness. We must clothe ourselves with love and allow the peace of Christ to rule us. We must allow Christ's Word to live in us, and we must teach and admonish one another. We must sing to God and be thankful. Finally, we must do everything we do in Jesus' name.

QUESTION 18

Open your Life Notebook. Growing in spiritual maturity involves both individual elements and corporate elements: things that we do privately in our relationship with God and ways that we live together as a community of believers. Does your congregation tend to emphasize the individual elements while neglecting the corporate elements—or the other way around? How can Paul's instructions in Colossians 3:12-17 help the members of your congregation grow in spiritual maturity?

Topic 3: Other Ministries of the Holy Spirit

Read Ryrie, chapter 67, "Other Ministries of the Spirit." Read each verse cited.

Teaching

John 16:12-15 describes the Spirit's ministry of teaching believers. Let us summarize Ryrie's conclusions:

Beginning at Pentecost, the Spirit supernaturally helped the apostles understand the meaning of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, and the meaning of all that He had taught them. Their comprehensive understanding resulted in powerful preaching that glorified Christ. In the years which followed Pentecost, the Spirit superintended the recording of this truth in the New Testament. Today, the Spirit continues His ministry of teaching believers by helping us to understand the Scriptures.

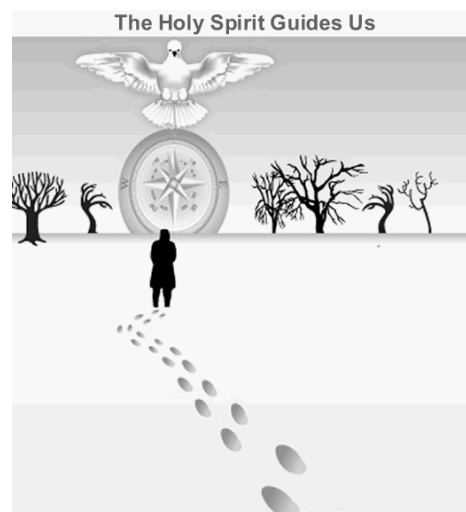
It is important to emphasize that the teaching ministry of the Spirit does not minimize or eliminate the role of human teachers. It is the Spirit, however, who helps believers to understand the meaning of what they hear. Notice Ryrie's stress on the confirmation of truth and the authentication of teaching. The Spirit's ministry to us also helps us to assimilate truth into our lives and not just learn it as a set of facts.

QUESTION 19

Open your Life Notebook. Write a brief paragraph describing a time when the Spirit convicted you and brought change to your life as you seriously studied a passage of Scripture.

Guiding

Ryrie says that the guiding ministry of the Holy Spirit is one of the Spirit's "most assuring" works. We do not need to walk in the dark but can pray for the Spirit's guidance at any time.



QUESTION 20

Match each Scripture passage with the example of the Holy Spirit's guidance that it speaks about.

| <i>Scripture Passage</i> | <i>Example of the Holy Spirit's Guidance</i> |
|--------------------------|---|
| Acts 8:26-39 | Paul and Barnabas are set apart and sent to Cyprus. |
| Acts 10:17-33 | Philip speaks with the Ethiopian eunuch. |
| Acts 13:2-4 | Paul anticipates imprisonment and persecution. |
| Acts 2:20-23 | Peter visits the home of Cornelius. |

QUESTION 21

Open your Life Notebook. Sometimes we are overwhelmed by the demands of congregational life. The needs of fellow believers seem so much greater than our resources, and we are called to evangelize as well! Read Acts 16:6-10. How did the Holy Spirit help Paul and Timothy make decisions about where to apply their efforts? Sometimes the Spirit will guide us not to do one good and worthy thing because another good and worthy thing requires our attention. Can you tell a story about a time when this has happened in your own ministry?

Assuring

Ryrie next discusses assurance as a ministry of the Holy Spirit to the believer. On the basis of such truths as the sealing of the Spirit and our identity in Christ, along with our personal knowledge that we have placed our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, the Spirit assures us that we are His forever. Assurance is never to be founded on feelings or experiences—they are too fleeting. Our feeling of assurance may fluctuate, depending on various factors in our lives. But genuine assurance is based on the truths found in God's Word (Heb 10:23) and revealed to the believer by the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:16).

QUESTION 22

Read the following passages (Rom 8:15-16; 29-39). Based upon your reading of these passages and the section in Ryrie, which of the following would you consider to be correct? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The Spirit's ministry of assurance to us (Rom 8:15-16)
- B. The cross of Christ and the gospel promise (Rom 8:29-39)
- C. Feeling of God's presence
- D. The evidence of good works in our lives

Praying

I have a friend who prays often for people who are living nonviolently in the midst of a civil war in the land where she lived as a child. Sometimes when she prays, she is seized with grief for her friends, and she sobs as she cries out to God for their protection and an end to the war. Once I asked her afterward, "Are you all right?" I was surprised that she was not exhausted after her display of grief. She told me that the Holy Spirit is with her in her intercession, so it is not burdensome for her. Having cried out to God on behalf of her friends, she can now courageously move forward in her quest to help them find peace. *This must be what Jesus meant when he said, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Mt 5:4), I thought, and what Paul meant when he said that the Holy Spirit "helps us in our weaknesses" when we pray and "intercedes for us with inexpressible groanings."* (Rom 8:26)

Ryrie writes that the Holy Spirit can help us to know what to pray for, and the Spirit can give help in the form of groanings that "find no adequate or formulated expression." The result of this

ministry of the Spirit, Ryrie teaches, is that we become content as we wait for the final consummation of our redemption because we are assured of our salvation.

QUESTION 23

Open your Life Notebook. Briefly write about a time when you were faced with an unmanageable or painful situation and you were aware of the Holy Spirit's presence as you prayed. How did the Holy Spirit's ministry to you at that time help you to move forward in the situation?

Sanctifying

Ryrie writes of three aspects of sanctification (or being set apart):

1. Positional, or definitive, sanctification is the sanctification that all believers have by virtue of their membership in the body of Christ.
2. Experiential, or progressive, sanctification is the continual process of being set apart as we pursue a life of holiness.
3. Ultimate sanctification is the sanctification that comes when we are eternally set apart with God in heaven.

QUESTION 24

According to Ryrie in "The Agents of Sanctification," who are the agents in believers' sanctification? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The Holy Spirit
- B. Believers themselves
- C. Jesus Christ
- D. God the Father

Topic 4: The History of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

Read Ryrie, chapter 68, "History of the Doctrine of the Spirit."

Ryrie divides the history of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit into three eras: the period before the Council of Nicaea in 325, the years from the Council of Nicaea to the Protestant Reformation, and the era from the Reformation to the present.

Please read the article on various doctrines of the Holy Spirit throughout history¹.

QUESTION 25

Match the person or movement with their belief about the Holy Spirit.

| <i>Person or Movement</i> | <i>Belief About the Holy Spirit</i> |
|---------------------------|--|
| Arius | The Son and Spirit are not eternal. |
| Macedonius | The Spirit is more of an activity of God than a person of the Godhead. |
| The Synod of Toledo | The Spirit illuminates, baptizes, and places the believer in Christ. |
| The Plymouth Brethren | The Spirit is not divine but a creature subordinate to the Son. |
| Neoliberalism | The Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. |

¹ Refer to supplementary article at the end of this lesson

QUESTION 26

Open your Life Notebook. Ryrie devotes a number of pages to the history of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and then writes that this history should make us aware of the vital importance of orthodox doctrine. Why do you suppose Ryrie considers orthodoxy on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in particular so vital to Christian faith and life? As you answer, consider the situation in the Corinthian church that Paul was addressing in his discourse on the exercise of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12–14).

Key Biblical Concepts

Memorize the following key biblical concepts and their related Scripture references. Be prepared to explain how each reference supports its related concept:

1. All members of the body of Christ are needed, and all members have dignity and are worthy of honor—1 Corinthians 12:22-25.
2. The Holy Spirit gives believers various specific spiritual gifts—Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; Ephesians 4:7-16; 1 Peter 4:10-11.
3. Spiritual gifts must be exercised with love—1 Corinthians 13.
4. Believers are instructed to be filled with the Spirit—Ephesians 5:18.
5. Believers who are filled with the Spirit will be fruitful in specific ways—Galatians 5:22-23.
6. Spiritual maturity involves a number of specific practices in the private and congregational lives of believers—Colossians 3:12-17.
7. The Holy Spirit teaches believers—John 16:12-15.
8. The Holy Spirit guides believers—Acts 2:20-23; 8:26-39; 10:17-33; 13:2-4; 16:6-10.

Conclusion

Although *knowing* the truth about the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential to teaching and leading, of greater importance is *living* according to these truths. We trust that your walk with the Lord in the Spirit will be even more fruitful, liberating, and fulfilling because of what you have learned in this lesson

Lesson 8 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Which of the following statements reflects Ryrie's position regarding the relationship between talents and spiritual gifts?

- A. Both talents and spiritual gifts are God-given, and both are to be used in serving the body of Christ.
- B. Both talents and spiritual gifts are God-given; spiritual gifts are to be used in serving the body of Christ, but talents may or may not be used in this way.
- C. Spiritual gifts are God-given; talents are not.
- D. A spiritual gift is an office, like the office of pastor, teacher, or evangelist.

QUESTION 2

Which of the following is a correct statement of Ryrie's position on the distribution of spiritual gifts?

- A. Every gift is operational in every congregation.
- B. Every gift is operational in every generation.
- C. Each believer has every gift but must learn how to use each one.
- D. Each believer has at least one gift, but some congregations and some generations do not have all the gifts.

QUESTION 3

A Christian discovers his or her spiritual gifts by waiting for a special revelation from God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

The command to believers in Ephesians 5:18 indicates that not all have experienced the filling by the Spirit. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

According to Ryrie, the way to become Spirit-filled is to:

- A. Yield to the control of the Spirit.
- B. Pray for the filling of the Spirit.
- C. Seek Spirit baptism.
- D. Work hard at living righteously.

QUESTION 6

Which of these statements reflects Ryrie's position on the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit?

- A. Because the Holy Spirit directly instructs believers, human teachers are unnecessary for explaining the Word of God.
- B. No believer should undertake the ministry of teaching unless that believer senses the Holy Spirit providing the words.
- C. The Holy Spirit's teaching supersedes the content of Scripture.
- D. Human teachers are a necessary part of instructing believers, but the authentication of the teaching comes from the Holy Spirit.

QUESTION 7

The three aspects of sanctification, in order of occurrence, are positional sanctification, progressive sanctification, and ultimate sanctification. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

According to Ryrie, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was one of the first doctrines to be formalized by the early Christian church. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

At which of these church meetings was the filioque added to a major creed, provoking division between the Western and Eastern branches of Christianity?

- A. The Council of Nicaea
- B. The Synod of Toledo
- C. The Council of Constantinople
- D. The Diet of Worms

QUESTION 10

Ryrie credits which of these groups with establishing “the proper understanding of the baptizing ministry of the Spirit”?

- A. The Montanists
- B. The Plymouth Brethren
- C. The Pelagians
- D. The Calvinists

Lesson 8 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1: *Your answer*

QUESTION 2: Natural talent

QUESTION 3: Spiritual gift

QUESTION 4: Spiritual gift

QUESTION 5: Natural talent

QUESTION 6: Natural talent

QUESTION 7: Spiritual gift

QUESTION 8: *Your answer*

QUESTION 9:

- A. They are distributed to all believers.
- B. They are distributed by the Holy Spirit at will.
- C. They are distributed to the body of Christ as a whole.
- D. They are distributed by the risen, ascended Christ.

QUESTION 10: *Your answer*

QUESTION 11:

| <i>Command</i> | <i>Spiritual Gift</i> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Serve one another (Gal 5:13) | Ministering |
| All give (2 Cor 9:7) | Giving |
| Be kind (Eph 4:32) | Showing mercy |
| All witness (Acts 1:8) | Evangelism |
| Great Commission (Mt 28:19) | Teaching |
| Exhort one another (Heb 10:25) | Exhortation |
| Walk by faith (2 Cor 5:7) | Faith |

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13:

| <i>Scripture Passage</i> | <i>Teaching About Spiritual Gifts</i> |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1 Corinthians 12:7 | Gifts are for the common good. |
| 1 Corinthians 12: 20, 25 | Gifts are given to unify the church. |
| 1 Corinthians 12:22-24 | Gifts confer honor on all members of the church. |
| 1 Corinthians 13 | Gifts are to be exercised with love. |

QUESTION 14: *Your answer*

QUESTION 15: *Your answer*

QUESTION 16:

| <i>Scripture Passage</i> | <i>Event</i> |
|--------------------------|--|
| Acts 2:41 | Three thousand believed after the filling on the Day of Pentecost. |
| Acts 5:14 | Multitudes of men and women turned to the Lord after the filling of the disciples. |
| Acts 6:7 | A number of priests believed after Spirit-filled helpers were chosen. |
| Acts 11:24 | Many in Antioch were converted after Barnabas was filled with the Spirit. |

QUESTION 17: *Your answer*

QUESTION 18: *Your answer*

QUESTION 19: *Your answer*

QUESTION 20:

| <i>Scripture Passage</i> | <i>Example of the Holy Spirit's Guidance</i> |
|--------------------------|---|
| Acts 8:26-39 | Philip speaks with the Ethiopian eunuch. |
| Acts 10:17-33 | Peter visits the home of Cornelius. |
| Acts 13:2-4 | Paul and Barnabas are set apart and sent to Cyprus. |
| Acts 2:20-23 | Paul anticipates imprisonment and persecution. |

QUESTION 21: *Your answer***QUESTION 22:**

- A. The Spirit's ministry of assurance to us (Rom 8:15-16)
- B. The cross of Christ and the gospel promise (Rom 8:29-39)

QUESTION 23: *Your answer***QUESTION 24:**

- A. The Holy Spirit
- B. Believers themselves
- C. Jesus Christ
- D. God the Father

QUESTION 25:

| <i>Person or Movement</i> | <i>Belief About the Holy Spirit</i> |
|---------------------------|--|
| Arius | The Son and Spirit are not eternal. |
| Macedonius | The Spirit is not divine but a creature subordinate to the Son. |
| The Synod of Toledo | The Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. |
| The Plymouth Brethren | The Spirit illuminates, baptizes, and places the believer in Christ. |
| Neoliberalism | The Spirit is more of an activity of God than a person of the Godhead. |

QUESTION 26: *Your answer*

Lesson 8 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

B. Both talents and spiritual gifts are God-given; spiritual gifts are to be used in serving the body of Christ, but talents may or may not be used in this way.

QUESTION 2:

D. Each believer has at least one gift, but some congregations and some generations do not have all the gifts.

QUESTION 3: False

QUESTION 4: True

QUESTION 5:

A. Yield to the control of the Spirit.

QUESTION 6:

D. Human teachers are a necessary part of instructing believers, but the authentication of the teaching comes from the Holy Spirit.

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8: False

QUESTION 9:

B. The Synod of Toledo.

QUESTION 10:

B. The Plymouth Brethren

Lesson 8 Article

Holy Spirit

Before the Council of Nicaea, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was not highly developed. Like some other doctrines of the Christian faith, it developed over time. But the name of the Holy Spirit was included in the baptismal formula and in the Apostles' Creed. Believers spoke of the Father, Son, and Spirit, implicitly acknowledging the Spirit's deity and personhood.

The church needed to formalize its doctrine of the Spirit when teachings arose that were contrary to its longtime understanding of the Spirit's personality and place in the Trinity. Perhaps the most controversial of these was the teaching of Arius, who made the anti-Trinitarian argument that the Son and the Spirit were not eternal—that the Son was generated by the Father, and that the Spirit was created by the Son. The Council of Nicaea was called to address what came to be known as the Arian controversy, and from the council emerged the Nicene Creed, in which believers affirm that the Son is “of the same substance” as the Father and that they “believe in the Holy Spirit.”

The Council of Nicaea didn't settle the matter of the Holy Spirit's identity. Again controversy arose when Macedonius, the bishop of Constantinople, asserted that the Spirit was not divine but was a creature subordinate to the Son. To address the new controversy, the Council of Constantinople was convened in 381. This council settled the question of the deity of the Spirit, but it did not say that the Spirit was “of the same substance” as the Father and the Son, and it did not define the relationship among the three members of the Trinity.

Two centuries later, the question of the relationship among the members of the Trinity was addressed at the Synod of Toledo, and the solution opened a division between the Western and Eastern branches of Christianity. The leaders gathered at Toledo added what is called the “filioque” (the phrase “and the Son”) to the Constantinopolitan creed so it would say that the Spirit “proceeds from the Father and the Son.” The Eastern church regarded this as a heretical amendment of the creed of Constantinople.

In the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, believers began to give attention to the Spirit's work. Church historians attribute the Western doctrine of the Holy Spirit to the work of Reformation thinkers from this period.

Ryrie credits the Plymouth Brethren of the nineteenth century with establishing the “proper understanding of the baptizing ministry of the Spirit and the distinct nature of the New Testament church.” He writes that “the church owes much to the Brethren's testimony to the importance of the Word of God, the illumination of the Spirit, and the position that the believer has in Christ by the work of the Spirit.”

Several movements of the twentieth century bring us to where we are today. Ryrie focuses on neo-orthodoxy, neoliberalism, and Pentecostalism. Though Karl Barth (on whose theology neo-orthodoxy is based) believed in the deity of the Spirit, Ryrie explains that some neo-orthodox writers regard the Holy Spirit “as more of an activity of God than a person of the Godhead.”

Ryrie is particularly critical of neoliberals, who, Ryrie asserts, do not believe in the Spirit's deity at all and thus deny the reality of the Trinity. It may be that this is not a uniform belief among liberals; there are many teachers who could be termed liberal who speak often of the Trinity and of the coequal relationship among the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Finally, there are the Pentecostals, whose doctrine of the Spirit these two lessons on the Holy Spirit have touched on repeatedly.

Ryrie concludes by writing that this history “should teach us that orthodox doctrine is not only important to faith but equally vital to life. Perhaps in no doctrine is this wedding of truth and life more important than in the doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit.”

Lesson 9: The Church

Lesson Introduction

Our congregation used to sing this chorus (“I Am the Church, You Are the Church”) when we met together:

I am the church

You are the church

We are the church together

All of God’s people, all around the world

We are the church together

When we would join hands in a circle to sing this song, we saw its truth before our eyes: in our congregation are people from Cambodia, India, and Laos; those of us born in the United States are of European, African, and Asian ancestry, raised in Catholic homes, Protestant homes, Jewish homes, and Buddhist homes.

The congregation grew. Recently we purchased our own building and left our rented worship space behind. One of the questions we faced when we moved was what to call our new building. Most of us were accustomed to calling a Christian house of worship the church, but some insisted that this distracts us from the fact that the church is the worldwide body of Christ, of which we are only one small part.

So now we call our house of worship the meeting house, but in our everyday language the word *church* continues to have many meanings: we use the word to refer to our congregation and our denomination, as well as to the worldwide body of Christ.

In this lesson we learn about what the church is, how it is structured, and what it does.

Topic 1 addresses the question, “What do we mean when we use the word *church*?”

In Topic 2 we consider how the church relates to the world, to biblical Israel, and to Christ and the Holy Spirit.

We address the structure under which the church functions in Topic 3.

Topic 4 examines New Testament guidelines about selecting the leaders who are responsible for guiding and equipping the rest of the congregation.

In Topic 5 we discuss the ordinances of the church, particularly baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

And finally, in Topic 6 we examine the upward, inward, and outward ministries of the church.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: The Description of the Church

Topic 2: The Distinctiveness of the Church

The Relation of the Church to the Kingdom

The Relation of the Church to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

Topic 3: The Organization of the Church

Principles and Patterns

The Types of Government

Topic 4: The Leadership of the Church

The Purpose of Leadership

The Calling of Leaders

- Descriptions of the Primary Leaders
- Topic 5: The Ordinances of the Church
 - Baptism
 - The Lord’s Supper
- Topic 6: The Ministries of the Church
 - Upward Ministries
 - Inward Ministries
 - Outward Ministries

Lesson Objectives

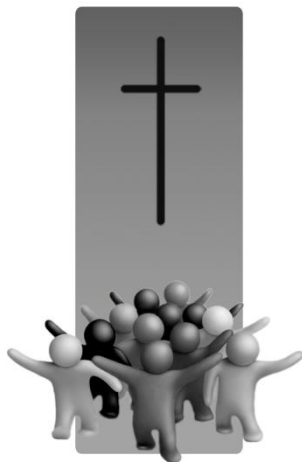
When you have finished this lesson, you should be able to:

- Identify the various uses of the word *church* and discuss their origins and meanings
- Discuss the nature of the church in relation to the old covenant
- Delineate the differences between various forms of church government and identify the form of government used in your church
- Clarify the need and purpose for leadership in the church, identify the classes of leadership, and list the qualifications for leaders
- Discuss different perspectives concerning baptism and the Lord’s Supper
- Examine your own congregation to determine the content and breadth of its upward, inward, and outward ministries

Topic 1: The Description of the Church

If you have not already done so, read Ryrie, chapter 69, “What Is the Church?”

Ryrie begins with a discussion of the meaning of the English word *church*. Then he details the ways in which words translated *church* are used in the New Testament and discusses the concept of the church in Scripture. Finally, he addresses the understandings of the church held by Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Reformed believers, and Baptists.



The English word *church* comes from the Greek word *kyriakon*, which means “belonging to the Lord.” A related biblical word in Hebrew is *qahal*, which means “an assembly.” Finally there is the Greek *ekklesia*, which also means “an assembly” and from which is derived the English word *ecclesiology*, the study of the church. Ryrie details the ways in which each of these words is used in the Bible.

The concept of the church is many faceted even in the New Testament. Ryrie explains that a church can be a specific congregation or a group of believers associated with a geographical location. The church is also the universal body of believers in Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, each denominational tradition has its own concept of the church, its own doctrine of ecclesiology. Ryrie presents the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Reformed, and Baptist concepts of the church, but there are many others. Orthodox believers, Anabaptists, Lutherans, Methodists—all have a way of understanding what the church is, what the church does, and how the church relates to the world.

QUESTION 1

Match each Scripture with what that Scripture teaches about the church.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Teaching about the Church</i> |
|--------------------|--|
| Acts 20:28 | God purchased the church with the blood of His Son. |
| Ephesians 4:11-12 | Christ gives spiritual gifts to build His church. |
| Ephesians 5:25, 29 | Christ loves, nourishes, and cherishes the church. |
| Matthew 16:18 | Christ's principal work in the world today is to build His church. |

QUESTION 2

Open your Life Notebook. What is the word for *church* in your language? Do you have separate words to refer to the building where believers gather to worship? To a single congregation? To a group of believers in a specific geographical area? To a Christian denomination (like the Methodist or Lutheran church)? To the universal body of believers in Christ?

Topic 2: The Distinctiveness of the Church

If you have not already done so, you should now read Ryrie, chapter 70, "The Distinctiveness of the Church."

To develop the theme of the distinctiveness of the church, Ryrie examines five relationships. He considers the relation of the church:

1. To the kingdom
2. To Israel
3. To this age
4. To Jesus Christ
5. To the Holy Spirit

The Relation of the Church to the Kingdom

There are several kinds of kingdoms, Ryrie explains, and when examining the relation of the church to each, we must consider who the ruler of the kingdom is, who is being ruled, and what the realm is that is being ruled. Ryrie applies this rule to four different concepts of the kingdom: the universal kingdom, the Davidic/messianic kingdom, the mystery form of the kingdom, and the spiritual kingdom (the table below summarizes this discussion). The church has a different relationship with each of these types of kingdom.

| Type of Kingdom | The Ruler of the Kingdom | Who is being Ruled | The Realm that is being Ruled |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---|---|
| The universal kingdom | God | Everything and everyone everywhere | In all time and eternity |
| The Davidic/Messianic kingdom | Christ | The earth and its inhabitants | The world during the thousand years that follow Christ's coming |
| The spiritual kingdom | Christ | Believers only | The world as it now exists |
| The mystery form of the kingdom | God | People on earth who have related themselves somehow to Christianity | The world between Christ's first and second comings |

QUESTION 3

Match each type of kingdom with those who are ruled in that kingdom.

| <i>Type of Kingdom</i> | <i>Ruled in the Kingdom</i> |
|---------------------------------|---|
| The Davidic/messianic kingdom | Everything and everyone everywhere |
| The spiritual kingdom | People on the earth who have related themselves somehow to Christianity |
| The universal kingdom | The earth and its inhabitants |
| The mystery form of the kingdom | Believers only |

QUESTION 4

Ryrie rejects the concept of theonomy, the idea that the church's mission is to establish Old Testament Law in today's earthly kingdoms. Do you think it is possible to rule present-day earthly kingdoms according to Old Testament Law? Why or why not? What might be the dangers of attempting to do so? Record your response in your Life Notebook.

QUESTION 5

In His parables Jesus has much to say about the kingdom of heaven, and He likens that kingdom to yeast in a batch of dough (Mt 13:33). In the Sermon on the Mount He says that believers are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Mt 5:13-16). What are the characteristics of this spiritual kingdom that Jesus calls the kingdom of heaven? How can believers living according to these kingdom principles have a leavening effect on the rest of the world—that is, on God's universal kingdom? Record your response in your Life Notebook.

Ryrie is very firm in his assertion that the church is not a continuation of Israel. The church did not begin until the Day of Pentecost, he explains; it did not exist at all before that time. He then offers several details from the New Testament and Old Testament to support his argument.

QUESTION 6

Which of the following assertions are part of Ryrie's position regarding the relation of the church to Israel? (*Select all that apply.*)

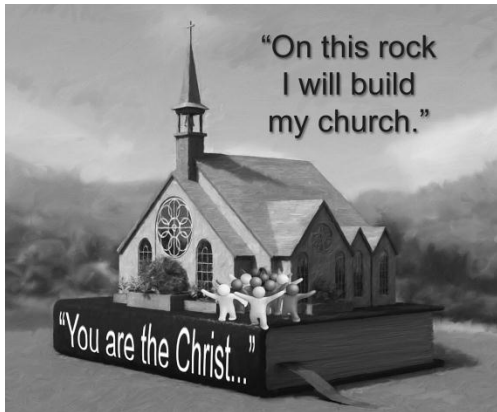
- A. Paul distinguishes between Israel and the church.
- B. In the chapters of Acts a contrast is drawn between Israel and the Gentiles.
- C. The church did not begin until the Day of Pentecost, so it couldn't have existed in Old Testament times.
- D. The word *kai* in Galatians indicates that the church carries on the covenant that God initiated with Israel.

The Relation of the Church to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

Jesus Christ is the founder of the church. As founder, Ryrie explains, Jesus:

1. Chose the disciples who would be part of the foundation of the church
2. Taught these disciples about matters that would be important when the church started to function
3. Became the cornerstone of the church
4. Sent the Holy Spirit, who activated the church.

After discussing these four activities of Christ as founder of the church, Ryrie takes up the question of who or what the "rock" is in Matthew 16:18, when Jesus says to Peter, "On this rock I will build my church." Ryrie rejects the teaching that Peter is the rock on which the church is built, concluding instead that the rock is Peter's proclamation of the truth about Christ: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt 16:16).



Ryrie also addresses the relation of the church to the Holy Spirit, touching once again on the themes we learned about in Lessons 7 and 8: the Holy Spirit activated the church at Pentecost and on that day baptized all believers into the body of Christ—that is, the church. On that day the disciples were filled with the Spirit, and three thousand people were baptized with water. To this day the Spirit indwells

and empowers individual believers and congregations and the church as a whole. The Holy Spirit is the power of the church.

QUESTION 7

According to Ryrie, the office of apostle originated with Peter because Jesus said that Peter would be the rock on which the church is built. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

Open your Life Notebook. After Peter proclaimed, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mt 16:16), Jesus told him, "On this rock I will build my church." Jesus seemed to be saying that the assertion that He is the Christ is the central truth of Christian faith, more important than any other. What might this proclamation have meant to the Jewish people who heard Peter speak after Pentecost? Clues might be found in the speech of Simeon, who had long awaited the Messiah and recognized Jesus as the anointed One shortly after His birth (Lk 2:29-32).

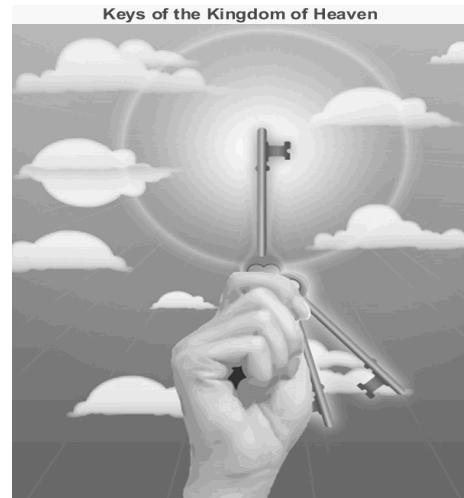
Topic 3: The Organization of the Church

If you have not already done so, you should now read Ryrie, chapter 71, “Principles and/or Pattern?” and chapter 72, “Types of Church Government.”

Principles and Patterns

The words of Jesus, “I will build my church” (Mt 16:18), are a confident declaration that what we understand as the church has the design of the Lord behind it. The additional assertion in Scripture that Christ is the head of the church (Eph 5:23) suggests that what He is building He has authority over. Jesus stands in vital union with His church, fills it with His presence, and spiritually oversees its very life. He is the head and supreme authority of the universal church that constitutes His spiritual body. But He is also head of the local church when it gathers in His name. Headship and authority imply organization.

After Peter confessed that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus told Peter, “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on the earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you release on earth will have been released in heaven” (Mt 16:19). It is evident that with this declaration Jesus was delegating earthly responsibility for His church to certain specified representatives.



The first six chapters of Acts tell us many things about the organization of the church.

QUESTION 9

Match each Scripture with what it tells us about the organization of the early church.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Organization of the Early Church</i> |
|------------------|--|
| Acts 2:42 | Believers selected people to be servants who would meet specific needs in the growing church. |
| Acts 2:45 | Regular patterns were established for teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. |
| Acts 5:1-11 | Believers gave generously so material help could be made available for those in need. |
| Acts 6 | The church had standards of righteousness. |

The New Testament gives us general principles for church organization and tells us about specific patterns followed by the early church. The question for churches today is whether they must conform to the early-church patterns, or just to the general principles. Ryrie concludes that though this question can't be answered definitively, churches should conform to early-church patterns as much as possible.

In addition to developing regular patterns of meeting and processes for appointing qualified leaders, the early church established doctrine. When a dispute arose over whether Gentile believers must be circumcised, a council was convened that included both apostles and elders. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, these leaders reached a position on the doctrinal question, and this position became the doctrinal standard for all the churches at the time.

As you read on in this lesson, consider whether various elements of church practice are matters of inviolable principle or might be negotiable patterns.

The Types of Government

Before taking up the various types of church government, Ryrie discusses the definition of the local church. He explains that the local church is an assembly of people who have made a profession of faith and who have been baptized, that the local church has some form of organization and that it exists to do God’s will.

Ryrie doesn’t discuss the fact that people can attend a local church without being members—or even believers. In many local churches these attendees are considered part of the congregation in an informal sense even though they are not formal members.

QUESTION 10

Open your Life Notebook. In your congregation, if an unbeliever begins visiting worship services and then comes to faith, how does that person progress toward membership? Where does baptism fit in this process?

Ryrie then discusses the five forms of church government: minimal, national, hierarchical, congregational, and federal. He concludes that the early church exhibited a blend of congregational and federal church government. This is what Ryrie recommends for today.

He offers a caution, however. If the balance shifts too far toward congregationalism, Ryrie contends, the church “fails to profit from the gifts of leadership,” and “immature and carnal believers...have an equal say with others.” If it tilts too much toward federalism, there can be “too much authority in some organizational structure above the local church.” This is a problem especially if doctrinal aberrations develop in that superstructure. When this happens and local congregations are unable to hold the superstructure accountable, the local congregations may leave the denomination, losing all of their property in the process. What is best, then, is a healthy balance between congregationalism and federalism.

QUESTION 11

Match each type of church government with its characteristics.

| <i>Church Government</i> | <i>Characteristics</i> |
|---------------------------|---|
| Federal government | These churches downplay membership and emphasize the headship of Christ. |
| Hierarchical government | The ruling clerical body of these churches is organized into orders and ranks. |
| Minimal government | These churches exist within the boundaries of a particular country or are organized under a single country’s head of state. |
| Congregational government | Individual units give up their sovereignty to a central authority, but retain some authority for themselves. |
| National government | The authority for governing one of these churches rests with the members of the church. |

QUESTION 12

Open your Life Notebook. Is your local congregation part of a denomination? Which form of church government does your denomination practice? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this form of church government?

Topic 4: The Leadership of the Church

If you have not done so already, read Ryrie, chapter 73, “Qualified Leadership for the Church.”

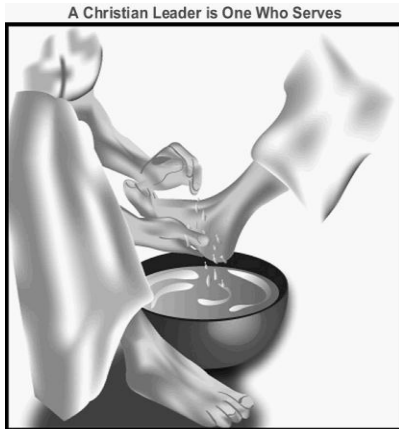
The Purpose of Leadership

Ryrie offers several New Testament examples related to leadership in the early church as evidence that leadership in the church is necessary.

- Elders were involved in the distribution of relief funds.
- Paul appointed elders when churches were founded during his first missionary journey.
- The council of Jerusalem was an assembly of leaders that settled an important doctrinal dispute.
- Paul wrote of leadership in his letter to Titus.
- Leadership is one of the spiritual gifts listed in Romans 12:8.

The Calling of Leaders

How are leaders chosen? Scripture gives us multiple models for the selection of leaders.



The New Testament tells us that the apostles appointed elders for the earliest churches, but Scripture does not tell us how elders should be chosen in other churches. In practice the method of selecting elders depends largely on what type of church government a church has.

In Acts 6 we learn that the congregation was closely involved in the selection of deacons in at least one early church, but again there is no prescription for

how deacons should be chosen elsewhere.



QUESTION 13

Match each Scripture passage with the authority under which leader selection took place and the identity of the leaders being selected.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Authority and Identity</i> |
|------------------|---|
| Acts 1:15-26 | Paul and company; elders appointed |
| Acts 6:1-6 | The Holy Spirit; Barnabas and Saul chosen |
| Acts 13:1-3 | The apostles; Matthias was chosen |
| Acts 14:21-23 | The gathered believers; seven deacons appointed |

Descriptions of the Primary Leaders

Congregations require leaders in various aspects of their work. The New Testament focuses only on the authoritative, overall leadership of the church.

Ryrie does not discuss the leadership role of pastors in detail. He notes that the New Testament names the spiritual gift of pastoring and explains that both men and women can have this gift and can exercise it in the congregation by shepherding others. The pastorate, on the other hand, is a role of principle leadership in many present-day churches. Because the New Testament says that elders and deacons (the principle congregational leaders named in Scripture) must be the “husband of one wife,” Ryrie writes emphatically that only men may serve in the office of the pastorate. However, many Bible-believing churches do not hold to Ryrie’s position and instead have women serving in the office of the pastorate.

It is important to note that the principle task of pastors (and evangelists and teachers) is to “equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph 4:12). From this perspective a good illustration of the local congregation is that of a local training center where believers are being trained for ministry. Thus a congregation where the pastor is the only one who is charged with doing the work of ministry and building up the body of Christ is not functioning biblically. The BEE course Church Dynamics explores this matter in more detail.

QUESTION 14

Open your Life Notebook. The question of women in church leadership may be one area in which we encounter the problem of principles and patterns that Ryrie discusses in chapter 71. Is the admonition that an elder or deacon must be the husband of one wife a statement of principle for all time or a pattern the early church followed due to cultural norms of the times that need not be continued today? Often in Scripture masculine language is used in an inclusive sense to refer to all people, so is it possible that the “husband of one wife” clause was intended to emphasize faithfulness in marriage rather than the sex of the leader?

Ryrie explains that the terms *bishop* and *elder* are used to refer to the same office in the New Testament. The role of the bishop or elder is to oversee all aspects of the congregation’s life. To hold this position of authority, a bishop or elder must meet specific qualifications that are laid out in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

QUESTION 15

Which of the following are characteristics that someone must have in order to serve as an elder or bishop? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Temperate (not addicted to wine)
- B. Free from the love of money
- C. Hospitable
- D. Christian for at least five years
- E. Sensible
- F. Not given to violence

The first person to die as a Christian martyr, Stephen, was also one of the church’s first deacons. In the early church Hellenist believers were complaining that their widows were being neglected while Hebrew widows were being cared for. The leaders of the church immediately recognized that it was not right for some to be left out of the care of the church, but they also acknowledged that they did not have time to care for the needs of all the believers. So they appointed Stephen and six others, “men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom” (Acts 6:3, NASB), to organize the distribution of food.

When Jesus washed his disciples’ feet he taught that a Christian leader is one who serves. By assuming the role of foot washer, he dignified all of those whose work is to help others. Now in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, Paul makes it clear that deacons, the servants of the church, are to be people of

strong Christian character—even above reproach. Deacons must be dignified, not double-tongued (not saying one thing to one person and something else to another), temperate (not addicted to wine), and not greedy. Their doctrine must be sound, they must be married to only one person, and their family must be managed well.

QUESTION 16

Open your Life Notebook. Sometimes in the process of caring for others, deacons find themselves in a position of helping other believers to solve difficult problems or to resolve conflicts with one another. The character traits listed in 1 Timothy can help them to do this lovingly and effectively. Tell the story of a deacon (or someone else) in your church whose strong character made possible the resolution of a challenging problem among believers in your congregation.

Topic 5: The Ordinances of the Church

If you have not already done so, read Ryrie, chapter 74, “Ordinances for the Church.”

What some churches call sacraments, Ryrie refers to as ordinances because sacraments can be understood as conveying grace to those who receive them. Ordinances, by contrast, do not convey grace; rather, they act as symbols pointing to God’s grace and to other truths of the gospel.

What are these ordinances? Ryrie writes that baptism and the Lord’s Supper are certainly ordinances for the church, foot-washing might also be, and marriage, and prayer for the sick can be considered ordinances as well.



Baptism

Baptism is a symbol of the believer’s identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Col 2:12). As such, it represents the spiritual cleansing and renewal that Christ’s work on the cross facilitates for those who believe. Because baptism is a physical act, and faith is an invisible spiritual transaction, baptism of a new believer becomes a visible, public proclamation of the new believer’s acknowledgment of relationship with Christ. And being visible, it identifies the new believer with the body of Christ, the church.

Baptism is a matter of great importance to the church. Yet its meaning, its mode, and its subjects are often controversial. Some churches teach that baptism effects forgiveness, others that it only signifies the spiritual renewal that the forgiven believer enjoys. Some churches sprinkle water on the one being baptized, and others pour the water; still others immerse the one being baptized. Some churches baptize infants born into believing households; others baptize only people who have professed faith.

Over the centuries many schisms in the church have been centered on differing doctrinal positions regarding baptism. After the schisms, people in one branch of the church have regarded people in the other as apostate, even though baptism is not what saves us. Baptism initiates each of us into the one body of Jesus Christ. Is not the unity of that body more important than uniformity on every particular facet of the ordinance?

Ryrie does not encourage division on this issue, but he does take the position that “Christian baptism means identification with the message of the gospel, the person of the Savior, and the group of believers.” Its proper mode is immersion because this is what was practiced by the early church. And, Ryrie teaches, the subjects of baptism should be believers, not infants, because the

scriptural order is to believe and then to be baptized and because baptism is “the initiatory rite into a believing community.”

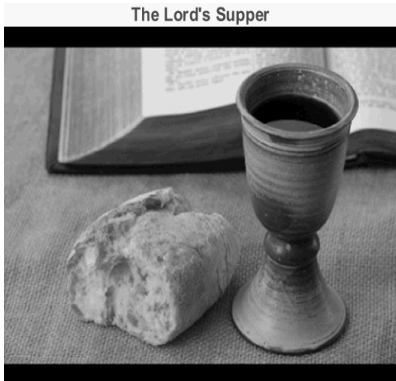
QUESTION 17

Open your Life Notebook. Read these two stories about baptism and answer the questions about them.

1. A child was born into a devout Christian family that practiced infant baptism and responsibly raised their children in a household full of biblical teaching. She was a sickly child, and almost died several times during her early childhood. During her childhood illness she and her family prayed that she might live, and the elders of the church came and laid hands on her and prayed that God would make her well. She had a strong faith from her earliest childhood memory. At what point did this child become a part of the church? At what point in her life would it be appropriate to baptize her?
2. An elderly gentleman who recently suffered a stroke has professed faith in Christ. He’s not yet well enough to travel to the local lakefront where his congregation conducts baptisms, but he wants to be baptized. So in the company of the man’s family and friends, the pastor baptizes him in his shower at home without immersing him fully. Is this man’s baptism valid? Does the validity or invalidity of his baptism in any way affect the reality of his salvation?

The Lord’s Supper

The second practice that is certainly an ordinance of the church is called by several names in Scripture. It is called “the Lord’s Supper” in 1 Corinthians 11:20 and “the table of the Lord” in 1 Corinthians 10:21. Acts 2:42 refers to “the breaking of bread”; in all likelihood this is not a reference to the Lord’s Supper exclusively but also to the love meal that preceded it.



Outside of Scripture the Lord’s Supper is sometimes called communion. The English word *communion* comes from the Greek *koinonia*, which is translated “sharing” (or sometimes “participation”) in 1 Corinthians 10:16 (NKJV): “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ?” Another word for the Lord’s Supper is

Eucharist, from the Greek word meaning thanksgiving; this is in reference to the giving of thanks before the congregation partakes of the elements.

One kind of dispute surrounded the Lord’s Supper in the early church in Corinth; another kind of dispute emerged centuries later. When the Corinthian church came together for the Lord’s Supper, some were greedy and ate too much and others were left hungry (presumably these believers gathered for a “love meal” as well as the Eucharist, as did the believers in Acts 2). Paul exhorted them not to take the bread and the cup in an “unworthy manner” (1 Cor 11:27); they should be “discerning the body”—that is, the congregation of believers—when partaking of the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:29). They were to “wait on one another” to ensure that all would have enough (1 Cor 11:33).

The Lord’s Supper, then, is an occasion for caring for one another and celebrating the unity of the body of Christ. This makes it all the more tragic that interpretation of the Lord’s Supper is a chief point of division among branches of the Christian church today. The Roman Catholic Church teaches transubstantiation—that the literal body and blood of Christ are present in consecrated bread and cup; the Lutheran Church teaches consubstantiation—that, in Ryrie’s words, “the

elements remain unchanged, but the prayer of consecration communicates Christ to the participants.” The Calvinist view is that “though the elements are only symbols, partaking of them involves partaking of Christ in his redemptive presence,” and another Reformer, Zwingli, taught that the Lord’s Supper is merely a memorial. Ryrie states his position thus: “It is a memorial, but it is also a service in which the presence of Christ in His people effects a communion.”

QUESTION 18

According to Ryrie in “The Lord’s Supper,” which of the following requirements must a person meet before receiving Communion? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Participating in the sacrament of confession
- B. Regeneration
- C. Cleansing before partaking in Communion
- D. Fellowship with a local church

Topic 6: The Ministries of the Church

If you have not yet done so, read Ryrie, chapter 75, “The Worship of the Church,” and chapter 76, “Other Ministries of the Church.”

In these chapters Ryrie discusses several ministries in which the church should be involved: worship, discipline, the care of widows, and charity. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list. As we function in a local church, we need to ask: What are we to be doing as the body of Christ? What are the scriptural mandates of ministry for the church?

We have already alluded to a general outline of ministries when considering the organization of the church. The church should be (1) God-centered, (2) committed to the rest of the body, and (3) concerned for the world around it. In the same vein, we refer to the ministries of the church as “upward,” “inward,” and “outward” ministries.

Upward Ministries

The foundation of every Christian life and ministry is a fixed focus on and abiding trust in God. Without this focus, no life or ministry can be fruitful. While none of us will do this perfectly, abiding in Christ must be the primary goal of every person and organization that desires to serve the Lord.

Worship

When the church considers all its responsibilities, it needs to be reminded of the source from which it draws its strength. Worship is that function of the church in which the body, mind, and spirit are directed toward the Lord. It is a response to His grace and provision, and it focuses on the glory and majesty of who He is.

Prayer

Prayer is an upward ministry that brings the earthly needs of the church in contact with the One who is able to meet those needs and provide direction for the church’s activity. It has been said of the church in Acts that it advanced on its knees. Scripture abounds with commands and comments concerning prayer (e.g., Mt 21:22; Phil 4:6-7; 1 Jn 5:14-15).

These upward ministries form the foundation for all other ministries of the church. Many of these other ministries take place within the church itself. We refer to such ministries as inward ministries.

Inward Ministries

The inward ministries of the church include the teaching of the Word, fellowship, caring, and discipline.

Teaching of the Word

The Word of God is to be preached in the assembly of believers for the edification of the saints (2 Tim 3:16-17; Eph 4:11-12). It is also to be instrumental in the conversion of unbelievers (Rom 10:17).

Fellowship

Another inward ministry of the church is that of providing fellowship for the members of the body, a place to enjoy and encourage one another. Jesus called His disciples to be with Him (Mk 3:13). When Jesus visited the home of His friends, Mary was content to sit at the Lord's feet and listen (Lk 10:39). In Hebrews, believers are exhorted not to neglect meeting together but to gather for mutual encouragement (Heb 10:25).

Caring

The New Testament contains many passages urging the necessity of giving for widows and orphans and for other people who are needy (e.g., Acts 20:35; 2 Cor 8:1-15; Jas 1:27). Paul challenges the Galatians to bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:2) and to take every opportunity to "do good to all people, and especially to those who belong to the family of faith" (Gal 6:10).

Discipline

The procedure that a church is to follow when administering discipline is spelled out clearly in Matthew 18:15-20. When Ryrie discusses this ministry, he gives some very helpful insights about how and to whom discipline should be administered. The goal of church discipline is not punishment, but restoration.

QUESTION 19

Read the story of church generosity¹. Open your Life Notebook. Our children learn about the church and its ministries by watching how the adults in the congregation edify and care for each other. What are the children in your congregation learning about what it means to be the church, the body of Christ on earth?

Outward Ministries

In the same way that the inward ministries are based on a firm relationship between people and God, so outward ministries are the product of love for God and other people. The focus here is to reach out to an unsaved world with the message of God's love and grace made visible in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

Evangelism

The Lord directs His church to go into the world and make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19). Paul reflects this concern for those outside the church in Romans 10:14-15. The BEE course Evangelism and Discipleship can be helpful in developing an evangelism program in your church.

Mission

An extension of the church's evangelistic outreach in its own community is its vision for the whole world. The Bible does not say "for God so loved your own city or country," but "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (Jn 3:16, NKJV). Does the church have a

¹ Refer to supplementary article at the end of this lesson

vision for the world? Are we sending some of our most qualified people to reach those who have never heard the gospel (see Acts 13)? The church is to be involved in the ministry of world missions.

Witness

We can tell people of God’s love with our words, and we can show them with our deeds. As Jesus says in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light shine before people, so that they can see your good deeds and give honor to your Father in heaven.” What does it mean to let our light shine before others? It is likely that Jesus intended the Beatitudes to be our guide, because His statements about believers being salt and light follow immediately after the Beatitudes in His Sermon on the Mount.



QUESTION 20

Read Matthew 5:1-12. Please match the first part of each Beatitude with the second part.

| <i>First Part</i> | <i>Second Part</i> |
|---|---|
| Blessed are those who mourn | for they will be called children of God |
| Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness | for theirs is the kingdom of heaven |
| Blessed are the pure in heart | for they will receive mercy |
| Blessed are the poor in spirit | for they will be comforted |
| Blessed are the merciful | for they will be filled |
| Blessed are the meek | for they will see God |
| Blessed are the peacemakers | for they will inherit the earth |



QUESTION 21

Read Matthew 5:13-16. Open your Life Notebook. Jesus calls believers “the salt of the earth.” Tell the story of a group of believers you know about that “lost its flavor” (Mt 5:13) by not living in the way Jesus taught. Did this have a discernable impact on the church’s witness? Jesus also calls believers “the light of the world” and exhorts them: “let your light shine before people, so that they can see your good deeds and give honor to your Father in heaven.” Tell the story of a group of believers you know about that let its light shine by living in the way Jesus taught. Did this have a discernable impact on the church’s witness?

Key Biblical Concepts

Memorize the following key biblical concepts and their related Scripture references. Be prepared to explain how each reference supports its related concept:

1. The nature of the church
 - a. God purchased the church with the blood of His son—Acts 20:28.
 - b. Christ loves, nourishes, and cherishes the church—Ephesians 5:25, 29.
 - c. Christ’s principal work in the world today is building His church—Matthew 16:18.
 - d. Christ gives spiritual gifts for the purpose of building His church—Ephesians 4:12.
2. Leadership in the church
 - a. Elders were recognized as leaders in the early church—Acts 11:30.
 - b. On his first missionary journey, Paul ordained elders for newly established gatherings of believers—Acts 14:23.
 - c. Helpers were chosen for the elders; these helpers would look after the needs of people in the church—Acts 6:1-7.
 - d. Elders and deacons are to be believers of good character—1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9.
3. Ordinances of the church
 - a. Jesus commanded that believers be baptized—Matthew 28:19.
 - b. Jesus commanded us to observe the Lord’s Supper in remembrance of Himself—1 Corinthians 11:23-26.
4. Ministries of the church
 - a. Believers are to gather regularly for worship and mutual encouragement—Hebrews 10:24-25.
 - b. The church should sanctify itself—Ephesians 5:26-27; one means of this sanctification is the process of church discipline that Jesus established—Matthew 18:15-20.
 - c. Believers are called to be generous to people in need—James 1:27.

Conclusion

In this lesson we have presented the essential information related to the church of Jesus Christ. This information includes many wonderful truths and many difficult interpretational issues. May we seek to emphasize those things that unite us and minimize the division that may result from different understandings of the difficult issues.

Lesson 9 Self Check

QUESTION 1

In the New Testament, the church is:

- A. A specific congregation
- B. A group of believers associated with a geographical location
- C. The universal body of believers in Jesus Christ
- D. All of the above

QUESTION 2

According to Ryrie, the church began with Abraham and was fully realized on the Day of Pentecost. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

Jesus teaches His disciples about matters related to the functioning of the church:

- A. At the Garden of Gethsemane
- B. In His parables
- C. In the Upper Room Discourse
- D. In conversations following His resurrection

QUESTION 4

Which of the following is Ryrie's conclusion about whether today's church should conform to the patterns of church organization detailed in Scripture?

- A. The New Testament's principles regarding church organization should be honored, but its specific patterns needn't be.
- B. Churches that do not follow the New Testament patterns of organization are apostate and not really part of the body of Christ.
- C. Though the matter of principles versus patterns probably can't be settled conclusively, today's church should try to conform to New Testament patterns as much as possible.
- D. None of the above.

QUESTION 5

Which of the following represents Ryrie's position on bishops and elders?

- A. The words *bishop* and *elder* refer to the same office in the church.
- B. Bishops oversee elders, who oversee deacons.
- C. The office of bishop expired at the end of the apostolic age.
- D. Bishops hold office in a line of succession beginning with the apostle Peter.

QUESTION 6

According to Ryrie, elders are responsible for oversight of spiritual matters and deacons are responsible for oversight of financial matters in the church. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

Ryrie recognizes baptism and the Lord's Supper as ordinances. He allows that additional ordinances might be:

- A. Foot-washing, confession, and marriage
- B. Foot-washing, praying for the sick, and marriage
- C. Praying for the sick, confession, and marriage
- D. Foot-washing, praying for the sick, and confession

QUESTION 8

Which of the following is Ryrie's statement of his position on the meaning of the Lord's Supper?

- A. The Lord's Supper is only a memorial.
- B. In the Lord's Supper, the literal body and blood of Christ are present in the consecrated bread and cup.
- C. Though in the Lord's Supper the bread and cup remain unchanged, the prayer of consecration communicates Christ to the congregation.
- D. The Lord's Supper is both a memorial and a service in which the presence of Christ in His people effects a real communion.

QUESTION 9

The early church established Sunday as a day of worship because that was the day of the Jewish Sabbath. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

The goal of church discipline is:

- A. Excommunication
- B. Justice
- C. Warning
- D. Restoration

Unit Three Exam

QUESTION 1

In the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is subordinate to the Father and the Son. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

During Old Testament times, the Holy Spirit

- A. Filled and directed all the people of Israel
- B. Came upon some people for a time
- C. Was not yet active in history
- D. Was a permanent presence in each person who enjoyed the Spirit's filling

QUESTION 3

Which sort of miracle did Jesus perform more than any other?

- A. Feeding multitudes
- B. Restoring sight to blind people
- C. Healing people who could not walk
- D. Transforming water into wine

QUESTION 4

According to Ryrie, the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is

- A. A danger to which any backslidden believer can succumb
- B. The unforgivable sin of all who challenged Christ during His life on earth
- C. Only a figurative concept that Jesus used in His parables
- D. Only possible with the personal and visible presence of Christ on earth

QUESTION 5

The Holy Spirit indwells

- A. All believers at all times
- B. Those believers who have been baptized in the Holy Spirit
- C. Only believers who are living a holy life
- D. All people, saved or unsaved

QUESTION 6

The sealing of the Holy Spirit occurs

- A. When a child is born
- B. At conversion
- C. At baptism
- D. At death

QUESTION 7

Which of the following statements about Spirit baptism is true?

- A. Devout people have experienced Spirit baptism since the time of Abraham.
- B. Spirit baptism is a blessing enjoyed only by some believers.
- C. Spirit baptism occurs at some point subsequent to conversion.
- D. Spirit baptism joins every believer to the body of Christ.

QUESTION 8

The doctrine of two Spirit baptisms emerged

- A. With newer Pentecostalism
- B. During the Protestant Reformation
- C. As a result of Vatican II of the Roman Catholic Church
- D. In the earliest days of the church

QUESTION 9

Spiritual gifts are simply natural talents exercised in the church. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

In every congregation, all of the various spiritual gifts are present. *True or False?*

QUESTION 11

Which of the following is a result of the Spirit's filling?

- A. Evangelistic involvement
- B. Christlike character
- C. Submissiveness
- D. All of the above

QUESTION 12

Believers are sanctified

- A. When they live a sinless life
- B. When they receive the second blessing of Spirit baptism
- C. Progressively over the course of their Christian life
- D. At the time of water baptism

QUESTION 13

Which council was called to address the Arian controversy over the nature of the Trinity?

- A. The Council of Nicaea
- B. The Council of Jerusalem
- C. The Council of Constantinople
- D. The Council of Chalcedon

QUESTION 14

Pelagianism asserts that:

- A. The members of the Trinity are not fully God.
- B. Jesus died as an example to others, not to make atonement for sin.
- C. Humans are able to do good apart from the enabling of the Holy Spirit.
- D. Original sin prevents people from coming to Christ apart from God's grace.

QUESTION 15

The church is

- A. A congregation of believers meeting together in one place
- B. Believers in a particular geographic region
- C. The worldwide body of believers
- D. All of the above

QUESTION 16

Ryrie teaches that the church and Israel are one and the same. *True or False?*

QUESTION 17

Which of the following reflects Ryrie's position on the principles and patterns of church life?

- A. Patterns of church life are matters of local culture, so we need not follow the New Testament patterns.
- B. We should follow the New Testament patterns of church life to the extent that it is possible.
- C. Because the New Testament pattern of church life was complete sharing of material goods, we should hold all things in common as well.
- D. Those churches that do not hold to New Testament patterns of church life are apostate and should be considered outside the faith.

QUESTION 18

Which form of church government does Ryrie favor?

- A. Federal government only
- B. National government only
- C. A blend of federal and congregational government
- D. A blend of national and hierarchical government

QUESTION 19

Regarding the relationship of elders to bishops, Ryrie's position is that:

- A. Elders and bishops are one and the same
- B. Elders are subordinate to bishops
- C. Bishops are subordinate to elders
- D. Elders and bishops hold different positions but are at the same level of church hierarchy

QUESTION 20

According to Ryrie, the words *sacrament* and *ordinance* can both be appropriately used for the Christian practices of baptism and the Lord's Supper. *True or False?*

QUESTION 21

The purpose of baptism is

- A. To forgive sins that the believer has committed up until this point in time
- B. To signify the believer's identification with the message of the gospel, the person of the Savior, and a group of believers
- C. To fill the new believer with the Holy Spirit so that he or she may be unified with the church
- D. To seal and ensure the salvation of the believer's position in heaven

QUESTION 22

Regarding the frequency with which a congregation celebrates the Lord's Supper, Ryrie's position is:

- A. The congregation should celebrate the Lord's Supper every week
- B. The congregation should celebrate the Lord's Supper once a month
- C. There is no rule about how often the church should celebrate the Lord's Supper
- D. The congregation is celebrating the Lord's Supper whenever they take a meal together

QUESTION 23

As baptism symbolizes the cleansing of the forgiveness of sin, foot-washing symbolizes the cleansing needed for fellowship. *True or False?*

QUESTION 24

We celebrate the Lord's Day on Sunday because

- A. Sunday was the Jewish Sabbath
- B. Sunday fell between market weeks in ancient Jerusalem
- C. Sunday was the day of the Lord's resurrection
- D. All of the above

QUESTION 25

Regarding caring for widows, Ryrie teaches that

- A. In modern times the government provides widows with all that they need.
- B. The church should help a widow to recover from the loss of her spouse so she can work to support herself.
- C. Each family is responsible for caring for its own widows.
- D. To the extent that a widow's family cannot support her, the church should care for her, whether that means partial or full support.

Lesson 9 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Teaching about the Church</i> |
|--------------------|--|
| Acts 20:28 | God purchased the church with the blood of His Son. |
| Ephesians 4:11-12 | Christ gives spiritual gifts to build His church. |
| Ephesians 5:25, 29 | Christ loves, nourishes, and cherishes the church. |
| Matthew 16:18 | Christ's principal work in the world today is to build His church. |

QUESTION 2: *Your answer*

QUESTION 3:

| <i>Type of Kingdom</i> | <i>Ruled in the Kingdom</i> |
|---------------------------------|---|
| The Davidic/messianic kingdom | the earth and its inhabitants |
| The spiritual kingdom | believers only |
| The universal kingdom | everything and everyone everywhere |
| The mystery form of the kingdom | people on the earth who have related themselves somehow to Christianity |

QUESTION 4: *Your answer*

QUESTION 5: *Your answer*

QUESTION 6:

- A. Paul distinguishes between Israel and the church.
- B. In the chapters of Acts a contrast is drawn between Israel and the Gentiles.
- C. The church did not begin until the Day of Pentecost, so it couldn't have existed in Old Testament times.

QUESTION 7: False

QUESTION 8: *Your answer*

QUESTION 9:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Organization of the Early Church</i> |
|------------------|--|
| Acts 2:42 | Regular patterns were established for teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. |
| Acts 2:45 | Believers gave generously so material help could be made available for those in need. |
| Acts 5:1-11 | The church had standards of righteousness. |
| Acts 6 | Believers selected people to be servants who would meet specific needs in the growing church. |

QUESTION 10: *Your answer*

QUESTION 11:

| <i>Church Government</i> | <i>Characteristics</i> |
|---------------------------|---|
| Federal government | Individual units give up their sovereignty to a central authority, but retain some authority for themselves. |
| Hierarchical government | The ruling clerical body of these churches is organized into orders and ranks. |
| Minimal government | These churches downplay membership and emphasize the headship of Christ. |
| Congregational government | The authority for governing one of these churches rests with the members of the church. |
| National government | These churches exist within the boundaries of a particular country or are organized under a single country's head of state. |

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Authority and Identity</i> |
|------------------|---|
| Acts 1:15-26 | The apostles; Matthias was chosen |
| Acts 6:1-6 | The gathered believers; seven deacons appointed |
| Acts 13:1-3 | The Holy Spirit; Barnabas and Saul chosen |
| Acts 14:21-23 | Paul and company; elders appointed |

QUESTION 14: *Your answer***QUESTION 15:**

- A. Temperate (not addicted to wine)
- B. Free from the love of money
- C. Hospitable
- E. Sensible
- F. Not given to violence

QUESTION 16: *Your answer***QUESTION 17:** *Your answer***QUESTION 18:**

- B. Regeneration.
- C. Cleansing before partaking in Communion.
- D. Fellowship with a local church.

QUESTION 19: *Your answer***QUESTION 20:**

| <i>First Part</i> | <i>Second Part</i> |
|---|---|
| Blessed are those who mourn | for they will be comforted |
| Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness | for they will be filled |
| Blessed are the pure in heart | for they will see God |
| Blessed are the poor in spirit | for theirs is the kingdom of heaven |
| Blessed are the merciful | for they will receive mercy |
| Blessed are the meek | for they will inherit the earth |
| Blessed are the peacemakers | for they will be called children of God |

QUESTION 21: *Your answer*

Lesson 9 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

D. All of the above

QUESTION 2: False

QUESTION 3:

C. In the Upper Room Discourse

QUESTION 4:

C. Though the matter of principles versus patterns probably can't be settled conclusively, today's church should try to conform to New Testament patterns as much as possible.

QUESTION 5:

A. The words bishop and elder refer to the same office in the church.

QUESTION 6: False

QUESTION 7:

B. Foot-washing, praying for the sick, and marriage

QUESTION 8:

D. The Lord's Supper is both a memorial and a service in which the presence of Christ in His people effects a real communion.

QUESTION 9: False

QUESTION 10:

D. Restoration

Unit Three Exam Answers

QUESTION 1: False

QUESTION 2:

B. Came upon some people for a time

QUESTION 3:

B. Restoring sight to blind people

QUESTION 4:

D. Only possible with the personal and visible presence of Christ on earth

QUESTION 5:

A. All believers at all times

QUESTION 6:

B. At conversion

QUESTION 7:

D. Spirit baptism joins every believer to the body of Christ.

QUESTION 8:

A. With newer Pentecostalism

QUESTION 9: False

QUESTION 10: False

QUESTION 11:

D. All of the above

QUESTION 12:

C. Progressively over the course of their Christian life

QUESTION 13:

A. The Council of Nicaea

QUESTION 14:

C. Humans are able to do good apart from the enabling of the Holy Spirit

QUESTION 15:

D. All of the above

QUESTION 16: False

QUESTION 17:

B. We should follow the New Testament patterns of church life to the extent that it is possible

QUESTION 18:

C. A blend of federal and congregational government

QUESTION 19:

A. Elders and bishops are one and the same

QUESTION 20: False

QUESTION 21:

B. To forgive sins that the believer has committed up until this point in time

QUESTION 22:

C. There is no rule about how often the church should celebrate the Lord's Supper

QUESTION 23: True

QUESTION 24:

C. Sunday was the day of the Lord's resurrection

QUESTION 25:

D. To the extent that a widow's family cannot support her, the church should care for her, whether that means partial or full support

Lesson 9 Article

Story of Generosity

When my younger daughter was very small, she used to boast to her friends, “My family is rich. My papa has a whole bucket of money under the bed.” It was true that there was a container of money under the bed, but the money was all in the form of coins, totaling perhaps three days’ wages.

During this period, our family fell on hard times, and it became necessary one day to gather coins from under the bed so we could buy groceries. My daughter watched, wide-eyed, as I did this. “Do you feel worried, Honey?” I asked. She nodded solemnly. “Remember when you told your friends that we’re rich because Papa has money under the bed?” Another solemn nod. “You were right, Honey. We are rich. But it’s not because of this bucket of coins. It’s because we are part of the church. The church is our family, and we can trust that they will care for us if we need them to.”

My daughter brightened. I could see that she knew what I said was true. “Do you believe this?” I asked. “How do you know that this is true?”

“Because when Lisa’s family was homeless, people at church gave them a place to stay.”

“That’s right,” I said. “And do you remember how we kept their things in our garage?”

My daughter nodded again, this time happily. She was secure in the wealth of a generous and compassionate congregation.

Unit Four: Last Things

Unit Introduction

The final unit deals with the doctrine of eschatology, or the study of last things. As Christians we know that history has a purpose and meaning. We are not just part of a never-ending cycle of endlessly repeating events. God created the universe and man within that universe for His own glory. Even though things do not always seem to go well here on earth, we have the assurance that God will work out His purposes. Believers will have the privilege of reigning with Christ on earth, and will ultimately spend eternity worshipping and serving Him in the new heaven and earth. What a wondrous hope we have, that God is in control! We can rest in His promises and provision for the future.

Lesson 10 deals with the various views of the Millennium. There are three prominent views, each of which has been the popular view at different times in church history. We will examine the biblical teaching and attempt to form some conclusions regarding this period of time.

In Lesson 11 we look at a smaller period of time called the Tribulation, and one event related to the Tribulation, the Rapture, or the coming of Christ for His church. We will present a system for understanding the sequence of events leading to the end of this age. We will try to understand something of the timing of Christ's second coming to reign on the earth in glory.

Lesson 12 treats more specifically the Millennium and the issue of rewards for the believer and judgments of the non-believer. In addition, we explore the subject of personal eschatology, that is, what happens to the individual at the time of death, and how that relates to personal resurrection.

Unit Outline

Lesson 10: A Survey of Millennial Views

Lesson 11: The Rapture and the Tribulation

Lesson 12: The Eternal Destiny of Man

Unit Objectives

When you have completed this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand and distinguish the characteristic features of the various views of the Tribulation, the Rapture, and the Millennium
- Formulate your own position of the system for understanding final events
- Explain the biblical teaching on the rewards of the believer
- Explain the biblical teaching on the judgment of the unbeliever
- Defend the biblical teaching of death and resurrection against various heresies

Lesson 10: A Survey of Millennial Views

Lesson Introduction

It is perhaps fitting that the conclusion of a course surveying basic biblical doctrines should discuss the culmination of history. Eschatology, the doctrine of last things, comes from two Greek words, *eschatos*, which means “last,” and *logos*, which means “word.” So eschatology is the word regarding last things.

In the study of the future we encounter some of the most magnificent concepts in the Bible. Here we find the distinctive biblical view of history. In contrast to the endless cycles of the Greeks or the humanly achieved dialectic of the Marxists, the biblical view presents a linear and God-directed view of history. History is going somewhere! Within the historical process, God, according to the Bible, intends to bring fulfillment and meaning to human existence.

One of the reasons for choosing Ryrie’s book for this course was that although he is a premillennialist, he attempts to give a fair survey of the other viewpoints: postmillennialism and amillennialism. Before entering into a more detailed study of prophecy regarding the future, we must first settle the overall issue: *Will there be an earthly kingdom for Jesus Christ?*

Over the centuries of Christendom, Bible-believing Christians have come to different conclusions about the end times. Perhaps one group is right; perhaps another is. Or perhaps both are partly right or neither is right at all. Regardless, objective truth about the end times exists, and we can do our best to discern that truth by examining the prophecies of Scripture. As we study, we can humbly remember that whatever conclusions we come to, the truth will remain the same.

In Lesson 10 we begin our exploration of eschatology, the doctrine of last things. We have already learned that the word *eschatology* comes from two Greek words, *eschatos*, meaning “last,” and *logos*, which means “word.”

Our lesson begins with an introduction to eschatology in Topic 1, then continues with an examination of the three views of the Millennium, the years of God’s earthly kingdom before the end of time.

Topic 2 quickly dispenses with a survey of postmillennialism, or the view that Christ will return after the Millennium is completed.

In Topic 3, we consider amillennialism, the view that there is no thousand-year earthly reign of Christ. We explore various characteristics of the doctrine, scriptural support for it, and its historical development.

Topic 4 takes up the position that Ryrie favors, premillennialism—the doctrine that Christ’s second coming will precede His thousand-year earthly reign. We will examine various hermeneutical issues related to this doctrine and learn about the doctrine’s history.

Earthly Kingdom for Jesus Christ?



Finally, in Topics 5 and 6, we will look at two biblical covenants that are important to our understanding of the Millennium—God’s covenant with Abraham in Topic 5, and God’s covenant with David in Topic 6. We will learn about God’s promises to both Abraham and David, and we will learn about what the Old and New Testaments have to say about the fulfillment of these promises.

This lesson will therefore address some of the arguments for and against the various millennial views. Regardless of what conclusions you arrive at, you should have an understanding and appreciation for the perspectives of those with whom you differ.

Lesson Outline

- Topic 1: Introduction to Eschatology
- Topic 2: A Survey of Postmillennialism
- Topic 3: A Survey of Amillennialism
 - Definition
 - Doctrinal Characteristics
 - Hermeneutics
 - Scriptural Support
 - Historical Development
- Topic 4: A Survey of Premillennialism
 - Definition
 - Doctrinal Characteristics
 - Hermeneutics
 - Historical Development
- Topic 5: God’s Covenant with Abraham
 - Promises of Covenant
 - Ratification of the Covenant
 - Alleged Conditions in the Covenant
 - Viewpoints on the Fulfillment of the Covenant
- Topic 6: God’s Covenant with David
 - Provisions of the Covenant
 - Old Testament Confirmation
 - New Testament Confirmation

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you should be able to:

- Clarify the importance of the study of prophecy
- Explain the nature of, and scriptural support for, postmillennialism
- Explain the nature of, and hermeneutical basis for, amillennialism
- Explain the nature of, and scriptural support for, premillennialism
- Explain the conditions and recipients of the Abrahamic Covenant
- Explain the conditions and recipients of the Davidic Covenant

Definitions of Key Terms

Amillennialism—The millennial view teaching that the Millennium is either spiritual in the hearts of men, or spiritual in heaven today. There is no earthly millennium.

Postmillennialism—The millennial view teaching that one of the church’s purposes is to Christianize the world and introduce a kind of golden age. After this, Christ will return and set up the eternal state.

Premillennialism—The millennial view teaching that Christ will come to establish the kingdom predicted in the Old Testament and reign on earth for one thousand years.

Covenant—A binding agreement between God and man.

Topic 1: Introduction to Eschatology

If you have not already done so, read Ryrie, chapter 77, “Introduction to Eschatology.”

In some circles it has become fashionable to say that prophecy is not very important; we must focus our attention on the more fundamental doctrines, such as salvation and the Trinity. Besides, they say, the prophetic language is quite vague, figurative, and complex, and we probably cannot satisfactorily explain it anyway.

Ryrie would have little patience with teachers who espouse such views! The Bible contains massive amounts of prophetic material. In fact, it has been estimated that over 25 percent of the Bible was prophetic at the time it was written. Surely any view of the Bible which says that 25 percent of it is either unimportant or not understandable cannot possibly be true!

QUESTION 1

Which of the following are reasons that Ryrie gives for the importance of studying prophecy? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. It provides joy in the midst of affliction.
- B. It cleanses us and encourages us to holy living.
- C. Without knowledge of prophecy, we cannot hope to see God.
- D. It provides proof of the reliability of Scripture.
- E. It gives us facts about life after death and about the end of history.

Topic 2: A Survey of Postmillennialism

If you have not already done so, read Ryrie, chapter 78, “A Survey of Postmillennialism.”

Postmillennialism has never been widely received by the church. Its optimistic view of history seems quite contrary to reality as well as Scripture. Scriptural support for postmillennialism is surprisingly weak, and the passages which Ryrie cites illustrate this point. None of these passages require the interpretation that there will be a universal era of righteousness which will precede the second coming of Christ.

Because postmillennialism is so rarely taught, we will not devote any more time to it here, other than to ask you to do the following exercise and to remind you that you are responsible to know the material in this chapter of Ryrie.

QUESTION 2

Match the proponent of postmillennialism with the sentence that describes that thinker's position.

| <i>Proponent</i> | <i>Position</i> |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Daniel Whitby (1638–1726) | History is Trinitarian: the first age is that of the Father, the second is that of the Son, and the third—to begin in about AD 1260—will be that of the Spirit. |
| Loraine Boettner (1901–1990) | The world will eventually be Christianized, and then there will be a long period of righteousness and peace, after which Christ will come again. |
| Joachim of Fiore (ca. 1135–1202) | The world will enjoy a time of peace and righteousness after the world is converted, Jews are restored to the Holy Land, and the pope and the Turks are defeated. |

Topic 3: A Survey of Amillennialism

If you have not already done so, read Ryrie, chapter 79, “A Survey of Amillennialism.”

There are two major millennial views held by the majority of Christians in the world today: amillennialism and premillennialism. Amillennialism has been advocated by some of the greatest scholars of Christendom, including John Calvin and Martin Luther.

Definition

Technically, Ryrie's definition of amillennialism would be rejected by most amillennialists, as many *do* believe there will be a millennium before the end of the world. What they do *not* believe in is an earthly, literal kingdom as predicted in the Old Testament prophets. Instead, for them the Millennium is either a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men expressed in the church or a spiritual kingdom in heaven today.

Hermeneutics

It is important that you get a good, basic grasp of the main tenets of amillennialism. Be sure that you have read Ryrie, chapter 79, carefully before continuing.

These two differing views of the prophetic promises and the nature of the kingdom are grounded in two different interpretive principles. Premillennialists believe that all Scripture should be interpreted according to the principle of plain, or normal, hermeneutics. Amillennialists, on the other hand, believe in a dual hermeneutic, i.e., one system of interpretation for prophecy and another for the rest of the Bible. Prophecy, they say, is to be interpreted spiritually or figuratively.

To flesh this out, Ryrie presents the interpretive principles used by Oswald T. Allis, an amillennialist whom he commends as a strong proponent of the infallibility of Scripture. Allis, he contends, reaches conclusions about the nature of prophecy that are correct “only if the interpreter abandons the principles of literal or normal interpretation.”

QUESTION 3

Read Ryrie's "The Hermeneutics of Amillennialism." Which of the following are, according to Oswald T. Allis, limitations on literal interpretation? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Sometimes nonliteral interpretation is necessary for resolving contradictions in the Bible.
- B. Because the main theme of the Bible is spiritual, spiritual interpretation can be valid.
- C. The Old Testament is preparatory to the New Testament, so the New Testament can interpret Old Testament prophecies in a figurative manner.
- D. Because the Bible contains figures of speech, we have the freedom to interpret nonliterally.

Scriptural Support

Please read Ryrie's discussion in "Interpretive Evidences for Amillennialism" carefully before continuing and consider additional passages in the exercises below.

QUESTION 4

Look up Romans 14:17, John 18:36, and Luke 17:21, and read Ryrie, chapter 79, "A Survey of Amillennialism." Open your Life Notebook. How might these verses be used to support amillennialism, and how might a premillennialist reply? Once you have answered this question, read the explanation of Question 4 in the answer section.

Amillennialists hold that there are two passages of Scripture in particular which substantiate their view that the church has inherited the promises of Israel, since they hold that the church is the "new Israel."

QUESTION 5

Read Romans 9:6-8. Open your Life Notebook. How might amillennialists and premillennialists understand this passage? Consider the relevance of verses 7 and 13 in your consideration of a possible premillennial understanding. Once you have answered this question, read the explanation of Question 5 in the answer section.

When Paul spoke to the Galatians about the "Israel of God," he was, according to the amillennialist, referring to the church. The church, they say, is the new Israel, the Israel of God.

QUESTION 6

Read Galatians 6:15-16 for yourself. Open your Life Notebook. What evidence do you see for and against this interpretation of the phrase "Israel of God"? Once you have answered this question, read the explanation of Question 6 in the answer section.

Other passages could be cited, but our purpose here is only to introduce you to some of the major passages used in support of the amillennial and premillennial views. You will need to decide this question for yourself.

Historical Development

In his discussion of the history of amillennialism, Ryrie refers to three time periods (the pre-Augustinian era, the Reformation, and the modern era). He also discusses the amillennialism of Augustine.

Early church apologists, he writes, were premillennial because they stressed literal interpretation. They believed that they were living in the last days, and they expected Christ's second coming to occur soon. Origen (ca. 185–ca. 254) was the first to present a new interpretation. He taught that the kingdom is the present church age, beginning with Adam.

In Origen’s time, the philosophy of Plato was widely accepted. In order to bridge the gap to the pagan mind, Origen, Clement (155–200), and others began to employ platonic philosophy in their interpretation of Scripture. This system of thought emphasized the world of ideals in contrast to the material world. According to Plato, ideals were the actual basis of reality; the material world was only a reflection, and a carnal one at that.

Amillennialism naturally grew in this soil rich with platonic dualism. The earthly kingdom of the Old Testament prophets seemed too carnal and unspiritual to be worthy of the God of the dualists. Something had to be done! Origen gave them the key by allegorizing the literal elements away, and Augustine gave them the system and philosophy of history to explain it. Amillennialism now had a theological and intellectual basis.

Augustinian amillennialism was the predominant view of the Roman Catholic church as well as that of the Reformers. It was not until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that the serious and systematic study of prophecy was undertaken again, and when it was, the premillennialist view reemerged.

Read Ryrie, chapter 79, “History of Amillennialism.” Based on your reading, answer the following question.

QUESTION 7

Match each theologian with an element of his teaching on the Millennium.

| <i>Theologian</i> | <i>Teaching</i> |
|-------------------|---|
| Calvin | The kingdom is the present age, beginning with Adam. |
| Augustine | The present time (of this theologian himself) is the Great Tribulation. |
| Origen | Premillennialism cannot be true because it entails a thousand-year limit on the saints’ eternal rest. |
| Luther | The Millennium is the time between the first and second comings of Christ. |

Topic 4: A Survey of Premillennialism

Having looked at amillennialism, we turn our attention now to the view that Ryrie holds—premillennialism. In preparation, read his chapter 80, “A Survey of Premillennialism.”

Definition

As with the other two views of the Millennium, the prefix on the word that describes the viewpoint is a virtual definition. The *postmillennialists* believe that Christ returns *after* the Millennium, the *amillennialists* that there will be *no earthly* Millennium, and the *premillennialists* that He returns *before* the Millennium.

Almost without exception, Ryrie asserts, premillennialists hold a high view of Scripture. Though they differ on just how literally the coming kingdom should be understood, they agree that the Millennium will follow the second coming of Christ, that it will last for one thousand years, that it will be located on this earth, and that its theocratic government will be headed by Christ Himself.

Premillennialists hold a distinctive understanding of God’s covenants with Abraham and David. These two covenants, they contend, have not yet been fulfilled, but they will be fulfilled during the Millennium. Premillennialists also have a distinctive position on the relation of the church to Israel. Ryrie sets out various positions on the relation of the church to Israel in the chart in the “Doctrinal Characteristics” section of chapter 80.

QUESTION 8

Summarize Ryrie's expanded definition of premillennialism in your own words. Then review and compare the definitions of the three millennial views in order to draw a time line for each of the views. Record your answer in your Life Notebook.

QUESTION 9

According to Ryrie, both covenant and dispensationalists agree that in the future kingdom Israel and the church will be distinguished. However, dispensational premillennialists say that in the present church era the church fulfills the promises to Israel and is the new Israel. *True or False?*

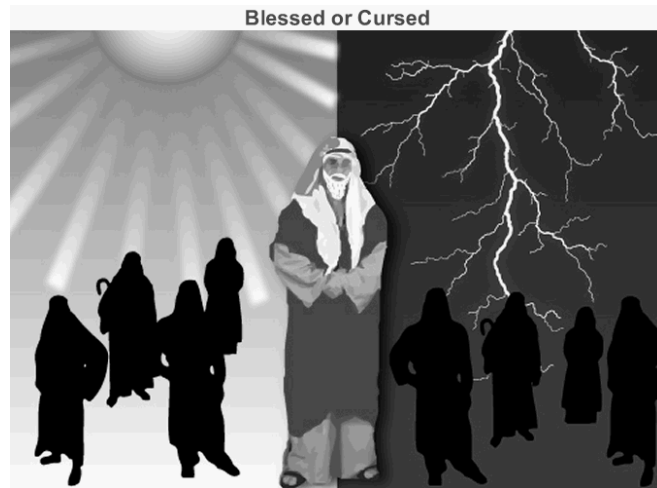
Hermeneutics

Ryrie begins by stating a very important tenet of premillennialism, which is its approach to interpreting Scripture. He simply says that it is a literal, or normal, hermeneutic. As simple as it sounds, it has tremendous consequences for understanding the eschatological portions of Scripture.

QUESTION 10

When Ryrie says that premillennialists employ a literal hermeneutic, this does not mean that they ignore figures of speech in the Bible. *True or False?*

It is probable that many amillennialists would not agree with Ryrie's views on hermeneutics. Many of them would claim to believe in "normal" interpretation as well. It is much better to avoid the terms "normal" and "literal." The real issue is "What is the intended meaning of the original writer that would most likely be the meaning understood by his readers at the time he wrote?" That is the real issue that divides premillennialists and amillennialists.



Premillennialists raise another concern: if the text of Scripture can mean something different from what it obviously was intended to mean by the writer and from what the original readers and hearers would have understood, then God is telling His people one thing, but He really means something else.

QUESTION 11

Read Isaiah 2:1-11; 11:1-16; Amos 9:11-13; Micah 4:1-5. Open your Life Notebook. How would amillennialists and premillennialists interpret these predictions? Which view seems the most correct to you?

Historical Development

Ryrie points out that the original views of the early church were premillennial. As mentioned above, in the philosophic desire to accommodate Christianity to platonic dualism, allegorical approaches to interpretation were employed. This became systematized by Augustine, and it was not until the modern period that the restoration of premillennial teaching appeared.

Topic 5: God's Covenant with Abraham

Please read Ryrie, chapter 81, "God's Covenant with Abraham."

Ryrie calls the interpretation of the Abrahamic covenant a watershed between amillennialists and premillennialists, i.e., the crucial dividing line between the two systems, which makes it critical that we understand the issues involved.

Promises of Covenant

Read Genesis 15 and Genesis 17:1-3. Premillennialists hold that Israel is yet to receive the fulfillment of everything promised in the Abrahamic Covenant. According to Ryrie in "National Promises," some of the characteristics of the land promises to Abraham are:

1. The land is promised as an everlasting possession (Gen 17:1-3).
2. It is promised to the physical, blood descendants of Abraham (Gen 15:18).
3. Its boundaries are given (Gen 15:18). The kingdoms of David and Solomon, though large, did not fit the boundaries given in this verse and other passages as well.
4. It is given unconditionally (Gen 15:9-17).

QUESTION 12

Why do you think the Abrahamic covenant is so important? Record your answer in your Life Notebook. Specifically, what effect does the Abrahamic covenant have on your personal view of Israel and the Church?

This wonderful promise to Abraham is one of the grand, underpinning covenants of the Bible. The various facets of this covenant touch Jew and Gentile alike, heaven and earth, body and soul. Though our discussion must be brief, its significance is eternal.

The first set of promises in the Abrahamic covenant, found in Genesis 12:2, were personal. God promised that he would make Abraham a great nation, that he would bless him, and that he would make Abraham's name great.

The next set of promises, found in Genesis 12:3, were universal. God promised that he would bless or curse people on the basis of their treatment of Abraham. And he promised that all families on earth would be blessed through the "seed" of Abraham.

The third set of promises, found in Genesis 15:18-21, were national. God promised that Abraham would father a great nation (this was both a personal and a national promise). He also promised to give that nation a specific land as an inheritance. Ryrie notes that Israel has never occupied the full area that God promised.

Amillennialists see Galatians 3:16 as teaching that the church is the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham. Premillennialists note that only the universal promise to the Gentiles is quoted here and thus only that aspect of the Abrahamic promises has now been fulfilled. This refers to the fact that we are spiritually born-again by faith in Christ.

QUESTION 13

Which of the following is **NOT** included in the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:2?

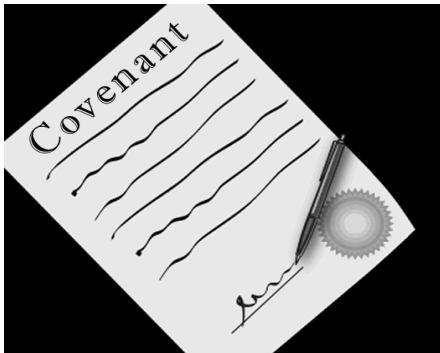
- A. "I will make you into a great nation."
- B. "I will lead you into righteousness."
- C. "I will bless you."
- D. "I will make your name great."

QUESTION 14

How would amillennialists and premillennialists understand Galatians 3:16?

Alleged Conditions in the Covenant

Ancient covenants were ratified in various ways. Today we sign legal documents in the presence of eyewitnesses, often with a notary certifying our signature. The ancient world had different processes. In one ceremony, two parties to the covenant would cut an animal in half and then walk between the parts of the animal to certify that both parties were binding themselves by blood to fulfill their obligations under the covenant. Thus, in the Hebrew Old Testament the phrase regularly used to describe the act of establishing a covenant is “to cut a covenant.”



When God “cut a covenant” with Abraham, as recorded in Genesis 15:9-17, Abraham was asleep during the ceremony. This covenant is thus a unilateral and unconditional covenant. God impressed on Abraham that the fulfillment of this promise depended on God, not on Abraham. This fits well with the premillennial view that the covenant with Abraham was without conditions and must one day be fulfilled literally.

Amillennialists, on the other hand, maintain that in most covenants there are conditions—though sometimes those conditions are merely implied, rather than stated directly.

Read Gen 22:16-18, which is a good passage to illustrate this. After Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice, an angel of the Lord said to him:

I swear by myself, says the LORD, that because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your beloved son, I will surely bless you and I will greatly multiply your descendants like the stars in the heavens, or like the sand on the sea shore. And your descendants will take possession of the gate of their enemies. All the nations of the earth will be blessed through your descendants because you have obeyed me.

Amillennialists understandably point to the phrase “Because you have done this” as evidence that the Abrahamic covenant was conditional. But Ryrie reminds us that the promise was made unconditionally before the events recorded in Genesis 22 occurred. What is conditional here is not God’s ultimate fulfillment of the covenant, but Abraham’s personal participation in the benefits of the covenant.

QUESTION 15

Amillennialists maintain that in most covenants there are implied, if not stated, conditions. Record in your Life Notebook reasons why Genesis 22:16-18 is a good passage to illustrate this.

QUESTION 16

What arguments does Ryrie use to counter the idea that the Abrahamic covenant is conditional? (Select all that apply.)

- A. Several imperatives in the passages that contain the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12; 17) actually express intention.
- B. The Old Testament writers repeatedly reject the idea that we can be made righteous by our works.
- C. The faith and obedience of Abraham and his descendents are necessary for their participation in the benefits of the covenant, but not for fulfillment of the covenant itself.
- D. Ryrie agrees with those who believe that the Abrahamic covenant is conditional; he does not argue against them.

Viewpoints on the Fulfillment of the Covenant

As Ryrie points out, amillennialists generally believe that the land promise is either conditional, or unconditional and spiritually fulfilled. Ryrie observes there is often an inconsistency in the amillennial view. If the covenant is conditional, then why look for historical fulfillment as the amillennialist often does in Joshua? If it was fulfilled under Joshua, then the church does not fulfill it. If the church does fulfill it, then why look for fulfillment under Joshua and Solomon?

QUESTION 17

How do amillennialists and premillennialists understand the apparent fulfillment of the land promises under Joshua (Josh 21:43-45) and Solomon (1 Kgs 4:21)? Use the chart below to outline your answer. Once you have answered this question, please read the explanation of Question 15 in the answer section.

| Promise | Joshua 21:34-45 | 1 Kings 4:21 |
|--------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Amillennial View | | |
| Premillennial View | | |

QUESTION 18

Long after the time of Joshua and Solomon, God still promises a future day in which Israel will inherit the land. Look up these passages, open your Life Notebook, and explain how they may contribute to the discussion of the Millennium (Zech 10:10; 12:2; Ezk 37:21-22; Joel 3:20; Amos 9:14-15; Jer 31:16-17).

All of the prophecies refer to the future restoration of the land to Israel. If the land promises have already been fulfilled under Joshua, why is it still being reconfirmed long after the time of Joshua and Solomon? The only reasonable answer is that the fulfillment under Joshua is not viewed in Scripture as the final, or ultimate, fulfillment intended in the original promise to Abraham.

QUESTION 19

It seems to the premillennialist that the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews in Hebrews 4:6-8 was specifically rejecting one of the amillennial arguments. Look up this passage in connection with Deuteronomy 3:20; 12:10; 25:19 and Joshua 1:15; 22:4; 11:23. What is the meaning of “rest”? How does Hebrews 4 seem to argue against the idea that the land promise has already been fulfilled?

Israel has never physically possessed the land from a river in Egypt to the Euphrates. So how is it that amillennialists conclude that the land promise has been fulfilled? Ryrie explains that they either spiritualize the promise and say that it is fulfilled by the church, or they believe that the promise was filled literally in Israel’s past history. In support of the latter position, amillennialists point to Joshua 21:43-45, where God tells Joshua that He has kept His promises to Israel by giving them the land of Canaan. Ryrie counters that this land did not extend from a river in Egypt to the Euphrates, and that Israel did not possess Canaan permanently. So what did God mean when He told Joshua that Israel’s possession of Canaan was a fulfillment of His promise? Ryrie suggests that this possession of Canaan was only partial fulfillment of the promise.

Ryrie also takes issue with the idea that the Abrahamic covenant both was fulfilled in Israel’s past and is presently fulfilled by the church in a spiritual sense. If it was fulfilled in the past, he asks, why is fulfillment in the present necessary? Or if it is fulfilled in the present, how could it have already been fulfilled in the past?

Topic 6: God’s Covenant with David

In the Garden of Eden God gave a command to Adam and Eve to subdue the earth. That command has yet to be obeyed; man’s destiny has yet to be fulfilled. With the covenant made to David, we see God moving to fulfill His creative purpose, to establish man over the works of His hands. It was to be through the nation of Israel and in One from the seed of David that God’s righteous kingdom would be established on earth. In these wonderful promises of the future reign of David’s Greater Son, the premillennialist sees strong evidence for his view of the Millennium.

Provisions of the Covenant

Read Ryrie, chapter 82, “God’s Covenant with David.”

The first reference to the Davidic covenant is found in God’s original promise to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3). As discussed above, one of the provisions of the Abrahamic covenant was that from him would come a “great nation.” This promise was expanded into a formal covenant with David, one of Abraham’s descendants, nearly one thousand years later.

QUESTION 20

Read the covenant as presented in 2 Samuel 7:12-16. Open your Life Notebook and summarize the promises of a descendant, a kingdom, and a throne.

Old Testament Confirmation

It is striking that throughout the Old Testament, even in the midst of severe apostasy, this covenant is repeatedly re-confirmed by God. This lends strong support to the premillennial contention that the Davidic covenant, like the Abrahamic, is an unconditional covenant.

Ryrie writes, “It seems almost as if God was anticipating the amillennial claim that the kingdom promise should be spiritualized into the church when He said that even though chastisement for sin would come, the covenant would not be broken or altered (Ps. 89:32-34).”

QUESTION 21

Amillennialists believe that the Davidic covenant was conditioned upon Israel's obedience. Because they disobeyed, the kingdom has been taken forever from Israel, spiritualized, and given to the church. However, read Psalm 89:3-4, 19-37 and Isaiah 9:7; 11:24-25, 54 and give your comments. Record your answer in your Life Notebook.

New Testament Confirmation

If the Davidic covenant is confirmed by Christ and the teachers of the New Testament, the premillennialist has a good case. Amillennialists and premillennialists agree with Ryrie that the terms "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" are synonymous. For a first-century Jew this meant that that kingdom was earthly, national, messianic, moral, and future. The question is: Did the teaching of Christ or others change this first-century Jewish concept?

Read Ryrie, chapter 82, "New Testament Confirmation."

QUESTION 22

Drawing on the results of your study, take the time now in two or three paragraphs to formulate your own position on the Millennium. Ground your position in Scripture and arguments from this lesson. Record your answer in your Life Notebook.

Key Biblical Concepts

Memorize the following key biblical concepts and their related Scripture references. Be prepared to explain how each reference supports its related concept:

1. God's promise to Abraham—Genesis 12:1-5
2. God "cuts" a covenant—Genesis 15:7-17
3. One thousand years—Revelation 20:1-5
4. Jesus confirms kingdom promise—Acts 1:6-8
5. Kingdom among you—Luke 17:21
6. Parables of the kingdom—Matthew 13
7. Davidic covenant—2 Samuel 7; Psalm 89

Lesson 10 Self Check

QUESTION 1

The role of the Old Testament prophets was to:

- A. Foretell what would happen before Christ's second coming
- B. Foretell what would happen after Christ's second coming
- C. Exhort God's people to live according to His ways
- D. All of the above.

QUESTION 2

Theonomists believe that:

- A. Christians should subdue the earth in order to effect God's dominion over all things.
- B. God will assert His dominion over all things; He does not need humans' help to do this.
- C. No human government is needed if we honor God as ruler of all.
- D. After Christ's second coming, God will rule the earth for one thousand years.

QUESTION 3

According to Ryrie's definition, amillennialism is the doctrine that there will be no Millennium before the end of the world. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Chiliasm is the belief:

- A. That there is no Millennium
- B. In a Millennium
- C. That the saints' rest in heaven will last only one thousand years
- D. That nonbelievers' punishment will be limited to one thousand years

QUESTION 5

According to Ryrie, the conclusive evidence for the truth of a doctrine is:

- A. Experiential
- B. Historical
- C. Prophetic
- D. Exegetical

QUESTION 6

Premillennialists believe that during the Millennium the world will have a theocratic government with Christ as its head. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

A Bible scholar's hermeneutic is that scholar's

- A. Position on eschatology
- B. Level of biblical education
- C. Approach to interpreting Scripture
- D. Faithfulness to the truth of the Bible

QUESTION 8

God's promises to Abraham were

- A. Personal
- B. Universal
- C. National
- D. All of the above

QUESTION 9

Whose legal throne rights were claimed for Jesus through Jesus' legal father, Joseph?

- A. Abraham's
- B. David's
- C. David's son Solomon's
- D. Solomon's son Coniah's

QUESTION 10

The Davidic covenant is the only example of a conditional covenant in the Old Testament. *True or False?*

Lesson 10 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

- A. It provides joy in the midst of affliction.
- B. It cleanses us and encourages us to holy living.
- D. It provides proof of the reliability of Scripture.
- E. It gives us facts about life after death and about the end of history.

QUESTION 2:

| <i>Proponent</i> | <i>Position</i> |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Daniel Whitby (1638–1726) | The world will enjoy a time of peace and righteousness after the world is converted, Jews are restored to the Holy Land, and the pope and the Turks are defeated. |
| Loraine Boettner (1901–1990) | The world will eventually be Christianized, and then there will be a long period of righteousness and peace, after which Christ will come again. |
| Joachim of Fiore (ca. 1135–1202) | History is Trinitarian: the first age is that of the Father, the second is that of the Son, and the third—to begin in about AD 1260—will be that of the Spirit. |

QUESTION 3:

- B. Because the main theme of the Bible is spiritual, spiritual interpretation can be valid.
- C. The Old Testament is preparatory to the New Testament, so the New Testament can interpret Old Testament prophecies in a figurative manner.
- D. Because the Bible contains figures of speech, we have the freedom to interpret nonliterally.

QUESTION 4: *Your answer*

Explanation of Question 4

From Romans 14:17 many amillennialists since Augustine have concluded that the future kingdom is spiritual and not physical. Premillennialists respond that just as the church is both spiritual and physical, so the kingdom is both spiritual and physical. They see nothing in this passage excluding a physical dimension to the kingdom any more than the fact that we are “seated in the heavenlies with Christ” excludes a physical dimension to the life of the church. In John 18:36 Jesus says His kingdom is not of this world. From this amillennialists have concluded that His kingdom is spiritual and not earthly. But Jesus does not say that His kingdom would not be in the world, only that it would not be of this world. The disciples, for example, are in the world (Jn 17:11), but they are not of this world (v 14). Similarly, premillennialists would argue that God’s kingdom will be in this world but will not be of it. That is, its values, authority, and principles will be heavenly in their source. In response to Luke 17:21 an amillennialist would say that, because God’s kingdom is “within” you, it must be a spiritual kingdom in the hearts of men and not a literal earthly kingdom as the Old Testament prophets predicted. Premillennialists point out that the Greek word *entos* can mean either “within” or “among.” It seems unlikely that the meaning “within” is intended here because Jesus would then be saying that the kingdom of God was within the unbelieving Pharisees, which was definitely not true. Yet the kingdom of God was present “among” them in the person of the king Himself.

QUESTION 5: *Your answer*

Explanation of Question 5

When Paul in Romans 9:6 says, “They are not all Israel who are descended from Israel,” amillennialists understand this to mean that just being a Jew does not make you part of the true Israel. There are some “Israelites” among the Gentiles. Premillennialists point out that this passage simply says there are two kinds of physical descendants from Abraham, children of the flesh and children of the promise. In verses 7 and 13 the distinction is between two kinds of physical descendants of Abraham. The true Israel (believing descendants of Abraham) in Romans 9 is the remnant according to the election of grace.

QUESTION 6: *Your answer*

Explanation of Question 6

The word “and” before the phrase “Israel of God” in Galatians 6:16 can be understood two ways. It can mean “that is” or simply “and.” Amillennialists understand the phrase here to mean “that is.” Thus, Paul prays for peace and mercy upon all who walk according to the new creation; that is, the Israel of God. Premillennialists believe that this use of “and,” while possible, is not typical and that there is no reason not to translate it as simply “and.” Paul is praying for peace to come upon those who are walking according to the new creation, i.e., the church, and also (or “in addition”) upon the Israel of God. Who then is the Israel of God? Premillennialists understand this term to refer to the future converted, restored, and revived Israel to which Paul refers in Romans 11:28-32. Thus, Gal 6:16 is an expression of Paul’s longing for the day when Israel will be brought to faith by the mercy of God.

QUESTION 7:

| <i>Theologian</i> | <i>Teaching</i> |
|-------------------|---|
| Calvin | Premillennialism cannot be true because it entails a thousand-year limit on the saints’ eternal rest. |
| Augustine | The Millennium is the time between the first and second comings of Christ. |
| Origen | The kingdom is the present age, beginning with Adam. |
| Luther | The present time (of this theologian himself) is the Great Tribulation. |

QUESTION 8:

Compare your answer with this definition: Premillennialists believe that the second coming of Christ will occur prior to the establishment of a literal kingdom of God on earth in which Christ will rule in righteousness for one thousand years.

QUESTION 9: False

QUESTION 10: True

QUESTION 11: *Your answer*

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13:

B. “I will lead you into righteousness”

QUESTION 14:

Amillennialists see Galatians 3:16 as teaching that the church is the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham. Premillennialists note that only the universal promise to the Gentiles is quoted here and thus only that aspect of the Abrahamic promises has now been fulfilled. This refers to the fact that we are spiritually born-again by faith in Christ

QUESTION 15: *Your answer*

Explanation of Question 15

In Genesis 22:16-18 amillennialists understandably point to the specific conditions given here and claim that this proves that the Abrahamic covenant was conditional. But as Kaiser points out, what is conditional here is not the ultimate fulfillment of the covenant, but that Abraham’s personal obedience was necessary for his personal participation in the benefits of the covenant. Premillennialists believe that the promises are only made to the generation of Jews who believe. Any given generation of Jews will only experience the benefits of the covenant if they believe in the Messiah. This in no way contradicts the certainty that one day God will give faith to the “Israel of God,” the future believing remnant of the last days. It is to this believing generation that the ultimate fulfillment of the covenant is promised.

QUESTION 16:

A. Several imperatives in the passages that contain the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12; 17) actually express intention.

C. The faith and obedience of Abraham and his descendents are necessary for their participation in the benefits of the covenant, but not for fulfillment of the covenant itself.

QUESTION 17: *Your answer*

Chart Answer to Question 17:

| Promise | Joshua 21:34-45 | 1 Kings 4:21 |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Amillennial View | Historically fulfilled the promise | Historically fulfilled the promise |
| Premillennial View | The generation never took all that God gave, so Israel has never really owned all the land promised | Solomon's area of rule was over many nations but not the fulfillment of the land promise of Genesis 15 |

QUESTION 18: *Your answer*

QUESTION 19: *Your answer*

Explanation of Question 19:

“Rest” refers to the land of Canaan. The writer to the Hebrews argues that if the land promise had been fulfilled under Joshua, why is the promise repeated six hundred years later to David?

Furthermore, he says that the promise of “rest,” the future possession of the land of Canaan, is still awaiting fulfillment.

QUESTION 20: *Your answer*

QUESTION 21:

Psalms 89 emphasizes that even if Israel sins, God will not break the covenant. The passages in Isaiah show God reconfirming the covenant in the midst of apostasy.

QUESTION 22: *Your answer*

Lesson 10 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

D. All of the above.

QUESTION 2:

A. Christians should subdue the earth in order to effect God's dominion over all things.

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4:

B. In a Millennium

QUESTION 5:

D. Exegetical

QUESTION 6: True

QUESTION 7:

C. Approach to interpreting Scripture

QUESTION 8:

D. All of the above

QUESTION 9:

D. Solomon's son Coniah's

QUESTION 10: True

Lesson 11: The Rapture and the Tribulation

Lesson Introduction

My sister had been thinking a lot about faith and was seriously considering the claims of Christianity, but she couldn't come to terms with God's wrath. How could she embrace a faith that teaches that some people will suffer so grievously someday in the future?

I had struggled with the same question long after coming to faith. So much of Scripture tells about God's love and His provision for His people. Who is this angry God of Revelation?

Finally I concluded that if we ignore those parts of Scripture that we are uncomfortable with, we are trying to create a God that we are comfortable with, rather than loving God as He is.

I also realized that these stories of God's unfolding wrath in Revelation appear at the conclusion of a book that tells again and again about God's deliverance from His wrath—a deliverance that is available to all who would grasp it. Here is God's love in the midst of His anger.

In Topic 1 we will examine an outline of future events.

We will study the tribulation period in Topic 2, exploring why it is a unique time of trouble, how it will begin, and how God's wrath will unfold during this time.

Then in Topic 3 we will consider various views of the rapture of the church (that is, the time when believers will be taken up into heaven), including perspectives on who will be included in the Rapture and when the Rapture will occur.

You may wish to read the chapters in Ryrie pertaining to this subject (83–89) now or wait and read them individually as they are assigned throughout the lesson.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: An Outline of Future Events

Topic 2: The Tribulation Period

Its Uniqueness

Its Beginning

The Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls

Topic 3: The Rapture of the Church

The Partial Rapture View

The Pretribulation Rapture View

Populating the Millennial Kingdom

The Midtribulation and Posttribulation Rapture Views

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you should be able to:

- List in sequence the major events leading up to and culminating in the second coming of Christ
- Chart the broad outline of the book of Revelation and fit the bowls, seals, and trumpets into a chronological sequence
- Explain the arguments for and against the pretribulation, midtribulation, posttribulation, and partial rapture views

Definitions of Key Terms

Rapture—the catching away of the church from earth to heaven

Partial rapture—the view that only those Christians who are persevering in their sanctification will be raptured before the Tribulation and that those who are carnal will miss the Rapture and have to endure the terrors of the Tribulation

Pretribulation rapture—the view that the rapture of the church occurs before the Tribulation begins

Midtribulation rapture—the view that the rapture of the church occurs near the midpoint of the Tribulation

Posttribulation rapture—the view that the rapture of the church occurs after the Tribulation and is simultaneous with Christ’s second coming

Topic 1: An Outline of Future Events

If you have not already done so, read Ryrie, chapter 83, “An Outline of Future Events.” Here Ryrie takes the events at the end of time in order, discussing the time of apostasy at the culmination of the church age, the rapture of the church, the Tribulation, the second coming of Christ, and the Millennium. Other scholars would place these events in a different order; Ryrie’s choice of sequence reflects his pretribulationist view on the Rapture—a matter we will take up in Topic 3 of this lesson.

In his discussion of the time of apostasy that will precede the Tribulation, Ryrie addresses doctrinal and lifestyle characteristics of apostasy: people will reject key doctrines of the faith, and they will embrace ungodly and destructive behaviors. He has strong words for the “apostate religious system” of “organized ecumenical religion,” charging that it will lift up doctrines to which diverse groups of believers can give support, presumably while downplaying doctrines over which there are stark differences of opinion. (Ecumenical efforts involve building unity among various branches of Christianity. Some ecumenists believe that this unity should be worldwide and should include every branch of Christianity.)

QUESTION 1

Match each of these Scriptures with the end-times event that it describes.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>End-Times Event</i> |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Thessalonians 4:17 | Tribulation |
| 2 Thessalonians 2:3 | Millennium |
| Revelation 6–19 | Second coming |
| Revelation 19:11-16 | Apostasy |
| Revelation 20 | Rapture |

QUESTION 2

Which of the following, according to Ryrie in “Increasing Apostasy,” are doctrines that will be rejected during the age of apostasy? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The return of Christ
- B. The baptism of the Holy Spirit
- C. The incarnation of Christ
- D. The Trinity

QUESTION 3

Open your Life Notebook. Ryrie's words for the ecumenical church are so strong that they could be taken as a rejection of all ecumenical endeavors at all times in history. But sometimes ecumenism involves reconciling branches of the church that split years ago over interpretations of doctrines on which Bible-believing people may differ. When, if ever, is it laudable to build unity among believers from various branches of Christianity? When are such efforts dangerous?

Topic 2: The Tribulation Period

In our personal lives we often have times of trials, sometimes quite severe, that test our patience, character, and trust in the Lord. As difficult as these trials are for us, they are nothing compared to the terrifying tribulation that the Lord has said is coming at the end of this age.

If you have not yet read Ryrie's chapter 84, "The Tribulation Period," please read it now.

Its Uniqueness

The book of Revelation is sometimes difficult to understand. Many fanciful and impossible interpretations have been made of it throughout church history, but much of the book is quite clear if careful attention is given to the interpretations of the symbols given by the book itself. On the other hand, Ryrie points to the frequent use of the words *like* and *as*, and notes that it was difficult for Revelation's author, John, to describe what he saw in the vision on which Revelation is based. He could describe these things never before seen only by comparing them to what has already been seen; we cannot know precisely how the vision appeared to him.

Ryrie writes that the Tribulation "will be a time of trouble unique in the history of the world." Unlike other times of trial, it will be worldwide, and it will be so terrible that people will stop planning for the future and will instead act as though they believe that the end of the world is near.

QUESTION 4

According to Revelation 3:10, the Tribulation will occur in parts of the world where apostasy is greatest. *True or False?*

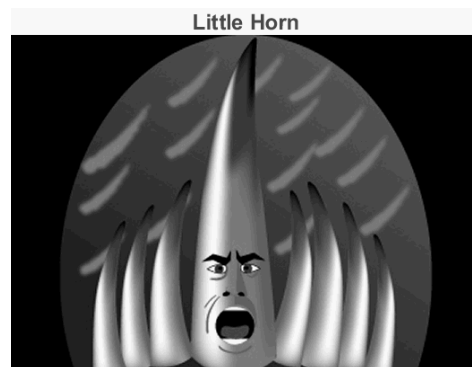
QUESTION 5

Open your Life Notebook. Many terrible things have happened in the history of the world, but in some way in all of those times, God has restrained evil. The terrible events have not lasted forever and, except for the flood of Noah's day, they have not affected the entire world. Has there been a time of trial in your region of the world that was terrible but was not all consuming? Can you point to specific ways in which God miraculously restrained evil in the midst of the time of trial?

Its Beginning

Ryrie's discussion of the Tribulation draws in part on the Old Testament book of Daniel. The book of Daniel was written in about 540 BC, after Israel and its temple in Jerusalem were destroyed and many of the people of Israel had been transported to Babylon. How could these events be harmonized with God's promises of a great future for Israel?

The prophet Daniel went to prayer wanting to know when the Messiah would come and when the



promises to Israel would be fulfilled. God answered Daniel's prayer with one of the most amazing prophecies of Scripture: the prophecy of the seventy weeks, which we find in Daniel 9. According to this prophecy, at the end of seventy weeks, the Messiah will come and Israel will be restored. Each week of the seventy represents a period of seven years, Ryrie explains, and there is an interval of undetermined length between the first sixty-nine weeks and the last, or seventieth, week.

The Tribulation will begin, Ryrie explains, when someone known variously as the "little horn," the "man of lawlessness," or the "beast" enters into a treaty with Israel. Ryrie insists that this person will be the leader of the "Federated States of Europe," but of course no such federation existed at the time Daniel and Revelation were written; indeed, the word Europe is not in the Bible. Like many theologians before him, Ryrie connects the figures in Daniel and Revelation to events in his own day. Those earlier theologians expected that the end was near and perhaps that it would come in their own lifetime. Yet we continue to watch and wait.

QUESTION 6

According to Ryrie's "The Beginning of the Tribulation," the part of Daniel's seventy weeks in which we are living is:

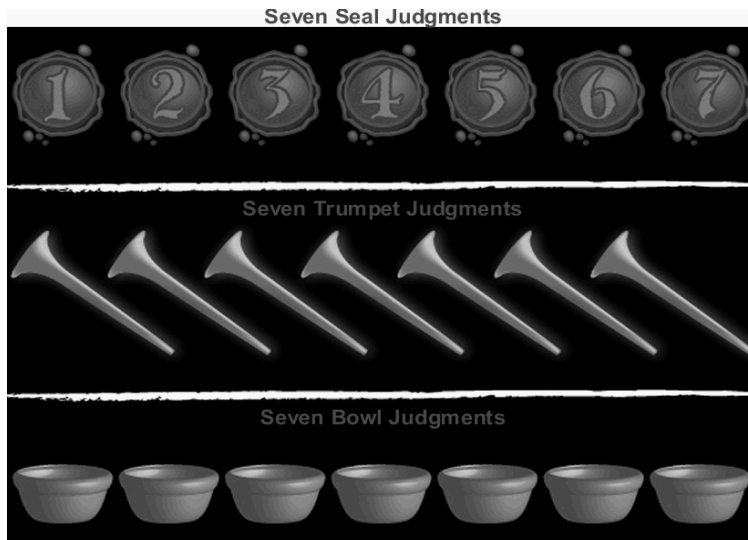
- A. The first week
- B. The sixty-ninth week
- C. The interval between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks
- D. The seventieth week

QUESTION 7

Open your Life Notebook. Over the centuries, various biblical scholars have concluded that the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation were unfolding in their own time. Jesus, however, exhorted his followers: "Therefore be alert, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming" (Mt 24:42). How can we serve God faithfully (see Mt 24:45-46) while we wait for Christ's return?

The Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls

In the middle of the book of Revelation we read of three sets of judgments that appeared to John in a vision: there are seven seal judgments, seven trumpet judgments, and seven bowl judgments. Scholars differ over whether these three sets of judgments will happen one after the other, or whether they will happen simultaneously. If the latter is true, then John is offering three descriptions of the same period of time, increasing the intensity of his description with each telling. Ryrie holds the former position: that the seal judgments precede the trumpet judgments, which in turn precede the bowl judgments.



One puzzle Ryrie addresses is martyrdom during the Tribulation. If all believers are taken up in the Rapture before the Tribulation begins, as Ryrie argues, how can there be believers during the Tribulation who will suffer martyrdom? The gospel will continue to exist in written form after the Rapture, Ryrie contends, and some will come to believe the gospel and then will tell others about it. Not all of the tribulation believers will be martyred. God will protect some from their enemies until the end of the Tribulation.

At the end of the seven terrible years of the Tribulation will be an enormous battle called Armageddon, and then the Lord will return.

QUESTION 8

Match the Scripture passages with the events the passages describe.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Events</i> |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Revelation 16 | Bowl judgments |
| Revelation 6; 8:1 | Trumpet judgments |
| Revelation 8, 9, and 11 | Seal judgments |

QUESTION 9

In "The Sequence," Ryrie teaches that the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments are three separate series of judgments that happen one after the other. *True or False?*

Topic 3: The Rapture of the Church

If you have not already done so, read Ryrie, chapters 85–89. The remainder of this lesson will be devoted to a discussion of the Rapture. There has been considerable disagreement among scholars as to whether the Rapture will occur before, during, or at the end of the Tribulation. Honest people who love Christ have sincerely disagreed on this matter.

The Partial Rapture View

Before discussing the timing of the Rapture, Ryrie addresses the question of whom the Rapture will involve. Some scholars (generally premillennialists; amillennialists, and postmillennialists do not see the Rapture as a distinct event) argue that all believers will be taken up in the Rapture,

whereas others say that only believers who are “watching and waiting” for the Lord’s return will be caught up at that time.

Partial rapturists “hold to salvation by grace and eternal security of the believer,” writes Ryrie, but they think that carnal Christians will not inherit the millennial kingdom. Carnal Christians living at the time of the first stage of the Rapture will be left on earth to endure some or all of the Tribulation; groups of believers will be taken up to heaven at various points during the Tribulation, and the remainder will be caught up after the Millennium. Ryrie rejects the partial rapture view as unbiblical.



QUESTION 10

Which of the following represent Ryrie’s objections to the partial rapture view. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Partial rapturists place the Rapture at the beginning of the Tribulation.
- B. The partial rapture view suggests that only some believers are baptized in the Holy Spirit.
- C. Crowns, not rapture, are the reward for godly living.
- D. The Rapture and the Second Coming occur simultaneously, so it is not possible for any believers to be left behind at the time of the Rapture.

The Pretribulation Rapture View

The two main views on the time of the Rapture are pretribulationism, the view that the rapture will happen before the Tribulation, and posttribulationism, the view that the Rapture will happen after the Tribulation. In chapter 86, Ryrie compares the pretribulationist and posttribulationist positions on three Scripture passages (Rev 3:10; Jn 17:15; and 1 Thess 5:1-11) and finds the posttribulationist arguments to be ineffective. The table below summarizes the pretribulationist and posttribulationist perspectives on key phrases in each of these passages.

| Scripture Passages | Pretribulationist | Posttribulationist |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Revelation 3:10 | "I will keep you from" means "I will keep you out of"; being kept from "the hour of trial" means never entering that time at all. | "I will keep you from" means "I will guard you through"; the phrase "the hour of trial" is not significant. |
| John 17:15 | God will guard believers by removing them from the kingdom of Satan and transferring them into the kingdom of Christ. | God will not remove believers from the earth to protect them from Satan; rather, God will guard them while they remain on the earth. |
| 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 | The Day of the Lord starts at the beginning of the tribulation. | The Day of the Lord happens at the time of the second coming—at the end of the tribulation—and this is when the rapture happens also. |

Ryrie further notes the absence of the church in the chapters of Revelation where the Tribulation is described in great detail (Rev 4–19). If the church is not present in the description of the Tribulation, he asks, how can it be that the church is on earth during that time?

QUESTION 11

What question, according to Ryrie in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, is the watershed between pretribulationism and posttribulationism?

- A. The severity of the tribulation
- B. The location of Armageddon
- C. The population of the millennial kingdom
- D. The beginning of the Day of the Lord

Populating the Millennial Kingdom

One of the major arguments for the pretribulation rapture is that unless there is a time period between the Rapture and the second coming of Christ, there will be no one to populate the Millennium in mortal bodies. If the Rapture and the Second Coming are simultaneous, as posttribulationists believe, then all Christians will receive resurrection bodies at the second coming of Christ. How then can the Millennium be populated by people in mortal bodies? As Ryrie sees it, the answer to this dilemma is that there is a time period between the Rapture and the Second Coming. That way a new generation of believers can come to Christ during the Tribulation; those new believers who survive the Tribulation will then inhabit the coming kingdom.

QUESTION 12

In the prevailing pretribulationist view, who will populate the millennial kingdom? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Carnal believers who were left behind in the Rapture
- B. Faithful Jewish survivors of the Tribulation
- C. Redeemed Gentile survivors of the Tribulation
- D. The “sheep” of Matthew 25

The Midtribulational and Posttribulational Rapture Views

Proponents of each view of the Rapture draw on Scripture to propose a particular chronology of end-times events. One of these views is midtribulationism—the belief that the Rapture will happen midway through the Tribulation, after the first three and a half years. Although this position is usually considered a form of pretribulationism, Ryrie suggests that the arguments in support of it are more akin to posttribulationist arguments. In any case, he rejects the midtribulationist position as an incorrect interpretation of Scriptures about the end times.

Ryrie then takes up the posttribulationist position, presenting then refuting three arguments for that view:

First, posttribulationists say that because the same words are used for both the Rapture and the Second Coming, they must be two facets of the same event. Ryrie agrees that the same words are used for both the Rapture and the Second Coming, but he points out that this doesn't necessarily mean that they are facets of the same event. It could be, instead, that the Rapture and the Second Coming are two different events that share similar characteristics.

Second, posttribulationists point out that Revelation refers to “saints” and “the elect” who are on earth during the Tribulation. They argue that this means that the church remains on earth for the Tribulation rather than being raptured before it begins. Ryrie would identify these saints as people who came to faith after the Rapture and during the Tribulation.

Finally, posttribulationists contend that in 2 Thessalonians 5:1-10, Paul promises that believers will be released from their trials at the Second Coming. Ryrie argues that the posttribulationists misinterpret this passage because they have misconstrued what the passage is about: “The subject of the passage is not release but vindication,” he writes. “Paul did not focus on when or how the persecuted Thessalonians will be relieved of persecution; rather, he assured them that God will judge His enemies and thereby vindicate those who have suffered.” This vindication will indeed happen at the Second Coming.

QUESTION 13

Midtribulationism is generally considered:

- A. A form of pretribulationism
- B. A form of posttribulationism
- C. A form of the partial rapture view
- D. A dangerous heresy

QUESTION 14

Open your Life Notebook. What are Ryrie's main arguments in the support of the pretribulationist viewpoint? Do you think he is convincing? Does he fairly present alternative viewpoints? Based upon your study of these options what is your conclusion about the timing of the Rapture?

QUESTION 15

Open your Life Notebook. Bible-believing Christians differ on the nature and timing of the Rapture but generally agree about certain aspects of eschatology. Which of the concepts in this discussion of end-times events seem to you essential to the faith? Which are matters on which faithful Christians can agree to disagree?

Key Biblical Concepts

Memorize the following key biblical concepts and their related Scripture references. Be prepared to explain how each reference supports its related concept:

1. The church age will end with a time of apostasy—2 Thessalonians 2:1-13.
2. After the time of apostasy, the church will be caught up to heaven in the rapture—1 Thessalonians 4:15-18; Revelation 3:10.
3. A period of tribulation will follow—1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; Revelation 6–19.
4. God will protect the church from the Tribulation—John 17:15; Revelation 3:10.
5. After the Tribulation will be the Second Coming, at which time believers will be vindicated—2 Thessalonians 1:5-10; Revelation 19:11-21.
6. After the second coming of Christ, His thousand-year reign will begin—Revelation 20.

Conclusion

As you have already realized, the study of eschatology is very complex. It requires the knowledge of many different Scriptures and contexts and careful logical and eschatological skills. Whatever we conclude about how events will unfold at the end of time, God's call to us is the same: to live faithfully and to let our light shine before others that they might believe as well.

Lesson 11 Self Check

QUESTION 1

According to Ryrie, the term *last days* refers to:

- A. The Rapture
- B. The Tribulation
- C. The Millennium
- D. The entire period from the first advent to the second advent of Christ

QUESTION 2

The part of Daniel's seventy weeks in which we are living is:

- A. The first week
- B. The sixty-ninth week
- C. The interval between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks
- D. The seventieth week

QUESTION 3

At the beginning of the Tribulation, Israel will sign a treaty with someone who is called:

- A. The little horn
- B. The man of lawlessness
- C. The beast
- D. By all of the above names

QUESTION 4

According to Ryrie the Tribulation begins at:

- A. The apostasy
- B. The rapture of the church
- C. The signing of a treaty or covenant between "the West" and Israel
- D. The abomination of desolation

QUESTION 5

Ryrie teaches that the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments are three separate series of judgments that happen one after the other. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

Regarding the Rapture, postmillennialists teach that:

- A. The Rapture occurs before the Tribulation
- B. There is no distinct rapture
- C. Rapture is a punishment for ungodly living
- D. The Rapture occurs after the Millennium

QUESTION 7

According to Ryrie, advocates of the partial rapture theory believe in salvation by grace and the eternal security of the believer. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

Who, according to Ryrie, gave the greatest initial impetus to the systematization of the pretribulationist view?

- A. John Calvin
- B. Pope John Paul II
- C. John Nelson Darby
- D. Menno Simons

QUESTION 9

When do pretribulationists teach that the judgment of the sheep and the goats will happen?

- A. At the Rapture
- B. During the Tribulation
- C. At the Second Coming
- D. When each individual believer dies and faces judgment

QUESTION 10

Regarding the Rapture and the Second Coming, posttribulationists teach that:

- A. The Rapture happens before the Second Coming
- B. The Second Coming happens before the Rapture
- C. The Rapture is a fanciful pretribulationist proposal that has no support in Scripture
- D. The Rapture and the Second Coming are facets of a single event

Lesson 11 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>End-Times Event</i> |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Thessalonians 4:17 | Rapture |
| 2 Thessalonians 2:3 | Apostasy |
| Revelation 6–19 | Tribulation |
| Revelation 19:11-16 | Second coming |
| Revelation 20 | Millennium |

QUESTION 2:

- A. The return of Christ
- C. The incarnation of Christ
- D. The Trinity

QUESTION 3: *Your answer*

QUESTION 4: False

QUESTION 5: *Your answer*

QUESTION 6:

- C. The interval between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks

QUESTION 7: *Your answer*

QUESTION 8:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Events</i> |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Revelation 16 | Bowl judgments |
| Revelation 6; 8:1 | Seal judgments |
| Revelation 8, 9, and 11 | Trumpet judgments |

QUESTION 9: True

QUESTION 10:

- B. The partial rapture view suggests that only some believers are baptized in the Holy Spirit.
- C. Crowns, not rapture, are the reward for godly living.

QUESTION 11:

- D. The beginning of the Day of the Lord

QUESTION 12:

- B. Faithful Jewish survivors of the Tribulation
- C. Redeemed Gentile survivors of the Tribulation
- D. The “sheep” of Matthew 25

QUESTION 13:

- A. A form of pretribulationism

QUESTION 14: *Your answer*

QUESTION 15: *Your answer*

Lesson 11 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

D. The entire period from the first advent to the second advent of Christ

QUESTION 2:

C. The interval between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks

QUESTION 3:

D. By all of the above names

QUESTION 4:

C. The signing of a treaty or covenant between “the West” and Israel

QUESTION 5: True

QUESTION 6:

B. There is no distinct rapture

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8:

C. John Nelson Darby

QUESTION 9:

C. At the Second Coming

QUESTION 10:

D. The Rapture and the Second Coming are facets of a single event

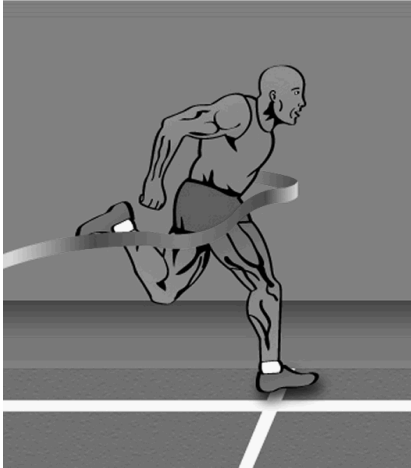
Lesson 12: The Eternal Destiny of Humanity

When Olympic athletes are running to win a medal, they focus their attention on the tape stretched across the finish line. As they strain to carry their weary bodies through the last steps of the race, they lean with all their remaining energy toward that tape, their goal.

What should be our goal as believers running the race of the Christian life? The author of Hebrews tells us:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, we must get rid of every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and run with endurance the race set out for us, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set out for him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. (Heb 12:1-2)

The Tape We Lean Toward is Christ



The tape toward which we lean is Christ Himself, and when we near Him, He is glorified.

Olympic runner Eric Liddell of Scotland knew this. He had trained for years to be in the Olympics, but when his best event, the 100 meters, was scheduled for a Sunday, he refused to violate his understanding of God's prescribed day of rest by participating. Glorifying God was more important to him than any medal.

On the day of a different Olympic race, the 400 meters, someone slipped a piece of paper into Liddell's hand as he headed for the starting blocks. On it were written the words of 1 Samuel 2:30 (NKJV): "Those who honor Me I will honor." Liddell not only won a gold medal for the 400 meters that day, he set a new world record.

Why do we live faithfully? To be rewarded in heaven, or to glorify God? We live faithfully to glorify God. And when we do, our faithfulness will be rewarded in heaven.

In this final lesson of the Doctrine 2 course, we look at the events that will conclude human history and glorify God.

We take a closer look at the Millennium in Topic 1.

In Topic 2 we examine the future judgments: learning who is included in each one, when each will happen, and what its rewards and punishments will involve.

Finally, in Topic 3 we consider the final resurrection and believers' eternal destiny.

Lesson Outline

Topic 1: The Millennium

Topic 2: The Future Judgments

Believers' Works

Old Testament Saints

Saints of the Tribulation

Jewish and Gentile Survivors of the Tribulation

Satan and Fallen Angels
Unsaved Dead

Topic 3: The Resurrection and Eternal Destiny
The Fact of Resurrection
The Order of the Resurrections
Between Death and Resurrection
Universalism
Conditionalism

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you should be able to:

- Describe the purpose and significance of the Millennium
- Tell when each end-times judgment will happen, who will be involved, and what the rewards and punishments will be
- Present the order of the resurrection program
- Describe the state between death and resurrection
- Argue for a biblical position on universalism and conditionalism

Topic 1: The Millennium

If you have not already done so, read Ryrie, chapter 90, “The Millennium.”

When Steven Weinberg, professor of physics at Harvard University, writes of the final significance of life, it sounds as though he is fighting back his own despair.

The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless. The effort to understand the universe is one of the very few things that lifts human life a little above the level of farce, and gives it some of the grace of tragedy. (Steven Weinberg, *The First Three Minutes* [New York: Basic Books, 1977], p. 154)

The biblical answer to Weinberg’s dilemma includes the fact that the universe is not hostile to humans but was created to be ruled by them. The original Edenic commission—that humans would rule the Earth and have dominion over it (Gen 1:28)—is only partially fulfilled in this present world; it will become a greater reality in the coming millennial reign of Christ, as believers rule jointly with Him for one thousand years. It is with the Millennium that Ryrie begins his discussion of the eternal destiny of humanity.

Ryrie opens his chapter on the Millennium by confronting what he considers the error of elevating kingdom ethics over church ethics. He does not specify what constitutes kingdom ethics and what constitutes church ethics, but we know that he is writing from a dispensationalist perspective that considers some New Testament teachings to be applicable during the present age and others to be applicable during the coming millennial kingdom.

The length of the Millennium, Ryrie teaches, will be a literal one thousand years. The government during this period will be a theocracy led by Christ Himself, and its seat will be the city of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem: Seat to the Theocracy led by Christ



QUESTION 1

According to Ryrie in “The Government of the Millennium,” who will be the rulers of the Millennium? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. King David
- B. The twelve apostles
- C. The angels
- D. Faithful believers
- E. Christ Himself

QUESTION 2

Open your Life Notebook. The church looks to the New Testament for instruction in ethics, or the system of moral values according to which believers should live. Dispensationalists separate kingdom ethics (meant for the millennium age) from church ethics (the church’s guide for the present age). Other theologians teach that we should look to the whole of the New Testament for guidance for faithful living in the present age. Do you agree with the dispensationalist position or the non-dispensationalist position? How might your position on this question influence the way you approach the more difficult ethical teachings of Jesus and the New Testament writers?

Topic 2: The Future Judgments

In chapter 91, “Future Judgments” (which you should read now), Ryrie discusses seven different judgments, the judgments of:

- Believers’ works
- Old Testament saints
- Saints who did not survive the tribulation period
- Jewish survivors of the Tribulation
- Gentile survivors of the Tribulation

- Satan and fallen angels
- The unsaved dead

We often think of Judgment Day as a single event in which all of the world’s people from throughout history are judged. But there are two broad categories of judgment, the resurrection to life and the resurrection to death, and there are several phases within each judgment. Furthermore, these judgments do not necessarily occur simultaneously.

Believers’ Works

In many areas of eschatology there is general agreement that certain events will take place, but much disagreement as to the details of exactly how they will come to pass. The topic of the judgment of believers is no exception.

Almost all agree that the believers’ works will be judged, but as to the precise nature of that judgment there is much discussion. For example, the Bible makes it clear that faithful believers will receive rewards of some sort, but scholars disagree about exactly what these rewards will look like and whether believers will be separated into different classes for all eternity on the basis of earthly faithfulness.

Ryrie teaches that the judgment of believers will take place immediately after the rapture of the church. “The nature of the believer’s works will be examined,” he writes, “to distinguish the worthy works from the worthless ones,” and “the outcome will be either reward or deprivation of reward.” Salvation itself is not at stake in this judgment; salvation has nothing to do with the worthiness of our works.

QUESTION 3

Match each Scripture with the reward it describes.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Reward</i> |
|------------------|--|
| Revelation 2:7 | Permission to eat from the tree of life |
| Revelation 2:10 | Authority over the nations |
| Revelation 2:17 | The crown of life |
| Revelation 2:26 | White robes |
| Revelation 3:5 | Hidden manna and a new name written on a white stone |
| Revelation 3:12 | Being made a pillar in the temple of God |
| Revelation 3:21 | A place with Christ on the throne |

QUESTION 4

According to Ryrie, believers who are deprived of rewards at the judgment of believers’ works will experience:

- A. Shame
- B. Physical pain
- C. Damnation
- D. All of the above

Old Testament Saints

The second category of judgment that Ryrie deals with involves the Old Testament saints. He holds the view that Daniel 12:1-3 (as it pertains to the resurrection of the righteous and their rewards) refers to the future judgment of Old Testament saints at the close of the Tribulation. And he equates the resurrection and judgment of the wicked mentioned in Daniel 12:2 with the general judgment of the unrighteous of all time at the Great White Throne judgment after the Millennium (Rev 20:11-15).

On the other hand, many would take this passage as simply referring, in general terms, to the future judgment of all wicked and righteous persons without reference to particular groups or particular times. Many of those holding this viewpoint would also claim that both Old Testament and New Testament saints will all be judged at the same time.

QUESTION 5

According to Ryrie in “The Judgment of the Old Testament Saints,” the resurrection and the judgment of the wicked of all time will occur

- A. At the Rapture
- B. During the Tribulation
- C. At the end of the Tribulation
- D. At the end of the Millennium

Saints of the Tribulation

The third kind of judgment involves the saints of the tribulation period. Revelation 20:4-6 speaks of the martyred saints of the tribulation period who have come to life in order to reign with Christ for a thousand years. As for the identity of those who will reign with Christ in the Millennium, verse 4 has been interpreted in several different ways.

One view is that only those saints who were beheaded (or perhaps martyred in some other way; cf. Rev 6:9) for not worshipping the beast during the Tribulation will be the ones to rule during the Millennium. But the second half of verse 4, concerning those who did not worship the beast, can also be understood as referring to a second group, namely the rest of the faithful saints of the tribulation period who refused to serve the beast (but who were not martyred).

Still another view is that the martyrs represent either all true Christians, or at least all believers who were faithful to Christ to the end of their lives, whether or not their lives ended in martyrdom. This view draws on other passages (e.g., Rev 2:26-28; 3:21; 5:10; 1 Cor 6:2-3) that are interpreted to mean that all faithful believers will take part in the millennial rule of Christ.

QUESTION 6

According to Revelation 20:4-6, which believers from the Tribulation will reign with Christ during the Millennium? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Those who have been martyred by beheading
- B. Those who have not worshiped the beast or his image
- C. Those who have not received the mark of the beast on their forehead and their hand
- D. All who came to belief during the Tribulation and survived until the end of that period

Jewish and Gentile Survivors of the Tribulation

One of the important issues for millennialists is the identity of those who will enter the Millennium with nonresurrected bodies as the initial parents of the millennial population. Ryrie holds that the Jews and Gentiles who are saved during the Tribulation will be judged at the

second coming of Christ, but will not receive their resurrected bodies at that time. They will be the ones who will serve as the parents of the initial millennial population.

Ryrie equates the judgment of Israel in Ezekiel 20:34-38 with the judgments in two of Jesus' parables, the parable of the ten bridesmaids and the parable of the talents, in Matthew 25:1-30. This is the judgment of the Jewish survivors of the Tribulation. Jews who are faithful during the that period will receive the Master's "Well done" and will enter the Millennium in nonresurrected bodies. Those who are not faithful will be consigned to the "outer darkness."

The judgment of the Gentiles of the tribulation period (Mt 25:31-46) also occurs prior to the Millennium, Ryrie teaches. Jesus' "brothers" in this passage are the Jews of the tribulation period. The faithful Gentiles (the sheep) who have treated others well during the Tribulation will enter the Millennium in nonresurrected bodies. The unfaithful Gentiles (the goats) will be judged.

QUESTION 7

Open your Life Notebook. Because we know that we are saved by grace through faith, and not by works, many of us don't know quite what to make of the story of the sheep and the goats at the end of Matthew 25. Ryrie teaches that this judgment on the basis of works is applied only to survivors of the Tribulation. What, then, is the meaning of the story for the rest of us? What lessons for Christian living can you discern from this passage?

Satan and Fallen Angels

Not much is said in the New Testament concerning the judgment of Satan and his angels other than that at the conclusion of the Millennium they will be thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:10). This is apparently the "judgment of the great day" referred to in Jude 6.

In his book detailing his exhaustive study of Scriptures related to the final judgments, *The Fire That Consumes*, Edward W. Fudge argues that the eternal fire of Matthew 25:41, into which the unsaved will be thrown along with Satan and his angels, consumes the people consigned to it, so that they (unlike Satan and his angels—see Rev 20:10) are not consciously suffering this horrible punishment for their sins forever. In other words, though the fire itself will be eternal, people's suffering in it will not be.

QUESTION 8

Open your Life Notebook. Make a list of strengths and weaknesses of Edward Fudge's argument about the lake of fire on the basis of biblical passages about God's judgment.

Unsaved Dead

At the end of the Millennium, everyone who has died without believing in Christ will be gathered before the Great White Throne for judgment. Christ will open the Book of Life, and it will not contain the name of anyone gathered before Him at this time. A second book will be opened that will contain evidence that all those gathered deserve eternal condemnation and that also, Ryrie



explains, might be used to determine degrees of punishment. All of the people at the Great White Throne judgment will be cast into the lake of fire.

QUESTION 9

According to Ryrie in “The Judgment of Gentile Survivors of the Tribulation,” “the dead” in Revelation 20:11-15 (the Great White Throne passage) are all who:

- A. Were left on earth at the Rapture
- B. Died before the Tribulation
- C. Died during the Tribulation
- D. Died in history without having been saved

Topic 3: The Resurrection and Eternal Destiny

In this last chapter of Ryrie, chapter 92, “Resurrection and Eternal Destiny,” we learn about what happens to us between our death and the resurrection of our bodies and what occurs during the resurrections of the people who have lived on earth through the ages. We also consider two false teachings about salvation and life in eternity: universalism and conditionalism.

The Fact of Resurrection

The resurrection of the body is a distinctively Christian doctrine. Both the body and the soul/spirit will be resurrected, not just the immaterial part of each person. The central New Testament passage about the resurrection is 1 Corinthians 15.

There are many things we do not understand about the resurrected body. The Scriptures do not tell us, for example, if an infant will have an infant body or whether our parents will bear the marks of age. We do know, however, that Christ was recognizable to His disciples and that our body will be like His in His resurrection (Phil 3:21). Therefore, it seems reasonable to believe that there will be some correspondence in appearance between our current body and our future one.

There are four basic views regarding the future of the body. Many believe that death is simply cessation of existence, that there is nothing after death. The ancient Greeks believed in the immortality of the soul but not of the body. The body was considered a burden that would one day be done away with. In Hinduism and Buddhism, the soul may inhabit a succession of bodies. In these systems, the best thing that can happen to the soul is for it to be released from the cycle and to merge into the universal spirit or soul, like a drop of water merges into the ocean. Only in Christianity do we have the distinctive doctrine of the resurrection of a glorious and transformed body.

QUESTION 10

Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-19. Open your Life Notebook. Why, according to Paul, is belief in the resurrection essential to Christian faith?

The Order of the Resurrections

Our key to understanding resurrections is 1 Corinthians 15:20-24, which presents a review of these events. The order in which people will be raised is this:

1. Christ (1 Cor 15:23).
2. Some saints in Jerusalem at Christ’s resurrection (Mt 27:52-53). Many argue that this was a resuscitation—that is, these saints were only resuscitated in their earthly bodies rather than resurrected in imperishable bodies, so they would have died again. Others consider this to have been an actual resurrection (with the saints apparently following Christ in ascension) that fulfills the feast of first fruits (Lev 23:9-14).
3. Church-age believers. This is the Rapture, in which departed saints receive resurrection bodies and living saints are transformed in the air (1 Cor 15:35-58; 1 Thess 4:13-18).

4. Old Testament saints (Job 19:25-26; Dan 12:1). Because these verses are addressed to Old Testament saints, this resurrection concerns them.
5. Tribulation saints (Rev 20:4). Revelation 20:5 informs us that this event is the completion of the first resurrection.
6. Millennial saints? Scripture is silent on this subject.
7. Unbelievers (Rev 20:5, 11-15). This is the damnation to eternal death.

QUESTION 11

Match the person or group with the place that person or group holds in the order of resurrections.

| <i>Person or Group</i> | <i>Place in Order</i> |
|---|-----------------------|
| Christ | Fifth |
| Unbelievers | Sixth |
| Old Testament saints | Fourth |
| Church-age believers | Third |
| Some saints of Jerusalem at the time of Christ's resurrection | Second |
| Tribulation saints | First |

Between Death and Resurrection

Intermediate state is a theological term used to describe the state of the soul (the immaterial part of a person) between death and resurrection. There is little debate as to where the unredeemed go between death and resurrection. Both the Old and New Testaments say that their destiny is Hades (Lk 16:23). There is some question, however, about the nature of the intermediate state in which the redeemed await the final resurrection of their bodies at the second coming of Christ.

Ryrie discusses two views on the intermediate state. One view is that all of the redeemed go immediately into the presence of the Lord at the time of their death. The other is that the redeemed (like the unredeemed) go to a place called Sheol, which is divided into two sections: Hades for the unredeemed and Paradise for the redeemed. Ryrie's position is that the redeemed go immediately into Christ's presence in heaven, where they wait for the resurrection of their bodies, which will occur at the time of Christ's second coming.

QUESTION 12

Read 1 Corinthians 15:54-58. Open your Life Notebook. How does the doctrine of resurrection help us to know that our labor for the Lord is not in vain? Can you tell the story of a time when this knowledge helped you to be "steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord"?

Universalism

Origen (AD 190–AD 250) was one of the first proponents of universalism, the doctrine that eventually all people will be saved. He postulated that after a certain period of personal anguish over their sins, the formerly wicked would be purified and enter into eternal life.

True universalists believe that those who never heard the gospel during their lifetime will hear after death and respond positively. And even those who heard during their lifetime and rejected the claims of Christ will be confronted with the gospel again and will eventually repent and accept Christ as their Savior.

Universalists emphasize that God is a God of love and that even though He is also a God of justice and threatened eternal punishment in the Scriptures, He will eventually relent and forgive everyone. He will bestow the grace necessary to melt the hardest of hearts and will grant the faith necessary for all to believe. Mercy will eventually triumph over punishment, and heaven will eliminate hell.

Opponents of universalism see passages like Philippians 2:10-11 and Colossians 1:19-20 as referring to all things being brought into subjection to God. Rebels will be forced to bow to God even though they will remain unrepentant in their hearts.

Universalism's opponents also point out that verses that seem to suggest that all will be saved (for example, 1 Tim 4:10; Heb 2:9; Rom 11:32) merely say that salvation will be offered to all (that is, that Christ died to make salvation available to all), not that all will receive the offer. Only those who believe will be saved.

QUESTION 13

According to Ryrie, Karl Barth taught

- A. Conditionalism
- B. Universal election
- C. Universal reconciliation of all people with God
- D. Limited atonement

Conditionalism

Proponents of conditionalism, also known as annihilationism, believe that after judgment the condemned will be annihilated and pass out of existence. They interpret Scripture passages on eternal punishment to mean that the effects of the punishment are eternal—that is, that the unsaved are eliminated from existence forever. The lake of fire, they teach, will consume the condemned in an instant, destroying them for eternity.

A notion that often underlies this doctrine is that it would be unjust for God to allow sinners to suffer for all of eternity for a finite number of sins committed in time. Thus conditionalists appeal to God's justice as well as God's love.

Conditionalists also see the existence of an eternal hell as a permanent blot on God's beautiful and otherwise perfect creation. Many view this as resulting in an eternal dualism of good and evil that would detract from God's perfect rule.

One of the passages often quoted to counter conditionalism is Matthew 25:46. Here there appears to be a clear parallelism between eternal punishment and eternal life (the Greek word translated "eternal" is the same in both cases). Conditionalists claim that the eternality of the punishment mentioned in the first part of the verse is different from that mentioned in the second part. The punishment is everlasting only in the sense that its results (the elimination of the wicked) continue to exist forever. On the other hand, the righteous in the second part of the verse are eternally conscious of the life they will enjoy in heaven forever. If eternal punishment and eternal life are taken as true parallels, this verse presents a problem for the annihilationalist.

Also, when Jesus speaks of hell in Matthew 13:42, He says, "in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The clear implication is that the wicked in hell will experience suffering of some sort that does not end instantly. Speaking of those who worshipped the beast during the Tribulation, John says that "the smoke from their torment will go up forever and ever, ... and [they] have no rest day or night" (Rev 14:11). Revelation 20:10 says that Satan, the beast, and the false prophet will be "tormented there day and night forever and ever" (though it does not say this of unbelievers of the church age).

The length of time unbelievers will suffer torment is a matter of disagreement among evangelical theologians. An excellent book on the subject is *Two Views of Hell*, by conditionalist Edward W. Fudge and traditionalist Robert A. Peterson, both evangelicals in the United States. In a description of the book on its Web site, the publisher (InterVarsity Press) writes this about the controversy:

Hell is real and terrible. It is the fate of those who reject God. Evangelicals agree about this unhappy truth. Yet on some questions about hell disagreements arise. Some evangelicals believe the wicked will experience perpetual, conscious torment after death. Others argue that the wicked will experience a limited period of conscious punishment and then they will cease to exist.
(<http://www.ivpress.com/cgi-ivpress/book.pl/code=2255>)

Like other evangelicals, however, Fudge and Peterson agree about “the need for faithful proclamation of the gospel of deliverance from sin and death.”

QUESTION 14

Open your Life Notebook. God is a God of both love and justice. Which position on hell (conditionalism or traditionalism) is more in keeping with Scriptures about eternal punishment and about God’s love and justice? Why do you think so?

Key Biblical Concepts

1. Believers’ works will be judged—1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10.
2. Old Testament saints will be resurrected and judged (though this passage may refer to the resurrection and rewarding of the Jewish believers of the tribulation period)—Daniel 12:1-3.
3. The saints who died during the Tribulation will be resurrected—Revelation 20:4-6.
4. Jewish survivors of the Tribulation will be judged—Ezekiel 20:34-38; Matthew 25:1-30.
5. Gentile survivors of the Tribulation will be judged—Matthew 25:31-46.
6. Satan and his angels will be thrown into the lake of fire—Revelation 20:10.
7. Unbelievers of all time will be judged before the Great White Throne—John 5:29; Revelation 20:11-15.
8. All who have died will one day be resurrected—1 Corinthians 15:12-58.
9. When believers die they go immediately into the Lord’s presence—Luke 23:43.

Conclusion

You now have reached the conclusion of many hours of study of the doctrines of the Christian faith. This is an impressive achievement—congratulations! In these two courses you have learned about nearly every major doctrine of the faith, yet this is only the beginning. The Bible is a goldmine of knowledge, a treasure house of truth. We wish you well as you pursue your study of the Word of God. Our sincere prayer is that you will understand the Bible better now, be able to apply it more accurately, and, most of all, come to know the God of the Bible more intimately. May the Lord continue to bless you in His matchless grace as you press on toward the mark!

Lesson 12 Self Check

QUESTION 1

All of the people living during the Millennium will willingly give their allegiance to Christ. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

According to Ryrie, the judgment of believers' works will happen _____.

- A. At the midpoint of the Tribulation
- B. During the separation of the sheep from the goats
- C. Immediately after the Rapture
- D. In the first year of the Millennium

QUESTION 3

Ryrie states that it is possible that Daniel 12:1-3 refers only to the resurrection and judgment of Jewish believers of the tribulation period. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

The phrase "judgment was given to them" in Revelation 20:4 refers to:

- A. The judgment that will befall believers who took the mark of the beast
- B. The judgment that will befall believers who stood by while others were persecuted during the tribulation
- C. The activity of the saints performing the role of judges in the millennial government
- D. The activity of the saints judging nonbelievers during the Great White Throne judgment

QUESTION 5

According to Ryrie, the judgment of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25 _____.

- A. Is when every believer's works will be weighed on God's scales of justice
- B. Is the judgment of Gentile tribulation survivors on the basis of how they treated Jewish people
- C. Is the judgment of Jewish tribulation survivors on the basis of how they treated Gentile people
- D. Is a noncanonical portion of Scripture that was added later by people who taught that we are saved by our works

QUESTION 6

At the final resurrection, only the soul is raised to live in eternity with God because the body is perishable. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

Who will one day be resurrected?

- A. Only believers who died before the Rapture
- B. Only the dead saints of Old Testament times
- C. Only the martyrs of the tribulation period
- D. All people who have lived at all times in history

QUESTION 8

Ryrie teaches that when the redeemed die they go immediately to:

- A. Sheol
- B. Heaven
- C. Purgatory
- D. Limbo

QUESTION 9

Universalism is the teaching that:

- A. All people will eventually be saved and enjoy eternity in God's presence
- B. God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are not three persons but one person
- C. Christ died for all people even though all will not believe in Him
- D. God, His people, and the universe are one

QUESTION 10

Conditionalists teach that:

- A. Our salvation is conditioned on the holiness of our life after we profess faith in Christ
- B. There is no such thing as hell
- C. After death, unbelievers will suffer torment for a time, then will be annihilated
- D. Christ offers salvation only to those who have been baptized

Unit Four Exam

QUESTION 1

The two kinds of prophecy have been called forthtelling (challenging God's people to live according to God's ways) and foretelling (telling what will happen in the future as a result of God's covenant with humanity). *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

Historically, postmillennialism has led to:

- A. The attitude that we don't need to worry about the future because the end is near
- B. Rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity
- C. An overly optimistic view of human nature
- D. Fatalism

QUESTION 3

Ryrie considers amillennialists to be:

- A. Absolutely correct
- B. In error although many of them hold a high view of Scripture
- C. Dangerously heretical
- D. Overly literalistic interpreters of Scripture

QUESTION 4

Amillennialists' dual hermeneutic involves:

- A. One interpretive system for prophecy and another for the rest of Scripture
- B. A separation between kingdom ethics and church ethics
- C. The belief that personhood consists in the body and the spirit
- D. A reduction of the three persons of the Trinity to only two

QUESTION 5

Christian apologists of the early church were:

- A. Amillennialists
- B. Premillennialists
- C. Postmillennialists
- D. Antimillennialists

QUESTION 6

The centerpiece of premillennialism is the teaching that the Great White Throne of judgment precedes the Millennium. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

Regarding the conditions for God's fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant, Ryrie teaches:

- A. God would fulfill the covenant if Abraham was faithful.
- B. God would fulfill the covenant if the nation of Israel was faithful.
- C. God will fulfill the covenant if the church is faithful.
- D. There are no conditions attached to the covenant.

QUESTION 8

The Davidic/messianic kingdom:

- A. Existed at the time of King David's rule
- B. Existed during Christ's earthly life
- C. Exists now within the church
- D. Will exist during the Millennium

QUESTION 9

The partial rapture view is that the body will be raptured but the soul/spirit will remain on earth.
True or False?

QUESTION 10

The church age will end with:

- A. A time of worldwide revival of devotion to God
- B. A time of growing apostasy
- C. The Great White Throne judgment
- D. The judgment of the sheep and the goats

QUESTION 11

The part of Daniel's seventy weeks in which we are living is

- A. The first week
- B. The sixty-ninth week
- C. The interval between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks
- D. The seventieth week

QUESTION 12

Regarding His second coming, Jesus teaches that:

- A. No one knows when it will happen
- B. We should study international events for signs of His imminent arrival
- C. We must make ourselves ready by deepening our knowledge of prophecy
- D. It already happened in His resurrection

QUESTION 13

Ryrie teaches that carnal believers will be left behind in the Rapture. *True or False?*

QUESTION 14

Pretribulationists teach that:

- A. The Millennium precedes the Tribulation
- B. The end-times judgments precede the Tribulation
- C. The Rapture precedes the Tribulation
- D. No believers will survive the Tribulation

QUESTION 15

Midtribulationism is generally considered:

- A. A form of pretribulationism
- B. A form of posttribulationism
- C. A form of the partial rapture view
- D. A dangerous heresy

QUESTION 16

Posttribulationists teach that the Rapture and the Second Coming are two facets of the same event. *True or False?*

QUESTION 17

Ryrie teaches that the form of government during the Millennium will be:

- A. A monarchy ruled by Christ and the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel
- B. An oligarchy ruled by the twelve apostles
- C. A democracy ruled by the people
- D. A theocracy ruled by Christ

QUESTION 18

The last judgment is that of:

- A. Believers' works
- B. The unsaved dead
- C. The millennial saints
- D. Satan and the fallen angels

QUESTION 19

According to Ryrie, the millennial kingdom will be populated by:

- A. Carnal Christians who were left behind in the Rapture
- B. All of the people living at the end of church age
- C. People who were saved during the Tribulation
- D. Us; we are living in the Millennium right now

QUESTION 20

According to Ryrie, the judgment of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25

- A. Is when every believer's works will be weighed on God's scales of justice
- B. Is the judgment of Gentile survivors of the Tribulation on the basis of how they treated Jewish people during that time
- C. Is the judgment of Jewish survivors of the Tribulation on the basis of how they treated Gentile people during that time
- D. Is a noncanonical portion of Scripture that was added later by people who taught that we are our saved by our works

QUESTION 21

The Great White Throne judgment is when:

- A. The goats are separated from the sheep
- B. Believers' works are judged
- C. Believers receive their resurrected bodies
- D. Unbelievers are judged

QUESTION 22

Because the body is perishable, only the immaterial part of believers will spend eternity with Christ in heaven. *True or False?*

QUESTION 23

The intermediate state is:

- A. The time between hearing the gospel and coming to belief
- B. The time between believers' deaths and their resurrections
- C. The time in purgatory where believers are purified of their sins before entering Christ's presence
- D. The state of the resurrected body

QUESTION 24

Universalism is the teaching that

- A. All people will eventually be saved and enjoy eternity in God's presence
- B. God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are not three persons but one person
- C. Christ died for all people even though all will not believe in Him
- D. God, His people, and the universe are one

QUESTION 25

Conditionalists teach that

- A. Our salvation depends on the holiness of our life after we profess faith in Christ
- B. There is no such thing as hell
- C. After death, unbelievers will suffer torment for a time, then will be annihilated
- D. Christ offers salvation only to those who have been baptized

Lesson 12 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

- A. King David
- B. The twelve apostles
- D. Faithful believers
- E. Christ Himself

QUESTION 2: *Your answer*

QUESTION 3:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Reward</i> |
|------------------|--|
| Revelation 2:7 | Permission to eat from the tree of life |
| Revelation 2:10 | The crown of life |
| Revelation 2:17 | Hidden manna and a new name written on a white stone |
| Revelation 2:26 | Authority over the nations |
| Revelation 3:5 | White robes |
| Revelation 3:12 | Being made a pillar in the temple of God |
| Revelation 3:21 | A place with Christ on the throne |

QUESTION 4:

- A. Shame

QUESTION 5:

- D. At the end of the Millennium

QUESTION 6:

- A. Those who have been martyred by beheading
- B. Those who have not worshiped the beast or his image
- C. Those who have not received the mark of the beast on their forehead and their hand

QUESTION 7: *Your answer*

QUESTION 8: *Your answer*

QUESTION 9:

- D. Died in history without having been saved

QUESTION 10: *Your answer*

QUESTION 11:

| <i>Person or Group</i> | <i>Place in Order</i> |
|---|-----------------------|
| Christ | First |
| Unbelievers | Sixth |
| Old Testament saints | Fourth |
| Church-age believers | Third |
| Some saints of Jerusalem at the time of Christ's resurrection | Second |
| Tribulation saints | Fifth |

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13:

- B. Universal election

QUESTION 14: *Your answer*

Lesson 12 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: False

QUESTION 2:

C. Immediately after the rapture

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4:

C. The activity of the saints performing the role of judges in the millennial government

QUESTION 5:

B. Is the judgment of Gentile tribulation survivors on the basis of how they treated Jewish people

QUESTION 6: False

QUESTION 7:

D. All people who have lived at all times in history

QUESTION 8:

B. Heaven

QUESTION 9:

A. All people will eventually be saved and enjoy eternity in God's presence

QUESTION 10:

C. After death, unbelievers will suffer torment for a time, then will be annihilated

Unit Four Exam Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2:

C. An overly optimistic view of human nature

QUESTION 3:

B. In error although many of them hold a high view of Scripture

QUESTION 4:

A. One interpretive system for prophecy and another for the rest of Scripture

QUESTION 5:

B. Premillennialists

QUESTION 6: False

QUESTION 7:

D. There are no conditions attached to the covenant

QUESTION 8:

D. Will exist during the Millennium

QUESTION 9: False

QUESTION 10:

B. A time of growing apostasy

QUESTION 11:

C. The interval between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks

QUESTION 12:

A. No one knows when it will happen

QUESTION 13: False

QUESTION 14:

C. The Rapture precedes the Tribulation

QUESTION 15:

A. A form of pretribulationism

QUESTION 16: True

QUESTION 17:

D. A theocracy ruled by Christ

QUESTION 18:

B. The unsaved dead

QUESTION 19:

C. People who were saved during the Tribulation

QUESTION 20:

B. Is the judgment of Gentile survivors of the Tribulation on the basis of how they treated Jewish people during that time

QUESTION 21:

D. Unbelievers are judged

QUESTION 22: False

QUESTION 23:

B. The time between believers' deaths and their resurrections

QUESTION 24:

A. All people will eventually be saved and enjoy eternity in God's presence

QUESTION 25:

C. After death, unbelievers will suffer torment for a time, and then will be annihilated

Basic Theology

Charles C. Ryrie

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CHARLES C. RYRIE

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ISBN: 0-8024-2734-0

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Printed in the United States of America

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Section IX—Jesus Christ Our Lord

Chapter 40: The Preincarnate Christ

The doctrine of Christ may include both a study of His person and His work. However, since His principal work was the Atonement, soteriology is usually separated from Christology. His other works are normally considered under Christology.

The doctrine can be organized more or less chronologically. A study of the preincarnate Christ comes first. This would be followed by a section on Christ in His humiliation, i.e., during His earthly life. (It would be erroneous to call this section Christ Incarnate, since the Incarnation continues beyond His earthly life.) Then would come a study of His present and future ministries. The major theological problems appear in the period of Christ's humiliation while in an earthly body, problems like the meaning of kenosis, the relation of His two natures, and impeccability.

The doctrine of the person of Christ is crucial to the Christian faith. It is basic to soteriology, for if our Lord was not what He claimed to be, then His atonement was a deficient, not sufficient, payment for sin.

I. THE PREEXISTENCE OF THE PREINCARNATE CHRIST

A. *The Meaning of Preexistence*

Preexistence of Christ means that He existed before His birth. For some writers it means that He existed before Creation and before time. But strictly speaking, preexistence is not synonymous with eternity. Practically speaking, they stand for a similar concept, for a denial of preexistence almost always includes a denial of eternity and vice versa.

B. *The Importance of Preexistence*

1. *At birth.* If Christ came into existence at His birth, then no eternal Trinity exists.
2. *Not God.* If Christ was not preexistent then He could not be God, because, among other attributes, God is eternal.
3. *Liar.* If Christ was not preexistent then He lied, because He claimed to be. Then the question arises, what else did He lie about?

C. *The Evidence for Preexistence*

1. *His heavenly origin.* Verses that claim heavenly origin for Christ attest to preexistence before birth. Note especially John 3:13; 31.
2. *His work as Creator.* If Christ was involved in creating, then, of course, He had to exist before Creation. See John 1:3; Colossians 1:16; and Hebrews 1:2.
3. *His relationship with God.* He claimed equality of nature with God (John 10:30). He claimed equal glory with the Father before the world began (John 17:5). Paul also claimed Christ had the same nature as God (Phil. 2:6). These passages are evidences for eternity as well.
4. *His attributes.* He claimed full Deity, and others attested to it. These claims will be examined later, but for now Colossians 2:9 will suffice—in Christ dwells all the fullness of Deity.
5. *His relation to John the Baptist.* Though John was born before Jesus, John acknowledged that Jesus existed before him (John 1:15, 30, literally “first of me” but referring to preexistence as the basis for Christ's superiority over John).

II. THE ETERNITY OF THE PREINCARNATE CHRIST

A. *The Meaning of Eternality*

Eternality means not only that Christ existed before His birth or even before Creation but that He existed always, eternally. Usually eternity and preexistence stand or fall together, though Arius taught preexistence of the Son but not His eternity. He insisted that if Christ was the Only Begotten He must have had a beginning. Jehovah's Witnesses today have an Arian-like Christology, which denies the eternity of the Logos.

B. *The Importance of Eternality*

If eternity is denied then (a) there is no Trinity, (b) Christ does not possess full Deity, and (c) He lied.

C. *The Evidence for Eternality*

His relationship with God as of the same essence demonstrates eternity, since God is eternal. Notice the word *charakter* in Hebrews 1:3, which indicates that Christ is the exact representation of God's nature or essence.

Possession of divine attributes includes the attribute of eternity.

The Old Testament prophets claimed eternity for Messiah. Micah said that His goings forth are from the days of eternity (Micah 5:2; see Hab. 1:12). Though the words can mean "from the days of old," that is, from earliest times, they can also mean from eternity. Isaiah 9:6, "Eternal Father," likely refers to Christ as a Father to His people always (thus it only looks forward, not backward to eternity past).

Christ claimed eternity when He declared, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58). This is more than limited existence before Abraham was born because He said "I am." "I was" might indicate that He existed for several centuries before Abraham, but I am (eimi) states eternity.

John's plain statement was that Christ is God (John 1:1). "The Word was God." Not the Word was divine (as in Moffatt and Goodspeed) since that would require theios (as in Acts 17:29 and 2 Pet. 1:3). Nor does John say that the Word was a god (as Jehovah's Witnesses translate it). Definite nouns that precede the verb, as here, regularly lack the definite article.¹

III. THE ACTIVITY OF THE PREINCARNATE CHRIST

A. *His Activity as Creator*

1. *The extent of it.* He was involved in the Creation of all things (John 1:3; Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2). This demonstrates His power (to be able to create all things).

2. *The purpose of it.* All things were created for Him (Col. 1:16), meaning for the purpose of achieving His ends in the creation. This demonstrates His prerogative (to have creation serve His purposes).

3. *The continuation of it.* He also now sustains His creation, for in Him all things hold together (Col. 1:17). This demonstrates His presence (continuing to sustain creation).

B. *His Activity as Angel*

1. *His identity as Angel of Yahweh.* Clearly the Angel of Yahweh is a self-manifestation of Yahweh, for He speaks as God, identifies Himself with God, and claims to exercise the prerogatives of God (Gen. 16:7–14; 21:17–18; 22:11–18; 31:11–13; Exod. 3:2; Judg. 2:1–4; 5:23; 6:11–22; 13:3–22; 2 Sam. 24:16; Zech. 1:12; 3:1; 12:8). Yet He is distinguished from Yahweh (Gen. 24:7; Zech. 1:12–13). That He is a Member of the Trinity is indicated by the fact that the

appearances of the Angel of Yahweh cease after the Incarnation. This is confirmed by the Old Testament statement that the Angel of God accompanied Israel when they left Egypt (Exod. 14:19; cf. Exod. 23:20) and the New Testament statement that the Rock who followed Israel was Christ (1 Cor. 10:4).

2. *His ministries as Angel of Yahweh.* (1) He often acted as messenger to various people (Gen. 16:7–14; 22:11–18; 31:11–13). (2) He guided and protected Israel (Exod. 14:19; 23:20; 2 Kings 19:35). (3) He was the instrument of judgment on Israel when God sent a pestilence on the people (1 Chron. 21:1–27). (4) He was the agent of refreshment to Elijah (1 Kings 19:5–7).

C. His Other Activities

No other historical activities of Christ are revealed as happening in His preincarnate state. His work as Messiah required the Incarnation, though it was predicted in the Old Testament. Likewise His work as Savior necessitated the Incarnation. The Old Testament does not give specific revelation of the second person as Savior, only God as Savior. To have done so would also have required an Old Testament revelation of the Trinity. Rather that period is called “the times of ignorance” (Acts 17:30).

Though our Lord was not inactive in His preincarnate state, His greatest works necessitated the Incarnation. Nevertheless, He stands magnificent in His person as the eternal God, but, as it were, in the shadows, waiting the spotlight of the Incarnation to reveal His glory and grace (John 1:17; Titus 2:11).

NOTE

1. See Leon Morris, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 77n.

Chapter 41: The Incarnation of Christ

I. THE MEANING OF INCARNATION

Though the word itself does not appear in Scripture, its components (“in” and “flesh”) do. John wrote that the Word became flesh (John 1:14). He also wrote of Jesus coming in the flesh (1 John 4:2; 2 John 7). By this he meant that the eternal second person of the Trinity took on Himself humanity. He did not possess humanity until the birth, since the Lord became flesh (*egeneto*, John 1:14, in contrast to the four occurrences of *en* in John 1:1–2¹). However, His humanity was sinless, a fact Paul guards by writing that He came “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3).

II. THE PREDICTIONS OF INCARNATION

A. Prediction of the God-Man

In this prophecy concerning Messiah in Isaiah 9:6; Isaiah foretold the union of Deity and humanity in Him. He said that a child would be born (a reference to humanity) and that His character would be such that He may be designated as the Mighty God (*el gibbor*, a reference to Deity). Isaiah uses *el* only in reference to God (Isaiah 31:3); *gibbor* means hero. Thus the phrase means a hero whose chief characteristic is that He is God. Thus in this single verse both the humanity and deity of our Lord are predicted.¹

The name Immanuel reveals the same truth about the Lord (Isa. 7:14). This means more than God’s presence with His people in His providential dealings. It means in this text that the very presence of the virgin-born Child brings God to His people.²

B. Prediction of the Virgin Birth (Isa. 7:14)

In this prophecy Isaiah foretold the means of the Incarnation as being a virgin birth. Liberals have challenged the translation “virgin” for the Hebrew word *almah*, stating that *bethulah* should have been used if Isaiah unmistakably meant virgin. It is true that *almah* means a sexually mature, marriageable maiden, and *bethulah* means a separated woman, usually a virgin, but not always (Esther 2:17; Ezek. 23:3; Joel 1:8). Thus it is not true to say, as the critics do, that *bethulah* would have been a more precise word to use if Isaiah clearly meant virgin.

Apparently *almah* is not a technical term for virgin but refers to a young woman, one of whose characteristics is virginity (Gen. 24:43). There is no instance where it can be proved that *almah* designates a young woman who is not a virgin. The Septuagint translates it by *parthenos* in two of its seven occurrences, as does Matthew 1:23. Thus the word means a young woman of marriageable age, one of whose characteristics was virginity, and necessarily so in the case of the fulfillment of this prophecy in Christ’s birth.

Who is the virgin referred to in the prophecy? The interpretations fall into three basic categories. (1) The nonmessianic interpretation that understands the prophecy fulfilled by some unknown woman in the past who may or may not have been a virgin. How then can verse 23 be explained? (2) The strictly messianic interpretation that sees the prophecy referring only to Mary with no reference to any maiden of Isaiah’s time. Unquestionably it does refer to Mary (Matt. 1:23), but whether to her only is the question. Without a reference to someone in Isaiah’s time what value would the sign have been to Ahaz? (3) The prophecy refers both to someone in Isaiah’s day and to Mary in the future.

According to this third interpretation, who would be the maiden in Isaiah’s day? Again there are three answers: (a) Ahaz’s wife; (b) some unknown maiden in Israel; or (c) Isaiah’s second wife to whom he was not yet married when the prophecy was given. If (a) is true then the son was Hezekiah. If (b) is true, then the son is unknown. If (c) is true the son was either Maher-shalal-

hash-baz (Isa. 8:3) or another unmentioned son of Isaiah. In this view Isaiah's first wife, the mother of Shear-jashub (Isa. 7:3) had already died.

Matthew unambiguously sees Christ as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. Of this there can be no question. And both the strictly messianic and the double-reference views acknowledge that.

III. THE MEANS OF INCARNATION

A. The Evidence

The Virgin Birth was the means of the Incarnation. The Incarnation, once accomplished, is a lasting state for our Lord. It began at His birth and continues (albeit in a resurrection body now) forever. In contrast to the Incarnation, the Virgin Birth was an event that lasted only a matter of hours.

When Gabriel announced to Mary that she would bear the Messiah, she protested that she would need a husband. The angel's response was, in essence, you won't need a husband, because the Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you (Luke 1:35). The statement emphasizes more the fact of divine generation of the Child than the method.

Matthew carefully guarded the fact of the Virgin Birth in the genealogical table of our Lord (Matt. 1:16). He recorded that Joseph was the husband of Mary, but that it was by Mary only that Jesus was born. The pronoun "by whom" is feminine singular, indicating clearly that Jesus was born of Mary only and not of Mary and Joseph.

Whether Galatians 4:4, "born of a woman," indicates the Virgin Birth or not is unclear. It may simply mean that Christ assumed humanity just like He assumed a position under the Law, as the next phrase says. Or it might refer to the Virgin Birth since the verb is not the regular verb for "be born" but the same verb as in John 1:14 that refers to the Incarnation, though not to the Virgin Birth as such. However, the passages in Isaiah, Matthew, and Luke are clear.

What was the purpose of the Virgin Birth? It need not be the necessary means of preserving Christ sinless, since God could have overshadowed two parents so as to protect the baby's sinlessness had He so desired. It served as a sign of the uniqueness of the person who was born. How early and how widely the fact was known among the contemporaries of Christ we cannot say. Of course, when Matthew and Luke were written it was known, and from that time on the early church regarded it as a crucial doctrine, and by the early second century an established doctrine.³

B. The Genealogies

Matthew and Luke both trace the genealogy of the virgin-born Son. Matthew contains forty-one selected names, whereas Luke includes seventy-seven. Matthew traces the King back to Abraham; Luke goes back to Adam. Matthew's list is commonly regarded as Joseph's line and Luke's, Mary's.

There has been much discussion particularly over the question of whether Luke's genealogy is that of Jesus through Mary His mother. Alfred Plummer raised this objection to that view: "It is probable that so obvious a solution, as that one was the pedigree of Joseph and the other the pedigree of Mary, would have been very soon advocated, if there had been any reason (excepting the difficulty) for adopting it. But this solution is not suggested by anyone until Amnius of Viterbo propounded it, ca. A.D. 1490."⁴

On the other side, F. Godet argued effectively for Mary's lineage in Luke on the basis of the absence of the article before Joseph (Luke 3:23), which links Jesus directly with Eli and seemingly puts Joseph out of the genealogical line altogether.⁵

Various explanations are given for both genealogies being Joseph's line. One is that Matthan and Matthat are the same person, making Jacob and Eli brothers and making Joseph the son of Eli and the nephew of Jacob. If Jacob died without heirs his nephew Joseph would have become the heir, or possibly Joseph became the heir of Jacob because Eli (assuming that his wife had died) married Jacob's widow according to the custom of levirate marriage.⁶

A strong argument for the Lucan genealogy being Mary's relates to the curse placed on Jehoiachin (Jeconiah or Coniah) in Jeremiah 22:30. He was pronounced "childless," which is explained in the verse as meaning no physical descendant of his would prosperously reign on the throne of David. (He apparently did have seven sons, though perhaps adopted, 1 Chron. 3:17–18.) Thus Jesus could not expect to be a ruling king (though He had the legal right) if He were a blood descendant of Joseph, who was a descendant of Coniah. Therefore the virgin birth was necessary to free Him from the line of the curse.⁷ However, this could also be accomplished if Jesus is linked to Joseph (not as His natural father, of course) through Nathan rather than Solomon (as Luke might be indicating).

It has also been suggested that the curse on Coniah was ended by God's choosing and exalting Zerubbabel (Hag. 2:23). Making him "as a signet" elevated him to a place of authority, and choosing him transferred to Zerubbabel and his family among David's descendants the messianic promise. Zerubbabel's name does appear in both the Matthew and Luke genealogies.

In any case Luke carefully avoided the impression that Jesus might be the natural son of Joseph; yet he preserved His kingly claims by not linking Him solely to His mother (since the claim passed through the male members). Never in His lifetime did anyone dispute Jesus' claim to the throne of David.

IV. THE PURPOSES OF THE INCARNATION

Why did God send His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh? The Scriptures give several answers to that question.

A. To Reveal God to Us

Though God reveals Himself in various ways, including the magnificences of nature around us, only the Incarnation revealed the essence of God, though veiled (John 1:18; 14:7–11). The only way man can see the Father is to know about the Son, and the only way we can do that today is through studying the record of His life in the Scriptures. Because He became a man, the revelation of God was personalized; because He is God, that revelation is completely truthful.

B. To Provide an Example for Our Lives

The earthly life of our Lord is held up to us as a pattern for our living today (1 Pet. 2:21; 1 John 2:6). Without the Incarnation we would not have that example. As man He experienced the vicissitudes of life and furnishes for us an experienced example; as God He offers us the power to follow His example.

C. To Provide an Effective Sacrifice for Sin

Without the Incarnation we would have no Savior. Sin requires death for its payment. God does not die. So the Savior must be human in order to be able to die. But the death of an ordinary man would not pay for sin eternally, so the Savior must also be God. We must have a God-man Savior, and we do in our Lord (Heb. 10:1–10).

D. To Be Able to Fulfill the Davidic Covenant

Gabriel announced to Mary that her Son would be given the throne of David (Luke 1:31–33). This is not fulfilled by the invisible God reigning over the affairs of men (which He does, to be

sure). To have an occupant of David's throne requires a human being. Therefore, Messiah had to be a human being. But to occupy that throne forever requires that the occupant never die. And only God qualifies. So the One who ultimately fulfills the Davidic promise has to be a God-man.

E. To Destroy the Works of the Devil (1 John 3:8)

Notice that this was done by Christ's appearing. The focus is on His coming, not on His resurrection as might be expected. Why was the Incarnation necessary to defeat Satan? Because Satan must be defeated in the arena he dominates, this world. So Christ was sent into this world to destroy Satan's works.

F. To Be Able to Be a Sympathetic High Priest (Heb. 4:14–16)

Our High Priest can feel our weaknesses because He was tested as we are. But God is never tested, so it was necessary that God become man so that He could be tested in order to be a sympathetic Priest.

G. To Be Able to Be a Qualified Judge

Though most people think of God the Father as the Judge before whom all will appear, the truth is that Jesus will be that Judge (John 5:22, 27). All judgment will be executed by our Lord "because He is the Son of Man." This is the title that links Him to the earth and to His earthly mission. Why is it necessary for the Judge to be human and to have lived on earth? So that He may put down all excuses people might try to make. Why must the Judge also be God? So that His judgment will be true and just.

Thus the Incarnation has ramifications in relation to our knowledge of God, to our salvation, to our daily living, to our pressing needs, and to the future. It truly is the central fact of history.

NOTES

1. See Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 1:335–38.
2. *Ibid.*, 1:289–91.
3. Ignatius Smyrna I.1, for example; see also Hans von Campenhausen, *The Virgin Birth in the Theology of the Ancient Church*, *Studies in Historical Theology* (Naperville: Allenson, 1964), 2:10–20.
4. Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Luke* (ICC, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1910), 103.
5. F. Godet, *A Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1910), 1:195–204.
6. See J. G. Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (New York: Harper, 1930), 207–9.
7. See Robert Gromacki, *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), 150–59.

Chapter 42: The Person of Christ Incarnate

The statement on the person of Christ incarnate formulated at the Council at Chalcedon (A.D. 451) has been considered definitive by orthodox Christianity. It reads as follows:

Therefore, following the holy fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and complete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards His Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards His manhood; like us in all respects apart from sin; as regards His Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards His manhood begotten, for us men and for our salvation, of Mary the virgin, the God-bearer; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-Begotten, recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one Person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two Persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of Him, and our Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught us, and the creed of the fathers has been handed down to us.

More concisely one may describe the person of Christ incarnate as being full Deity and perfect humanity united without mixture, change, division, or separation in one person forever. The key components of the description include “full Deity” (no diminution of any attribute of Deity), “perfect humanity” (“perfect” rather than “full” in order to emphasize His sinlessness), “one Person” (not two), and “forever” (for He continues to have a body, though resurrected, Acts 1:11; Rev. 5:6).

I. THE FULL DEITY OF CHRIST INCARNATE

A. He Possesses Attributes That Only God Has

1. *Eternality.* He claimed to exist from eternity past (John 8:58; 17:5).
2. *Omnipresence.* He claimed to be everywhere present (Matt. 18:20; 28:20).
3. *Omniscience.* He showed knowledge of things that could only be known if He were omniscient (Matt. 16:21; Luke 6:8; 11:17; John 4:29).
4. *Omnipotence.* He demonstrated and claimed the power of an omnipotent person (Matt. 28:18; Mark 5:11–15; John 11:38–44).

Other attributes of Deity are claimed for Him by others (e.g., immutability, Heb. 13:8), but these cited are claims He made for Himself.

B. He Performs Works That Only God Can Do

1. *Forgiveness.* He forgives sins eternally. Men may do that temporarily, but Christ grants eternal forgiveness (Mark 2:1–12).
2. *Life.* He gives spiritual life to whomever He wishes (John 5:21).
3. *Resurrection.* He will raise the dead (John 11:43).
4. *Judgment.* He will judge all people (John 5:22, 27).

Again, all of these examples are things He did or claims He made, not claims others made of Him.

C. He Was Given the Names and Titles of Deity

1. *Son of God.* Our Lord used this designation of Himself (though rarely, John 10:36), and He acknowledged its truthfulness when it was used by others of Him (Matt. 26:63–64). What does it mean? Though the phrase “son of” can mean “offspring of,” it also carries the meaning “of the order of.” Thus in the Old Testament “sons of the prophets” meant of the order of prophets (1 Kings 20:35), and “sons of the singers” meant of the order of the singers (Neh. 12:28). The designation “Son of God” when used of our Lord means of the order of God and is a strong and clear claim to full Deity.

In Jewish usage the term Son of . . . did not generally imply any subordination, but rather equality and identity of nature. Thus Bar Kokba, who led the Jewish revolt 135–132 B.C. in the reign of Hadrian, was called by a name which means “Son of the Star.” It was supposed that he took this name to identify himself as the very Star predicted in Numbers 24:17. The name “Son of Encouragement” (Acts 4:36) doubtless means, “The Encourager.” “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17) probably means “Thunderous Men.” “Son of man,” especially as applied to Christ in Daniel 7:13 and constantly in the New Testament, essentially means “The Representative Man.” Thus for Christ to say, “I am the Son of God” (John 10:36) was understood by His contemporaries as identifying Himself as God, equal with the Father, in an unqualified sense.¹

2. *Lord and God.* Jesus is called Yahweh in the New Testament, a clear indication of His full Deity (cf. Luke 1:76 with Mal. 3:1 and Rom. 10:13 with Joel 2:32). He is also called God (John 1:1; 20:28; Heb. 1:8), Lord (Matt. 22:43–45), and King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16).

D. He Claimed to Be God

Perhaps the strongest and clearest occasion of such a claim was at the Feast of Dedication when He said, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). The neuter form of “one” rules out the meaning that He and the Father were one person. It means that they are in perfect unity in natures and actions, a fact that could only be true if He were as much Deity as the Father. The people who heard this claim understood it that way, for they immediately tried to stone Him for blasphemy because He made Himself out to be God (John 10:33).

How can anyone say that Jesus of Nazareth Himself never claimed to be God, but rather that His followers made the claim for Him? Most of the passages cited above are from Christ’s own words. Therefore, one must face the only options: either His claims were true or He was a liar. And these claims are for full and complete Deity—nothing missing or removed during His life on earth.

II. THE PERFECT HUMANITY OF CHRIST INCARNATE

Denials of the humanity of Christ are less common than denials of His deity. Why? Because as long as you do not inject the Deity factor into the person of Christ, He is only a man, however fine or exalted, and as merely a man He cannot disturb people with His claims so much as if He is the God-man. However, those who may readily affirm His humanity may not so readily affirm His perfect humanity. They may acknowledge Him as a good man (how so if He lied?) or a great man (how so if He misled others?) but not as a perfect man (for then they might feel more obligated to listen to Him even though they may not acknowledge Him as God).

A. He Had a Human Body

Though Christ’s conception was supernatural, He was born with a human body that grew and developed (Luke 2:52). He called Himself a man (John 8:40).

B. He Had a Human Soul and Spirit

The perfect humanity of our Lord included a perfect immaterial nature as well as a material one. It was not that the human nature provided Christ's body while the divine nature consisted of soul and spirit. The humanity was complete and included both material and immaterial aspects (Matt. 26:38; Luke 23:46).

C. He Exhibited the Characteristics of a Human Being

Our Lord was hungry (Matt. 4:2). He was thirsty (John 19:28). He grew weary (John 4:6). He experienced love and compassion (Matt. 9:36). He wept (John 11:35). He was tested (Heb. 4:15). These are characteristics of true humanity.

D. He Was Called by Human Names

His favorite designation of Himself was "Son of Man" (more than eighty times). This name linked Him to the earth and to His mission on earth. It focused on His lowliness and humanity (Matt. 8:20); on His suffering and death (Luke 19:10); and on His future reign as King (Matt. 24:27).

He was also the Son of David, a title that linked Him to His ancestor David and to the royal promises to be fulfilled ultimately by Messiah.

Paul called Him a man in 1 Timothy 2:5.

III. THE UNION OF DEITY AND HUMANITY IN CHRIST INCARNATE

This concept of the hypostatic or one-person union of the divine and human natures in one person is probably one of the most difficult concepts to comprehend in theology. Not one of us has ever seen Deity except as the Scriptures reveal God, and not one of us has ever seen perfect humanity except as the Scriptures reveal prefallen Adam and our Lord. To try to relate these two concepts to the person of Christ adds complexities to ideas that are in themselves difficult to comprehend.

A. The Meaning of "Nature"

Though the English words "nature" and "substance" can be synonymous, meaning essence, we need to make a distinction between the two words for theological purposes. If nature is conceived of as a substantive entity, then nature and substance would be the same, and the incarnate Christ would consist of two substances, and would be essentially two persons, as Nestorianism held. But if "nature" is viewed as a "complex of attributes"² this error is more apt to be avoided. The single person of the incarnate Christ retained the total complex of divine attributes and possessed all the complex of human attributes essential to a perfect human being.

B. The Character of the Union

The Chalcedonian Creed stated that the two "natures" were united without mixture, without change, without division, and without separation. This means that the entire complex of the attributes of Deity and those of perfect humanity were maintained in Jesus Christ at all times since His Incarnation. There is no mixture of divine and human attributes (as Eutychians taught), no change in either complex (as Apollinarians taught), no dividing of them, and no separating them so as to have two persons (as Nestorianism taught). Orthodoxy says Jesus has two natures comprising one person or hypostasis forever. It is correct to characterize Christ as a theanthropic person, but not accurate to speak of theanthropic natures (since that would mix the divine and human attributes).

Calvinism has held that the union involves no transfer of attributes from one nature to the other. Lutheranism teaches the ubiquity of Christ's body, which does involve a transfer of the attribute of omnipresence to the humanity of Christ. In other words, ubiquitarianism holds that Christ is

present in His human nature everywhere and at all times. Luther developed this doctrine in 1527–28 to support his belief in the Real Presence in the Lord’s Supper.

C. The Communion of Attributes

This simply means that the attributes of both natures belong to the one person without mixing the natures or dividing the person. Practically speaking, it is the basis for Christ being seen to be weak, yet omnipotent; ignorant, yet omniscient; limited, yet infinite.

I have said that attributes cannot be transferred from one nature to the other. To do so would change the mix of the complex of attributes and thus the nature. If infinity can be transferred to humanity, then Deity loses infinity and is no longer full Deity. However, attributes of both natures must be expressed through the one person. Thus the person can seem to “transfer” back and forth from the expression of one or the other natures, though the attributes themselves must remain as part of whichever nature they properly belong to. Thus theologians have developed a system to classify the actions of the person of Christ with respect to origination of the action. Hodge has four categories, and Walvoord has seven.³ Some examples include (a) actions predicated on the whole person, like redemption (both natures being involved); (b) actions predicated on the divine nature (though the whole person is the subject), like preexistence (true only of the divine nature); and (c) actions predicated on the human nature, like being thirsty.

Whatever help such a classification may give, it seems more important to remember that the person does whatever He does, revealing whatever attribute of whichever nature He reveals. The person thirsted; the person knew all things; the person does not know the day or the hour; and (probably the hardest one) the person died. Of course, Deity does not die or thirst, but the person, Jesus Christ, the God-man, did both.

D. The Self-Consciousness of Christ

Another question is whether Christ in His own self-consciousness was aware of His deity and humanity at all times. The answer is that the person was always aware in Himself with respect to His deity and that the person grew in self-consciousness with respect to His humanity (Luke 2:52; John 8:56–58).

E. The Will(s) of Christ

Did Christ have one or two wills? Chalcedon said one Christ in two natures united in one person, implying two wills. In the seventh century the Monothelites insisted that Christ had but one will, but this view was declared heresy by the Council at Constantinople in 680. If will is defined as a “behavior complex” as Buswell does, then our Lord may be said to have had a divine behavior pattern and a perfect human one as well; hence two wills. If will is defined as the resulting moral decision as Walvoord does, then the person of Christ always made only one moral decision; hence one will. However, it seems to me that every single decision stemmed from either the “will” of His divine nature or the “will” of His human nature or a blending of both, making it proper to think of two “wills.”

IV. EARLY HISTORY OF THIS DOCTRINE

A. Docetism

In the late first century Marcion and the Gnostics taught that Christ only appeared to be a man (dokeo, to seem or to appear). The apostle John referred to this false teaching in 1 John 4:1–3. This heresy undermines not only the reality of the Incarnation but also the validity of the Atonement and bodily resurrection.

B. Ebionism

In the second century this heresy denied the deity of Christ, considering Jesus to be the natural son of Joseph and Mary but elected to be Son of God at His baptism when He was united with the eternal Christ.

C. Arianism

A heresy that denied the eternality of Jesus as the Logos. Arius reasoned that since Jesus was begotten, He must have had a beginning. Arians held that the divine nature of Christ was similar to God, homoousian, but not the same, homoousian. The Council of Nicaea condemned this teaching in A.D. 325, affirming that Jesus had the same nature as God.

D. Apollinarianism

Apollinarius, the younger (died about 390), sought to avoid undue separation of the natures of Christ. He taught that Christ had a human body and a human soul, but that He had the divine Logos instead of a human spirit (this assumes a trichotomous view of man). This Logos dominated the passive human body and soul. This was an error affecting the humanity of Christ.

E. Nestorianism

Nestorianism divided Christ into two persons (though it is disputed whether or not Nestorius himself clearly taught this). He explained that Jesus Christ was the prosopon (form or appearance) of the union of two natures. The humanity had the form of Godhead bestowed on it, and the Deity took upon itself the form of a servant, the result being the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth. Thus in this view the two natures were separated, resulting in two persons. The teaching was condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431.

F. Eutychianism

Eutyches (ca. 378–454) reacted against Nestorianism and taught that there was only one nature in Christ. This error is also known as monophysitism. The divine nature was not fully divine, nor was the human nature genuinely human, and the result was a mixed single nature. This was condemned at the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

A similar error developed after Chalcedon that taught that Christ had only one will though conceding verbally that He had two natures. It is called monothelitism. This was condemned at the third council of Constantinople in 680.

A study of errors should help clarify the truth and make us more careful how we express it. Semantics are very important in the statements of theology.

NOTES

1. J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 1:105.
2. *Ibid.*, 1:54.
3. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 2:78ff; John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord* (Chicago: Moody, 1974), 116–17.

Chapter 43: Christ: Prophet, Priest, and King

Sometimes the work of Christ is considered under this threefold division of the offices of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King. Eusebius (ca. 260–340) used these categories, so they have great antiquity.¹ Furthermore, a connection can be made between Messiah, the Anointed One, and the fact that prophets (1 Kings 19:16; Isa. 61:1), priests (Exod. 30:30; 40:13) and kings (1 Sam. 10:1; 15:1; 1 Kings 19:15–16) were all inaugurated by anointing.

I. CHRIST AS PROPHET

A. *The Designation of Christ as Prophet*

Moses predicted that God would raise up a prophet like himself (Deut. 18:15). Whatever other fulfillments this may have had in the succession of Old Testament prophets, its ultimate fulfillment was by Jesus Christ, who is identified as that Prophet (Acts 3:22–24). The ordinary people of Christ's day acknowledged Him as a prophet so enthusiastically that the chief priests and Pharisees feared reprisals if they took any strong action against the Lord (Matt. 21:11, 46; John 7:40–53). Further, the people called Him Rabbi (John 1:38; 3:2), not because He had been trained formally, but because they recognized the quality of His teaching.

Our Lord also claimed to be a Prophet (Matt. 13:57; Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24; 13:33; John 4:44) who came to do what prophets did, that is, deliver God's message to man (John 8:26; 12:49–50; 15:15; 17:8).

B. *The Manner of Christ as Prophet*

One of our Lord's principal activities while on earth was proclaiming God's message through preaching (Matt. 4:17) and teaching (Matt. 7:29). The manner of His preaching and teaching included these interesting characteristics.

1. *It was an occasional thing.* This does not mean He taught infrequently, but rather as the occasion arose. He was always open to opportunities and the variety of situations that presented themselves. He used the synagogue services when possible (Mark 1:21). He preached outdoors if an indoor situation was unavailable (Mark 4:1). He seized every opportunity.
2. *It was unsystematic.* This was due to the fact that He took opportunities as they arose, rather than waiting until a planned curriculum could be followed. Think, for example, of where you will find the Lord's teaching on sin; and the answer is in various passages of various types—some didactic, some parabolic. The interpreter of Scripture has to systematize Christ's teachings.
3. *It was profusely illustrated.* Those illustrations were themselves varied and appropriately chosen for the audience (notice an illustration for women and men in Matthew 24:40–41 and Luke 15:4, 8).
4. It made use of questions. This was true especially in situations of controversy (Matt. 22).
5. *It was authoritative.* This was probably the outstanding feature of Christ's ministry as a Prophet. His authority stood in sharp contrast to the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees (Mark 1:22) because it probed the depths of the reality of the truth.

C. *The Material of Christ as Prophet*

Though much of His prophetic material is scattered throughout the Gospels, four major messages are preserved for us: the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7), the parables of the mysteries of the kingdom (Matt. 13), the conversation with four of His disciples on the Mount of Olives on Tuesday of Holy Week (Matt. 24–25), and the message to the disciples in the Upper Room on Thursday evening (John 13–16).

The teachings of Christ are possibly the most difficult part of the entire Bible to interpret accurately. Why is this so? Because our Lord lived under the Mosaic Law and perfectly kept it; but He also presented Himself to Israel as their King; and when He was rejected as King, He introduced the new part of God's program, the church, and gave some teaching about it. In other words, He lived and taught in relation to three different aspects of God's program for this world—the Law, the church, and the kingdom. To keep those strands of teaching distinct and without confusion is not always easy.

1. The Sermon on the Mount. Some view this discourse as an exposition of the way of salvation. The problem with such an interpretation is simply that the great salvation words like redemption or justification do not occur at all in these chapters. Also, if this is the correct interpretation, then salvation is surely through good works.

Others consider the sermon a blueprint for Christian living today. To use it this way would require deliteralizing much of what is taught in order to be able to obey it in this unrighteous world. Further, if this is truth for the church, then why did our Lord not mention the Holy Spirit, so important for Christian living, or even the church itself?

Still others understand its primary purpose to relate to Christ's kingdom message. The forerunner, John, had announced the kingdom (Matt. 3:2); Christ Himself began to preach that message (Matt. 4:17); now He explained what was involved in true repentance. The kingdom they preached and the kingdom the people expected was that messianic, Davidic, millennial kingdom promised in the Old Testament. Christ gave no indication that they should have understood otherwise by changing the meaning of the kingdom He was talking about. But the people had placed their hopes so much on a political kingdom that they forgot there were spiritual requirements for even that political kingdom. So the Lord explained what was involved in spiritual preparation for the Davidic kingdom.

Preached in relation to the kingdom, this discourse seems mainly to emphasize getting ready for the kingdom. Some of the requirements to be practiced totally would necessitate the establishment of the kingdom with its righteous government (Matt. 5:38–42) though the general principle may be followed anytime.

So the sermon is a call to repentance for those who had disassociated inner change from the requirements for establishing the kingdom. Therefore, it has relevance for any time that the kingdom is imminent—which includes the time Christ preached it, and the future time of the Tribulation. It also pictures conditions as they will be in the kingdom when it is established. But, like all Scripture, it is profitable for disciples in any age since it is one of the most detailed ethical codes in the Bible.

2. Parabolic mysteries about the kingdom. Later on the same day as the blasphemous accusation of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 12:22–37), the Lord turned to His disciples to instruct them about the characteristics of the kingdom in this time between His death and return. These are called “mysteries” since they were unknown in the Old Testament but are now revealed to those rightly related to Him (Matt. 13:11). These characteristics of God's kingdom are different from those of the Davidic kingdom, past and future, and they cover a period yet future from the time when Christ spoke these words (Matt. 13:24 “is like” is an aorist used proleptically, that is, in anticipation of something future) and terminating with events at His Second Coming (Matt. 13:39–50).

Among other things, these parables relate different people's responses to the message, the presence of Satan's counterfeits in the kingdom, the rapid growth of the kingdom, evil in the kingdom, the value of the kingdom, and the presence of wicked people in the kingdom. This form of the kingdom is temporary—until He returns.

3. *The message on the Mount of Olives.* By the time this message was given at the end of Christ's earthly life, it was quite clear that the Jewish leaders had rejected the kingdom, and Christ Himself had introduced the church as the coming thing in God's program (Matt. 16:18). Did this mean that the kingdom was scratched from God's program forever? Not at all, and this message details some future events leading up to the return of Christ to establish that messianic, Davidic, millennial kingdom. Matthew 24:4–14 lists details that will happen during the first part of the coming Tribulation period. Matt. 24:15–28 do the same for the second half of that period. Then Christ will return to earth and take the throne of His kingdom (Matt. 24:30; 25:31, 34). That this did not occur in the disciples' lifetimes as they expected in no way abrogates the assurance that one day Christ will rule in His kingdom (Acts 1:6).

4. *The message in the Upper Room.* The night before His crucifixion the Lord revealed in capsule form a number of things about the new Church Age soon to be inaugurated. He repeated these things in capsule form because the disciples could not yet understand what was really happening (John 16:12). What were some of those new revelations? (1) He gave a new command—to love each other in the same way He loves us (John 13:34). (2) He opened up a new hope—a place that He would prepare and take believers (John 14:1–3). (3) He promised another Paraclete who would minister in a number of new ways: advising, exhorting, comforting, interceding, convicting, teaching, etc. (John 14:16). (4) He unveiled new relationships—the Holy Spirit in them, not just with them, believers in Christ, and Christ in believers (John 14:17, 20). (5) He established a new basis for prayer in His name (John 16:24, 26). All of these reveal tremendous differences between the economy then operative and the coming new dispensation of the church.

D. The Authentication of Christ as Prophet

The Law commanded that false prophets be stoned (Deut. 13:5, 10). Of course if a prophet lived to the time when his prophecy was either fulfilled or not, you could easily tell if he were a true or false prophet. If he did not, then it was more difficult. Our Lord's prophetic ministry was authenticated in two ways: by the fact that some of His prophecies came true in His lifetime and by the miracles that verified to the people of His day that He was a true Prophet.

The test case is His detailed prediction of His death. He prophesied that someone close to Him would betray Him (Matt. 26:21), that His death would be instigated by the Jewish leaders (Matt. 16:21), that He would die by crucifixion and that three days later He would come back to life (Matt. 20:19). For anyone to be able to give this kind of detail about His death and for these details to come true authenticates Him as a true Prophet.

In addition, some of Christ's miracles were directly linked as attesting to His being a true Prophet (Luke 7:16; John 4:19; 9:17). Truly in these last days God has spoken to us by His Son (Heb. 1:1–2).

II. CHRIST AS PRIEST

The prophet spoke to men from God; the priest speaks to God for men. Being of the tribe of Judah disqualified Christ from being an Aaronic priest; therefore, God arranged ahead of His coming for another order of priests, the order of Melchizedek, and Christ is a priest of that order with respect to His person and His work. Yet there are similarities between Aaronic priests and Christ as Priest both in His person and His work.

A. As Aaronic Priest

An Aaronic priest had to be a man chosen by God and qualified for His work (Lev. 21; Heb. 5:1–7). Our Lord, chosen, incarnate, and tested, qualified in His person to be a ministering Priest.

Aaronic priests served by representing the people to God and especially in offering sacrifices. Their sacrifices were many, repeated, and not in themselves eternally efficacious. They did make

atonement for sin in the context of the theocracy, but the writer to the Hebrews makes it clear that had they been able to effect eternal satisfaction for sin there would have been no need for their repetition year after year (Heb. 10:2–3). In contrast, our Lord’s sacrifice of Himself for our sins was a single sacrifice, once for all, and for all mankind. In this, His great work of redemption, He did a work that was foreshadowed by the work of the Aaronic priests, even though He was not a priest after the order of Aaron.

B. As Melchizedek Priest

The portrait of Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18–20 and Hebrews 7:1–3 seems deliberately limited to those features that liken him to Christ. The form of “made like” in Heb. 7:3 is not an adjective that would indicate that Melchizedek was like Christ in his being (lending weight to the interpretation that he was a theophany), but a participle, meaning that the likeness is being made by the biblical writer’s statement. The features of the portrait are limited so that the resemblance may be more extensive.

Features of the Melchizedekian priesthood include these:

- (1) It was a royal priesthood. Melchizedek was a king as well as a priest. The uniting of these two functions was unknown among Aaronic priests, though predicted of Christ in Zechariah 6:13.
- (2) It was unrelated to ancestry. “Without father, without mother” (Heb. 7:3) does not mean that Melchizedek did not have parents, nor that he was not born or did not die, but only that the Scriptures contain no record of these events so that he might be more perfectly likened to Christ. Aaronic priests depended on their ancestry to qualify.
- (3) It was timeless, having no recorded beginning or ending so Melchizedek might again be more like the Lord who is a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.
- (4) It was superior to the Aaronic order. Abraham, out of whom came the Aaronic order, acknowledged the superiority of Melchizedek when he gave tithes of the spoils of the war to him (Gen. 14:20). Levi, though unborn, and all the priests that came from him, were involved in this act that demonstrated the superiority of Melchizedek.

In what ways does Christ function as a Melchizedekian priest? Like Melchizedek He is a ruler. He receives our obeisance. He blesses us. And as Melchizedek offered bread and wine to Abraham to refresh and sustain him after the battle, so our Lord as Priest refreshes and sustains His people. He did this, for example, to Stephen at the time of his martyrdom. Our Lord was standing to sustain Stephen (Acts 7:55). He does the same today with respect to local churches as He walks among the golden lampstands (Rev. 2:1). His work of redemption is finished, so He is seen seated, indicating He will never have to rise again to do it over or to add to it in any way (Heb. 1:3). But His ministry of helping and sustaining goes on, so He is seen standing to do this. We have a great High Priest standing and ready to come to the aid of those who are tested (Heb. 2:18) and anxious to give grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:16).

III. CHRIST AS KING

The concept of king includes a wide range of prerogatives. A king in Israel had legislative, executive, judicial, economic, and military powers. The concept of Christ as King may be surveyed around five words: promised, predicted, proffered, rejected, and realized. God’s gracious covenant with David promised that the right to rule would always remain with David’s dynasty. It did not promise uninterrupted rule, for, in fact, the Babylonian Captivity did interrupt it (2 Sam. 7:12–16). Isaiah predicted that the Child who would be born would establish and reign on the throne of David (Isa. 9:7).

Gabriel announced to Mary that her Baby would have the throne of David and reign over the house of Jacob (Luke 1:32–33). Throughout His earthly ministry Jesus’ Davidic kingship was proffered to Israel (Matt. 2:2; 27:11; John 12:13), but He was rejected.

The Gadarenes repudiated His claims (Matt. 8:34). The scribes rejected His claim to be able to forgive sins (Matt. 9:3). Many people in various cities rejected His credentials (Matt. 11:20–30; 13:53–58). The Pharisees rejected Him (Matt. 12; 15:1–20; 22:15–23). Herod, Pontius Pilate, Gentiles, and Jews all rejected Him with finality at the Crucifixion (John 1:11; Acts 4:27).

Because the King was rejected, the messianic, Davidic kingdom was (from a human viewpoint) postponed. Though He never ceases to be King and, of course, is King today as always, Christ is never designated as King of the church (Acts 17:7 and 1 Timothy 1:17 are no exceptions, and Revelation 15:3, “King of saints,” KJV, is “King of the nations” in the critical and majority texts). Though Christ is a King today, He does not rule as King. This awaits His second coming. Then the Davidic kingdom will be realized (Matt. 25:31; Rev. 19:15; 20). Then the Priest will sit on His throne, bringing to this earth the long-awaited Golden Age (Ps. 110).

NOTE

1. Eusebius Ecclesiastical History I.iii, 8, 9.

Chapter 44: The Self-Emptying of Christ

I. THE ORIGIN OF THE CONCEPT

The question of Christ's self-emptying or kenosis (from the verb in Phil. 2:7) has been discussed throughout church history. The Synod of Antioch in 341 said that Christ emptied Himself of "the being equal with God" while clearly defending the full deity of Christ. During the Reformation the discussion centered on the possibility of Christ emptying Himself of the attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence without affecting essential Deity. In the seventeenth century some boldly asserted that Christ was actually less than divine. But the nineteenth century brought an almost new form of Christology with the appearance and spread of many false ideas of the kenosis. This was due to the fact that that century saw the rise of many new scientific theories like evolution and radical criticism. It also brought an emphasis on the rediscovery of the "real" humanity of Jesus and with it the magnitude of His self-denial and self-emptying.

Of course, there is a true statement of kenosis since it is taught in Philippians 2:7, and that statement does not contradict other truths that the Scriptures reveal about the Lord. Actually the Bible does not elaborate a doctrine of kenosis, though basic elements usable in forming a true statement are revealed. To put this all together and to avoid heresy is the task of this chapter.

II. THE TRUE MEANING OF THE CONCEPT

A. The Central Passage

The central passage on the kenosis, Philippians 2:5–11, begins with an exhortation to humility of mind, following the example of Christ who left glory to suffer on the cross. Then follows this concise statement about the preincarnate and incarnate Christ.

1. *The eternal existence of Christ.* (Phil. 2:6). This is clearly stated by the form *hyparchon*, which in this present participle (especially as contrasted with the following aorists) declares Christ's indefinite continuance of being. There is in the choice of this word (in contrast to *eimi*) a suggestion of being already (as in Acts 7:55), thus underscoring the eternality of His existence. That indefinite existence was in the *morphe* of God, the essential form including the whole nature and essence of Deity. If "form of God" implies anything less than fully God, then "form of a bond-servant" in Philippians 2:7 would have to mean that on earth Christ was something less than a servant. But the full reality of His being a Servant is the point of the passage. Likewise, the full reality of His deity is the point of "form of God" in Phil 2:6.

J. B. Lightfoot, after a detailed study of *morphē* in Greek philosophy, in Philo, and in the New Testament, concluded that it connotes that which is intrinsic and essential to the thing. Thus here it means that our Lord in His preincarnate state possessed essential Deity.¹

Paul then reinforced Christ's deity by asserting that coequality with God was not something to be grasped, simply because He always had it. He did not covet it; He had no need to, for it was His eternally. Nor did He exploit it; rather, He willingly emptied Himself.

2. *The self-emptying.* (Phil. 2:7–8). Notice that whatever the emptying involved, it was self-imposed. No one forced Christ to come into this world and eventually die on a cross as our Sin-bearer. Other uses of the verb empty are found in Romans 4:14 (void); 1 Corinthians 1:17 (void); 1 Corinthians 9:15; 2 Corinthians 9:3; but they do not really contribute to the understanding of this passage.

Of what did this consist? Of all that was involved in His eventual death on the cross. This included taking the form (*morphē*) of a slave. Yet in this form He was no less at the same time in the form of God though His glory was veiled to most (but see John 1:14). To take the form of a

slave He had to be human, something the next two phrases in Philippians 2:7–8 describe. He was made “in the likeness of men.” “Likeness” indicates two things: first that He was really like men, and second that He was different from men. His humanity subjected Him to trials and limitations; yet the word “likeness” guards against concluding that He was identical with men. He was different because He was sinless (see Rom. 8:3). Further, He was found in the appearance (*schema*) of a man. This word refers to that which is outward; i.e., in actions, dress, manners, and all appearances He was a man. Thus He humbled Himself and became obedient to death on a cross, the epitome of shame.

The movement of the passage starts with Christ’s preincarnate glory and proceeds to His shameful death on the cross. Obviously, in order to die, He had to become man. In order to do that He had to empty Himself of His preincarnate position, yet without diminishing the Person. There was no way He could become a man and remain in the position He had in His preincarnate state. But He could and did become a man while retaining the complete attributes of His preincarnate Person, that is, of full Deity.

The self-emptying permitted the addition of humanity and did not involve in any way the subtraction of Deity or canceling the use of the attributes of Deity. There was a change of form but not of content of the Divine Being. He did not give up Deity or the use of those attributes; He added humanity. And this in order to be able to die. Isaiah put it this way: “He poured out Himself to death” (Isa. 53:12).

It seems to me that even evangelicals blunt the point of the passage by missing its principal emphasis as suggested above and focusing on trying to delineate what limitations Christ experienced in His earthly state. To be sure, the God-man experienced limitations; but equally sure the God-man evidenced the prerogatives of Deity. Therefore, conservatives suggest that the *kenosis* means the veiling of Christ’s preincarnate glory, which is true only in a relative sense (see Matt. 17:1–8; John 1:14; 17:5). Or they suggest it means the voluntary nonuse of some of His attributes of Deity. This was true on occasion but certainly not always throughout His life (see John 1:48; 2:24; 16:30). Neither did He only do His miracles always in the power of the Spirit, but sometimes in His own power (Luke 22:51; John 18:6). So if our understanding of *kenosis* comes from Philippians 2, we should get our definition of the concept there. And that passage does not discuss at all the question of how or how much Christ’s glory was veiled. Nor does it say anything about the use or restriction of divine attributes. It does say that the emptying concerned becoming a man to be able to die. Thus the *kenosis* means leaving His preincarnate position and taking on a servant-humanity.

B. A Definition

In the *kenosis* Christ emptied Himself of retaining and exploiting His status in the Godhead and took on humanity in order to die.

III. THE FALSE MEANINGS OF THE CONCEPT

A. Christ Surrendered Some or All of His Attributes

This misconception states that *kenosis* means our Lord actually gave up His attributes of deity or at least the relative attributes of omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience. Biblically this is false, and theologically it is impossible. If He surrendered any attribute then He ceased to be God during His earthly life. There would then be no way He could have said what He did in John 10:30 that He and the Father were One in essence. Christ did not denude Himself of any aspect of His deity.

B. Christ Appeared as a Man by Disguising His Deity

This is less blatantly heretical, but essentially also denies the full deity of Christ, because the disguise involved a change in the mode of Christ's existence. It denies that Christ was God at the same time He was man. And if this is true then how could He say that whoever saw Him saw the Father (John 14:9)?

This entire discussion is clarified if we remember that the relation and activity of the two natures in our Lord concern the doctrine of the hypostatic union. The doctrine of kenosis focuses more on the fact of His Incarnation as necessary to His death.

NOTE

1. J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians* (London: Macmillan, 1913), 127–33.

Chapter 45: The Sinlessness of Christ

I. THE MEANING OF CHRIST'S SINLESSNESS

Sinlessness in our Lord means that He never did anything that displeased God, violated the Mosaic Law under which He lived on earth, or in any way failed to show in His life at all times the glory of God (John 8:29). It does not exclude His experiencing sinless limitations that accompany humanity. For example, He was weary (John 4:6); He was hungry (Matt. 4:2; 21:18); He was thirsty (John 19:28); He slept (Matt. 8:24). But at every stage of His life, infancy, boyhood, adolescence, manhood, He was holy and sinless.

II. THE TESTIMONY TO CHRIST'S SINLESSNESS

A. The Evidence

The Scriptures definitely assert the sinlessness of Christ.

Our Lord was announced as a holy Child (Luke 1:35). He challenged His enemies to show that He was a sinner, which they could not do (John 8:46). They failed in their attempts to trap Him by using something He said (Matt. 22:15). He claimed to do always those things that pleased the Father (John 8:29). He said that He kept the Father's commandments (John 15:10). During the trials and Crucifixion, He was acknowledged as innocent eleven times (by Judas, Matt. 27:4; by Pilate six times, Matt. 27:24, Luke 23:14, 22; John 18:38; 19:4, 6; by Herod Antipas, Luke 23:15; by Pilate's wife, Matt. 27:19; by the repentant thief, Luke 23:41; and by the Roman centurion, Matt. 27:54). Furthermore, there is no record of our Lord ever offering a single sacrifice, though He frequented the temple. This silence speaks of the fact that He did not need to do so since He was without sin.

Paul said of our Lord that He "knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21).

Peter also declared that Christ did not commit any sin, nor was deceit ever found in His mouth (1 Pet. 2:22). He was a Lamb without blemish and without spot (1 Pet. 1:19).

John affirmed the same truth when he said that in Christ was no sin (1 John 3:5).

The writer of Hebrews attested to our Lord's sinlessness by several phrases: He was without sin (1 John 4:15); He was holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners (1 John 7:26), and without any need of offering sacrifices for Himself (1 John 7:27).

Thus Christ's own testimony and that of the writers of the New Testament are uniform—He was sinless.

B. The Debate

Though conservatives agree that Christ was sinless, they do not agree on the question of whether or not He could have sinned. That He did not is affirmed; whether He could have is debated.

The concept that He could not have sinned is called impeccability (*non posse peccare*). The concept that He could have, whether He did or not, is peccability (*posse non peccare*). Liberals, of course, think that not only could He have sinned but that He also did sin. That is peccability combined with sinfulness. The concept of peccability does not need to include sinfulness, and conservatives do not include it.

III. THE TESTING OF CHRIST'S SINLESSNESS

A. The Relation of Testing to Peccability/Impeccability

The debate as to whether Christ was peccable or impeccable is closely linked to the temptation of Christ. Those who support peccability reason that if He could not have sinned then His

temptations were not real and He cannot serve as a truly sympathetic High Priest. In other words, peccability requires a constitutional susceptibility to sin. Those who support impeccability point out that it relates to the union of the divine and human natures in the one person so that even though the human nature was peccable, the person was impeccable. It could not be otherwise with a person who has all power and a divine will.

Hodge represents the peccability viewpoint. “Temptation implies the possibility of sin. If from the constitution of His person it was impossible for Christ to sin, then His temptation was unreal and without effect, and He cannot sympathize with His people.”¹

On the other side Shedd wrote:

It is objected to the doctrine of Christ’s impeccability that it is inconsistent with His temptability. A person who cannot sin, it is said, cannot be tempted to sin. This is not correct; any more than it would be correct to say that because an army cannot be conquered, it cannot be attacked. Temptability depends on the constitutional susceptibility, while impeccability depends on the will. . . . Those temptations were very strong, but if the self-determination of His holy will was stronger than they, then they could not induce Him to sin, and He would be impeccable. And yet plainly He would be temptable.²

B. The Nature of Christ’s Testings

That His tests were real goes without saying. They happened, so they were obviously real. Actually the particular tests Christ experienced were suited to a God-man. No ordinary man would ever be tempted to try to turn stones into bread, but the God-man could have done that. No sane man would be seriously tempted to prove his messiahship by jumping off a high place expecting to land unharmed. No man would take seriously an offer from Satan to give him all the kingdoms of this world—perhaps a corner of some kingdom, but not all. So these were tests designed to test a God-man in a way no other has ever been tested.

Though the particular tests were out of the ordinary experience of human beings, the areas of testing that they represented were common to all people. All sinful desires can be classified as either lusts of the flesh, lusts of the eyes, or the boasting about possessions (or a combination thereof, 1 John 2:16). The tests that Satan put the Lord through fall into those three categories (Matt. 4:1–11).

When the writer to the Hebrews said that our Lord was tested in all (kata panta), he couldn’t mean that He experienced every test that people experience (Heb. 4:15). He was, for example, never tested to misuse television. But He did experience tests tailor-made for a God-man that fell into the same categories into which all tests fall, including ours. And the reason He could be tested at all was that He had a human nature, for God is not tempted with evil (James 1:13). He was tested, the writer continued, “according to likeness.” In other words, the fact that He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh allowed Him to be tested. Yet there was a major difference between His humanity and ours. He was “without sin.” He had no sin nature and He never committed a single sin. Still that does not mean that His humanity was impeccable. It was peccable, though it never knew sin. But the person of the God-man was impeccable.

Shedd correctly observed: “Consequently, Christ while having a peccable human nature in His constitution, was an impeccable Person. Impeccability characterizes the God-Man as a totality, while peccability is a property of His humanity.”³

C. The Results of Christ’s Testings

1. Sensitivity. He became sensitive to the pressure of testing. He experienced it with emotions and powers we cannot understand.

2. *Example.* He furnishes us an example of victory over the severest kinds of tests.
3. *Understanding.* He can offer sympathetic understanding to us when we are tested.
4. *Grace and power.* He can also provide the grace and power we need in times of testing. People who have experienced the same problems we might have are sensitized and sympathetic, but often they can do little or nothing about our problems. He can do something and offers us grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:16). Only a God-man High Priest can do both—sympathize because He was genuinely tested and empower because He is God.

D. An Illustration

When I first began to teach at the seminary level, I was appalled at the number of misspellings I found in students' tests. Early in my career I gave an exam to a class of probably no more than twenty students that expected the word Gethsemane in one of the answers. Believe it or not, that class misspelled that word eight different ways! That is not easy to do even deliberately. Deity and millennium were other words commonly misspelled. Remember, these students were college and university graduates.

When I visited my family home the first Christmas vacation, I found myself one evening socializing with a group of public school teachers. They were members of a Bible class my father had taught for years, and many of them had been my teachers in my early years. Of course they were interested in how I liked teaching. When I complained about misspellings, I struck sympathetic chords in almost all of them. I complained about Gethsemane. They complained about neither or cat or other much simpler words that seminary students are never tempted to misspell. My students' temptations to misspell were particularly related to theological words. The particular words were suited to the different levels of students. But the area was the same—misspelling words each group should have known. Because we shared a common problem area, we could sympathize genuinely with each other.

It would be true to say that every student in my class was truly tested with respect to the correct spelling of Gethsemane. Those who knew it passed the test, but the test was there for all to take. We have a High Priest who can genuinely sympathize because He was really tested with tests peculiar to a God-man. He did not sin and He could not have sinned. He was and is holy, innocent, and undefiled, God's spotless Lamb.

NOTES

1. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 2:457.
2. William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (New York: Scribner, 1891), 2:336.
3. *Ibid.*, 2:333.

Chapter 46: The Resurrection and Ascension of Christ

I. THE RESURRECTION

A. *The Importance of Christ's Resurrection*

1. *To His person.* If Christ did not rise from the dead then He was a liar, for He predicted that He would (Matt. 20:19). To the women who came to His tomb wondering where He was, the angel said, "He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said" (Matt. 28:6). The Resurrection authenticates our Lord as a true Prophet. Without that, all that He said would be subject to doubt.

2. *To His work.* If Christ did not rise from the dead then, of course, He would not be alive to do all His post-resurrection ministries. His ministry would have ended at His death. We would not, therefore, have a High Priest now, an Intercessor, Advocate, or a Head of the church. Furthermore, there would be no living Person to indwell and empower us (Rom. 6:1–10; Gal. 2:20).

3. *To the Gospel.* In the classic passage, 1 Corinthians 15:3–8, Christ's death and resurrection are said to be "of first importance." The Gospel is based on two essential facts: a Savior died and He lives. The burial proves the reality of His death. He did not merely faint only to be revived later. He died. The list of witnesses proves the reality of His resurrection. He died and was buried; He rose and was seen. Paul wrote of that same twofold emphasis in Romans 4:25: He was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification. Without the Resurrection there is no Gospel.

4. *To us.* If Christ did not rise then our witness is false, our faith is without meaningful content, and our prospects for the future are hopeless (1 Cor. 15:13–19). If Christ is not risen then believers who have died would be dead in the absolute sense without any hope of resurrection. And we who live could only be pitied for being deluded into thinking there is a future resurrection for them.

B. *The Evidences for Christ's Resurrection*

1. *His appearances after the Resurrection.* The number and variety of people in a variety of circumstances who saw the Lord after His resurrection give overwhelming proof of the fact that He did rise from the dead. When, for example, on the Day of Pentecost Peter offered as proof of his message the fact that they were witnesses of the resurrected Christ, he did so in the city where the Resurrection had occurred less than two months before and to an audience who could ask around to check on Peter's claim (Acts 2:32).

The order of appearances between Christ's resurrection and ascension seems to be as follows: (a) to Mary Magdalene and the other women (Matt. 28:8–10; Mark 16:9–10; John 20:11–18); (b) to Peter, probably in the afternoon (Luke 24:34; 1 Cor. 15:5); (c) to the disciples on the Emmaus road toward evening (Mark 16:12; Luke 24:13–32); (d) to the disciples, except Thomas, in the Upper Room (Luke 24:36–43; John 20:19–25); (e) to the disciples, including Thomas, on the next Sunday night (Mark 16:14; John 20:26–29); (f) to seven disciples beside the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1–24); (g) to the apostles and more than 500 brethren and James, the Lord's half brother (1 Cor. 15:6–7); (h) to those who witnessed the Ascension (Matt. 28:18–20; Mark 16:19; Luke 24:44–53; Acts 1:3–12).

2. *Effects that must have a cause (the Resurrection).* Some astounding facts must be explained. It is inconceivable to think they could have a satisfactory explanation other than being caused by the resurrection of Christ.

What caused the tomb to be empty? The disciples saw that it was empty. The guards reported to the chief priests that it was empty and took a bribe to keep quiet about it (Matt. 28:11–15). If the story they were ordered to tell (that the disciples came and stole the body) were true, then, of

course, they should have been punished or executed for allowing that to happen while they were on guard duty. Some have suggested that the disciples went to the wrong tomb, but again the presence of the guard makes this inconceivable. The tomb was empty (the effect) because Christ had risen (the cause).

What caused the events of the Day of Pentecost? Pentecost came and went every year, but the year that Christ rose it saw the descent of the Holy Spirit as He had promised (Acts 1:5). In his sermon Peter attributed the coming of the Spirit to the fact that the risen Christ sent the Spirit (Acts 2:33). The coming of the Spirit (the effect) had to have a sufficient cause (the risen Christ).

What caused the day of worship to change? All the first Christians were Jewish, accustomed to worshipping on the Sabbath. Yet suddenly and uniformly they began to worship on Sunday though it was an ordinary workday (Acts 20:7). Why? Because they wanted to commemorate the resurrection of their Lord, which took place on Sunday, they changed their day of worship. Sunday worship, the effect; Christ's resurrection, the cause.

C. The Results of Christ's Resurrection

1. A new, prototype body. With the resurrection of Christ there appeared for the first time in history a new kind of resurrection body, for He rose with an eternal body, never to die again. Before that event, all resurrections were restorations to the former earthly bodies.

Christ's resurrection body had links with His unresurrected earthly body. People recognized Him (John 20:20), the wounds inflicted by crucifixion were retained (John 20:25–29; Rev. 5:6), He had the capacity (though not the need) to eat (Luke 24:30–33, 41–43), He breathed on the disciples (John 20:22), and that body had flesh and bones proving that He was not merely a spirit showing itself (Luke 24:39–40).

But His resurrection body was different. He could enter closed rooms without opening doors (Luke 24:36; John 20:19), He could appear and disappear at will (Luke 24:15; John 20:19), and apparently He was never limited by physical needs such as sleep or food.

The most detailed description of Christ risen and ascended is found in Revelation 1:12–16. Here John recorded his vision of the glorified Christ. He was like a son of man, which links Him to His former earthly appearance, but He also radiated glory from His eyes, feet, voice, and face. This is the way we shall see Him someday.

His resurrection also serves as a prototype of the resurrection of believers. Twice Christ is referred to as the firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5). This means that He was the first to have an eternally resurrected body. Our resurrection bodies, like His, will be different from our earthly bodies. When answering the question, What will believers' resurrection bodies be like? Paul said that they will not be the same bodies that were laid in the grave simply reconstituted; but they will be new yet related to the former ones (1 Cor. 15:35–41).

Believers in the eternal state will be "like Him" (1 John 3:2). What does this mean? John explained in the following verses. To be like Him means to be pure (1 John 3:3), to be without sin (1 John 3:5), and to be righteous (1 John 3:7). Our entire beings, including our bodies, will be characterized these ways.

2. A proof of His claims. We have already mentioned that His resurrection proved His truthfulness as a Prophet (Matt. 28:6). It also validated His claim to be Lord and Messiah, a point Peter drove home in his Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:36). Paul states that the Resurrection proved Him to be the Son of God (Rom. 1:4).

3. A prerequisite to all His subsequent ministries. If Christ did not rise then His life and ministry ended on the cross, and He does nothing from that time on. Through the Resurrection and

Ascension our Lord entered into His present and future ministries, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

The resurrection of Christ has always been the joyous, captivating, and motivating truth for the church. One of the simplest prayers and earliest creeds of the church was “Maranatha,” “our Lord, come” (1 Cor. 16:22). No one could say that who denied the resurrection of his Lord. It affirmed in the clearest way that Jesus is the living and coming Lord.

Maranatha!

II. THE ASCENSION

A. Statements About the Ascension

- 1. In the Old Testament.* Two references foretell the ascension of Messiah (Ps. 68:18, quoted in Eph. 4:8 and Ps. 110:1, quoted in Acts 2:34–35).
- 2. In the sayings of Christ.* Our Lord spoke of going to His Father (John 7:33; 14:12, 28; 16:5, 10, 28) and specifically of the Ascension (John 6:62; 20:17).
- 3. In the writings of the New Testament.* The debated ending of Mark records the Ascension (John 16:19); Luke speaks of it twice (Luke 9:51; 24:51); but the principal description is in Acts 1:6–11. Other New Testament passages refer to it (Eph. 4:10; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 4:14; 1 Pet. 3:22), and others that tell of the present exaltation of Christ presuppose it (e.g., Col. 3:1).

B. Description of the Ascension

- 1. The place.* It occurred in “the vicinity of Bethany” (Luke 24:50), that is, on the Bethany side of the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:12).
- 2. The procedure.* Christ actually traveled up as if supported by the cloud (Acts 1:9). The ascent was not a sudden disappearance but a gradual, though not long, movement upward.
- 3. The promise.* As the disciples watched, two angels appeared and promised that He who had just been taken from them would return again “in just the same way” (Acts 1:11).

C. Problems Raised with Regard to the Ascension

- 1. It was contrary to the laws of nature.* Yes it was, but Christ’s resurrection body was not necessarily subject to the laws of nature and Christ, as God, could supersede the laws He made.
- 2. Did He ascend to heaven before the public ascension?* Some think that John 20:17 indicates one or more ascensions before the one detailed in Acts 1. However, the verb “I ascend” is most likely a futuristic present referring to the coming public ascension of Acts 1 and referring to it with certainty. It is as if the Lord were saying to Mary, “Stop clinging to Me. There is no need for this, as I am not yet at the point of permanent ascension. You will still have the opportunity to see Me. However, there is no question but that I certainly will ascend to My Father.”¹

D. Significance of the Ascension

The Ascension marked the end of the period of Christ’s humiliation and His entrance into the state of exaltation. Even the forty days between His resurrection and His ascension involved some limitation as, for example, with respect to showing His glory. Notice that His post-resurrection, preascension appearances did not startle the disciples as far as the appearance of His resurrection body was concerned. But the post-ascension appearance of Christ to John described in Revelation 1 must have shown His glory much more vividly.

The Ascension having taken place, Christ then was ready to begin other ministries in behalf of His own and of the world.

NOTE

1. See Leon Morris, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 840–41.

Chapter 47: The Post-Ascension Ministries of Christ

The resurrection and ascension of our Lord provided His entrance into heaven and the beginning of additional ministries for Him. One, at least, He has already done; others He is doing throughout the entire period between His ascension and His second coming; others are yet to begin in the future. In this chapter we shall look at these ministries briefly (since many overlap other areas of theology).

I. PAST MINISTRY

Before His death our Lord promised not to leave the disciples orphans but to send another Paraclete (John 14:16–18, 26; 15:26; 16:7). That last verse plainly says that the coming of the Spirit depended on Christ's going to the Father.

Peter reiterated this on the Day of Pentecost, claiming that it was the risen and ascended Christ who sent the Holy Spirit and accompanying proofs that they witnessed on that day (Acts 2:33). Both the Resurrection (Acts 2:32) and Ascension (Acts 2:34) are specifically mentioned by Peter as prerequisite to the sending of the Spirit.

II. PRESENT MINISTRY

A. As Head of His Body

By His resurrection and ascension our Lord was positioned in the place of honor at the right hand of the Father to be Head over the church, His body (Eph. 1:20–23). This involves a number of specific ministries He performs in relation to the body.

1. *He formed the body.* He formed the body by sending the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost to baptize believers into the body (Acts 1:5; 2:33; 1 Cor. 12:13). Though the Spirit's work of baptizing is the immediate agent that effects placing people in the body, the ascended Christ is the ultimate Agent because He sent the Spirit. The practical effect of this new position should be disassociation from the old life and demonstration of newness of life (Rom. 6:4–5).

2. *He cares for His body in a number of ways.* He sanctifies it (Eph. 5:26), a reference to the entire process of sanctification that begins at conversion and continues until we are presented perfect in His presence in heaven. Conversion in this passage is signified by the reference to "washing" and "with the word," the former apparently referring to baptism and the latter to the public confession by the one being baptized at that time.

His work of sanctifying includes nourishing and cherishing His body (Eph. 5:29). To nourish means to bring to maturity (as in Eph. 6:4). To cherish means literally to keep warm, thus to love and care for His children (the only other occurrence of the word is in 1 Thess. 2:7).

3. *Our ascended Lord also gives gifts to the body.* (Eph. 4:7–13). First He descended into "the lower parts [i.e.] the earth" ("earth" in Eph. 4:9 is an appositive genitive that names the lower parts). Then He ascended on high. And when He ascended, He led captive a host of captives. Here Paul uses an illustration from Psalm 68:18 in which the triumphant warrior is exalted when he returns with captured prisoners. He receives gifts from the conquered people and gives gifts to his own people. Christ conquered sin and death during His ministry on earth; now He gives gifts to His followers during His ministry in heaven. In 1 Corinthians 12:5 the giving of gifts is also related to the Lord.

4. *The ascended Lord also empowers the body.* (John 15:1–10). This well-known illustration of the Vine and branches makes clear that without the power of the living Christ flowing through us we can do nothing. Clearly that power is resurrection power dependent on a relationship of our being in Him and His being in us (John 14:17). And that relationship did not exist before He went

to the Father. On His part this ministry involves discipline or encouragement (depending on the meaning of “takes away” [John 15:2], as in John 11:39, but which can also mean “lifts up,” as in John 8:59), and cleansing (John 15:3). On our part it requires abiding, which means keeping His commandments (John 15:10; 1 John 3:24).

B. As Priest for His People

As a faithful Priest our ascended Lord sympathizes, succors, and gives grace to His people (Heb. 2:18; 4:14–16). In the latter passage the writer predicates this ministry on the Ascension—He “passed through the heavens.”

As a faithful Priest our Lord intercedes for His people (Heb. 7:25). The writer linked this ministry to the fact that this Priest, unlike Old Testament priests, is not subject to death anymore but abides a Priest forever and lives forever to intercede for His people. As to the exact form this ministry may take in communicating or mentioning our needs we cannot fully know; but it apparently focuses both on the positive aspect of asking that things be prevented from happening in our lives (Luke 22:32) and the negative aspect of cleansing us from evil things that do happen (1 John 2:1–2). We will not know until we are in heaven all that this ministry of our High Priest has meant in our lives, both in its positive and negative facets.

As High Priest our Lord also serves as a Forerunner, assuring us that we will eventually have an entrance into heaven as He already has had (Heb. 6:19–20). The word “forerunner” is used of a scout reconnoitering, or of a herald announcing the coming of a king; in other words, it implies that others are to follow. Christ is now in heaven as our Priest; this assures us that we will follow Him there someday.

C. As Preparer of a Place for Us

Just before His death, the Lord informed the disciples that He was shortly going to prepare a place for them, after which He would return to take them there (John 14:1–3). The “Father’s house” refers to heaven, and in heaven are many abiding places. The word occurs only in verses 2 and 23 and indicates permanent residences. Part of His present work today is preparing these residences for His own. To be able to begin to do this He must go to the Father through the way (John 14:6) of death and resurrection.

III. FUTURE MINISTRY

Though detailed discussion of what will happen in the future belongs to eschatology, I think it appropriate to mention here at least three aspects of our Lord’s ministry in the future.

A. He Will Raise the Dead

In the future all people will hear the voice of Christ raising them from the dead (John 5:28–29). Some will be called to eternal life and others to condemnation. Though we know from other Scriptures that both groups will not be raised at the same time, His voice calling them will be the cause of the resurrection of all. Believers of the Church Age will be raised at the Rapture of the church (1 Thess. 4:13–18). Old Testament saints will apparently be raised at the Second Coming (Dan. 12:2). The unbelieving dead of all time will not be raised until after the Millennium (Rev. 20:5).

B. He Will Reward All People

Though the average person thinks of God (the Father) as the Judge of all people, the Lord said that all judgment has been delegated to Him (John 5:22, 27). As with resurrection, judgment for all will not take place at the same time, but Christ will judge all.

Believers will be judged by Him at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:11–15; 2 Cor. 5:10) after the Rapture of the church. The outcome of this judgment for all will be heaven, though with a varying number of rewards. All will receive some praise from God (1 Cor. 4:5).

Unbelievers will be judged at the Great White Throne at the conclusion of the millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:11–15). All will be rewarded for their deeds by being cast into the lake of fire. None will be shown to be deserving of heaven. But regardless of the time, all will be judged by our Lord.

C. He Will Rule This World

When our Lord returns He will take the reins of government and rule the nations of this world as a benevolent dictator (Rev. 19:15). Then and only then will the world experience a time of righteousness, justice, social welfare, economic prosperity, and spiritual knowledge. He will show Himself to be King of kings and Lord of lords in the same arena where man's rebellion against God took place.

Section X—So Great A Salvation

Chapter 48: Some Introductory Considerations

I. THE SCOPE OF THE SUBJECT

Soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, is one of the grandest themes in the Scriptures. It embraces all of time as well as eternity past and future. It relates in one way or another to all of mankind, without exception. It even has ramifications in the sphere of the angels. It is the theme of both the Old and New Testaments. It is personal, national, and cosmic. And it centers on the greatest Person, our Lord Jesus Christ.

From God's perspective, salvation includes the total work of God in bringing people from condemnation to justification, from death to eternal life, from alienation to filiation. From the human perspective, it incorporates all of the blessings that being in Christ brings both in this life and the life to come.

The inclusive sweep of salvation is underscored by observing the three tenses of salvation. (1) The moment one believed he was saved from the condemnation of sin (Eph. 2:8; Titus 3:5). (2) That believer is also being saved from the dominion of sin and is being sanctified and preserved (Heb. 7:25). (3) And he will be saved from the very presence of sin in heaven forever (Rom. 5:9–10).

II. THE MOTIVES FOR SALVATION

Why should God want to save sinners? Why should He bear the pain of giving His only begotten Son to die for people who had rebelled against His goodness? What could it possibly mean to God to have a family of human beings?

The Bible indicates at least three reasons that God wanted to save sinners.

(1) This was the greatest and most concrete demonstration of the love of God. His good gifts in nature and through His providential care (great as they are) do not hold a candle to the gift of His Son to be our Savior. John 3:16 reminds us that His love was shown in His gift, and Romans 5:8 says that God proved conclusively that He loved us by the death of Christ.

(2) Salvation also gives God a display of His grace throughout all eternity (Eph. 2:7). Each saved person will be a special trophy of God's grace forever. Only redeemed human beings can provide this display.

(3) God also wanted a people who would do good works in this life and thus give the world a glimpse, albeit imperfect, of God who is good (Eph. 2:10).

Without the salvation Christ provided, these things would not be possible.

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF SALVATION

In only two instances does the New Testament pronounce a curse on Christians for failure to do something. One is not loving the Lord (1 Cor. 16:22), and the other is preaching a gospel other than the Gospel of grace of God (Gal. 1:6–9). Not comprehending clearly the doctrine of salvation can lead to proclaiming a false or perverted Gospel, and many statements of the Gospel one hears today may well come under this curse. Yet the grace of God overpowers our unclear presentations, and people are saved in spite of, though not as a result of, an unclear or misstated Gospel.

Positively, this doctrine is crucial simply because a Gospel witness is the responsibility of all believers. For the preacher it is even more important, for he is the link between God and the

unregenerated person, and his message must be clear (Rom. 10:14–15). Chafer, whose ministry began in evangelism, still thought near the end of his life that “in a well-balanced ministry, Gospel preaching should account for no less than 75 percent of the pulpit testimony. The remainder may be for the edification of those who are saved.”¹ This certainly underscores the importance of studying and understanding this great theme of soteriology.

NOTE

1. Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 3:9.

Chapter 49: The Biblical Terminology

I. THE OLD TESTAMENT USAGE

The most important Hebrew root word related to salvation in the Old Testament is *yasha'*. Originally it meant to be roomy or broad in contrast to narrowness or oppression. Thus it signifies freedom from what binds or restricts, and it came to mean deliverance, liberation, or giving width and breadth to something. Sometimes this deliverance came through the agency of man (e.g., through judges, Judg. 2:18; 6:14; 8:22; 12:2; or kings, 1 Sam. 23:2), and sometimes through the agency of Yahweh (Ps. 20:6; 34:6; Isa. 61:10; Ezek. 37:23; Zech. 3:4). Sometimes salvation is individual (Ps. 86:1–2) and sometimes corporate, that is, of the nation (Isa. 12:2, though all the world will share in it, Isaiah 45:22; 49:6). In the Old Testament salvation was not only a deliverance from some trouble but also a deliverance to the Lord for His special purpose (Isaiah 43:11–12; 49:6).

Faith was the necessary condition for salvation in the Old Testament as well as in the New. Abraham believed in the Lord, and the Lord counted it to him for righteousness (Gen. 15:6). The Hebrew prefix *beth* indicates that Abraham confidently rested his faith on God (cf. Exod. 14:31; Jon. 3:5). The covenant relationship established by the Mosaic Law also implied that an Israelite had to have faith in the God of that covenant if he were to be pleasing to Him and not be cut off.

The object of faith was always the true God (Num. 14:11; 20:12; 2 Kings 17:14, Ps. 78:22, Jon. 3:5). This Savior God was the sole origin of salvation (Ps. 3:8, Jon. 2:9). To trust in idols was not only ineffective but ludicrous, for salvation was of the Lord.

II. THE NEW TESTAMENT USAGE

In both the Septuagint and the New Testament the Greek verb *sōzō* and its cognates *i-Italic{sōter}* and *i-Italic{sōteria}* usually translate *yasha'* and its respective nouns. However, a number of times the *sōzō* group translates *shalom*, peace or wholeness, and its cognates. Thus salvation can mean cure, recovery, remedy, rescue, redemption, or welfare. This can be related to preservation from danger, disease, or death (Matt. 9:22; Acts 27:20, 31, 34; Heb. 5:7). But the full Christian usage means saving from eternal death and endowing a person with everlasting life (Rom. 5:9; Heb. 7:25).

As in the Old Testament, the initiative of salvation is entirely with God (John 3:16). The Lord Jesus Christ's death on the cross is the sole basis for that salvation (Acts 4:12; Heb. 5:9). As stated before, this salvation has a past aspect that occurred when we believed, a present aspect, and a future consummation.

But word usage does not begin to fathom all that the biblical revelation declares about salvation. Other concepts like sacrifice, redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, and justification are vital to a full understanding of the doctrine. These will be considered later, but I mention them now lest anyone think that the doctrine is built only on the words related to saving.

Salvation affects the whole person. Nevertheless, the removal of man's fallen nature and the receiving of a resurrection body awaits a future day. But this is also a part of our salvation (Rom. 8:23). In addition, the curse that has been on the world will be removed (Rom. 8:18–23), and the entire universe will feel the effects of Christ's work of reconciliation (Col. 1:20).

Chapter 50: The Passion of Christ

The basis of all the facets, accomplishments, and benefits of the death of Christ is, of course, the historical event of His death on the cross. “Passion” means suffering, and particularly the sufferings of Christ between the night of the Last Supper and the Crucifixion.

I. THE NEED FOR HIS PASSION

Because of man’s sinfulness and helplessness, someone else had to step in and aid him if he was to find acceptance and fellowship with a holy God. Sin brought and brings estrangement from God, and depravity means that nothing man can do will merit any favor or consideration from God as far as salvation is concerned.

Without repeating the material under the doctrine of sin, the salient points need to be reviewed. Everyone born into this world stands condemned because of (a) his relation to Adam’s sin (Rom. 5:12) and (b) because of the sin nature with which everyone is born (Eph. 2:3). In addition, (c) all commit sin, which is the inevitable fruit of the sin nature (Rom. 3:9–23). This not only means universal condemnation but also establishes a universal need that all have to be saved from sin’s penalty.

Everyone born into this world is helpless to do anything to gain soteriological favor with God. Depravity, you remember, does not mean that people cannot or do not perform actions that are good in man’s and God’s sight; nor does it mean that sinful man has no conscience to judge between good and evil for himself; nor that people indulge in every form of sin or even in any particular sin to the greatest extent possible. But depravity does mean that because man’s entire being has been corrupted he can never do anything that would merit saving favor with God. In relation to salvation this means that help will have to come from someone who has not been affected with that corruption, someone who is sinless.

II. THE PERSON OF THE PASSION

The person involved in that atoning sacrifice was the God-man. Only this kind of Being could have effected our salvation. Again, without repeating material under Christology, let me review some of the salient features of His person that bear on His atoning work.

Though a number of reasons are stated in Scripture for the Incarnation, the principal one was that He might save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). To do this required Incarnation; that is, God in flesh. God has declared that the penalty for sin has to be death. Since God cannot die, there had to be an Incarnation in order that there be a human nature to experience death and thus pay the penalty for sin.

The God-ordained means of accomplishing the Incarnation was the Virgin Birth. Whether He could have done it some other way and still preserve the sinlessness of Jesus Christ can only be a matter of conjecture. The fact of the matter is that He did do it through the Virgin Birth. The feminine singular relative pronoun “by whom” in Matthew 1:16 undebatably links Christ to one human parent, His mother. It was a Virgin Birth.

The result of the Virgin Birth was a God-man. God always was. The total human nature was conceived by the Spirit in the womb of Mary, and the Baby born was fully God and a perfect human being, united in one person forever. This is called the hypostatic union.

This God-man, unique in all history, alone qualifies to be an adequate Savior. The Savior had to be human in order to be able to die, for God does not die, and the Savior had to be God in order to make that death an effective payment for sin. When a sinful person dies, he or she dies for his or her own sins. A sinless person can atone for the sins of others.

Notice this truth in the opening verses of Romans 1. When Paul described the Gospel (Romans 1:1), he said that it concerns God's Son (Romans 1:3); and that Son was human (from the seed of David, Romans 1:3) and divine (designated to be the Son of God, Romans 1:4). In other words, we have a Gospel simply because we have a God-man Savior-man who as man is able to die, and as God can make that death a satisfactory payment for the sins of the world. No other kind of savior can save.

III. THE SUFFERINGS IN THE PASSION

The sufferings of Christ in His death have been labeled His passive obedience in classical Protestant theology. This passive obedience stands in contrast to Christ's active obedience, which refers to the obedience exhibited during His lifetime. His life was, of course, one of obedience, beginning with His willing acceptance of the Incarnation (Heb. 10:5–10) and continuing throughout His entire life on earth (Luke 2:52; John 8:29). Through suffering He learned obedience (Heb. 5:8).

The sufferings of Christ's life, though real, were not atoning. Nevertheless, the merit of His atoning death is inseparable from the sinlessness and perfection of His life, which was attested to by His life of obedience. Thus while theologians have made this distinction between life and death sufferings (active and passive obedience), it fails to be very significant, since only the sufferings of His death and His obedience in being the sacrificial Lamb were atoning.

Strictly speaking, then, only the sufferings on the cross were atoning. It was during the three hours of darkness when God laid on Christ the sins of the world that Atonement was being made. The abuse and scourgings that preceded His time on the cross were part of the sufferings of His life.

IV. THE OUTLINE OF THE PASSION

As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, the Passion usually includes the events from the Last Supper to the Crucifixion. Here is an outline of these events and the nature of the things involved in those last hours of Christ's life.

A. The Trials

The traditional site of the Passover is in an Upper Room in the southwest corner of the city of Jerusalem.

From there the group made their way across the city to the Garden of Gethsemane (on the slope of the Mount of Olives to the east of Jerusalem) where the Lord was betrayed and arrested, and where He also restored Malchus's ear. This happened perhaps around 3 A.M.

Back again through the city the Lord was taken to the house of Annas for a hearing. Both Annas's and Caiaphas's houses were in the southwestern part of the city, not far from the Upper Room where the Lord and His disciples had been earlier.

Then they moved to the court of Caiaphas's house where at least a quorum of the Sanhedrin gathered and passed sentence on the Lord.

When morning came the full Sanhedrin confirmed the sentence passed a few hours before.

The Lord was then taken before Pilate since the Jews did not have the authority to carry out a sentence of death. Pilate's judgment hall was near the northwest corner of the temple area, across the city from Caiaphas's house.

An examination by Herod followed. His palace stood at the western wall of the city. So once again the Lord traversed the city.

Across the city and back to Pilate, the Lord was condemned to be crucified.

The site of the Crucifixion is debated. The two candidates are the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, west of Pilate's judgment hall, and Gordon's Calvary, northwest of Pilate's judgment hall. Either location required another trip across a major portion of Jerusalem. The total distance covered by our Lord in His enfeebled condition was about two and one-half miles.

B. The Day

The traditional view of a Friday crucifixion has everything to commend it and nothing to contradict it. All the Gospels state that the day following the Crucifixion was Sabbath (Matt. 27:62; 28: 1; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:56; John 19:31). All the Gospels state that the women visited the tomb of Jesus on the day after the Sabbath, that is, on the first day of the week, Sunday (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). It was a common practice of the Jews to refer to a part of a day or night as the whole day (Gen. 42:17–18; 1 Sam. 30:12–13; 1 Kings 20:29; 2 Chron. 10:5, 12; Esther 4:16; 5:1). Therefore, to fulfill the “three days and three nights” of Matthew 12:40 required that the Lord be in the tomb the part of Friday before sundown (day #1), all of Saturday (day #2), and the part of Sunday after sundown on Saturday and until the Resurrection occurred (day #3). And, of course, the Scriptures say He rose “on the third day” (1 Cor. 15:4).

C. The Method

Crucifixion was Eastern in origin. The Persians practiced it, and Alexander the Great seemed to have learned of it from them. Phoenicia, famed for its barbaric practices, frequently employed crucifixion. Rome apparently borrowed it from Carthage and perfected it as a means of capital punishment. The extent to which Rome used it staggers the imagination.

After being sentenced, the condemned person was flogged with a leather whip loaded with metal or bone. He was then required to shoulder the cross beam and carry it to the place of execution. This beam was approximately six feet long and weighed about thirty pounds. This was affixed to the upright stake, which was already in place at the execution site. Nails about seven inches long with a head (to keep the body from sliding off) were driven through the hands and feet of the victim. Sometimes ropes were also used to keep the body on the cross.

The Romans had learned to push the feet upward when they nailed them to the cross so that the victim could lean on the nail and push himself upward momentarily in order to breathe easier. This kept the victim alive longer. Death rarely came in less than thirty-six hours, and most people survived two or three days before they died. Insatiable thirst, pain from the scourging, cramps, dizziness, public shame, and the horror of knowing what lay ahead before the release of death all combined to make crucifixion a horrible means of dying.

This is what men did to our Lord. And God laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He died to pay the penalty of sin, and He died for you and for me.

Chapter 51: The Meaning of the Death of Christ

Although it is true that the full meaning of the death of Christ cannot be captured in one or two slogan-like statements, it is also true that its central meaning can and must be focused on several very basic ideas. There are four such basic doctrines: Christ's death was a substitution for sinners, a redemption in relation to sin, a reconciliation in relation to man, and a propitiation in relation to God. Not to emphasize these four or not to insist on their basic importance to a proper understanding of the meaning of the death of Christ is to beggar or even pervert the biblical concept. For example, it is proper and biblical to view the death of Christ as a great display of the love of God or to see it as an example for us to be self-sacrificing (these are biblical truths, John 15:13; Rom. 5:8), but if these comprised the only meaning of the death of Christ, there would be no eternal value in it. It must provide a substitution and a payment for sin, or the example means relatively little. So we must understand these basic facts first, for they form the saving and eternal meaning of the death of our Lord.

I. A SUBSTITUTION FOR SINNERS

A. *The Concept of Substitutionary Atonement*

1. *The meaning of substitutionary atonement.* Substitutionary or vicarious atonement simply means that Christ suffered as a substitute for us, that is, instead of us, resulting in the advantage to us of paying for our sins.

Man could atone for his sins personally only if he could suffer eternally the penalty that sin incurred. Man, of course, could never do this, so in His love and compassion, God stepped into a hopeless situation and provided a Vicar in Jesus Christ who did provide an eternal satisfaction for sin.

| | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| PERSONAL ATONEMENT | VICARIOUS ATONEMENT |
|--------------------|---------------------|

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Provided by the offending party | Provided by the offended party |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| A matter of strict justice | A combination of justice and love |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------|
| Never finished | A completed sacrifice |
|----------------|-----------------------|

2. *Objections to substitutionary atonement.* Certain objections have been raised against this concept.

a. The idea of substitutionary atonement makes God unjust since He condemned His Son to bear the sins of mankind. This might be a valid objection except for the fact that the Triune God was involved in planning redemption, and the Son voluntarily took upon Himself the work of substitution. In other words, although this might be a valid objection on a finite level, it cannot be on the infinite level, since at that level there are not three separate parties involved.

b. Vicarious atonement makes the innocent Christ suffer for the wicked. This is absolutely true, and is essential to atonement. It is also plainly scriptural (1 Pet. 3:18). Therefore, to raise this as an objection is to question the plan and purpose of God.

c. A moral agent cannot be responsible for sin unless he commits it personally. This simply is not so in human government; so it need not be so in divine government. Guilt can come on members of a board of directors for the wrongdoings of their executives. Negligence on the part of school employees opens its officials to lawsuits.

B. *The Evidence for Substitutionary Atonement*

Clearly the Bible teaches that Christ's sacrifice was not a matter of sympathy but of substitution.

1. *In the Old Testament.* The arrangements of the sacrificial system of the Old Testament included the necessity of the offerer laying his hands on the animal being offered as a sacrifice.

This meant transmission and delegation, and implied representation; so that it really pointed to the substitution of the sacrifice for the sacrificer. . . . If the sacrifice was brought by more than one, each had to lay on his hands. It is not quite a settled point whether one or both hands were laid on; but all are agreed that it was to be done “with one’s whole force”—as it were, to lay one’s whole weight upon the substitute.¹

The animal’s death took the place of the death due the one offering that animal. The system clearly taught substitution.

2. *In the use of the preposition anti.* The root meaning of this preposition, which occurs twenty-two times in the New Testament, is face-to-face, opposite, as two objects placed over against each other and one being taken instead of the other as in an exchange. Critics of substitutionary atonement label this “crude transactionalism.” Nevertheless, the preposition anti does support substitution.

- a. In classical Greek. Anti uniformly means “in the place of,” and it has no broader meaning as, for instance, “for the sake of.”²
- b. In Greek of the New Testament Period. Moulton and Milligan give no examples of anti meaning “on behalf of” or “for the sake of.” The common meaning is “instead of.” The same and only meaning is found in Polybius (ca. 200–ca. 118 B.C.), Philo, and Josephus.
- c. In the Septuagint. Among the 318 occurrences of anti there is no example of the broader meaning “on behalf of.” Uniformly it means “in place of” and translates tachath (Gen. 44:33).
- d. In the New Testament. Examples of the clear meaning “instead or in place of” are found in Matthew 2:22 and Luke 11:11. Instances where the idea of exchange is prominent occur in John 1:16; Romans 12:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:15; Hebrews 12:16; and 1 Peter 3:9. Matthew 17:27 (the incident concerning paying the temple tax) seems to bear a clear substitutionary sense. The tax was redemption money (Exod. 30:11–16). The idea of equivalence appears in Matthew 5:38 and 1 Corinthians 11:15, though some understand the use of anti in the latter reference to mean that a woman’s hair serves in place of a covering. However, this would seem to contradict Paul’s teaching in the preceding verses, so likely it has the idea of equivalence. That is, hair in the natural realm is equivalent to what the covering stands for in the spiritual realm.³ Clearly none of these verses support the meaning “on behalf of” or “for the benefit of.”

The crucial verse is Mark 10:45): “For even the Son of man came . . . to give his life a ransom for many” (see also Matt. 20:28). Anti demands the interpretation that our Lord came to die in our place and as our substitute. It cannot be understood otherwise, and this, of course, was Christ’s own interpretation of the meaning of His sacrifice. Anti also appears as the prefix on the compound word antilutron in 1 Timothy 2:6. Christ was our substitution ransom.

3. *In the use of the preposition hyper.* The original meaning of this preposition was over, upper, and for one’s benefit. The idea included standing over someone to protect him and to receive the blows on his behalf and in his place. Thus the basic ideas in the word include both benefit and substitution, simply because to act on behalf of or for the benefit of someone often includes acting in his place. Both these ideas occur in the New Testament usage, as we shall see.

- a. In classical Greek. Both ideas of benefit and substitution occur in classical writings.⁴

b. In the Greek of the New Testament period. Again both ideas are found. Often *huper* is used of someone writing a letter for someone else who was illiterate. Clearly this is a substitutionary idea.

c. In the Septuagint. Again both ideas are found, but it is especially important to soteriology to note that the substitutionary meaning is clearly the meaning in such verses as Deuteronomy 24:16 and Isaiah 43:3–4.

d. In the New Testament. No one debates that *huper* means “for the benefit of.” The debate centers on whether or not it can mean “in the place of.” Those who deny substitutionary atonement naturally want to eliminate the latter meaning and insist that Christ’s death was not in any sense a substitutionary payment but only a benefit to mankind. Those who affirm substitutionary atonement can rest their case on the meaning of *anti*, but they can also point to the substitutionary meaning in *huper*. The case is further strengthened by the fact that *huper* clearly has a substitutionary meaning in passages that are not concerned with the Atonement. There are three clear ones.

(1) In Romans 9:3 Paul wishes he could be accursed in the place of his fellow Jews. He wanted to take their place under God’s curse.

(2) 1 Corinthians 15:29 most likely refers to those who by being baptized showed that they had joined the Christian ranks to take the place of those who had died, and therefore could be said to have been baptized for (in the place of) those who had died. This understanding of the verse requires a substitutionary meaning of *huper*.

(3) Even if there were any question about the two preceding examples, there certainly can be no question about the substitutionary meaning of *huper* in Philemon 13.

Onesimus, the converted slave, was in Rome with Paul, and he was about to return to his master Philemon in Colossae. In this wonderful letter of intercession on Onesimus’s behalf, Paul told Philemon that he would like to keep Onesimus with him in Rome to help him on Philemon’s behalf (*huper sou*). That can only mean that someone had to be in Rome with Paul—either Philemon himself or his slave Onesimus as his substitute.

Of course, the idea of benefit is present as well, but the only way there could have been any benefit to Paul was to have Philemon’s substitute, Onesimus, with him in Rome. If *huper* has both ideas, benefit and substitution in nonatonement passages, then it may also carry both meanings in atonement passages, and indeed it does. Some important examples where the substitutionary idea is present are John 11:50–51; Romans 5:6–8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 3:13; Titus 2:14; and 1 Peter 3:18.

To summarize: *anti* always has the idea of equivalence, exchange, or substitution. It never has the broader idea of “for the sake of” or “on behalf of.” *Huper* has both ideas, including the idea of substitution in atonement passages in the New Testament.

C. The Denial of Substitutionary Atonement

Attempts to deny the force of this evidence are usually made in one of two ways. Some claim that even though substitution may be in the picture, it must not be made the controlling meaning of Christ’s death. Thus substitution is submerged in and among the other meanings of His death until it becomes such a minor part of the concept that it has disappeared for all practical purposes. Here is an example: “The death of Jesus is bigger than any definition, deeper and more profound than any rationale. . . . By a rich variety of terms and analogies it is set forth, but it is never completely captured in any verbal net. . . . Even though no final rationale of the cross is to be achieved, we must seek its meaning again and again.”⁵

Others simply attempt to reinterpret substitution as always meaning “for the sake of.” Here is an example:

The fact is that he [Paul] intends what we may call a “representative” view of Christ’s death. When Paul writes that Christ died “for” me, he usually means not “instead of me” but “for my benefit.” . . . Thus it cannot be a matter of substitution or of a scapegoat. In another context, it is true, the analogy of the ransom of a captive or (very rarely) that of a sacrificial offering is brought in play by Paul and suggests substitution. But this motif . . . is dominated by the ruling conception of our participation with Christ in His death to sin and the Law.⁶

This writer fails to examine any of the evidence of the prepositions or verses I have cited.

Clearly, according to His own teaching and that of the rest of the New Testament, Christ’s death was a substitution for sinners.

II. A REDEMPTION IN RELATION TO SIN

Redemption means liberation because of a payment made. To believers the concept has a special significance since the payment was the death of the Lord Himself.

A. The Old Testament Doctrine

Three Hebrew words form the lexical basis for the Old Testament doctrine: *g’l*, *pdh*, and *kopher*. The primary idea in *g’l* is family obligation related to payment of a price. The kinsman-redeemer had the responsibilities of (a) redeeming family property that had changed ownership and (b) marrying a childless widow to raise up children in her dead husband’s name. When there was no brother available, the responsibility was extended to the next of kin (Ruth 3:9).

The meaning of the root *pdh* is that of ransom by payment of a price, as in a commercial transaction, without any obligation arising from kinship (Exod. 13:12; Num. 18:15–17). This word may have more overtones of grace than *g’l* simply because the one who redeems has no obligation to do so.

The meaning of *kopher* refers to the sum paid to redeem a forfeited life (Exod. 21:28; 30:12). All these words consistently signify deliverance by payment of a price. The circumstances may vary from redeeming a prisoner of war, a slave, a pawned article, or the nation Israel, but always because of the payment of a price.

Little direct association is evident in the Old Testament between redemption and sin (but see Ps. 130:8; Isa. 59:20). The lack of formal statements making the association is doubtless due to the ever-present and obvious link between redemption and sin seen in the sacrificial system. Because it was continually seen, it did not have to be said so frequently.

B. The New Testament Words

1. *Agoraz^o*. The basic idea in this word is to frequent the forum. Then it took the meaning of buying or acquiring in the forum. The New Testament uses it twenty-four times in this usual meaning of buying (e.g., Matt. 13:44; Luke 9:13). The Septuagint uses it with the same basic meaning of buying, a simple commercial transaction (e.g., Gen. 41:57; 42:5, 7).

The soteriological use of *agoraz^o* in the New Testament includes three basic ideas. (1) In His work of redeeming, Christ paid the purchase price for all mankind (2 Pet. 2:1). (2) The price itself is clearly stated to be the blood of Christ (Rev. 5:9–10). (3) Because we have been bought with that purchase price, we are to serve Him (1 Cor. 6:19–20; 7:22–23).

2. *Exagoraz^o*. The compound simply adds the idea of purchasing out of the forum. Two passages in which this word is used are especially significant. In Galatians 3:13 the substitutionary nature of Christ’s death stands out clearly. We were under a curse. He bore that

curse. We have been removed from the curse. In Galatians 4:5 Paul declared that believers have been completely removed from being under the Law.

In passing, we might note an interesting use of this compound in a nonatonement passage, Ephesians 5:16. Here believers are exhorted to redeem the time, that is, to buy it up and remove it from useless activities.

3. *Peripoioumai*. This word occurs only one time with reference to the Atonement, in Acts 20:28. It means to keep safe or to preserve. In the middle voice as used in this verse, it means to keep or save for oneself or to acquire or gain possession of. Thus the idea is that God acquired the church through the blood of His own Son for His personal possession. Again the idea of a price paid is prominent, and that price clearly was the death of Christ.

4. *Lutro^o*. From the root *luo*, to loose, this word was used for loosing clothes or animals or prisoners. It was usually connected with a ransom being paid as a condition of release. Thus its meaning is to release on receipt of a ransom.

a. In the Septuagint. The half-shekel atonement money levied before the tabernacle was constructed was a ransom payment for each Israelite twenty years and older (Exod. 30:11–16). The Year of Jubilee involved redemption of property (Lev. 25:31–32). The difference between the greater number of firstborn and the lesser number of Levites was compensated for by a five-shekel ransom per extra person (Num. 3:46–51). In all these instances the idea was freedom because of a price paid.

b. In classical Greek. Again the meaning is uniformly release on receipt of ransom paid. The word was often used in relation to the redemption of slaves and prisoners of war.

c. In the New Testament. The verb *lutro^o* appears in Luke 24:21 (of the national deliverance of Israel); Titus 2:14; and 1 Peter 1:18–19 (of individual redemption). Note especially in the latter reference that the price paid is the blood of the Lamb. The noun *lutron* occurs only in Matthew 20:28 and Mark 10:45. As previously discussed under the meaning of *anti* this verse clearly affirms substitution, and the price to be paid is the death of Christ. *Lutr^{osis}* is used in connection with the national deliverance of Israel in Luke 1:68 and Luke 2:38. In Hebrews 9:12 the sacrificial system of the Old Testament serves as the background for the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. Again the price is clearly “His own blood.”

Apolutr^{osis} appears ten times in the New Testament: once referring to non-Christian release (Heb. 11:35), once in the general sense of Christian redemption (1 Cor. 1:30), three times with reference to eschatology (Luke 21:28; Rom. 8:23; Eph. 4:30), and five times of the unbeliever’s release (Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7, 14; Col. 1:14; Heb. 9:14). Clearly the price paid is the death of Christ. We have already discussed *antilutron* in 1 Timothy 2:6 under substitution. His death was a substitute ransom payment for all.

C. The Doctrine Summarized

Redemption may be summarized around three basic ideas. (1) People are redeemed from something; namely, from the marketplace or slavery of sin. (2) People are redeemed by something; namely, by the payment of a price, the blood of Christ. (3) People are redeemed to something; namely, to a state of freedom; and then they are called to renounce that freedom for slavery to the Lord who redeemed them.

III. A RECONCILIATION IN RELATION TO THE WORLD

Reconciliation means a change of relationship from hostility to harmony and peace between two parties. People can be reconciled to each other (Matt. 5:24, *diallasso*; 1 Cor. 7:11, *katallasso*),

and people have been reconciled to God (Rom. 5:1–11; 2 Cor. 5:18–21, *i-Italic{katallasso}*); Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20, *apokatallasso*).

A. The Need for Reconciliation—Why?

Because of sin God and man are in a relationship of hostility and enmity. Though this is not mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5, it is clear in Romans 5. We were enemies of God (2 Corinthians 5:10). Does this refer to mankind's enmity toward God or to God's enmity toward man? The latter seems to be the sense; that is, God reckoned us to be His enemies. This is the sense of the same word in Romans 11:28, where God is said to reckon the people of Israel His enemies. Paul's mention of God's wrath in 2 Corinthians 5:9 supports the interpretation that the enemies were the object of His wrath. Our state of estrangement could not have been more serious, nor the need for a change, a reconciliation, more urgent.

B. The Cause of Reconciliation—How?

Clearly the testimony of the New Testament is that reconciliation comes about through the death of the Lord Jesus (Rom. 5:10). God made Him to be sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. The death of Christ completely changed man's former state of enmity into one of righteousness and complete harmony with a righteous God.

C. The Object of Reconciliation—Who?

There are three main answers to this question: God is reconciled to man, man is reconciled to God, both are reconciled to each other.

Shedd taught that God is reconciled to man. He explained verse 10, which says man is reconciled to God this way: "Yet this does not mean the subjective reconciliation of the sinner toward God, but the objective reconciliation of God toward the sinner."⁷ His reasoning for the statement is that since it is God's wrath that is removed, then God must be reconciled. However, effecting a change in God would seem to conflict with His immutability.

Walvoord⁸ and others are equally certain that reconciliation affects only man. Second 2 Corinthians 5:19 seems clear: God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself. The world of mankind is clearly the object of reconciliation. Romans 5:10 agrees by stating that we were reconciled to God. "God is the One who is active in reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18–19), and men are said to be reconciled (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:20); i.e., they are acted upon by God. Thus believers are said to receive reconciliation. They are recipients of a relationship of peace and harmony brought about by God."⁹

Still others see reconciliation as involving both God and man. Berkhof taught that the Atonement reconciled God to the sinner. "This is undoubtedly the primary idea, but does not imply that we cannot also speak of the sinner's being reconciled to God. . . . And even when we speak of the sinner as being reconciled, this must be understood as something that is secondary. The reconciled God justifies the sinner who accepts the reconciliation. . . ."¹⁰

Leon Morris, who also holds that both man and God are reconciled, carefully notes that

When we say that God can be thought of as reconciled to man, that does not mean that, with various imperfections, He alters completely His attitude to man. Rather it is our groping way of expressing our conviction that He reacts in the strongest possible way against sin in every shape and form, and that man comes under His condemnation accordingly; but that when reconciliation is effected, when peace is made between man and God, then that condemnation is removed and God looks on man no longer as the object of His holy and righteous wrath, but as the object of His love and His blessing.¹¹

The central passages clearly state that man is reconciled to God. Man is the object of reconciliation. Yet there remains a sense in which, after man has received personally the reconciliation, both parties, man and God, may be said to be reconciled in that they have come together. Still the grievance against man and the initiative to effect a change were God's; He acted on man to reconcile him to Himself.

D. The Provision and Application of Reconciliation

God's provision of reconciliation is universal. Because of the death of Christ the position of the world was changed—people were now able to be saved. But that alone saves no one, for the ministry of reconciliation must be faithfully discharged by proclaiming the Gospel message. When an individual believes, then he receives the reconciliation God provided in Christ's death (2 Cor. 5:18–21). The world has been reconciled, but people need to be reconciled. The universal reconciliation changes the position of the world from an unsalvable condition to a salvable one. Individual reconciliation through faith actually brings that reconciliation in the individual's life and changes the position of the individual from unsaved to saved. Then, and only then, are his sins forgiven, though they were paid for on the cross.

[Man] has been reconciled with God because the reconciliation by God of sinful men to Himself, effected once and for all in Christ, has lasting effects. It is not applicable merely to one period or to one group of people, but to all the world. Whenever the word of reconciliation is proclaimed by those to whom God has committed it, and whenever it is appropriated by an individual sinner, whoever and wherever he may happen to be, that person is reconciled by God to Himself, and his reconciliation means that God no longer imputes to him his trespasses; i.e., He no longer counts his sins against him.¹²

To summarize: The need for reconciliation lies in God's enmity against sinful mankind. God took the initiative and reconciled the world to Himself. This was done by the death of Christ, and that provision changed the world into a savable position before God. Yet though the world has been reconciled, man needs to be reconciled by changing his position about Christ. Then, and only then, is his condition before God changed.

IV. A PROPITIATION IN RELATION TO GOD

Propitiation means the turning away of wrath by an offering. In relation to soteriology, propitiation means placating or satisfying the wrath of God by the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

A. The Need for Propitiation: The Wrath of God

The reality of the wrath of God raises the need for appeasing that wrath or for propitiation. Though to the liberal such an idea is pagan, the truth is that the wrath of God is a clear teaching of both the Old and New Testaments.

1. In the Old Testament. More than twenty different words occurring about 580 times express the wrath of God in the Old Testament (2 Kings 13:3; 23:26; Job 21:20; Jer. 21:12; Ezek. 8:18; 16:38; 23:25; 24:13). Everywhere sin constitutes the reason for God's wrath. Idolatry especially aroused His wrath (Deut. 6:14; Josh. 23:16; Ps. 78:21; Isa. 66:15–17). The effects of God's wrath included general affliction (Ps. 88:7), pestilence (Ezek. 14:19), slaughter (Ezek. 9:8), destruction (Ezek. 5:15), being delivered to enemies (2 Chron. 28:9), drought (Deut. 11:17), plagues (2 Sam. 24:1), leprosy (Num. 12:10), and exile (2 Kings 23:26–27; Ezek. 19:12).

Ways of averting God's wrath included purging sin (Deut. 13:15–17), repentance (Jon. 3:7, 10); intercession (Ps. 106:23; Jer. 18:20), and God's own action in removing it (Ps. 78:38; Isa. 48:9).

At the same time the Old Testament also portrays God as loving His people and yearning for their fellowship. So the Old Testament concept is not a pagan one of an unreasonable God who demands to be placated, but of a righteous God who cannot overlook sin but whose love also provides avenues for fellowship with Himself.

2. *In the New Testament.* Though not mentioned so frequently as in the Old Testament, wrath in the New Testament is a basic concept to show the need for propitiation. The New Testament uses two principal words. *orge* conveys a more settled anger (John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; Eph. 2:3; 1 Thess. 2:16; Rev. 6:16), while *thumos* indicates a more passionate anger (Rev. 14:10, 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1; 19:15). Together they clearly convey the divine hostility against sin in a personal way. His wrath is not simply the inevitable, impersonal result of the working of cause and effect, but a personal matter. To appease that wrath was not a matter of vengeance but of justice, and it required the sacrificial gift of God's Son.

B. The Provision of Propitiation: The Sacrifice of Christ

Paul undebatably linked propitiation with the death of Christ in Romans 3:25. His blood (that is, His death) made Him the propitiation. An interpretive question exists as to the shade of meaning in *hilasterion* in the verse. Since it is the same form as is used in Hebrews 9:5, many understand this to refer to Christ as the place where propitiation was made. He was the mercy seat. Others understand the reference to mean that Christ was the propitiatory offering as supported in Hebrews 2:17; 1 John 2:2; and 1 John 4:10. Perhaps we are to include both shades of meaning in this passage; that is, our Lord was the satisfactory sacrifice for sin and therefore the place where propitiation was made. Notice the interconnection of sin, sacrifice, blood, and propitiation in these passages.

The references in 1 John 2:2 and 1 John 4:10 both stress the fact that Christ Himself is the offering that turns away the wrath of God. He is not called the propitiator (note that He is named Savior in 1 John 4:14) as if to allow for the possibility that He might have used some other means of propitiation outside of Himself. He is the offering.

C. The Negation of Propitiation: The Teaching of C. H. Dodd

1. *His background.* C. H. Dodd (1884–1973) was a British Congregational minister and New Testament scholar. He held professorships at Manchester and Cambridge, and after his retirement he served as general director of the New English Bible translation. He is primarily known for his work in “realized eschatology” and in the 2. *His view on propitiation.* Dodd's view was first stated in an article in the *Journal of Theological Studies* (1931, 32:352–60) entitled “*Hilaskesthai*, Its Cognates, Derivatives, and Synonyms.” In essence his view is this: “The rendering propitiation is . . . misleading, for it suggests the placating of an angry God, and although this would be in accord with pagan usage, it is foreign to biblical usage.”¹³ Though he cited elaborate philological and exegetical evidence, his principal reason for this conclusion appears to be theological. To him it is sub-Christian to think that God can be angry and therefore needs to be appeased; therefore, propitiation must be defined in some other way. He proposed expiation as the substitute word and concept for propitiation.

3. *His evidence.* Dodd cites the following. (1) At least two pagan contexts furnish examples of the meaning expiate and show that in pagan usage the meanings of expiate and propitiate were ambiguous. (2) The Old Testament word *kipper* is translated in the Septuagint by sanctify, purify, cancel, purge, forgive, and not by propitiate. Therefore, *hilaskesthai* will have those other meanings also. (3) *Hilaskesthai* is used to translate other Hebrew words as cleanse and forgive. (4) When the word is used to translate *kipper*, it does not mean appeasement but to remove guilt.

4. *The response.* Roger Nicole has offered the most comprehensive and persuasive reply to Dodd's arguments.¹⁴ He points out (a) that Dodd's choice of evidence is selective, since he omits

consideration of a number of relevant words; (b) that he fails to include evidence from Philo and Josephus, both of whom understand propitiation as appeasement; (c) that he often ignores the contexts of passages that if considered would not support his conclusions; and (d) that basically his logic is faulty when he assumes that the root meaning of a word is changed or lost just because it is used to translate words other than the most directly equivalent ones.

Basically, the stumbling block to Dodd's way of thinking is the idea of the wrath of God. He must eliminate that and goes to great philological lengths to try to accomplish it. However, he does not succeed either philologically or biblically. Romans 1:18; 2:5; Colossians 3:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:7–9; and Revelation 6:16 cannot be explained away by Dodd or anyone else. Yet his influence has been widespread (T. W. Manson, D. M. Baillie, Vincent Taylor, C. K. Barrett, and the Revised Standard Version).

D. The Distinction between Propitiation and Expiation

Propitiation, as we have seen, means the placating of the personal wrath of God. Expiation is the removal of impersonal wrath, sin, or guilt. Expiation has to do with reparation for a wrong; propitiation carries the added idea of appeasing an offended person and thus brings into the picture the question of why the offended person was offended. In other words, propitiation brings the wrath of God into the picture while expiation can leave it out. If one wanted to use both words correctly in connection with each other, then he would say that Christ propitiated the wrath of God by becoming an expiation for our sins.

E. An Important Practical Point

If because of the death of Christ God is satisfied, then what can the sinner do to try to satisfy God? The answer is nothing. Everything has been done by God Himself. The sinner can and need only receive the gift of righteousness God offers.

Before Christ died, it was perfectly proper to pray, as did the taxgatherer in Luke 18:13, "God, be merciful [lit., be propitiated] to me, the sinner." Though provision for fellowship with God was provided under the Law, this man could not rely on a finished and eternal sacrifice for sin that would appease God once and for all. So that was an entirely appropriate prayer for him to pray. But now Christ has died and God is satisfied, and there is no need to ask Him to be propitiated. He is appeased, placated, and satisfied eternally. This is the message we bring to a lost world: Receive the Savior who through His death satisfied the wrath of God.

NOTES

1. Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple, Its Ministry and Service* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 113–14.
2. See the detailed analysis by R. E. Davies, "Christ in Our Place—The Contribution of the Propositions," *Tyndale Bulletin* 21 (1970): 71–91.
3. See Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 3:1179.
4. Compare Davies, "Christ in Our Place," 82.
5. Frank Stagg, *New Testament Theology* (Nashville: Broadman, 1962), 135–36.
6. Amos N. Wilder, *New Testament Faith for Today* (New York: Harper, 1955), 134.
7. William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology* (New York: Scribners, 1891), 2:396.
8. John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord* (Chicago: Moody, 1974), 179–86.

9. A. Berkeley Mickelsen, "Romans," in *Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1962), 1197.
10. L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), 373.
11. Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 221.
12. R. V. G. Tasker, *The Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 89.
13. C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1935), 55.
14. Roger Nicole, "C. H. Dodd and the Doctrine of Propitiation," *Westminster Theological Journal*, May 1955, 17:127–48.

Chapter 52: Some Results of Salvation

A list of results or benefits of salvation could conceivably include hundreds of items. I only intend to discuss in this chapter some of the principal things God has done, is doing, or will do on the basis of the completed sacrifice of Christ.

I. JUSTIFICATION

Justification is not only one of the great benefits of the death of Christ but is also a cardinal doctrine of Christianity because it distinguishes it as a religion of grace and faith. And grace and faith are the cornerstones of the doctrine of justification.

A. *The Meaning of Justification*

To justify means to declare righteous. Both the Hebrew (*sadaq*) and the Greek (*dikaioo*) words mean to announce or pronounce a favorable verdict, to declare righteous. The concept does not mean to make righteous, but to announce righteousness. It is a courtroom concept, so that to justify is to give a verdict of righteous. Notice the contrast between to justify and to condemn in Deuteronomy 25:1; 1 Kings 8:32; and Proverbs 17:15. Just as announcing condemnation does not make a person wicked, neither does justification make a person righteous. Condemning or justifying announces the true and actual state of the person. The wicked person is already wicked when the verdict of condemnation is pronounced. Likewise, the righteous person is already righteous when the verdict of justification is announced.

B. *The Problem in Justification*

Since this is a forensic idea, justification is related to the concept of God as Judge. This theme is found throughout the Bible. Abraham acknowledged God as the Judge of all the earth who had to do what was right (Gen. 18:25). In the song of Moses, God's justice and righteousness were rehearsed (Deut. 32:4). Paul called God the righteous Judge (2 Tim. 4:8). The writer of Hebrews called God the Judge of all, and James reminded his readers that the Judge stood at the door (James 5:9).

If God, the Judge, is without injustice and completely righteous in all His decisions, then how can He announce a sinner righteous? And sinners we all are. There are only three options open to God as sinners stand in His courtroom. He must condemn them, compromise His own righteousness to receive them as they are, or change them into righteous people. If He can exercise the third option, then He can announce them righteous, which is justification. But any righteousness the sinner has must be actual, not fictitious; real, not imagined; acceptable by God's standards, and not a whit short. If this could be accomplished, then, and only then, can He justify.

Job stated the problem accurately when he asked, "How can a man be in the right before God?" (Job 9:2).

C. *The Procedure in Justification (Rom. 3:21–26)*

God does put into effect that third option: He changes sinners into righteous people. How? By making us the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21), by making many righteous (Rom. 5:19), by giving believers the gift of righteousness Romans 5:17). Five steps were involved in the outworking of this procedure as detailed in the central passage on justification, Romans 3:21–26.

1. *The plan.* (Rom. 3:21). God's plan for providing the needed righteousness centered in Jesus Christ. It was apart from Law. The construction is without an article, indicating it was apart from not only the Mosaic Law, which could not provide that righteousness (Acts 13:39) but also from all legal complications. It was manifested (a perfect passive form) at the Incarnation of Christ, and the effects of that great intervention in history continue. It is constantly witnessed by the Law

and the Prophets, who testified of the coming of Messiah (1 Pet. 1:11). Thus the plan centers in a person.

2. *The prerequisite.* (Rom. 3:22). Righteousness comes through faith in the now-revealed Jesus Christ. The New Testament never says we are saved because of faith (that would require *dia* with the accusative). It always makes faith the channel through which we receive salvation (*dia* with the genitive). But, of course, faith must have the right object to be effective, and the object of saving faith is Jesus Christ.

3. *The price.* (Rom. 3:24–25). Quite clearly the price paid was the blood of Christ. The cost to Him was the greatest. To us the benefit comes freely (the same word is translated “without a cause” in John 15:25), that is, without any cause in us, and so by His grace.

4. *The position.* When the individual receives Christ, he is placed in Christ. This is what makes him righteous. We are made the righteousness of God in Him. This righteousness alone overcomes our desperate, sinful condition and measures up to all the demands of God’s holiness.

5. *The pronouncement.* (Rom. 3:26). Not only does Christ’s righteousness, which we have, meet God’s demands, but it also demands that God justify us. We are in fact, not fiction, righteous; therefore, the holy God can remain just and justify the one who believes in the Lord Jesus.

Therefore, no one can lay anything to the charge of God’s elect, for we are in Christ righteous in God’s sight. And this is why God can justify us.

D. The Proof of Justification

Justification is proved by personal purity. “He who has died is freed [lit., justified] from sin” (Rom. 6:7). We stand acquitted from sin so that it no longer has dominion over us. Justification before the bar of God is demonstrated by holiness of life here on earth before the bar of men. This was the perspective of James when he wrote that we are justified by works (James 2:24). Unproductive faith is not genuine faith; therefore, what we are in Christ will be seen in what we are before men. Faith and works are like a two-coupon ticket to heaven. The coupon of works is not good for passage, and the coupon of faith is not valid if detached from works.

One final thought: justification assures us of peace with God (Rom. 5:1). Our relationship with Him is right, legal, and eternal. This forms a sure foundation for peace with God.

II. THE JUDGMENT OF THE SIN NATURE

A second very important benefit of the death of Christ relates His death to the judgment of the believer’s sin nature (Rom. 6:1–14). Justification, we saw, will be seen in a life of holiness; and the basis for that life of holiness, like the basis for justification, is the death of Christ.

In the preceding chapter Paul used that startling phrase “the gift of righteousness” (Rom. 5:17). This raises the question of Romans 6:1. If righteousness is a gift, then would it not be better to continue in sin in order that grace may increasingly be seen? If salvation were by works, this question would never be raised, since one would have to keep on doing good works in order to merit salvation. But if salvation is by grace, then cannot one sin as much as he pleases and will this not actually display grace all the more? Paul answers the question with an emphatic no. He gives two reasons that the justified person will not continue in sin.

A. The Judgment Frees Us from the Domain of Sin (Rom. 6:2–10)

1. *Its accomplishment.* (Rom. 6:2–4). Being joined to the death and resurrection of Christ is that which actually accomplishes our transference from the domain of the old life to that of the new life. Death to sin becomes, then, not a hope, but a reality, because Christ died to sin once and we were joined to Him in that death by baptism.

Death means separation, not extinction. So death to sin in this paragraph means separation from its domain or realm, but not the extinction of its presence. Baptism means association or identification with someone or something. Here it refers to our identification with Christ in His death so that we have been separated from the power of sin. Baptism cannot refer here to a ceremony or even a sacrament, but rather to a relational union to the Lord (similar to the Israelites being relationally united to Moses in the crossing of the Red Sea, 1 Cor. 10:2). Ritual or water baptism illustrates this union but cannot accomplish it. Thus this baptism unites us to Christ's death unto sin (separation from its domain), to His burial (to demonstrate conclusively that His death was actual), and to His resurrection (to give us newness of life).

2. *Its accompaniments.* (Rom. 6:5–10). Identification with Christ in His death unto sin brings (a) a uniting with Him in resurrection life (Rom. 6:5), (b) an annulling of the old self (Rom. 6:6), and (c) a freeing from the mastery of sin (Rom. 6:7). The future tense in verse 5 indicates what must inevitably occur (as in Gal. 6:5). Thus it refers to our resurrection to new spiritual living, not our future physical resurrection. The old man in Romans 6:6 relates to our place in the old creation under the sway of sin and death. Though removed from its domain, the old order still seeks to dominate through the old man (Eph. 4:22) as it tries to express itself, using the body as a vehicle of sin (which is likely the meaning of “body of sin”). For a similar and instructive use of “destroyed” or “done away with” in Romans 6:6, see Hebrews 2:14, which relates the death of Christ to destroying Satan's power.

B. The Judgment Frees Us from the Dominion of Sin (Rom. 6:11–14)

Now Paul appeals to believers to be free from the dominion of sin on the basis of Christ's death unto sin. The appeal involves reckoning (Rom. 6:11), refusing (Rom. 6:12), and presenting (Rom. 6:13). Reckoning or considering means to calculate, to add up the truth of the facts presented in verses 1–10 and then act accordingly. In addition we must refuse to obey the evil desires of sin, and present ourselves, including all the members of our bodies, to God for His use. These phrases all appeal for a decisive and urgent break with the old life.

Godet put all these ideas together well when he wrote:

The Christian's breaking with sin is undoubtedly gradual in its realization, but absolute and conclusive in its principle. As, in order to break really with an old friend whose evil influence is felt, half measures are insufficient, and the only efficacious means is a frank explanation, followed by a complete rupture which remains like a barrier raised beforehand against every new solicitation; so to break with sin there is needed a decisive and radical act, a divine deed taking possession of the soul, and interposing henceforth between the will of the believer and sin (Gal. 6:14). This divine deed necessarily works through the action of faith in the sacrifice of Christ.¹

III. THE BASIS FOR THE BELIEVER'S FAMILY FELLOWSHIP

No passage is more basic for understanding the believer's family fellowship than 1 John 1:5–10. In it John lays down vital principles for daily Christian living, and this fellowship is based on the death of Christ (1 John 1:7). Thus another benefit of His death is that it provides for enjoyment of fellowship within the family of God.

That this passage refers to family fellowship, not initial justification, seems clear from the reoccurrence of the pronouns “we” and “us” eighteen times in the six verses. Also 2:1 continues the subject and addresses it clearly to believers. Salvation, of course, brings a perfect, complete, and eternal forgiveness (Eph. 1:7), but Christians sin and therefore need continual forgiveness in order to enjoy fellowship within the family relationships. Some have denied that this is necessary, claiming that since Christians are already forgiven, they need not ask for what they already

have.² But believers do need to forgive and to ask for forgiveness (see Luke 11:4; 2 Cor. 2:10; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13).

What are the conditions for enjoying family fellowship? They are two: conforming to the standard of light and confessing sin. God is light—an impossible standard for anyone in a mortal body to meet, so it is good that that is not the requirement. The requirement is that we walk in the light. This places us in the same moral realm as the Father so we can share fellowship. The requirement is tailored to every believer, for no matter what his or her state of maturity, he receives some light from the Word to which he must respond. As he responds, then more light comes and with it more response. So fellowship grows as that circle of light expands.

Of course, response does not always follow. Sin enters and confession is needed to restore fellowship. What is confession? It is saying the same thing about sin as God does. It is having the same perspective on that sin as God does. This must include more than simply rehearsing the sin, for God's perspective would also include forsaking that sin. Therefore, to confess includes an attitude of forsaking that sin.

Private confession to God is always necessary to restore fellowship. What about public confession as well? That depends. There are scriptural examples of public confession (James 5:16 gives a general exhortation and Acts 19:18 a specific example). Public sin would normally require public confession. Years ago I was discussing this matter of public confession with an elderly saint. He gave me two worthwhile guidelines to govern public confession. (1) Be sure God is prompting you to confess publicly. Satan, emotions, or public pressure can also urge you to do something that might not be of the Lord. (2) Before you say anything, ask whether or not it will edify those who hear, for all things in the public assembly should be done to edify.

When we confess to the Father, He is reliable and righteous to forgive and to restore us to family fellowship. This is true whether or not we feel it to be so. And notice that He does this because of the death of Christ who was the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:1–2).

IV. THE END OF THE LAW

Another important benefit of the death of Christ was the inauguration of the faith-righteousness principle to replace the law-works principle. However, Paul's statement in Romans 10:4 that Christ is the end of the Law might be understood as either signifying termination or purpose. In other words, either Christ terminated the Law, or the purpose of Christ's coming was to fulfill the Law (Matt. 5:17). However, termination seems clearly to be the meaning in this context because of the contrast (beginning in Rom. 9:30) between the Law and God's righteousness. Paul's argument that follows is not that the Jew was incomplete and needed the coming of Christ to perfect his position before God, but that his position under the law-works principle was absolutely wrong because it sought to establish righteousness by human effort rather than by accepting God's gift of righteousness. Though it is true that our Lord fulfilled the Law, this passage is not teaching that, but rather that He terminated the Law and provided a new and living way to God.

A. The Nature of the Law

The Law that our Lord terminated was, of course, the Mosaic Law according to the contrast in the passage itself. In order to develop the importance of this benefit of the work of Christ, it is first necessary to observe some features of the Mosaic Law.

1. The Mosaic Law was a unit. Generally the Law is divided into three parts: the moral, the ceremonial, and the judicial. The Ten Commandments comprise the moral part (Exod. 34:28). The judgments begin at Exod. 21:2 and include a list of various responsibilities with attendant judgments on offenders. The ceremonial part begins at Exod. 25:1 and regulated the worship life

of Israel. Though this threefold division is almost universally accepted in Christian theology, the Jewish people either did not acknowledge it or at least did not insist on it. Rather they divided the 613 commandments of the Law into twelve families of commandments, which were then subdivided into twelve families of positive and twelve families of negative commands. Specific commands that fell into these various categories were drawn from many places within the Law simply because the Law was viewed as a unit.

Noticing the penalties attached to certain commands further emphasizes the unitized character of the Law. When the command to keep the Sabbath (one of the “commandments”) was violated by a man who gathered sticks on that day, the penalty was death by stoning (Num. 15:32–36). When the people of Israel violated the command concerning the Sabbatical Year for the land (one of the “judgments”), God sent them into Captivity, where many died (Jer. 25:11). When Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire before the Lord (one of the “ordinances”), they immediately died (Lev. 10:1–7). Clearly these commands from various parts of the Law were equally binding and the punishment equally severe. The Law was a unit.

James approached the Law as a unit. He decried partiality because it violated the law to love one’s neighbor as oneself, and this single violation, he said, made the people guilty of the whole Law (James 2:8). He could scarcely arrive at such a conclusion unless the Law were a unit.

2. *The Law was given to Israel.* Both the Old and New Testaments are unanimous in this (Lev. 26:46; Rom. 9:4). Further, Paul contrasted the Jews who received the Law with the Gentiles who did not (Rom. 2:14).

B. The End of the Law

The Jerusalem Council settled this matter early and clearly (Acts 15). Debating the question of whether or not circumcision was necessary for salvation, the council said an emphatic no. Peter described the Law as an unbearable yoke. When the leaders wrote to the Gentile believers to curb their liberty in matters that were offensive to Jewish believers, they did not try to place the believers under the Law (which would have settled the problem quickly), for they realized the Law had come to an end.

In 2 Corinthians 3:7–11 Paul even specified that the part of the Law that was written on stones (the Ten Commandments) was done away. He dared to label the moral part of the Law as a ministry of death and condemnation, but, thank God, this has been replaced by the New Covenant, which brings life and justification.

In Hebrews 7:11–12 the writer demonstrated the superiority of the priesthood of Melchizedek over that of Aaron. He concluded that if the Aaronic or levitical priesthood could have brought perfection to the people, there would have been no need for another priesthood based on Melchizedek. And that change of priesthood necessitated a change in the Law. In other words, if the Law has not been done away, then neither has the levitical priesthood, and Christ is not our High Priest today. But if Christ is our High Priest, then the Law can no longer be operative and binding on us.

C. The Problem Raised

If Christ ended the Law, then why does the New Testament include some laws from the Mosaic Law in its ethic? How could the unit end and yet have specifics in it still binding on the Christian? If the New Testament included all the Ten Commandments the answer would be simple: the moral Law continues while the rest has been concluded. But the New Testament only includes nine of the ten, and it further complicates any simple solution by including some laws from parts other than the moral section of the Law (Rom. 13:9; James 2:8).

D. Suggested Solutions to the Problem

1. *Calvin's*. Calvin taught that the abrogation of the Law had reference to liberating the conscience from fear and to discontinuing the ancient Jewish ceremonies. He distinguished between the moral Law, which he said was abrogated only in its effect of condemning people, and the ceremonial Law, which he said was abrogated both in its effects and in its use. In discussing 2 Corinthians 3 he only distinguished in a general way the difference between death and life in the Old and New Covenants. He presented a very fine exposition of the Ten Commandments, but he did not consider Sunday to be a continuation of the Sabbath (as the Westminster Confession did). In other words, Calvin, as many who have followed him, considered part but not all of the Law as ended and the Ten Commandments as binding on believers today, except the Sabbath one, which he took nonliterally (Institutes II, XI, 4 and II, VIII, 33). Obviously this does not really solve the problem.

2. *Murray's*. John Murray plainly stated the Commandments were abolished, but he saw them as applicable in some deeper sense, whatever that means. He wrote: "Hence the abolition of these regulations is coincident with the deeper understanding of the sanctity of the Commandments. It is this same line of thought that must also be applied to the fourth commandment. Abolition of certain Mosaic regulations? Yes! But this in no way affects the sanctity of the commandment nor the strictness of observance that is the complement of that sanctity."³

3. *Mine*. The only solution (which I have never seen proposed by anyone else) that seems to do full justice to the plain sense of these various Scriptures distinguishes between a code and the commandments contained therein. The Mosaic Law was one of several codes of ethical conduct that God has given throughout human history. That particular code contained 613 commandments. There have also been other codes. Adam lived under laws, the sum of which may be called the code of Adam or the code of Eden. Noah was expected to obey the laws of God, so there was a Noahic code. We know that God revealed many commands and laws to Abraham (Gen. 26:5). They may be called the Abrahamic code. The Mosaic code contained all the laws of the Law. And today we live under the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2) or the law of the Spirit of life in Christ (Rom. 8:2). This code contains the hundreds of specific commandments recorded in the New Testament.

The Mosaic Law was done away in its entirety as a code. It has been replaced by the law of Christ. The law of Christ contains some new commands (1 Tim. 4:4), some old ones (Rom. 13:9), and some revised ones (Rom. 13:4, with reference to capital punishment). All the laws of the Mosaic code have been abolished because the code has. Specific Mosaic commands that are part of the Christian code appear there not as a continuation of part of the Mosaic Law, or in order to be observed in some deeper sense, but as specifically incorporated into that code, and as such they are binding on believers today. A particular law that was part of the Mosaic code is done away; that same law, if part of the law of Christ, is binding. It is necessary to say both truths in order not to have to resort to a nonliteral interpretation of 2 Corinthians 3 or Hebrews 7 and in order not to have to resort to some sort of theological contortions to retain part of the Mosaic Law.

An illustration of this idea: As children mature, different codes are instituted by their parents. Some of the same commandments may appear in those different codes. But when the new code becomes operative, the old one is done away. So it was with the Mosaic Law when our Lord became the end of the Law for righteousness to all who believe.

V. ADOPTION

Our adoption into the family of God is another benefit of the death of Christ.

A. The Meaning of Adoption

Adoption is the act of God that places the believer in His family as an adult. In contrast, being born again emphasizes the idea of coming into God's family as a babe with the attendant need for growth and development (John 1:12; 3:3). But adoption teaches the ideas of adulthood and full privileges in the family of God. Concomitant with adoption is the divesting of all relationships and responsibilities of the previous family relationship. Both being adopted and being born occur at the moment of saving faith, but they indicate different aspects of our relation to the family of God.

B. The Background of Adoption

Most cultures had some practice akin to adoption. Moses, a slave, was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter in Egypt. The Nuzu tablets reveal a custom whereby a childless couple could adopt a son who would serve them in life and be their heir in death. Hebrew laws did not include one that concerned adoption, and the Greek word for adoption does not occur in the Septuagint. This was probably due to the law of levirate marriage, which provided a way for a family to have heirs to inherit the family property. Polygamy may also have been another way to overcome the problems of childlessness.

Adoption was a very common aspect of Greco-Roman life, and this is the background of the New Testament concept. Childless couples would often adopt a son, who then became their heir. Even if the adopted son had living biological parents, they had no more claim over him after the adoption had taken place. Often parents were willing to let their sons be adopted by another family if it meant a better lot in life.

C. The Pauline Doctrine of Adoption

The doctrine is exclusively Pauline, and he used the term five times (Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5).

1. *The adoption of Israel as a nation.* (Rom 9:4). See also Exodus 4:22.

2. *The adoption of believers as individuals.* This act of God was predestined (Eph. 1:5) so that it may be said that God's predetermined plan included our destiny as adopted sons. It was made possible by the death of Christ (Gal. 4:5). It happened when we believed and became part of the family of God (Rom. 8:15), yet it awaits its full realization until we receive resurrection bodies (Rom. 8:23).

D. The Ramifications of Adoption

1. *Adoption means placing us in a family to which we did not naturally belong* (Eph. 2:3). Children of wrath become sons of God.

2. *Adoption means complete freedom from former relationships, particularly to the Law* (Gal. 4:5). In other words, the other side of adoption is freedom from the Law.

3. *Adoption is possible only because of a voluntary act of the One doing the adopting.* Before the foundation of the world God's plan included our adoption (Eph. 1:5).

4. *Adoption means we have full rights to all the privileges of being in God's family* (Rom. 8:15). Spiritual growth may be involved in the enjoyment of those privileges, but every believer has the right to them from the moment of salvation on.

And this is all true because of Christ's redemption (Gal. 4:5).

NOTES

1. F. Godet, Commentary on Romans (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, n.d.), 1:404.

2. For an excellent critique of this concept see Zane Hodges, "Fellowship and Confession in 1 John 1:5–10," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 129 (January 1972): 48–60.
3. John Murray, *Collected Writings* (Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), 1:212.

Chapter 53: Theories of the Atonement

As one would expect, various views of the Atonement, both true and false, have been propagated throughout church history. A study of these, even in a summary manner, should do two things: it should help prevent one falling into the same errors others have made, and it should help one to state the truth more precisely because of errors that have been made.

| Label | Source | Teaching |
|-----------------|--------------------|---|
| Ransom to Satan | Origen (185-254) | The death of Christ was a ransom paid to Satan to satisfy any claims Satan had against man. Ultimately Satan was deceived. The Bible does not say anything about to whom a ransom was paid. |
| Recapitulation | Irenaeus (130–202) | Christ recapitulated in Himself all the stages of life, including what belongs to us as sinners. His obedience substituted for Adam’s disobedience, and this should effect a transformation in our lives. |
| Satisfaction | Anselm (1033–1109) | Sinful man robbed God of Cur Deus Homo-His honor. God rewarded the death of Christ by viewing it as a work of supererogation so that He can pass on its stored-up merits to us. Faith is necessary to appropriate this. |

| Label | Source | Teaching |
|-----------------|---|--|
| Moral Influence | Abelard (1079-1142), Also Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Bushnell | Death of Christ was not an expiation for sin but a suffering with His creatures to manifest God’s love. This suffering love should awaken a responsive love in the sinner and bring an ethical change in him. This, then, liberates from the power of sin. |
| Example | Socinus (1539–1604) | Christ’s death did not atone for sin, but revealed faith and obedience as the way to eternal life and inspiring people to lead a similar life. |
| Governmental | Grotius (1583–1645) Also Wardlaw, Miley | God’s government demanded the death of Christ to show His displeasure with sin. Christ also did not suffer the penalty of the Law, but God accepted His suffering as a substitute for that penalty. |

| | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|---|
| Dramatic | Aulen (1879–1978) | Christ in His death gained victory over the powers of evil. |
| Barthian | Barth (1886–1968) | Christ’s death was principally a revelation of God’s love and His hatred of sin. |
| Penal Substitution | Calvin (1509–1564) | Christ the sinless One took on Himself the penalty that should have been borne by man and others. |

All of these viewpoints may perhaps be cataloged under three basic categories. (1) Views that related the death of Christ to Satan (Origen, Aulen). (2) Views that consider His death as a powerful example to influence people (Abelard, Socinus, Grotius, Barth). (3) Views that emphasize punishment due to the justice of God and substitution (perhaps Anselm—though deficient—and the Reformers). Although there may be truth in views that do not include penal substitution, it is important to remember that such truth, if there be some, cannot save eternally. Only the substitutionary death of Christ can provide that which God’s justice demands and thereby become the basis for the gift of eternal life to those who believe.

Chapter 54: The Doctrine of Election

The doctrine of election forms one of the bases of salvation, though it is not the only one. Other doctrines such as the death of Christ, faith, efficacious grace, and regeneration may also properly be termed bases as well. All are necessary in bringing to fruition the plan of God for the salvation of people.

I. THE MAJOR VIEWPOINTS ON ELECTION

A. Foresight Election

This view holds that God elects on the basis of foreseen faith. “By election we mean that sovereign act of God in grace whereby He chose in Christ Jesus for salvation all those whom He foreknew would accept Him.”¹ It is probably true to say that a great majority of evangelicals consciously or unconsciously hold this concept of election. God looked down the corridor of time and in His foreknowledge saw who would accept Christ and then elected them to salvation. This makes foreknowledge foresight without any pretemporal elective action on God’s part.

B. Corporate Election

A form of this view was held by Karl Barth. He taught that election is primarily election of Christ, then the election of the community, and finally the election of individuals. Actually all are elect in Christ, though unbelievers do not yet know that. This is why Barth’s doctrine of election caused him to be accused of universalism.

An evangelical form of this same concept (perhaps in some cases influenced by Barth and in some cases not) views election as the choosing of the group, the church, in Christ, but not of individuals until after they become members of the group by faith. In the evangelical form there is no suggestion of universalism, though the idea of corporate election is common to both. We cannot speak of individuals being elected before the foundation of the world but only of the church being so elected in Christ (Eph. 1:4). When an individual believes in Christ, he is placed in that elect group, and then he can be said to be elect. “What did God choose before the foundation of the world? The church. Not individuals, but the body of Christ.”²

C. Individual, Pretemporal Election

In this viewpoint election is “that eternal act of God whereby He, in His sovereign good pleasure, and on account of no foreseen merit in them, chooses a certain number of men to be the recipients of special grace and of eternal salvation.”³ Thus election is unconditional (i.e., there is nothing in the creature that conditions God’s choice), pretemporal (before the foundation of the world), unmerited (i.e., of grace), and the basis of salvation. Those who hold this view also acknowledge that election is in Christ, but they mean that He is the ground and cause and guarantee of the election of individuals. They reject the corporate election concept, insisting rather that God elected individuals (and not on the basis of foresight), and those elect individuals form the group, the church.

II. THE TERMINOLOGY OF ELECTION

A proper understanding of a number of terms that are directly and indirectly related to election will help to formulate the concept more biblically. Often the chief problem in understanding this doctrine is not including enough facets of it. No human mind will ever harmonize sovereignty and free will, but ignoring or downplaying one or the other in the interests of a supposed harmony will solve nothing.

A. Background Terminology

Certain terms and concepts form the backdrop against which election must be viewed.

1. *Omniscience*. This means that God has innate knowledge of all things actual and possible. Thus God's choices were made with the greatest knowledge possible.

2. *Decree, design, drawing*. The decree of God is His plan for everything. The decree contains many decrees. Decreeing and foreordaining are synonymous theological concepts, but they obviously emphasize the sovereignty facet rather than the free will aspect. The word "design" is less weighted toward sovereignty, while the word "drawing" seems almost neutral.

Scripture teaches clearly that God's plan includes all things (Eph. 1:11), but it also reveals that the degree and directness of God's relationship to specific events is varied. Sometimes He directly ordains something (Deut. 32:39; Acts 5:1–11). Almost always He works through the natural laws He has ordained and does not lift them to make exceptions even for believers (Phil. 2:30). Sometimes He decides to allow people to give full expression to their sinful natures almost without restraint (Rom. 1:24, 26, 28). Sometimes He expects us simply to make choices on the basis of what seems right or what we desire to do (1 Cor. 10:27).

In the light of this variety, I personally think a word other than decree could better express all these aspects. Design may be satisfactory. Drawing may be too neutral, as if God did the initial work and then gave up control. And yet design brings the word "architect" into view, which does serve as a helpful concept in this doctrine. God is the Architect of a plan, which does include all things but includes them in a variety of relationships. Architects' plans are detailed. So is God's plan. In the process of constructing a building, experts can predict that so many workers will be injured and in some cases that some will lose their lives. Such grim statistics are included in the planning of the building, and yet we would not hold the architect responsible for the injuries and deaths (assuming proper safety measures). Carelessness, indifference to rules, even violation of safety restrictions are usually the causes of accidents. But whose fault are they? The individuals who are careless or indifferent. So God's plan has been designed so that the responsibility for sin lies with the individual, even though God knowingly included sin in His plan.

3. *Sovereign, free*. These synonymous words can only refer to God in the absolute sense. He alone is sovereign and free. Exactly how He exercises that sovereignty and freedom we know only through the revelation of His plan as discussed in the preceding paragraph. Of course when He chooses to restrict Himself, that in no way makes Him less sovereign or free. Sovereign means supreme, and God always was, is, and will be the Sovereign who freely chose the plan He did.

B. Direct Terminology

1. *Election*. Election emphasizes God's free choice of individuals to salvation (the election of Christ, Israel, or angels are not under consideration here). When Paul uses the verb, he uses it in the middle voice, indicating that God's choice was made freely and for His own purposes (1 Cor. 1:27–28; Eph. 1:4). Individual Thessalonians were chosen (2 Thess. 2:13); as many as were set (previous to their believing) in the group of those who would have eternal life did believe (Acts 13:48); Paul was a chosen instrument (for salvation and service, Acts 9:15; Gal. 1:15); and some individuals' names were not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8; 17:8), which must mean some were. Election is unconditional and individual.

God's elect in this age have not been chosen from the spectacular people of this world (1 Cor. 1:27–28; James 2:5). They were chosen before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), and because they are elect they are to live godly lives (Col. 3:12; 2 Pet. 1:10).

2. *Predestination*. To predestine is to preplan a destiny. The word *proorizō* means to mark off beforehand. The death of Christ and its meaning were predestined by God (Acts 4:28; 1 Cor. 2:7). God's elect are predestined to adoption (Eph. 1:5), to an inheritance (Eph. 1:11), and to ultimate conformity to Christ (Rom. 8:28–29).

Biblically, predestination is limited to the elect people and assures their present position and future destiny. Theologically, the term has been used to include all things, that is, as a synonym for the total plan of God. From this theological definition it is an easy step for some forms of Calvinism to use predestination in relation to the destiny of the nonelect. Thus there arises a doctrine of double predestination. However, this is a logical assumption, not based on biblical texts. The Bible is clear that the elect are predestined, but it never suggests that there is a similar decree to elect some to damnation. The Scriptures seem content to leave that matter as a mystery, and so should we.

3. *Foreknowledge*. The word *proginoskō* is used (a) of prior, temporal knowledge (Acts 26:5; 2 Pet. 3:17); (b) of God's relation to Israel (Rom. 11:2); (c) of Christ's sacrifice (Acts 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:20); and (d) of God's people today (Rom. 8:29; 1 Pet. 1:2).

The debate centers around the question of how much relationship exists in the word "foreknowledge." Does it mean merely that God foreknows in the sense of foreseeing without any relationship? Or, a variation of this, does it mean He foresaw faith and not people? Or, as Calvinism holds, does it mean that He related Himself to people before time in some way so that there is a causative connection that makes foreknow practically equivalent to predestine or foreordain? Clearly people are foreknown, not their faith (Rom. 8:28–29). Clearly too foreknowledge as mere perception is not the basis of election, for 1 Peter 1:2 includes a decision on God's part. Election is in harmony (*kata*) with foreknowledge, and that foreknowledge included the procedure used in working out the choice. Therefore, there is some relationship and/or decision inherent in the meaning of foreknow. Certainly verse 20 includes those ideas or it would assure nothing about the sacrifice of Christ. Likewise there is decisiveness and certainty in Acts 2:23 and Romans 11:2. An apocryphal use of the word also includes certainty: "And Thy judgments are in Thy foreknowledge" (Judith 9:6). To be sure, the word does not say "elect," but neither can it be reduced to a neutral concept of perception only. It does include decision that in turn has to involve an assurance that comes from certainty.

C. Opposite Terminology

By this I mean the ideas involved in retribution and preterition. Retribution means deserved punishment, while preterition is the passing over of those not elected to salvation. Both terms avoid the concept involved in double predestination or reprobation, which means foreordination to damnation. None of these terms appear in the Scripture, though the idea is clearly taught in Romans 9:18, 21; 1 Peter 2:8; and Revelation 17:8. Therefore, the Scriptures do contain a doctrine of preterition, though there is not a decree to condemn in the same sense that there is a decree to elect. Obviously the very idea of election has to include the idea of the greater number out of which they were chosen, and those who were not chosen were certainly passed by.

This in no sense implies that God delights in the destiny of the wicked, or that they are driven against their wills, or that the doctrine of election nullifies a "whosoever" Gospel, or that any individual can know he is not elect and thereby try to excuse himself for rejecting Christ. All are accountable to God for their attitude toward Christ.

III. THE DOCTRINE SUMMARIZED

A. God's Election Is Grounded in His Own Being

Therefore, the act of electing a people has to be compatible with all of His attributes. It is based on His omniscience, so that we may be assured that when He elected He did so knowing full well all of the alternative possibilities. It is related to the exercise of His sovereign will, so that He was in no way forced to do what He did. It was done by the God who is love, so that predestination was done in love (Eph. 1:4–5). It expressed His mercy; otherwise how could God have loved Jacob? (Rom. 9:15). It demonstrates His matchless grace (Eph. 2:7–8). And the ultimate purpose

of election is to display His glory (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). Usually we put the emphasis on the fact that God elects. We need to remember that it is God who elects, and He can do nothing unloving or unjust.

B. God's Election Was of Individuals

This has already been discussed. He chose individuals, who then together make up the people of God.

C. God's Election Was Not Based on Foreknowledge (Meaning Foresight)

To foreknow is not a neutral concept but involves some sort of relationship.

D. God's Election Was Before the Foundation of the World

He did not choose us only after we chose Him (Eph. 1:4).

E. Election Alone Does Not Result in the Salvation of People

To be sure, election assures that those chosen will be saved, but it alone does not save them. People are saved through faith in the substitutionary death of Christ. And, of course, they must learn about the death of Christ somehow in order to have content to their faith. Thus election, the death of Christ, testimony of His death, and personal faith are all necessary in the salvation of an individual. Election alone does not save.

F. Election Is Purposeful, Not Capricious

Its purpose for us is service and good works (John 15:16; Gal. 1:15–16; Eph. 2:10; 1 Thess. 1:4–10).

Its purpose for God is to manifest His glory (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14).

Therefore, the doctrine of election is highly motivating and should never be deadening to one's spiritual life (Col. 3:12).

IV. OBJECTIONS TO THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

Of course election is only a part of the broader consideration of the entire decree or plan or sovereignty of God. These objections are the ones usually raised against that doctrine.

A. It Equals Fatalism

Popularly, this objection is expressed like this: "What's going to be is going to be anyway, and I cannot do anything about it." There are two very important differences between the biblical doctrine of the decree of God and the false teaching of fatalism. (1) Behind the decree is an intelligent, loving Being. Behind fatalism lies only impersonal blind chance. (2) Fatalism has no place for the importance of means. It only emphasizes ends. The decree of God includes all the means essential to arriving at the ends. And those means are as essential as the ends. Thus, the biblical doctrine gives proper place to human responsibility. What's going to be is going to be through certain means and procedures and responsible human actions. Ephesians 1:11 spotlights all things, not solely ends.

B. It Is Inconsistent with Human Freedom

This is the same objection raised in Romans 9:19: Why can God fault anyone, since no one really resists His will if everything is part of His plan? Though it is true that God has the right to do anything consistent with His nature, it is equally true that He has chosen to exercise His rights by including the responsible and relatively free actions of people (Philemon 14; Rev. 17:13 linked with Rev. 17:17). I say relatively free simply because no one has absolute freedom, if for no other

reason than the limitations of being fallen human creatures. He has made us responsible, and when we fail to act responsibly we are justly blamed.

An illustration: Does God know the day you are going to die? The answer is yes, He does. Question: Could you die a day sooner? The answer is no. Question: Then why do you eat? Answer: to live. The means of eating is essential to the end of living to the preordained day of death. From this point on the illustration can easily and uselessly get into the realm of the hypothetical. Suppose I do not eat? Then I will die. Would that be the day God planned that I should die? These are questions that do not need to be asked or answered. Just eat.

Or to change the illustration: Has God planned the answers to my prayers? Yes. Then why pray? Because those answers come when I pray.

Or again: Does God know who are elect? Of course, He elected them. Can any of them be lost? No. Then why pray and witness? Because that is how they will be saved. Will any of them fail to believe? No. Then why do they have to believe? Because that is the only way they can be saved, and unless they do believe they will not be saved. Do not let your mind ask the theoretical and useless questions. Let your mind and your life concentrate on doing what is God's will and making sure you act responsibly.

C. It Makes God the Author of Sin

I think we must acknowledge that God did construct a plan that included sin, and its inclusion did not come as a surprise. Yet we must guard the clear teaching of Scripture that God hates sin (Ps. 5:5), that He is never responsible for our committing sin (James 1:13), and that including sin in His plan does not make it somehow less sinful and us less culpable.

All that the Bible says about the concrete appearance of sin in creatures is that it was found in Satan (Ezek. 28:15). Isaiah 45:7 may refer to God's including evil in His plan; some understand the verse to refer to the results of sin, such as calamity. Proverbs 16:4 teaches also that all things are included in God's plan. We must seek a balance in this truth and live with the unresolved tensions.

Finally, face the ramification of all things not being included in one way or another in God's plan. This would mean that there were things outside of His control, and that is a frightening idea.

Listen to these words of Calvin:

Herein appears the immeasurable felicity of the godly mind. Innumerable are the evils that beset human life; innumerable too the deaths that threaten it. We need not go beyond ourselves: since our body is the receptacle of a thousand diseases—in fact holds within itself and fosters the causes of diseases—a man cannot go about unburdened by many forms of his own destruction, and without drawing out a life enveloped, as it were, with death. For what else would you call it, when he neither freezes nor sweats without danger? Now, wherever you turn, all things around you not only are hardly to be trusted but almost openly menace, and seem to threaten immediate death. Embark on a ship; you are one step away from death. Mount a horse; if one foot slips, your life is imperiled. Go through the city streets; you are subject to as many dangers as there are tiles on the roofs. If there is a weapon in your hand or a friend's, harm awaits. All the fierce animals you see are armed for your destruction. But if you try to shut yourself up in a walled garden, seemingly delightful, there a serpent sometimes lies hidden. Your house, continually in danger of fire, threatens in the daytime to impoverish you, at night even to collapse upon you. Your field, since it is exposed to hail, frost, drought, and other calamities, threatens you with barrenness, and hence,

famine. I pass over poisonings, ambushes, robberies, open violence, which in part besiege us at home, in part dog us abroad. Amid these tribulations must not man be most miserable, since, but half alive in life, he weakly draws his anxious and languid breath, as if he had a sword perpetually hanging over his neck?

You will say: these events rarely happen, or at least not all the time, nor to all men, and never all at once. I agree; but since we are warned by the examples of others that these can also happen to ourselves, and that our life ought not to be excepted any more than theirs, we cannot but be frightened and terrified as if such events were about to happen to us. What, therefore, more calamitous can you imagine than such trepidation? Besides, it is an insult to God to say that He has exposed man, the noblest of His creatures, to the blindness and temerity of fortune.⁴

Then join with Paul in his magnificent doxology that comes at the conclusion of his lengthy and detailed section on election when he wrote: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen” (Rom. 11:33–36).

NOTES

1. Henry C. Thiessen, *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 344; though this definition was not allowed to stand in Doerksen’s revision, 1981, 258.
2. Dan Esterline, “The Doctrine of Predestination,” *Moody Monthly*, February 1979, 86; for the same view see also Roger T. Forster and V. Paul Marston, *God’s Strategy in Human History* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale, 1975); and Robert Shank, *Elect in the Son* (Springfield, Mo.: Westcott, 1970), 48–49.
3. L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), 114.
4. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I, XVII, 10.

Chapter 55: The Extent of the Atonement

I. THE QUESTION

Limited atonement or particular redemption can scarcely be termed a cornerstone doctrine. Nevertheless, it obviously is sometimes a hotly debated one. Berkhof is typical of those who hold the view and who express the issue this way: “Did the Father in sending Christ, and did Christ in coming into the world, to make atonement for sin, do this with the design or for the purpose of saving only the elect or all men? That is the question, and that only is the question.”¹ If indeed the question is properly expressed this way, then the answer is clear: The Atonement was limited, for Christ did not come into the world to save all men. Our understanding of election makes that answer certain.

But is Berkhof’s question the correct question? The answer is no. It is false to say that “that is the question, and that only is the question.” Rather, the actual question is: Did Christ purpose by coming into the world to make provision for the salvation of all people, realizing that the Father would mysteriously draw the elect to Himself and allow others to reject the provision made? Because some reject does not invalidate the provision or mean that the provision was not made for them. If we say that a father provides sufficient food for his family, we do not exclude the possibility that some members of that family may refuse to eat what has been provided. But their refusal does not mean that the provision was made only for those who actually do eat the food. Likewise, the death of Christ provided the payment for the sins of all people—those who accept that payment and those who do not. Refusal to accept does not limit the provision made. Providing and possessing are not the same.

II. THE VIEWS

Arminians accept universal redemption or unlimited atonement (along with the idea that sufficient grace is supplied to all so that they may believe). Among Calvinists there are some who hold to universal redemption (so-called four-point Calvinists or Amyraldians, after Moses Amyraldus, 1596–1664), and some who teach particular redemption (so-called ultra or five-point Calvinists). The latter group holds that Christ died to secure salvation for the elect; thus His death was limited in its extent to the elect. Moderate Calvinists see the purpose of Christ’s death as providing a substitution for all; therefore, it was unlimited in its extent.

These views relate to the question of the order of the decrees of God. This discussion concerns logic more than revelation, and it only serves to highlight the different perspectives by attempting to place an order on the parts of the single decree of God, especially focusing on the relation of election to the Fall (lapse—fall). Supralapsarianism places election first (supra—above) followed by the decrees to create, allow the Fall, and then provide for the salvation of the elect. Infralapsarianism (infra—later) lists Creation, Fall, election, and then provision for the salvation of the elect. Sublapsarianism (sub—beneath) sees this order: Creation, Fall, provision of salvation for all, election of some to be saved. Some theologians do not recognize the distinction between infra and sub, and I must say that none of these schemes really confirms anything. The issue under discussion concerns the extent of the Atonement, and it will not be settled or even enlightened much by deciding the supposed order of the decrees.

III. SOME IMPORTANT AFFIRMATIONS

When discussing this question, it is essential to keep certain truths clearly in mind.

(1) Unlimited redemptionists are not universalists. They do not believe that all will ultimately be saved. Nor does their view require or logically lead to such a heretical conclusion. To assert this is to create a straw man.

(2) All people are lost, including the elect. The fact that an individual is elect does not in some way make him less lost than a nonelect person.

(3) Anyone who will be saved must believe. The Father will draw the person, yet he must come (John 6:37, 44).

(4) Some Scriptures do relate the Atonement particularly to the elect. See John 10:15 and Ephesians 5:25 for clear examples. Unlimited people readily acknowledge this. But this is not the issue. The question is: Are there Scriptures that broaden the extent of the Atonement beyond the elect? Limited advocates say no and attempt to explain those passages that seem to broaden the Atonement in ways that do not broaden it. In other words, unlimited advocates acknowledge that the Atonement is both limited and unlimited; limited advocates insist that it is strictly limited and do not recognize any unlimited passages as teaching unlimited atonement.

IV. EXEGETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A. 2 Peter 2:1

It is generally acknowledged that the verse most difficult to harmonize with the limited atonement view is 2 Peter 2:1. Apparently it says that the false teachers (who are not among the elect) had the price of redemption paid for them by the Lord, for in their teaching they deny the Lord who bought (*agoraz̄o*) them. In other words, Peter seems to be saying that the Lord in His sacrifice paid the price of redemption for these nonelect people.

Some particular redemptionists say that Peter was only recording what the false teachers claimed. They said that the Lord bought them, but in reality He did not because He died only for the elect. Thus Peter simply acknowledged what they were saying without affirming the truth of it, and indeed, it is not a true statement from the limited viewpoint. But, of course, even if this is an expression of what the false teachers were saying, it still can be a true statement, so it cannot be assumed to be false simply because it comes from their mouths. But more likely Peter was emphasizing the depth of their defection by pointing out that they denied the Lord who bought them. This is sometimes called the “Christian Charity” view.

Others understand this to mean that the Lord (as Creator) “purchased” these nonelect people in the sense that He as Creator possessed them. Thus *agoraz̄o* (buy, redeem) comes to *mean ktiz̄o* (create). The Lord possessed them as He did Israel when He effected a temporal deliverance from Egypt (Deut. 32:6).

In attempting to reinforce this interpretation, particular redemptionists cite three lines of alleged support. (1) The word for Lord (*despotes*) when used in the New Testament refers to God, not Christ, and it should refer to Christ if this verse teaches a soteriological ransom (see, for example, Acts 4:24; Rev. 6:10). While the word does usually refer to the Father when it refers to Deity, does not Jude 4 use it in reference to Christ? It seems so, and if so there, then there is no reason that it does not also refer to Christ in 2 Peter 2:1.

(2) They also point out that in other occurrences of *agoraz̄o* where it refers to soteriological redemption in the New Testament, the price paid is mentioned in the context. Therefore, since no price is mentioned in 2 Peter 2:1, this must not refer to an actual soteriological redemption, but rather a Creator-creature “possession.” However, in Revelation 14:4 no price is mentioned in the context of relating the soteriological redemption of the 144,000. Likewise, 2 Peter 2:1 could also refer to a soteriological redemption without mentioning the specific price.

(3) Further it is alleged that *agoraz̄o* is always used in contexts where there is a real, take-possession kind of buying. Because the false teachers in 2 Peter 2:1 were not actually saved, *agoraz̄o* cannot refer to a salvation purchase since no real possession took place. But notice Luke 14:18–19 where a real, actual purchase was made of a piece of property and yet the

purchaser had not even seen it. Likewise, the unlimited redemptionist argues, the false teachers were actually purchased (that is, Christ did die for them) even though they were never possessed (that is, they were not saved).²

B. 1 John 2:2

This verse also seems to say rather clearly that the death of Christ was for the whole world, since He is the propitiation not only for our sins but also for the sins of the whole world. “Our” seems to refer to those who are (or will be) saved while “the whole world” includes those who are not saved. How do limited redemptionists explain this verse so as to be compatible with their viewpoint?

Actually three suggestions are made. In all three, “ours” and “the whole world” add up to the sum total of all the elect; therefore, “ours” refers to some of the elect and “the whole world” to others of the elect. (1) Some understand “ours” to mean the elect living in Asia Minor where the apostle John was; “the whole world” then refers to the elect living outside Asia Minor. This is a geographical distinction. (2) Others see a racial distinction; that is, “ours” means the elect from among Jewish people, and “the whole world” designates the elect from among Gentiles. (3) Still others make a chronological distinction. “Ours” designates the elect living in the first century, while “the whole world” focuses on the elect in subsequent centuries. In other words, limited atonement sees the Atonement from this verse as geographically, ethnically, or chronologically universal, but only in relation to the elect, not all people.³

To be sure, the word “world” does not always mean all people (see John 12:19), but no dictionary gives it the meaning of only the elect.

Furthermore, the only other occurrence of the phrase “the whole world” in John’s writings is in 1 John 5:19, and there it undebatably includes everybody. So the presumption is that it also means everyone in 1 John 2:2. And this means that Christ died for all people even though all are not ultimately saved.

C. 1 Timothy 2:4–6; 4:10

Generally, limited redemptionists understand the “all” in 1 Timothy 2 to refer to all kinds of people. That is, Christ died for all kinds of sinners (among the elect), and God wishes all kinds of people (among the elect) to be saved. In 1 Timothy 4:10, however, some understand Savior to mean that Christ provides the general benefits of providence to all and especially to believers. “Savior” then has no soteriological connotation, according to this interpretation. The logic behind these interpretations is that if Christ is the Savior of all people absolutely, then all must be saved, and since all are not saved, then He cannot be the Savior of all in any soteriological sense. But is not God the Father of all people absolutely (Acts 17:29), and yet not all people are in the redeemed family? (Gal. 3:26). Similarly, Christ can be said to be the Savior of all without all being saved.⁴

D. Hebrews 2:9

Again it seems clear that the Atonement was universal. How else could the writer say that He tasted death for every man? Notice that the preceding verses use the word “man” also and the meaning is clearly all people, not just the elect.

E. John 3:16

Limited redemptionists are forced to say that this verse means God loved only the world of the elect. One advocate of limited redemption understands the verse to emphasize the intensity of God’s love; that is, God loved the world of sinners. But it is still restricted to the elect sinners. Now if John 3:16 is so restricted, then no limited redemptionist could tell his young children, for

example, that God loves them, since he could not know at that age whether or not they belonged to the elect. The Lord, however, expressed His love *agapa* ὁ for an unsaved (and evidently a nonelect) man (Mark 10:21).

F. Acts 17:30

This verse states the matter as broadly as it could be said. God commands all men everywhere to repent. To read it to say all men without distinction of race or rank everywhere in the earth but only among the elect (which is the way it would have to be understood to support limited atonement) does not appear to be the most secure exegesis!

Exegesis clearly supports the unlimited position.

V. THEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A. Universal Gospel Preaching

Unlimited advocates claim that in order for one to preach the Gospel to all, Christ had to die for all. It does seem to make more sense to say that unlimited redemption is more compatible with universal Gospel preaching. However, it must be recognized that believing in limited atonement does not necessarily dampen one's evangelistic efforts. Some great evangelists, like Spurgeon, held to limited atonement. And some who hold to unlimited atonement fail in their responsibility to witness.

B. The Value of Christ's Death

Is some of the value of Christ's death lost if all for whom He died are not actually saved? The limited person says yes; therefore, he concludes, Christ only died for the elect. But if God designed that there be value in a universal sacrifice in that it made the whole world savable, in addition to the saving value for those who do believe, then all the value is realized, though in different ways.

C. Do the Nonelect Have Their Sins Paid for Twice?

Some limited advocates argue that if Christ died for all, then the sins of the nonelect were paid for at the cross by the death of Christ and will be paid for again at the judgment by the condemnation of the nonelect to the lake of fire. So in effect their sins are paid for twice. Logically, then, either the death of Christ should not include the nonelect, or the nonelect should not be condemned to the lake of fire.

An analogous question might be asked. Did the Israelite who refused to apply the Passover blood to the door of his house have his sins paid for twice? When the Passover Lamb was killed, his sins were covered. But if he did not put the blood on the door, he died. Was this a second payment for his sins? Of course not. The first and sufficient payment was simply not applied to that particular house. Death after failure to apply the blood was just retribution for not appropriating the sufficient sacrifice. The Atonement of Christ paid for the sins of the whole world, but the individual must appropriate that payment through faith. The world was reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:19), but those reconciled people need to be reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:20).

An illustration: In one school where I have taught, the student aid was handled in this way. People made gifts to the student aid fund. Needy students applied for help from that fund. A committee decided who would receive aid and how much. But when the actual money was distributed, it was done by issuing a check to the student, who then was expected to endorse it back to the school, which would then place the credit on his account. The money was not moved directly from the aid fund to the individual student's account. The student had to receive it personally and place it on his account. Let us suppose you gave a gift to cover one student's tuition for one year. You could properly say that his tuition was fully paid. But until the selection

is made by the committee, and until the student receives the gift and places it on his account, his tuition is not paid. If he fails to endorse the check, it will never be paid even though it has been paid!

The death of Christ pays for all the sins of all people. But not one individual has his own account settled until he believes. If he never believes, then even though the price has been fully paid, his sins will not be forgiven. The death of Christ is like some benefactor paying the tuitions of all students in all schools everywhere. If that could be true, what should we be telling students? The good news that their tuitions are paid.

Christ died for all. What should we be telling the world?

NOTES

1. L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), 394.
2. See John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1959), 250–52; and Gary Long, *Definite Atonement* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1976), 67–82.
3. See John Murray, *Redemption—Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 82–85.
4. See Owen, *Death of Death*, 235.

Chapter 56: The Application of Salvation

In this chapter we shall consider the ministries involved in the application of salvation. Historically, this consideration has been labeled the *ordo salutis*, or way of salvation, and it attempts to arrange in logical order (not temporal order) these activities involved in applying salvation to the individual. But like the question of the order of the decrees in lapsarianism, the *ordo salutis* in reality contributes little of substance. The most argued point is the relation between regeneration and faith, which we shall discuss later. Rather than trying to establish an order, it is more useful to note which ministries are solely of God (calling, regeneration) and which involve man as well (conviction, conversion).

I. CONVICTION

A. *What Is Conviction?*

As recorded in John 16:8–11, the Lord promised that after Pentecost the Holy Spirit would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. What is conviction? It is not the same as conversion. It is convincing or refuting an opponent so that he has the matter set before him in a clear light whether he accepts or rejects the evidence.

The idea of “conviction” is complex. It involves the conceptions of authoritative examination, of unquestionable proof, of decisive judgment, of punitive power. Whatever the final issue may be, he who “convicts” another places the truth of the case in dispute in a clear light before him, so that it must be seen and acknowledged as truth. He who then rejects the conclusion which the exposition involves, rejects it with his eyes open and at his peril. Truth seen as truth carries with it condemnation to all who refuse to welcome it.¹

Notice the use of the word in Matthew 18:15. The man reproved or convicted may accept the evidence and repent, or he may not, which would then result in a further confrontation. Conviction, then, offers proof, but does not guarantee the truth will be accepted, which is necessary for conversion.

B. *Who Are Convicted?*

The world. Does this refer only to the elect? No, since the ministry of conviction expects that some will not accept the truth. Does it mean everyone in the world? Likely not, since this involves the specifics of sin, righteousness, and judgment, not just general conviction that comes from natural revelation. It must mean a large number of people, more than the elect, but not everybody (cf. John 12:19).

C. *Of What Are They Convicted?*

Conviction comes in the specific areas of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The *hotis* may mean because or namely or a mixture in the three clauses. For example, if because, then the world is convicted of sin because of unbelief. If namely, then the world is convicted of the sin of unbelief. The righteousness is that which Christ provided on the cross, vindicated by His ascension to the Father. The judgment may be the sinner’s future judgment, assured by the already completed judgment of Satan, or it may refer to Satan’s judgment on the cross (John 12:31).

The order is a logical one. Man needs to see his state of sin, have proof of the righteousness that the Savior provides, and be reminded that if he refuses to receive that Savior he faces certain condemnation.

D. How Is Conviction Accomplished?

Most likely several ways are involved. The Spirit may speak directly to man's conscience, which, though able to be seared, can still convict. He may speak through the written Word. He may also use the spoken testimony or preached word. But whether or not people are involved in effecting this ministry of conviction, if conviction comes to an individual the Spirit must do it. We readily acknowledge that regeneration is the work of the Spirit, but we sometimes let ourselves think that our clever or convincing presentations can convict. Not so. God must do even that.

II. CALLING

A. The General Call

Only one or two references in the New Testament use the word "call" to convey the idea of a general call to elect and nonelect alike. Matthew 22:14 clearly supports the concept, while Matthew 9:13 may also. However, the idea is clearly expressed in passages like Luke 14:16–24 and John 7:37. This is God's general invitation to men to come to Him.

B. The Effective Call

This is the call that only the elect respond to through faith and that results in their salvation (Rom. 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:2). This is God's work, though He uses the proclamation of the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). The call is unto fellowship (1 Cor. 1:9), light (1 Pet. 2:9), liberty (Gal. 5:13), holiness (1 Thess. 4:7), and His kingdom (1 Thess. 2:12).

III. REGENERATION

A. The Meaning of Regeneration

The word, used only twice in the New Testament (Matt. 19:28; Titus 3:5), means to be born again. To be born from above (anothen) occurs in John 3:3 and probably includes the idea of being born again also (see the use of anothen in Gal. 4:9). It is the work of God that gives new life to the one who believes.

B. The Means of Regeneration

God regenerates (John 1:13) according to His will (James 1:18) through the Holy Spirit (John 3:5) when a person believes (John 1:12) the Gospel as revealed in the Word (1 Pet. 1:23).

C. The Relation of Regeneration and Faith

In the Reformed statement of the *ordo salutis*, regeneration precedes faith, for, it is argued, a sinner must be given new life in order to be able to believe. Although this is admittedly stated only as a logical order, it is not wise to insist even on that; for it may as well be argued that if a sinner has the new life through regeneration, why does he need to believe? Of course, there can be no chronological order; both regeneration and faith have to occur at the same moment. To be sure, faith is also part of the total package of salvation that is the gift of God (Eph. 2:9); yet faith is commanded in order to be saved (Acts 16:31). Both are true.

D. The Fruit of Regeneration

The new life will bear new fruit. In 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18, some of the results of the new life include righteousness, not committing sin, loving one another, and overcoming the world.

IV. FAITH

The Meaning of Faith

Faith means confidence, trust, to hold something as true. Of course, faith must have content; there must be confidence or trust about something. To have faith in Christ unto salvation means to have confidence that He can remove the guilt of sin and grant eternal life.

B. The Necessity of Faith

Salvation is always through faith, not because of faith (Eph. 2:8). Faith is the channel through which we receive God's gift of eternal life; it is not the cause. This is so man can never boast, even of his faith. But faith is the necessary and only channel (John 5:24; 17:3).

Normally the New Testament word for believe (*pisteuo*) is used with the preposition *eis* (John 3:16), indicating reliance or confident trust in the object. Sometimes it is followed by *epi*, emphasizing the trust as laying hold on the object of faith (Rom. 9:33; 10:11). Sometimes it is followed by a clause that introduces the content of the faith (Rom. 10:9). The verb is used with a dative in Romans 4:3. But whatever the form, it indicates reliance on something or someone.

C. The Kinds of Faith

The Scriptures seem to distinguish four kinds of faith.

1. *Intellectual or historical faith.* This apprehends the truth intellectually as a result of education, tradition, rearing, etc. It is human and does not save (Matt. 7:26; Acts 26:27–28; James 2:19).

2. *Miracle faith.* This is faith to perform or receive a miracle, and it may or 3. *Temporary faith.* Luke 8:13 illustrates this kind of faith. It seems similar to intellectual faith, except that there seems to be more personal interest involved.

4. *Saving faith.* This is a reliance on the truth of the Gospel as revealed in the Word of God.

D. The Facets of Faith

1. *The intellectual facet.* This involves a factual and positive recognition of the truth of the Gospel and the person of Christ.

2. *The emotional facet.* The truth and the person of Christ are now seen in an interested and absorbing way.

3. *The volitional facet.* Now the individual appropriates personally the truth and the Person and places his reliance on Him.

Although these three facets may be distinguished, they must be integrated when saving faith takes place. The person believes in Christ with all his being, not just his intellect or emotions or will.

Perhaps one of the clearest statements of the necessary content to saving faith is found in the words of the Lord to the sinful Samaritan woman. He said, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water" (John 4:10). Know about the gift and the Person, then ask and receive eternal life.

NOTE

1. B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: Murray, 1908), 2:219.

Chapter 57: The Security of the Believer

I. DEFINITIONS AND DISTINCTIONS

The title of this chapter was not chosen indiscriminately. In some theologies or dictionaries it would have been entitled Assurance; in others, Perseverance; in a few, Preservation. What are the differences, and why choose Security?

Eternal security is the work of God that guarantees that the gift of salvation, once received, is forever and cannot be lost. The concept of eternal security emphasizes God's activity in guaranteeing the eternal possession of the gift of eternal life. It relates to those the Holy Spirit regenerates, and its veracity does not rest on feelings or experiences.

Preservation is quite similar to eternal security in emphasizing the work of God in preserving the believer in his salvation.

Perseverance, the term generally used in Calvinism, labels the fifth point in Calvin's theology, the "final perseverance" of the saints. It means that believers "can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved" (Westminster Confession, XVII, I). It seems to focus on the believer—it is the believer who perseveres (albeit through the decree and power of God). Security focuses on God—it is God who secures our salvation. It does not deny that there may be times of backsliding, but it stresses the need for demonstrable fruit throughout the Christian life. Sometimes those who approach this doctrine from the viewpoint of perseverance deny the possibility of a Christian's being carnal.

Though eternal security, preservation, and perseverance in reality all teach the same bottom-line conclusion (namely, that the true believer will not lose his salvation), assurance is a different doctrine. It is the realization of the truth of eternal security or perseverance. A secure salvation is a true fact whether one realizes it or not. Thus a believer has security whether or not he has assurance.

II. THE DOCTRINE OF ASSURANCE

Assurance is the realization that one possesses eternal life. Lack of assurance often brings unnecessary but terrible trauma to a person's life. Why do people lack assurance?

Four reasons may be suggested. (1) Some doubt the reality of their committal to Christ. Sometimes this may be connected with the inability to pinpoint a time when one received Christ. Regeneration occurs at a specific point in time. People are either saved or lost at any given moment. No one grows into conversion. But we all do grow in our comprehension of conversion. So, although in God's sight and in our experience there was a point in time when we were saved, in our recollection or understanding we may not be able to specify it.

Sometimes this doubt is more basic than just the matter of time. Did I really trust Christ? Such doubt may be dispelled by calling on the name of the Lord again (and again and again, if necessary). No one can be born again more than one time, but one may honestly tell the Lord his doubt and call on Him for salvation again.

(2) Some lack assurance because they question the correctness of the procedure they went through when they expressed faith in Christ. I did not go forward. Am I really saved? Did I pray the proper prayer? I received Christ privately. Is this sufficient, or do I need to make some kind of public demonstration? This problem, which is very real to more people than it should be, has been aggravated by elevating some method of invitation to the place where it almost becomes the means of salvation.

(3) If one does not believe in the security of the believer, then he will undoubtedly lack assurance more than once in his lifetime.

(4) When sin, especially a serious sin, enters the believer's life, then doubt sometimes accompanies such an experience. Security does not grant a license to sin, but to have assurance we need to realize that Christians will sin, and that sin does not cause us to lose our salvation. The normal Christian experience never includes sinlessness, for "we all stumble in many ways" (James 3:2). This never excuses sin, for the Christian will also grow in holiness. But the experience of sin does not forfeit salvation.

III. THE ARMINIAN VIEW OF SECURITY

James Arminius (1560–1609) received his training in strict Reformed theology. When asked to defend supralapsarianism against sublapsarianism, he found himself guardedly defending the sublapsarian position. His writings, collected in three volumes, consist mostly of occasional treatises that grew out of the controversies he found himself in. The system known as Arminianism took his views much further and was forged by Simon Episcopius (1583–1643).

Among the principal teachings of Arminianism are the following.

1. *Foreknowledge.* God's decrees are based on His foreknowledge (meaning foresight). Election was due to foreseen faith and reprobation to foreseen resistance to grace. Though Arminius also viewed foreknowledge as foresight, he did say that "God decreed to save some and damn certain particular persons."¹

2. *Pollution, not guilt.* Man inherited pollution from Adam but not imputed guilt. Depravity is not total, for man can incline his will toward good deeds.

3. *Perfection.* It is possible for a believer to live in such conformity to God's will so as to be called perfect.

4. *Loss of salvation.* Arminianism clearly teaches that a believer may lose his salvation. Arminius said: "I never taught that a true believer can either totally or finally fall away from the faith and perish; yet I will not conceal that there are passages of Scripture which seem to me to wear this aspect."²

On a more popular level, Arminians sometimes equate the position of eternal security with a license to sin. Of course, Calvinists do sin and excuse it, but so do Arminians. Our life should adorn our doctrine, but our life, good or bad, neither makes doctrine true or untrue.

As a practical matter, the Arminian view of the possibility and reality of losing one's salvation sometimes leads to a cataloging of sins. In one category are sins that will cause you to lose your salvation; in another, those that do not. Of course, some sins are worse than others (Matt. 7:1–5; John 19:11), but if one sin can cause the loss of salvation, then any sin can. Resistance to this conclusion may account for the perfectionism teaching in Arminianism.

IV. THE REASONS FOR ETERNAL SECURITY

Basically security is based on the grace of God and the fact that eternal life is a gift and it is eternal. When a person believes in Christ, he is brought into a relationship with the Godhead that assures his salvation is secure. Of course, this is true only of born again people. There are those who profess but do not possess life. Sometimes we can make a reasonably sure judgment as to whether an individual only professes or actually possesses eternal life. Sometimes we cannot. But the regenerated person's salvation is secure because of that relationship to God that he has through faith.

A. Reasons Related to the Father

1. *His purpose.* God purposed to glorify the same group He predestined, called, and justified (Rom. 8:30). This daring statement could not be made if any one of that group could lose his salvation. If so, then the ones whom He justified would not be the same number as the ones He glorified. But the text says they will be the same.

2. *His power.* Most would agree that God's power is able to keep the believer (and it is, Jude 24), but some would argue that it can be thwarted by a person renouncing his faith. But the Lord said that we are secure in His hand and the Father's hand and that no one can seize the believer from the safe position (John 10:28–29). "No one" means no one, including the individual himself. The promise does not say that no one, except yourself, can seize the believer out of God's hand. It says no one.

B. Reasons Related to the Son

1. *His death.* Paul asks two questions in Romans 8:33: Who will bring a charge against God's elect, and who condemns them? His answer that no one can is based on the death, resurrection, intercession, and advocacy of Christ (Romans 8:34). If any sin can undo a believer's salvation, and if in fact, he can lose that salvation, then Christ's death did not pay for that sin. But it did, Paul asserts. Our Lord Himself also declared that He would lose nothing of what the Father gave Him (John 6:39–40)—everyone who believes in Him will be raised at the last day, not everyone who believes and perseveres.

2. *His prayers.* Christ's present ministry in heaven of praying for His own consists of two aspects: a preventive ministry (intercession) and a curative ministry (advocacy). His prayer in John 17 illustrates the preventive aspect. There He prayed that we might be kept from the evil one (John 17:15), that we would be sanctified (John 17:17), that we would be united (John 17:21), that we would be in heaven with Him (John 17:24), and that we might behold His glory (John 17:24). Because of His unceasing intercession for us He is able to save us completely and eternally (Heb. 7:25).

Advocacy comes into action when we sin (1 John 2:1). Again, if any sin can undo salvation (and any can), then Satan has an airtight case against any believer whenever he sins (Rev. 12:10). He can justly demand the Christian's eternal damnation, and were it not for our Advocate, we would be condemned. But the Lord points to His work on Calvary that removes the guilt of all our sins, those committed before and after salvation, and this suffices to answer Satan's charge.

I sinned. And straightway, posthaste, Satan flew
before the presence of the Most High God,
And made a railing accusation there.
He said, "This soul, this thing of clay and sod,
Has sinned. 'Tis true that he has named Thy name,
But I demand his death, for Thou hast said,
'The soul that sinneth, it shall die.' Shall not
Thy sentence be fulfilled? Is justice dead?
Send now this wretched sinner to his doom.
What other thing can righteous Ruler do?"
And thus he did accuse me day and night,

And every word he spoke, O God, was true!
Then quickly One rose up from God's right hand,
Before whose glory angels veiled their eyes,
He spoke, "Each jot and tittle of the Law
Must be fulfilled; the guilty sinner dies!
But wait—suppose his guilt were all transferred
To Me, and that I paid his penalty!
Behold My hands, My side, My feet! One day
I was made sin for him, and died that he
Might be presented faultless, at Thy throne!"
And Satan fled away. Full well he knew
That he could not prevail against such love,
For every word my dear Lord spoke was true!
—Martha Snell Nicholson

C. Reasons Related to the Spirit

1. *He regenerates.* If we are born again by the Spirit when we believe, then if we can renounce our faith to lose our salvation, we would have to have the new birth taken away as well.
2. *He indwells.* If salvation can be lost, then the presence of the Spirit within the life of the believer would have to be removed. The Christian would become disindwelt.
3. *He baptizes.* The Spirit joins the believer to the body of Christ when he believes (1 Cor. 12:13); therefore, if salvation can be lost, the Christian would have to be detached from the body of Christ.
4. *He seals.* The Spirit seals the believer until the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30). If salvation can be lost, then His sealing would not be until the day of redemption but only until the day of sinning, or apostasy, or disbelief.

Of course, Scripture gives no hint that a Christian can lose the new birth, or that he can be disindwelt, or that he can be removed from the body of Christ (thus maiming His body) or be unsealed. Salvation is eternal and completely secured to all who believe.

To be sure, believers sin and are warned against false profession and Christian immaturity, but God never takes back the gift of His salvation once it is received. Believers will not always persevere in godliness. Peter did not (Gal. 2:11). Many Ephesian believers did not (Acts 19:18). Lot did not (2 Pet. 2:7). At the Judgment Seat of Christ there will be some whose works will be burned and who will be saved as through fire (1 Cor. 3:15). Even though every believer will bear some fruit (1 Cor. 4:5), it is difficult if not impossible to quantify how much or what kind each one will bear and thus to make judgments as to the spiritual condition of an individual.

V. SOME "PROBLEM" PASSAGES

Certain passages are sometimes understood as invalidating the doctrine of eternal security. We shall examine some of these to show that at least there is a reasonable interpretation that does not contradict the doctrine of security.

A. Passages That Warn Against Substituting Law for Grace

Two passages severely warn against trying to replace the way of grace with the old way of the Law. In Galatians 5:4 Paul clearly declared that those who attempt to be justified by the Law have “fallen from grace.” That is, to try to use the Law as the ground for justification is to fall away from grace, which provides the only way to be justified.

The same kind of warning appears in Hebrews 10:26–31. Here the writer warned that if a person rejects the truth of Christ’s death for sin, there is no other sacrifice for sin available and no other way to come to God. Such unbelief brings the threefold indictment detailed in verse 29.

B. Passages That Warn Against Losing Rewards (but Not Salvation)

Quite clearly Paul spoke to this possibility in the “race” passage, 1 Corinthians 9:24–27. Races are run for rewards, and Paul himself felt the need to live a disciplined life so that at the end he would not be disappointed, not eliminated from the race, not lose his crowns.

The Lord’s illustration of the Vine and the branches teaches the same basic truth (John 15:1–17). These branches are in Him, thus referring to believers. Believers, then, are exhorted to abide in Him in order to be fruitful. Abiding means to keep Christ’s commandments (John 15:10 and 1 John 3:24). The believer who does not abide, though still in Christ and thus saved, loses his opportunities and rewards, both in life and at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The casting forth, withering, and burning refer not to loss of salvation but to loss of present witness and future reward.

C. Hebrews 6:1–8

This much-debated passage has been variously interpreted.

(1) The Arminian viewpoint sees the people described as believers who actually can lose their salvation (“fall away”). But if the passage teaches that, it also teaches that such a person who has lost his salvation can never be saved a second time, for “it is impossible to renew them again to repentance.”

(2) Others see this as a reference to professing believers who only fall away from knowledge of the truth to which they have been exposed but which they never personally accepted. In this view security is not an issue since professors are not saved.

(3) I personally understand the passage to be describing born again people. The phrases in verses 4 and 5 clearly refer to a conversion experience (cf. “enlightened” in Hebrews 10:32, “taste” in Hebrews 2:9, and “partakers” in Hebrews 12:8). But they are willfully immature believers (cf. Hebrews 5:11–14). Now, the writer warned, since it is impossible to go back in the Christian life to start it over (but if one could it would be necessary to fall away first in order to go back to the beginning), there are only two remaining options: stay where you are in this state of immaturity, or move forward to maturity (Hebrews 6:1). Since their present state was undesirable, this passage was a strong warning to go on in the Christian life. This warning is similar to that which a teacher might give a class: “It is impossible for you students, once enrolled in this course, turning the clock back (which cannot be done, but which would have to be done if one could go back to the beginning) to start this course over. Therefore, go on to further knowledge.”

The warnings against immaturity and fruitlessness are severe and the consequences significant. But those consequences do not include hell because of losing eternal life. Paul exulted in the confidence that nothing, including any other created thing (which has to include yourself), can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ (Rom. 8:38–39). And again he declared: “If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim. 2:13). The consistency of God’s character guarantees a secure salvation.

NOTES

1. The Works of James Arminius, trans. James Nichols (Auburn: Derby and Miller, 1853), 1:248.
2. Ibid. 1:254.

Chapter 58: What Is the Gospel?

Confusion abounds with respect both to the content and presentation of the Gospel of the grace of God. Some do not present it purely; some do not present it clearly; some do not present it sincerely. But because God is gracious, He often gives light and faith in spite of our imprecise witness.

I. SOME FALLACIES IN THE PRESENTATION OF THE GOSPEL

A. The Fallacy That the Gospel Primarily Concerns Other Than Sin

There can be no Good News for the person who does not sense that he needs Good News. And there can be no sense of need without some realization of sin. Of course, sin has many symptoms that can alert an individual to the basic problem, sin. Therefore, a Gospel presentation can focus on lack of joy or peace or the need to have help in solving problems, but those are symptoms of the sin that alienates from God. Nevertheless, one does not need to be saved in order to have joy or peace or the solution to problems. He needs to be saved in order to have sins forgiven. Lack of joy is not what bars people from heaven. Sin is. The Gospel believed solves the sin problem.

B. The Fallacy That There Are Different Gospels for Different Age-Groups

There is not one Gospel for children, another for young people, yet another for adults, one for unchurched people, while another for those with a church background. There is one Gospel. There may be different ways of explaining the Gospel to different groups, but unless the content is the same, those different explanations may create different gospels. Different vocabulary may be indicated, but those different words must convey the same Gospel.

C. The Fallacy That the Truth Is in Other Than the Word of God

Experience can confirm or deny truth, but it does not create infallible truth. Neither does archaeology. Neither does fulfilled prophecy, for the prophecies of the Bible were true before they were ever fulfilled. Neither does apologetics. These approaches have their place, but only in the Word do we have absolute truth. Like the apostles, we must preach the Word (Acts 13:5) and reason out of the Scriptures (Acts 17:2).

D. The Fallacy That Cleverness Will Convict

If the convicting ministry of the Spirit is to set the truth of the Gospel before the unsaved person in such a light that he must acknowledge it as truth (whether he believes it or not), then this must be done by the Spirit, not by my cleverness. Of course, our presentation should be well prepared and well presented, but these in themselves do not guarantee that anyone will be convinced. God must do that.

E. The Fallacy That Charm Will Assure Results

Insofar as we can exercise control, we should not be offensive as to dress, speech, or culture, but the moment we announce the Gospel we take on the offense of the Cross (Gal. 5:11). The message is a stumbling block; the messenger should not be. But even though he is not, this will not guarantee results. Charm does not convert people.

F. The Fallacy That Procedures Produce Conversions

Procedures do produce results, but results are not always the same as conversions. Pressure can produce results; music can hypnotize; settings can intoxicate; and stories can move; but none of these necessarily bring conversions. A good test for any Gospel message is this: Did the speaker give his listeners something to believe, not did he give them something to do.

II. SOME FALLACIES IN STATING THE CONTENT OF THE GOSPEL

A. *The Fallacy of Adding Baptism*

Though an important Christian ordinance, baptism is not a part of the Gospel. To include it in the Gospel is to add a work to the grace of God. However, some feel certain verses do make baptism a requirement to be saved.

1. Mark 16:16. The original ending of Mark's Gospel is the subject of much debate. It is doubtful that what we designate as verse 16 was part of the genuine close of the Gospel. At best, it would be unwise to base any doctrine on the content of verses 9–20. However, it is also possible that if verse 16 is a part of the inspired text that the reference is to baptism of the Spirit. After all, the Lord would have spoken Mark 16:16 at almost the same time as He spoke Acts 1:5 concerning the imminent baptizing ministry of the Spirit.

2. Acts 2:3-8. Baptismal regenerationists understand this verse to teach that repentance and baptism lead to the forgiveness of sins. Unquestionably baptism was a clear proof in New Testament times of conversion, whether it be conversion to Judaism, to John the Baptist's message, or to Christianity. To refuse to be baptized raised a legitimate doubt as to the sincerity of the profession. Therefore, when the Jewish crowd asked Peter what they must do, he quite naturally said to repent (change their minds about Jesus of Nazareth) and be baptized (give clear proof of that change).

Though it is true that exegetically the text may be understood to say that baptism is unto (eis) the forgiveness of sins, it is equally true that it may say that baptism is not for the purpose of the forgiveness of sins but because of forgiveness (that had already taken place at repentance). Eis is clearly used with this meaning in Matthew 12:41—they repented at (on the basis of, or because of) the preaching of Jonah. It certainly cannot mean in that verse that they repented with a view to the preaching of Jonah. So Acts 2:38 may be understood that the people should repent and then be baptized because their sins were forgiven.¹

3. Acts 22:16. The verse contains four segments: (a) arise (which is a participle, arising); (b) be baptized (an imperative); (c) wash away your sins (another imperative); and (d) calling on the name of the Lord (another participle). To make the verse teach baptism as necessary for salvation necessitates connecting parts b and c, be baptized and wash away. But rather than being connected to each other, each of those two commands is actually connected with a participle. Arising is necessary before baptism, and calling before sins can be washed away. Thus the verse should be read this way: arising, be baptized; wash away your sins, calling on the Lord. The verse correctly understood does not teach baptismal regeneration.

B. *The Fallacy of Misunderstanding Repentance*

Repentance means a genuine change of mind that affects the life in some way. Like other significant theological terms it must be defined specifically by asking a further question, namely, Change the mind about what? Unsaved people can truly repent but without being saved, as, for example, to change the mind about a bad habit and to break that habit as a result. Christians can repent of specific sins and stop doing them (Rev. 2:5; 2 Cor. 7:9—notice that in this verse sorrow leads to repentance, but it is not necessarily the same as repentance). And unsaved people can repent unto salvation. This saving repentance has to involve a change of mind about Jesus Christ so that whatever a person thought of Him before, he changes his mind and trusts Him to be his Savior. That is the only kind or content of repentance that saves (Acts 2:38; 17:30; 2 Pet. 3:9). However, saving repentance may be preceded by a repentance concerning sin (which activates an individual's sense of need for forgiveness) or a repentance toward God (which alerts him to the fact that he has offended a holy God and therefore needs a way to appease Him). This aspect of

repentance (like John 16:8–11) is still not saving unless it is accompanied by faith in Christ (Acts 20:21).

C. The Fallacy of Making Surrender of Life a Part of the Gospel

1. The question. The question is simply this: Does one have to make Christ Lord of his life or be willing to do so in order to be saved? One yes answer puts it this way.

The lordship view expressly states the necessity of acknowledging Christ as the Lord and Master of one's life in the act of receiving Him as Savior. These are not two different, sequential acts (or successive steps), but rather one act of pure, trusting faith. It takes little theological acumen to discern the base differences between the lordship and nonlordship views of the presentation of the Gospel.²

In the same vein, Arthur W. Pink wrote:

Something more than “believing” is necessary to salvation. A heart that is steeled in rebellion against God cannot savingly believe: it must first be broken. . . . No one can receive Christ as his Saviour while he rejects Him as Lord! It is true the preacher adds that the one who accepts Christ should also surrender to Him as Lord, but he once spoils it by assertion that though the convert fails to do so nevertheless heaven is sure to him. That is one of the devil's lies.³

Simply stated the question is: Does the lack of commitment to the lordship of Christ over the years of one's life mean a lack of saving faith? Or, as Boice asked, “Is ‘faith’ minus commitment a true biblical faith?”⁴ Boice says no, it is not.

Notice that the question is not whether believers will sin, or if they will bear fruit. All believers will bear some fruit in their Christian lives. Nor is it a question of whether believers should decide who will direct their lives. That is an essential question for spiritual growth, and some apparently decide that issue when they believe and some do not. The question is: Is commitment of life a necessary part of faith and thus of the Gospel?

2. Some examples. The Bible furnishes some clear examples of people who were saved but who lacked commitment. These are not examples only of sins committed after salvation (though they include such), but they demonstrate saving faith without commitment.

Remember the life of Lot. It scarcely qualifies as an example of commitment at any point, yet the New Testament declares that he was a righteous person (2 Pet. 2:7). If we only had the Old Testament record, we might seriously question that he was righteous before God.

Observe also the condition of the believers at Ephesus. Paul ministered in that city more than two years. Some believed at the beginning of his ministry; others, later on. They were converted from a lifestyle that included devotion to magical arts based on the gibberish written on the statue of Diana in the temple at Ephesus. After believing in the Lord, many, if not most, of those believers (and Acts 19:18 undebatably states they were believers) still continued their superstitious practices. It would be wishful thinking to imagine they did not know such practices were wrong when they accepted Christ and during the two years that many continued to do them. But not until the end of Paul's ministry in Ephesus did the believers finally become convicted about this and confess their sins and burn their books of magic. Theologically, then, this says that there were people at Ephesus who became believers in Christ knowing they should give up their use of magic but who did not (some for as long as two years), but who nevertheless were born again. Their salvation did not depend on faith plus submission to the lordship of Christ over their use of magic.

3. *Some observations.* This lordship teaching fails to distinguish salvation from discipleship and makes requirements for discipleship prerequisites for salvation. Our Lord distinguished the two (Luke 14:16–33). This teaching elevates one of the many aspects of the person of Christ (Master over life) in making it a part of the Gospel. Why not require faith in His kingship? Or in the fact that He is Judge of all, or that He was the Creator? Though my view has been dubbed “easy believism,” it is not easy to believe, because what we ask the unsaved person to believe is not easy. We ask that he trust a person who lived two thousand years ago, whom he can only know through the Bible, to forgive his sins. We are asking that he stake his eternal destiny on this. Remember the example of Evangelist Jesus. He did not require the Samaritan woman to set her sinful life in order, or even be willing to, so that she could be saved. He did not set out before her what would be expected by way of changes in her life if she believed. He simply said she needed to know who He is and to ask for the gift of eternal life (John 4:10).⁵

NOTES

1. See A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (New York: Harper, 1930), 3:35–36.
2. K. L. Gentry, “The Great Option: A Study of the Lordship Controversy,” *Baptist Reformation Review* 5 (Spring 1976) 5: 52.
3. Arthur W. Pink, *Present-Day Evangelism* (Swengel, Pa.: Bible Truth Depot, n.d.), 14–15.
4. James M. Boice, “The Lord Christ,” *Tenth*, October 1980, 10:8, and “The Meaning of Discipleship,” *Moody Monthly*, February 1986, 34–37.
5. See Charles Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life* (Chicago: Moody, 1969), 169–81 and *So Great Salvation* (Chicago: Moody, 1997)

Section XI—The Holy Spirit

Chapter 59: Who Is the Holy Spirit?

I. HE IS A PERSON

Denial that the Spirit is a person often takes the form of substituting the concept that He is a personification of, say, power—much like claiming that Satan is a personification of evil. This denial of His personality has occurred throughout church history, first by the Monarchians, the Arians, the Socinians, and today by Unitarians, liberals, and some neo-orthodox theologians. But there is a great deal of evidence that He is a person.

A. He Possesses and Exhibits the Attributes of a Person

1. *He has intelligence.* He knows and searches the things of God (1 Cor. 2:10–11); He possesses a mind (Rom. 8:27); and He is able to teach people (1 Cor. 2:13).

2. *He shows feelings.* He can be grieved by the sinful actions of believers (Eph. 4:30—an influence cannot be grieved).

3. *He has a will.* He uses this in distributing gifts to the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:11). He also directs the activities of Christians (Acts 16:6–11).

Since genuine personality possesses intelligence, feelings, and will, and since the Spirit has these attributes, He must be a person.

B. He Exhibits the Actions of a Person

1. *He guides us into truth by hearing, speaking, and showing.* (John 16:13).

2. *He convicts of sin.* (John 16:8).

3. *He performs miracles.* (Acts 8:39).

4. *He intercedes.* (Rom. 8:26).

These are activities that an influence or personification could not do but that Scripture shows the Holy Spirit can do.

C. He Receives Ascriptions That Would Be Given Only to a Person

1. *He is One to be obeyed.* (Acts 10:19–21).

2. *He can be lied to.* (Acts 5:3).

3. *He can be resisted.* (Acts 7:51).

4. *He can be grieved.* (Eph. 4:30).

5. *He can be blasphemed.* (Matt. 12:31).

6. *He can be insulted.* (Heb. 10:29).

To think of acting and reacting to an influence in these ways is incongruous.

D. He Relates as a Person to Other Persons

1. *To the apostles.* He related to the apostles in a manner that shows His own distinct personality (Acts 15:28). He is a person as they are persons; yet He is a distinct and identifiable person.

2. *To Jesus.* He relates to the Lord Jesus in such a way that if the Lord has personality one must conclude that the Spirit does also. Yet He is distinct from Christ (John 16:14).

3. *To other Trinity members.* He relates to the other persons of the Trinity as an equal person (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).
4. *To His own power.* The Spirit is related to His own power yet distinguished from it so that we may not conclude that He is merely a personification of power (Luke 4:14; Acts 10:38; 1 Cor. 2:4).

E. A Grammatical Consideration

Several times the writers of the New Testament use a masculine pronoun to refer to the Spirit (which is a neuter). The clearest example of this exception to normal grammatical usage is John 16:13–14 where the masculine demonstrative pronoun is used twice to refer to the Spirit mentioned in verse 13. Other references are less clear since the masculine pronouns used may refer to the word “Paraclete” (which is masculine, John 15:26; 16:7–8) or to the word “earnest” (which is also masculine, Eph. 1:14–15). Nevertheless, the clear exception to normal accident in John 16:13–14 does support the true personality of the Spirit.

Each of these lines of scriptural evidence leads to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit, even though a spirit being, is as real a person as the Father, or the Son, or as we are.

II. HE IS GOD

Not only is the Spirit a person, but He is a unique person, for He is God. Proofs of personality are not necessarily proofs of Deity; but proofs of Deity are also proofs of His personality. If God is a person, and if the Spirit is also God, then He is a person also.

A. His Appellations Show Deity

The divine names of the Spirit reveal His Deity. Sixteen times He is related by name to the other two persons of the Trinity (Acts 16:7—“the Spirit of Jesus” and 1 Cor. 6:11—“the Spirit of our God”).

Further, promise of our Lord to send “another Helper” (John 14:16) uses the word for “another” that means another of the same kind. In other words, if Christ is God, then the Spirit, the other Helper of the same kind, is also God.

B. His Attributes Are Those That Belong to God Alone

As we have seen, the Spirit has attributes that show that He is a genuine person, but He also possesses attributes that only God has, which shows, therefore, that He is Deity. These attributes are omniscience (Isa. 40:13; 1 Cor. 2:12), omnipresence (Ps. 139:7), and omnipotence by virtue of His work in Creation (Job 33:4; Ps. 104:30).

He is also truth, love, life-giver, but man can be these things in a relative sense as well.

C. His Actions Are Those That Only God Can Perform

1. *He was the cause of the Virgin Birth.* (Luke 1:35).
2. *He was the Agent in giving the inspired Scriptures.* (2 Pet. 1:21).
3. *He was involved in the Creation of the world.* (Gen. 1:2). Here as with other uses of the “Spirit of God” in the Old Testament we may ask if the references clearly are to the third person of the Trinity or to God as spirit (which He is). Leupold, commenting on verse 2, gives a thoughtful answer to the question.

Absolutely none other than the Holy Spirit is here under consideration. . . . It may require the full light of New Testament revelation to enable us to discern that the Spirit of God here is the same as He who in the New Testament is seen to be the

Holy Spirit; but having that light, we need not hesitate to believe that it sheds clear light back on the Old Testament usage of the expression. . . . Does it not seem reasonable that the Spirit of inspiration should have so worded the words that bear upon His activity that, when the full New Testament revelation has come, all statements concerning the Spirit are in perfect harmony with this later revelation?¹

D. His Associations with the Other Persons of the Godhead Demonstrate Deity

1. *Spirit as Yahweh.* The New Testament identifies the Spirit as Yahweh of the Old Testament, particularly when quoting an Old Testament passage that God spoke and attributing it to the Spirit (cf. Acts 28:25–27 with Isa. 6:8–10 and Heb. 10:15–17 with Jer. 31:31–34). This is strong evidence that the New Testament writers considered the Spirit to be God.

2. *Spirit and God.* Blasphemy of and lying to the Spirit are the same as doing these things to God (Matt. 12:31–32; Acts 5:3–4).

3. *Equality.* The Spirit is associated on an equal basis with the Father and Son (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). In the Matthew reference the use of the singular “name” strengthens the proof.

He is a person and He is God.

NOTE

1. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Columbus: Wartburg, 1942), 49–50.

Chapter 60: The Holy Spirit in Old Testament Times

The approximately 100 references to the Spirit of God in the Old Testament give evidence of His working during that period. Not all, however, see these references as indicating the third person of the Trinity. P. K. Jewett, for example, believes that in the Old Testament the Holy Spirit is never used to indicate “a Person distinct from the Father and the Son,” but rather “the divine nature viewed as vital energy.”¹ Although it is true that the Old Testament does not reveal the doctrine of the Trinity, still it seems to convey the idea that the Spirit is a person, not simply vital energy (Ps. 104:30). Leon Wood correctly observed that “it is also important to recognize that the matter of the identity of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament is not so much a question of what people thought regarding this member of the Godhead as it is what the intention was of God Himself who inspired the writers.”² And we do know from the New Testament that it was the Holy Spirit who was at work in Old Testament times (Acts 7:51; 2 Pet. 1:21).

I. THE SPIRIT’S WORK IN CREATION

A. *The Evidence*

Seven verses speak of various aspects of the Spirit’s work in Creation. They are Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13; Job 27:3; Job 33:4; Psalms 33:6; Psalms 104:30; and Isaiah 40:12–14. Although some feel these are not clear references to the Spirit, there really are no good reasons for not considering them to be (even though in some of these verses translations will use “breath” instead of Spirit).

B. *His Activity*

The Spirit was involved in the general planning of the universe (Isa. 40:12–14).

He was also active in relation to the creation of the stars of heaven (Ps. 33:6).

The Spirit participated in the Creation of the earth (Gen. 1:2). The word “moved” (KJV) (found elsewhere only in Deut. 32:11, “hovers” [NASB] or “fluttereth” [KJV] and Jer. 23:9, “shake” [KJV]) means that the Spirit hovered over and cared for the yet unfashioned and uninhabited earth.

The Spirit worked in creating the animals (Ps. 104:30) and in the creation of man (Job 27:3; Job 33:4). Thus the range of His activity included all the basic facets of Creation.

II. THE SPIRIT’S WORK IN REVELATION AND INSPIRATION

That the Holy Spirit was the Agent of revealing and recording God’s message to man in Old Testament times is clearly taught in both the Old and New Testaments.

Peter provides the most inclusive statement on the subject in 2 Peter 1:21. Prophecies were not borne by man’s will, but the writers were borne or carried along by the Spirit. The same verb appears in both parts of the verse, indicating that the will of man was not the carrier but rather the Spirit of God was. The men who wrote acted as agents, but their wills did not control or interfere with what God wished to communicate; the Spirit was the One who carried them along.

Specific Old Testament verses like 2 Samuel 23:2 and Micah 3:8 indicate that the prophets spoke by means of the Spirit.

Furthermore, the New Testament assigns certain Old Testament quotations to the Spirit as their author. When debating the Pharisees, Christ quoted from Psalm 110, which He acknowledged was written by David but given by the Spirit (Matt. 22:43–44). Peter quoted from Psalm 41 in connection with the replacement for Judas and said that the Holy Spirit foretold this concerning Judas by the mouth of David (Acts 1:16–17). Later Peter also stated that Psalm 2 was given “by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David” (Acts 4:25). Paul also quoted from the

Old Testament and assigned the authorship to the Holy Spirit (Acts 28:25–27 from Isa. 6:9–10), and the writer to the Hebrews did the same in two places in that epistle (Heb. 3:7–11; Heb. 10:15–16). Clearly, then, these New Testament references indicate that the Spirit acted in giving God’s truth in Old Testament times.

III. THE SPIRIT’S WORK IN RELATION TO PEOPLE

The Spirit’s ministry to people in Old Testament times was not the same as it has been since the Day of Pentecost. Whatever it was, the Lord made it quite clear it would be different after Pentecost. Notice how repeatedly the Lord spoke of the “coming” of the Spirit (who was already present) in His conversation with the disciples in the Upper Room (John 15:26; John 16:7–8; John 16:13). This indicates both that the Spirit was at work then and that His work would take on a different character after Pentecost. When the Lord summarized that contrast, He said the Spirit “abides [present tense] with [para] you, and will be [future tense] in [en] you” (John 14:17). Although there is an alternative reading of the present tense in the second clause (i.e., is in you), most commentators prefer the future tense.

This, of course, delineates the contrast between the ministry of the Spirit at the time the Lord spoke these words and the future ministry after Pentecost. Buswell, wishing to blunt that contrast, translates the en as “among,” making the promise mean that the Spirit would be among the company of disciples. He does acknowledge that it might be construed to mean “in you individually.”³ Many commentators simply seem to be unaware of any distinction being made here. F. Godet’s comment is to the point.

The preparatory operation of the Spirit upon the disciples is expressed by the words: “He dwelleth with you”; and the closer relation into which He would enter with them at Pentecost by: “He shall be in you.” Hence we must be careful neither to read with the Vulgate, *mei* in the future, He shall dwell in the first proposition, nor with some Alexandrines, *esti*, is, in the second. The whole meaning of the phrase consists in the antithesis of the present dwelleth (comp. *menon* in v. 25) and the future shall be. The contrast of the two regimens with you (comp. *par’ humin* of v. 25) and in you corresponds exactly with that of the tenses.⁴

With this contrast in mind, we need to try to delineate and systematize what the Spirit did for people in Old Testament times.

A. The Nature of His Work

Three words seem to explain the Spirit’s ministry to people in the Old Testament.

1. *He was in certain ones.* Pharaoh recognized that the Spirit was in Joseph (Gen. 41:38). Likely Pharaoh did not understand this was the Holy Spirit, but later revelation seems to make this clear. The Spirit was in Joshua, which is why God chose him (Num. 27:18). The Spirit was in Daniel (Dan. 4:8; 5:11–14; 6:3). In these instances the preposition used is beth, “in.”

2. *The Spirit came upon some.* The preposition used to depict this is al. A number of people experienced this ministry of the Spirit (Num. 24:; Judg. 3:10; Judg. 6:34; Judg. 11:29; Judg. 13:25; 1 Sam. 10:10; 1 Sam. 16:13; 2 Chron. 15:1). These included judges, Saul, and the prophets Balaam and Azariah.

3. *The Spirit filled Bezalel.* (Exod. 31:3; Exod. 35:31). This seemed to be a special enablement to lead the craftsmen as they worked on the tabernacle.

B. The Extent of His Work

1. *Limited as to people.* After God chose Israel to be His people, the Spirit's work was with that group primarily if not exclusively. Israel, of course, was a spiritually mixed nation with unbelievers as well as believers. Yet the Spirit ministered to the entire nation by being present and guiding the people (Neh. 9:20; Isa. 63:10–14). This seemed to be a general relationship. There were apparently closer relationships He had with some within the nation (see above and Num. 11:29).

However, we do not have clear revelation of the Spirit's ministry outside Israel. Genesis 6:3 may be an exception if the verse means that the Spirit judged mankind for its wickedness in the days of Noah. But the verse may be a warning that the human spirit God placed in human beings would not always abide because mankind would be wiped out in the Flood. Certainly there was no indication that the Spirit convicted the world of sin in Old Testament times (as He does now, John 16:8), and no other nations enjoyed His general presence among them as Israel did. As far as the record is concerned, His ministry was to Israel and individuals in Israel.

2. *Limited as to kinds of ministry.* As stated above, we find no ministry of general conviction, no indwelling and empowering as after Pentecost (John 7:37–39), no sealing, and certainly no baptizing (it is still future in Acts 1:5). Regeneration of the Spirit is not mentioned specifically, though some feel that the Spirit was regenerating in the Old Testament because believers give evidence of a struggle within their beings brought on by the presence of both the old and new.

3. *Limited as to eternity.* The Spirit empowered Samson; later the Lord left him (Judg. 13:25; Judg. 16:20). The Spirit came on Saul and later left him (1 Sam. 10:10; 1 Sam 16:14). Apparently there was no guarantee of permanent presence of the Spirit in Old Testament times.

Perhaps I could draw an analogy between the Spirit's ministry in the Old Testament and grace in the Old Testament. Both were present during that period, but the Spirit who worked in the Old Testament would "come" in new and fuller ministries after Pentecost, just as the displays of grace in the Old Testament were dim compared with grace that flooded the world when Christ came (John 1:17; Titus 2:11).

NOTES

1. P. K. Jewett, "Holy Spirit," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 3:184.
2. Leon Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 19.
3. J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 1:115.
4. F. Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. John* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1881), 3:141.

Chapter 61: The Holy Spirit in the Life of Our Lord

I. THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

The Holy Spirit was involved in the conception of our Lord in the womb of the virgin Mary. The result was His Incarnation (Luke 1:35).

II. THE LIFE OF CHRIST

A. The Aspects of the Ministry of the Spirit

- 1. Christ was filled with the Spirit.* (Luke 4:1). The word here indicates that this was the characteristic of His life (as in Acts 6:3, 5). It was not a momentary thing, but a relationship He had all of His life.
- 2. Christ was anointed with the Spirit.* (Luke 4:18; Acts 4:27; Acts 10:38; Heb. 1:9). This signified that He is the Messiah (Anointed One) and empowered Him for His prophetic ministry.
- 3. Christ rejoiced in the Spirit.* (Luke 10:21). This was perhaps an evidence of His being full of the Spirit.
- 4. Christ was empowered by the Spirit throughout His life.* This was predicted by Isaiah (Isa. 42:1–4; Isa. 61:1–2) and experienced by Jesus of Nazareth in His ministries of preaching (Luke 4:18) and doing miracles (Matt. 12:28).

B. The Areas of the Ministry of the Spirit

- 1. The Spirit's ministry in the life of our Lord was related to Christ's office as a Prophet.* At the beginning of His public ministry, He declared that the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18).
- 2. The Spirit's ministry also enabled Him to perform some of His miracles.* Some of the Lord's miracles were undebatably done in the power of the Spirit. This claim was what evoked the incident concerning the unpardonable sin (Matt. 12:28, 31). He also gave sight to the blind because the Spirit was upon Him (Luke 4:18). In the Old Testament giving sight to the blind was a prerogative of God (Exod. 4:11; Ps. 146:8) and something Messiah would do (Isa. 29:18; 35:5; 42:7). Thus when the Lord restored sight to blind people He was making a clear claim to be Israel's long-awaited Messiah. One would expect the ministry of the Spirit (anointing and empowering) to be connected with this kind of miracle, which demonstrated that Jesus was the anointed Messiah.

In all the Old Testament there is no account of any blind person receiving sight. None of the Lord's disciples was involved in restoring sight to any blind person. Only Ananias's involvement in Paul's regaining his sight is somewhat relevant, though this was different from what our Lord did when He gave sight to those who had never seen. Thus when Christ came on the scene of history and gave sight to so many blind people, this was a strong claim to His messiahship.

More miracles of Christ in this category are recorded than in any other. Matthew records the healing of two particular blind people (Matt. 9:27–31), the general healing of the blind (Matt. 11:5), the healing of blind people that provoked the unpardonable sin (Matt. 12:22), additional unspecified numbers of blind cured (Matt. 15:30), and the healing of blind people in the temple on Palm Sunday (Matt. 21:14). Mark records the opening of a blind man's eyes at Bethsaida (Mark 8:22–26) and the restoration of sight to Bartimaeus and his friend at Jericho (Mark 10:46–52, also recorded in Matthew and Luke). John records the healing of the man who was born blind (John 9). And all of these were done in the power of the Spirit.

But some of our Lord's miracles were evidently done in His own inherent God-man power. The woman with the continual hemorrhage was healed through His own power (Mark 5:30). The healing of the paralytic who was let down through the roof by his friends is attributed to the power of the Lord (Luke 5:17). The mass healing of the multitude after the choosing of the disciples was the result of His own power (Luke 6:19). Those who came to arrest Him in the Garden of Gethsemane were thrown back for the moment by a display of the power of His own deity when He said, "I am" (John 18:6).

Some would say that these miracles were attributed to Christ but actually empowered by the Spirit within Him. Although that could be true, it does not seem to be the normal way to read the texts. So it is better to acknowledge that He did some of His miracles in the power of the Spirit (particularly those that gave evidence of His claim to be Messiah by restoring sight to the blind) and some in His own power.

C. The Conflict over the Ministry of the Spirit

Matthew 12:22–37 and Mark 3:22–30 record the conflict over the power of the Spirit that occurred in Galilee, while Luke records a similar incident in Judea about a year later (Luke 11:14–23).

The conflict recorded in Matthew and Mark arose because the Lord healed a man who was blind and mute (which probably meant that he was also deaf). However, the real cause of his problems was demon possession. Although Jewish exorcists could cast out demons, they would have a very difficult time with this case, because how do you communicate with a person who is blind and mute and likely also deaf? When the Lord healed all the maladies at once, the people were astonished and began to suggest that Jesus was really their Messiah. This provoked the Pharisees' blasphemous accusation that Satan was obliging his friend Jesus by withdrawing demons from people to make it look like Christ Himself had that power. So, they said, who would want to follow a person who was a friend of Satan as Jesus obviously was?

The Lord's reply consisted of three statements:

(1) A kingdom or house that is divided against itself cannot stand. In other words, Satan would not destroy his own kingdom by aligning himself with Jesus' kingdom. True, Satan might allow Jewish exorcists to cast out demons, but that would not create the kind of basic rift in Satan's kingdom that Jesus' doing it would, if indeed He were doing it by Satan's power.

(2) The Lord then pointed out that the charge was absurd since the Pharisees recognized that the Jewish exorcists did not cast out demons by the power of Satan. So why should they accuse Him of doing it that way?

(3) The only logical conclusion to be reached from these facts is that the kingdom of God had come, since Christ was defeating Satan by taking his victims from him and doing so in the power of the Spirit of God.

Now, by accusing Jesus of being in league with Satan, the Pharisees were putting themselves on the side of Satan. Furthermore, they were accusing the Holy Spirit in whose power Christ cast out demons. What did the Lord mean when He said that a sin against the Son of man was forgivable but not against the Spirit? He meant that though they might misunderstand His claims, such ignorance, though deplorable, was forgivable. But to misunderstand the power of the Spirit was unforgivable since the Spirit's power and ministry was well known from Old Testament times.

Speaking against the Spirit was not merely a sin of the tongue. The Pharisees had not sinned only with their words. It was a sin of the heart expressed in words. Furthermore, theirs was a sin committed to His face. To commit this particular sin required the personal and visible presence of Christ on earth; to commit it today, therefore, would be impossible. But to show wickedness of

heart is unpardonable in any day if one dies persisting in his or her rejection of Christ. A person's eternal destiny is determined in this life, but no sin is unpardonable as long as a person has breath. As a matter of fact, the Lord urged the Pharisees to side with Him rather than against Him (Matt. 12:30), to show repentance of heart (Matt. 12:33–35), and to speak words that would demonstrate a righteous heart and not those which would result in their condemnation (Matt. 12:36–37). Paul himself is evidence that blasphemy is forgivable (1 Tim. 1:13).

D. The Significance of the Ministry of the Spirit

1. *Development of humanity.* We may reasonably assume that the Spirit played a role in the development of the humanity of Christ (Luke 2:52; Heb. 5:8). His growth must have been related to the Spirit who filled and anointed Him.

2. *Christ's dependence.* He did depend on the Spirit for leading and for power, in some of the miracles at least.

If the sinless Son of God used these ministries of the Holy Spirit, how can we expect to live independently of His power?

III. THE DEATH OF CHRIST

Usually Hebrews 9:14 is cited as evidence that our Lord offered Himself in His death through the Spirit. The evidence as to whether or not this is a reference to the Holy Spirit is fairly equally divided, making a definite conclusion difficult.

The evidence that this is a reference to the Spirit is as follows. The lack of the article (literally, through eternal spirit) points to the Holy Spirit just as the lack of the article in Hebrews 1:1 points more clearly to Christ.

Theologically it is reasonable to expect that if the Spirit played a role in Christ's birth and life He would also be involved in His death.

The evidence that this is not a reference to the Holy Spirit but to Christ's own eternal spirit that His deity had is as follows. The lack of the article would more naturally refer to other than the Holy Spirit since the designation Holy Spirit usually includes the article.

If this refers to Christ's eternal spirit, then it is not a reference to the divine nature offering up the human nature, but to the entire person offering up Himself by the action of the highest spirit-power within Him. His own divine spirit was involved in the offering of the God-man.

Another verse, 1 Peter 3:18, may refer to an action of the Spirit with respect to the death of Christ. Usually, however, it is thought that this verse relates the Spirit's work to the resurrection of Christ. Two major problems emerge in the exegesis of it. One concerns the identification of "spirit" whether it refers to the Holy Spirit or to Christ's own eternal spirit. If the former, then the form is instrumental, "by the [Holy] Spirit" (KJV); if the latter, then it is locative, "in the [Christ's] spirit." The parallel with "flesh" may give preference to the idea of Christ's spirit. If so, then we have no record of the Holy Spirit's ministry in relation to Christ's death (unless Heb. 9:14 applies) or to His resurrection.

But even if the reference is to the Holy Spirit, another problem still exists. It concerns the use of an aorist participle, "quickened by the spirit" (KJV). Normally, the aorist participle indicates activity simultaneous or antecedent to that of the main verb, but not subsequent. (Acts 25:13 is not an exception since their "coming" may be a period of time in which the saluting was a part, or since greetings were often sent ahead of arrival.) If the main verb is "died," then the action of quickening cannot refer to the Resurrection, which was subsequent to His death. It would refer to some quickening at the time of the Crucifixion (simultaneous action). However, if the main verb is "bring" in the clause, then conceivably the quickening could refer to the Resurrection, which

was antecedent to our being brought to heaven. In this case, the reference is to the resurrection of Christ. In the first option it refers to some kind of quickening or empowering on the cross. But in either case it is not clear that the Holy Spirit was involved, rather than Christ's spirit.

Finally, some cite Romans 1:4 to show that the Holy Spirit had a part in the resurrection of Christ. Again two exegetical problems exist. One concerns the identification of "spirit of holiness." The parallelism with "according to the flesh" (Rom. 1:3) argues that it refers to Christ's own spirit, rather than the Holy Spirit. The second problem concerns identifying what resurrection(s) is in view. Literally, the text says "a resurrection of dead [pl.]." This could refer (a) to Christ's resurrection from among dead persons, or (b) to the resurrections He did while on earth, or (c) to all of them, including His own. But in any case it is far from certain that the Spirit was directly involved.

Actually no clear evidence exists for the Spirit's direct working in the death or resurrection of our Lord. Of course, in the sense that these activities relate to the second person of the Godhead, all the persons are involved.

Chapter 62: The Spirit Indwelling

As we noted in the preceding chapter in discussing John 14:17, the Spirit does certain new and special things since His “coming” on the Day of Pentecost. At the heart of these distinctive ministries lies the ministry of dwelling in believers, for it is foundational to all His ministries to Christians in this age.

I. THE PEOPLE INDWELT

To express indwelling Paul not only used the preposition *en* but also the verb *oikeō*, to dwell (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16; though, of course, sometimes he used only the preposition as in 1 Cor. 6:19). He related this ministry of the Spirit to all believers.

A. *The Indwelling Spirit Is a Gift from God to All Believers*

A number of passages clearly teach that the Spirit is given to all believers rather than selectively to some (John 7:37–39; Acts 11:16–17; Rom. 5:5; 1 Cor. 2:12; 2 Cor. 5:5). One would expect this to be so since a gift is not a reward and no merit is involved in receiving this gift.

B. *Not to Possess the Indwelling Spirit Indicates an Unsaved Condition*

Not to have the Spirit is the same as not belonging to Christ, Paul declared (Rom. 8:9). Jude also described apostates as those who did not have the Spirit (Jude 19) and who were “natural” (NIV). This is the same word used in 1 Corinthians 2:14, another verse that describes an unsaved individual. To be natural is to be unsaved and not to have the Spirit. Therefore having the Spirit characterizes all born again people.

C. *Sinning Believers Are Indwelt by the Spirit*

The acid test of whether or not the Spirit indwells all believers is whether or not He lives in sinning Christians. Clearly He does. 1 Corinthians 6:19 was written to a very spiritually mixed group, some fine, spiritual believers, but many who were carnal and worldly; yet Paul did not say that only the spiritual group were indwelt by the Spirit. One brother, who in Paul’s judgment was a believer (1 Cor. 5:5) was living in gross sin. Others were at legal swords’ points with each other (chap. 6). Still Paul said that the Spirit was “in” all of them (1 Cor. 6:19). Not only did he make no exceptions to his statement, but he made the indwelling of the Spirit the ground for his exhortation to holy living. Clearly then, all believers, but only believers, have the Spirit living in them.

II. THE PERMANENCE OF INDWELLING

Some who agree that the Spirit is given to all believers feel that He may withdraw from those who commit certain sins. Thus they acknowledge His indwelling but deny its permanence.

Whatever sins could cause His departure would have to be more grievous than the fornication of chapter 5 or the legal disputes of chapter 6, for Paul did not exclude these believers from his statement that the Spirit dwelt in them (v. 19).

Furthermore, if the Spirit leaves sinning Christians, then they are no longer Christians according to Romans 8:9. The Spirit cannot leave a believer without throwing that believer back into a lost, unsaved condition. Disindwelling has to mean loss of salvation, and loss of salvation must include disindwelling. The security of the believer and the permanent indwelling of the Spirit are inseparable doctrines.

But we also have the positive promise of the Savior that He would pray to the Father who would give another Helper in order “that He may be with you forever” (John 14:16). To be sure, sin

affects the effectiveness of the Spirit in the believer's life, but it does not remove His presence from believers.

III. SOME PROBLEMS CONCERNING THE INDWELLING OF THE SPIRIT

A. Is Not Obedience a Condition for Indwelling?

Peter spoke of the Holy Spirit "whom God has given to those who obey Him" (Acts 5:32). Does this mean that obedience is a condition for the giving of the Spirit and thus only certain (i.e., obedient) believers have the Spirit? Yes, if obedience is understood in the way Peter used it. He was addressing the unbelieving Sanhedrin and concluded by pressing the matter of their obedience. Obedience to what? Certainly the obedience of the Sanhedrin had nothing to do with obedience to matters in the Christian life, for they were not Christians. The obedience Peter called them to was to obey (believe) the truth that Jesus was their Messiah. Shortly after, some of the priests in Jerusalem did believe and Luke said "a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

Two other references use obedience as a synonym for receiving Christ's salvation. Paul described the purpose of his mission as "for obedience to the faith among all nations for his name" (Rom. 1:5). The writer to the Hebrews said that Christ became the Source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him (Heb. 5:9). Therefore, if obedience is understood correctly (as obeying the Gospel), it is a condition for receiving the gift of the Spirit.

B. Are There Not Illustrations of the Temporariness of Indwelling?

Yes, there are, but they are all before the Day of Pentecost (1 Sam. 16:14; perhaps Ps. 51:11; Luke 11:13; John 20:22). But there are no such examples after the coming of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Since those before Pentecost relate to a different economy of the Spirit, they cannot be used to prove that the same thing happens after Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came to indwell believers permanently.

C. Does Not the Delay in Giving the Spirit to the Samaritans Show That It Is Subsequent to Salvation and Thus Selective?

That there was a delay in giving the Spirit to the Samaritans is clear; the question is, Why? Some say it shows that indwelling comes subsequent to salvation and not necessarily to all believers. Others equate this giving of the Spirit with the filling of the Spirit. Still others say the procedure was different in this instance because the Samaritans were the first non-Jewish group to be taken into the church. The latter is partly true: Samaritans were part Jewish and part Gentile. The purely Gentile pattern for the giving of the Spirit is found in Acts 10:44, where the Spirit was given to the Gentiles in Cornelius's house at the moment they believed.

The best explanation of this delay in the case of the Samaritans lies in the schismatic nature of Samaritan religion. Their worship rivaled Jewish worship in Jerusalem; therefore, God needed to prove to them that their new Christian faith was not also to rival the Christian church in Jerusalem. The best way to show beyond doubt that the Samaritan Christians belonged to the same group as the Jerusalem Christians (and vice versa, to show the Jerusalem leaders that Samaritans were genuinely saved) was to delay the giving of the Spirit until Peter and John came from Jerusalem to Samaria. This delay and God's use of Peter and John in conveying the gift of the Spirit saved the early church from having two rival mother churches.

D. Does Not Acts 19:1–6 Show That Indwelling Is Subsequent to Salvation?

To answer yes to this question requires understanding that the twelve disciples of John the Baptist were already Christian believers before they met Paul at Ephesus. But this is not the correct understanding. They did not become believers in Jesus by believing John's message and receiving

his baptism; they became Christian believers only after Paul explained to them the difference between John and Jesus. In fact, it does not appear from the text that they even understood much about John's message. But when they understood and believed what Paul explained to them, they immediately received the Spirit through Paul's laying on of hands. There was no delay.

The normal Gentile pattern for receiving the Spirit was established in the house of Cornelius, where the Spirit was given when the people believed, which was while Peter was preaching and before they were baptized in water (Acts 10:44; Acts 10:47).

E. What Is the Relation of Indwelling to Anointing?

Anointing in the Old Testament, a very solemn matter, made a person or thing holy and sacrosanct (Exod. 40:9–15). It was associated with the Holy Spirit and with equipping for service (1 Sam. 10:1, 9; Zech. 4:1–14). In the New Testament Christ was anointed (Luke 4:18; Acts 4:27; 10:38; Heb. 1:9) and all believers are anointed (2 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 2:20, 27). As far as the anointing of believers is concerned, these passages teach that it is not something repeated but something that abides. Although Old Testament anointing was related more to service (as also was Christ's anointing), New Testament believers' anointing concerns a relationship that enables us to understand truth. Old Testament anointing seems closer to the idea of the filling of the Spirit, whereas believers' anointing is akin to the indwelling of the Spirit. Not every believer experienced it in the Old Testament; all do today. It may have been repeated in the Old Testament; it abides on all believers today.

The New Testament clearly teaches that all believers are permanently indwelt. Let not our familiarity with this blunt the significance of it. This universal and permanent ministry to believers stands in sharp contrast with the indwelling ministry of the Spirit in the Old Testament (John 14:17). It means that whether or not we feel it, God the Holy Spirit lives within our beings constantly. This ought to give us (a) a sense of security in our relationship with God, (b) a motivation to practice that presence of God, and (c) a sensitivity to sins against God.

Chapter 63: The Spirit Sealing

Three New Testament passages speak of this particular ministry of the Spirit. The first, 2 Corinthians 1:22, says that God has sealed us and given us the earnest of the Spirit. Ephesians 1:13 adds that we were sealed with the Spirit (τῷ πνεύματι) when we believed, and again, that the Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance. Ephesians 4:30 states we were sealed by or with (ἐν) the Spirit until the day of redemption.

This specific ministry of the Spirit constitutes something nowhere mentioned in the Old Testament. Leon Wood tries to build a case for its occurring during that period by arguing that since sealing is related to security of the believer and also to indwelling, and since Old Testament saints were both secure and indwelt, they must also have been sealed.¹ If this be true it can only be inferred; it is nowhere specifically stated. It appears, rather, to be something God has done for believers only since the Day of Pentecost.

I. THE PEOPLE WHO ARE SEALED

As with indwelling, sealing belongs to believers only and to all believers. In 2 Corinthians 1:22 Paul makes no exceptions in writing to a group in which exceptions could easily be justified. All are sealed. If this were not true, then how could Paul make it the basis for the exhortation not to grieve the Spirit in Ephesians 4:30? He would have to be saying that only that group of believers who are sealed should not grieve the Spirit.

II. THE TIME OF SEALING

Like indwelling, sealing takes place at the time of our conversion. The “and” in 2 Corinthians 1:22 links sealing with the gift of the Spirit as the earnest. And the Spirit is given when we believe (Acts 2:38).

Ephesians 1:13 can legitimately be exegeted two ways, which result in two different answers to the question of when are people sealed. The principal verb is “you were sealed.” The aorist participle that accompanies it is “believing.” The participle may express an action that preceded that of the principal verb. If so, then the believing occurred before being sealed; i.e., there was an interval of time between believing and being sealed. Or the participle may indicate action that occurred at the same time as that of the principal verb. If so, then the believing and the sealing happened at the same time. Exegetically either could be correct. But theologically, believing and sealing must be simultaneous. Otherwise it would be possible to have unsealed believers.

III. THE AGENT(S) OF SEALING

Clearly God does the sealing of believers (2 Cor. 1:22). Less clear is the question of whether the Holy Spirit is also an agent. Ephesians 4:30 seems to indicate that He is, because it uses the phrase “by whom.” However, this could mean “in whom.” Ephesians 1:13 is ambiguous; no preposition is expressed. The Spirit may be the Agent or the sphere of the sealing, or both. We are sealed by the Spirit and in the Spirit.

If both, it might be like saying, “I went to the store in my car.” You could mean “by means of my car” viewing the car as the agent that took you to the store. Or you could mean “by sitting within (the sphere of) my car,” viewing the car as the enclosure in which you were taken. Actually you did both. The car served both as the agent that took you and the enclosure in which you were located. Similarly, the Spirit did the sealing as the agent, and as a result we are enclosed in Him.

IV. THE DURATION OF SEALING

Sealing is to the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30). This refers to that future day when our redemption shall be fully accomplished, including receiving our resurrection bodies (cf. Rom.

8:23). Thus the sealing guarantees the complete fulfillment of God's promises to us. And no believer can become unsealed on his way to heaven.

V. THE RAMIFICATIONS OF SEALING

A. Security

The concept of sealing includes the ideas of ownership, authority, responsibility, and, above all, security. Sealing assures us of the security of God's promises to us, especially our salvation. We can be certain (a) that He possesses us, (b) that we have a secure salvation sealed by and with the Spirit, and (c) that He purposes to keep us to the day of our full redemption.

Registered mail furnishes a good example of the security concept in sealing. When registering a piece of mail, it not only has to be sealed carefully, but then the post office stamps it a number of times across the edges of the seal to be able to detect any tampering with that seal. Only two people can legitimately break the seal, the recipient or the sender (if it is delivered back to him). In the case of believers, God is the Sender, and God is the Recipient, and God is the One who does the sealing. So only God can break the seal, and He has promised not to do so until the day of redemption.

Both 2 Corinthians 1:22 and Ephesians 1:13–14 mention the gift of the Spirit as an earnest along with sealing. The association is quite logical. Sealing guarantees that we shall receive all that God has promised us, some of which awaits our future redemption. The presence of the Spirit in our lives serves as an earnest or pledge that all will be fulfilled. In human affairs, once earnest money has been given and received, both the purchaser and the seller are pledged to complete the transaction. Similarly, the gift of the Spirit serves as God's pledge that He will not go back on any of His promises to us.

B. Purity

The thought of the day of our full redemption when we shall be perfect should shame us about sin in our lives now. Furthermore, the fact that we have a relationship with the Holy Spirit who is grieved when we sin should motivate us to purity.

What sins grieve Him? Any and all sins. But in the immediate context (the two verses that surround Eph. 4:30), sins of the tongue are highlighted. Of course, what comes from our mouths is indicative of what is in our hearts. The thought of being sealed by and in the Holy Spirit should guard our lips.

NOTE

1. Leon Wood, *The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 70–71.

Chapter 64: The Spirit Baptizing

Another ministry of the Spirit that is distinctive to this post-Pentecost Age is that of baptizing those who believe into the body of Christ. It was first predicted not in any Old Testament passage but by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:11 and parallels). But this ministry was never experienced by anyone during the earthly lifetime of our Lord, for after His resurrection and just prior to His ascension He said it was to happen “not many days hence” on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5). This distinctive ministry served a particular purpose—adding people to the body of Christ—and since the body of Christ is distinctive to this age, then the baptizing work of the Spirit also would be.

I. CONFUSION CONCERNING THE SPIRIT’S BAPTIZING

Confusion surrounds this area of pneumatology, causing divisions among believers and obscuring of this great truth. Why is this so?

One reason for the confusion relates to an unclear conception of the body of Christ. If one believes that the church began with Abraham or with John the Baptist then it will likely be more difficult to see the distinctiveness of the baptizing ministry of the Spirit in this age. So baptism is usually made a synonym for the conversion experience.¹ But if one recognizes the body as a work of God that began at Pentecost, then the necessity of the Spirit’s baptizing people into that body will be clear.

Overemphasis on water baptism, particularly by immersion, often obscures or even obliterates the doctrine of Spirit baptism. If the two truths are not distinguished, usually the truth of Spirit baptism gets lost, for it is regarded simply as another way of talking about water baptism. E. Y. Mullins, Baptist theologian of a previous generation, understood the baptism of the Spirit as the baptism into the (local) church, implying that literal (water) baptism is a Spirit-guided activity according to 1 Corinthians 12:13.² Dale Moody, a Baptist theologian of this generation, states that “God imparts the Spirit in baptism.”³

The contemporary Pentecostal association of baptism of the Spirit with a second blessing and/or with the experience of tongues as the evidence of having been baptized adds to the confusion.

Sometimes baptism of the Spirit and filling of the Spirit are not distinguished, with the resulting idea that the “filling-baptism” happens subsequent to conversion and not to all believers. This view does not necessarily involve speaking in tongues. It considers baptism an infilling for special power. The lack of clarity is compounded by the fact that great men like R. A. Torrey and D. L. Moody were unclear in this area. Torrey taught that a person could or could not be baptized with the Spirit at the moment of salvation.⁴ In his biography of Moody, Torrey recounts Moody’s baptism as something that occurred subsequent to salvation.⁵

Admittedly, sometimes this lack of clarity is innocent; but regrettably sometimes these misconceptions are deliberately promoted. In either case believers are robbed of an important truth that involves our union with Christ and a solid basis for holy living.

II. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SPIRIT’S BAPTIZING

A. It Is Operative Only in This Dispensation

As already pointed out, no Old Testament prediction of the baptism exists, and our Lord said it would happen for the first time when the Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5). Later Peter called this “the beginning” (Acts 11:15–16). Also the purpose of the baptism, to join believers to the body of Christ, and the distinctiveness of the body to this dispensation, support the conclusion that this is a ministry operative only in this dispensation.

B. It Is Experienced by All Believers in This Dispensation

Three facts support this conclusion. The central text, 1 Corinthians 12:13, clearly states that all have been baptized, just as all have been made to drink of the Spirit (through His indwelling). That this was said of the church people of Corinth, which included such a variety of spiritual conditions, indicates that carnality does not cause one to miss this ministry.

Nowhere in the Scriptures is there a single exhortation for anyone to be baptized with the Spirit. This indicates that all believers have experienced this ministry.

If “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5 refers to the baptism of the Spirit (which is most likely), then it is something true of the same group who have “one Lord” and “one faith,” that is, all believers.

C. It Occurs at Salvation and Is Not Repeated Thereafter

If it did not occur at salvation then there would exist believers who were truly saved but who, because they had not been baptized with the Spirit, did not belong to the body of Christ. Baptism is what joins a believer to the body, so if one could be saved and not baptized, he could be an out-of-the-body believer.

If baptism needs to be repeated, then it could only be if the believer were detached from the body of Christ and needed to be rejoined. Since the first baptism at conversion joins one to the body, then if a second baptism is needed, there would have to have been a removal from the body between the two baptisms.

III. CONSEQUENCES OF THE SPIRIT’S BAPTISM

A. It Joins Us to the Body of Christ

This involves the following great and often convicting truths. Being in His body means we are risen with Him to newness of life (Rom. 6:4), and we should exercise our gifts to keep that body functioning properly (the context of 1 Cor. 12:13).

Experiencing the one baptism serves as the basis for and exhortation to keep the unity of the body (the context of Eph. 4:5).

The nonnecessity for a second baptism assures us of the security of our position in His body.

B. It Actualizes Our Cocrucifixion with Christ

Being associated with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection establishes the basis for realizing our separation from the power of indwelling sin and our walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:1–10; Col. 2:12).

IV. CONTEMPORARY DOCTRINE OF TWO SPIRIT BAPTISMS

Because 1 Corinthians 12:13 is so clear about all believers being baptized, and because some contemporary teachers want to justify the concept of a special baptism for power (a second blessing), a doctrine of two Spirit baptisms has arisen that is, as far as I know, a new teaching. Whereas old Pentecostalism uniformly taught that the baptism of the Spirit was an endowment for power, tongues being the evidence of the experience, newer Pentecostalism sees two baptisms. One is that of verse 13, which all believers experience and which is accomplished by the Spirit and places people in the body of Christ. The other is the baptism seen in the book of Acts and is accomplished by Christ to place people in the Spirit for experiences of power. The first happens at conversion and results in a position; the second occurs later and can be repeated and is for power. The first does not require speaking in tongues; the second ideally does.

The New Testament uses the phrase “to baptize with, in, or by the Spirit” only seven times (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16; 1 Cor. 12:13). Actually these seven

occurrences can be placed in three categories: the predictions in the Gospels, the pointing ahead and pointing back to Pentecost in the two Acts references, and the doctrinal explanation in 1 Corinthians. In the Gospels it appears more natural to understand Christ as the Baptizer and the Spirit as the sphere into which people are baptized. In Acts and Corinthians it seems to be more natural to understand the Spirit as the Agent of baptism and the body of Christ as the sphere into which people are baptized. However, those distinctions are not hard and fast. Both Christ and the Spirit are Agents, and both the Spirit and the body are spheres. Christ is the ultimate Agent, for He sent the Spirit who is, so to speak, the intermediate Agent (Acts 2:33). Clearly the body is one sphere, and the Spirit is another. This is similar to the Spirit's work in sealing—He is both the Agent who seals and the sphere in which we are sealed.

However, neo-Pentecostalism needs to make sharp distinctions. The references in the Gospels and in Acts, they say, are references to Christ as Agent and the Spirit as sphere, which bring power to the believer. This is the baptism in the Spirit. The reference in 1 Corinthians reveals the Spirit as the Agent and the body as the sphere and is the baptism by the Spirit. All believers have been baptized by the Spirit, but not all believers have experienced the baptism in the Spirit.

Interestingly, ultradispensationalism uses the same argument for two baptisms to support their teaching of two churches within the Acts period. The Petrine church, or Jewish church, existed from Pentecost to Paul, and the body church from Paul on. The Jewish church received power by the baptism in the Spirit, and the Pauline, or body, church is formed by the baptism by the Spirit.⁶

Such an infrequently used and seemingly technical phrase would more likely refer to the same activity in all its occurrences. To establish two separate and quite distinct baptisms is tenuous at best. To see two agents is biblical because of Acts 2:33 and quite normal because different persons of the Trinity are often involved in the same work. Besides, Ephesians 4:5 says there is only one baptism. It is Christ's work through the agency of the Spirit's ministry to join those who believe to the church, the body of Christ, with all the privileges and responsibilities that come with that position.

NOTES

1. Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1981), 564.
2. E. Y. Mullins, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1943), 1:399–401.
3. Dale Moody, *The Word of Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 447.
4. R. A. Torrey, *The Baptism with the Holy Spirit* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1972), 13–14.
5. R. A. Torrey, *Why God Used D. L. Moody* (New York: Revell, 1923), 51–55.
6. Charles F. Baker, *A Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Grace Bible College Publications, 1971), 503.

Chapter 65: The Spirit Gifting

The doctrine of spiritual gifts is almost exclusively a Pauline doctrine, the only use of the word outside of Paul being in 1 Peter 4:10. The major passage in Ephesians 4 attributes the giving of gifts to the risen and ascended Christ. The major passage in 1 Corinthians 12 emphasizes the Spirit's work as the One who gives gifts. The other principal passage, Romans 12, leaves the Agent unspecified. Since we only mentioned briefly the ministry of Christ in relation to giving gifts to His body under Christology, we will look at the doctrine in detail here.

I. THE DEFINITION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

A. What Is Meant

The word for spiritual gifts (*charisma*), obviously related to the word for grace, means something that is due to the grace of God. The use of the word in the New Testament ranges from the gift of salvation (Rom. 6:23), to the gift of God's providential care (2 Cor. 1:11), to the most frequent use in relation to gifts of grace to the believer. When used in this latter relationship I suggest that a spiritual gift is a God-given ability for service.

In this proposed definition the synonym for gift is ability. A spiritual gift is an ability. "God-given" reminds us that Christ and the Spirit are the givers of gifts, and "for service" seeks to capture the emphasis in the central passages that gifts are to be used in serving the body of Christ. Though there exists a close analogy between spiritual gifts and talents (certainly both are God-given, 1 Cor. 4:7), talents may or may not be used for serving the body.

B. What Is Not Meant

1. *A spiritual gift is not a place of service.* The gift is the ability, not where that ability is used. Teaching can be done in or out of a formal classroom situation and in any country of the world. Helping can be done in the church or in the neighborhood.
2. *A spiritual gift is not an office.* The gift is the ability and can be exercised whether one holds an office in a local church or not. In this regard much confusion exists over the gift of pastor. The gift is the ability to shepherd people. This can be done by the person who occupies what we call, in our modern ecclesiology, the office of the pastorate. Or it can be done, say, by a dean of men or a dean of women in a school. Or it can be done by the wife and mother in a home.
3. *A spiritual gift is not a particular age group ministry.* There is no gift of youth work or children's work. All ages need to be served by pastors, teachers, administrators, helpers, etc.
4. *A spiritual gift is not a specialty technique.* There is no spiritual gift of writing or Christian education or music. These are techniques through which spiritual gifts may be channeled.
5. *A spiritual gift is different from a natural talent.* I have already mentioned that a talent may or may not serve the body of Christ, while a spiritual gift does. Let's notice some further contrasts between spiritual gifts and natural talents.

| Natural Talents | Spiritual Gifts |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Given by God | Given by God |
| Through our parents | Independent of parents |
| Given at birth | Evidently given at conversion |
| To benefit mankind | To benefit the body particularly |

Thus a spiritual gift is a God-given ability to serve the body of Christ wherever and however He may direct.

II. THE DISTRIBUTION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

A. They Are Distributed by the Risen, Ascended Christ (Eph. 4:11)

The fact that the Head of the body gives gifts to His body raises the use of gifts to a high and holy level. These are His gifts, entrusted to us because He needs us to use them in order to build up His body. What dignity this gives even to what may seem to be the lowliest kind of service!

B. They Are Distributed by the Holy Spirit at Will (1 Cor. 12:11, 18)

Why does He give a believer a specific gift? Because He knows best what is needed by the body and what best fits each believer for service. If we would believe that, it would keep us from complaining that we are not like someone else, and it ought to motivate us to use to the fullest what God has given us.

When does the Spirit give us our gifts? Most likely at conversion. If these are gifts of the Spirit, and if we do not possess the Spirit until conversion, then it seems that His gifts would be given at that time. We may not discover all the gifts given at salvation, but I am inclined to believe that we have them all at that time. As we grow, other gifts may come to light to use at different times in our life, but likely we possess them all from conversion. Probably we cannot say what particular combination of gifts we have until we can look back over our lives and see what ones God used through all of our days.

C. They Are Distributed to All Believers

No believer is without at least one spiritual gift. Peter made it clear that all have at least one (1 Pet. 4:10). Every believer is either single or married, and both states are said to be spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 7:7). Possibly many believers also have the gift of helps or serving.

But no believer has all the gifts. If they did, then the metaphor in 1 Cor. 12:12–27 would be meaningless. If any believer possessed all the gifts then he or she would have no need for other believers. He would be the hand and foot and eye and ear—the whole body—which is impossible. Believers need other believers simply because no believer possesses all the gifts.

D. They Are Distributed to the Body of Christ as a Whole

By this I mean to emphasize that not every congregation need expect that it will have all the gifts represented in it. The state of growth and maturity may not require this. God knows what each group needs and will see that it is supplied accordingly.

I mean too that not every generation may necessarily expect to have all the gifts. A gift given once is a gift given to the whole body of Christ. God gave the foundation gifts of apostles and prophets at the beginning (Eph. 2:20). After the foundation was laid by those who used those gifts, other gifts were needed. But in the twentieth century we are still benefiting from and building on those foundational gifts. They were given in the first century to the whole body in all centuries. No generation has been slighted. The Spirit endows the church as He wills, and He knows exactly what each believer, each congregation, and each generation needs.¹

III. THE DISCOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The “peril of the pendulum” operates in relation to spiritual gifts. On the one swing of the pendulum is the idea that spiritual gifts are essentially irrelevant to Christian service today because the gifts were given to the early church only and the important matter today is maturity, not gifts. On the opposite swing is the emphasis that you cannot even begin to serve unless you are sure of your spiritual gift(s). If spiritual gifts were given to the early church only or are

irrelevant to service today, then why do they appear in New Testament books written to the second generation of believers and to those who lived throughout the Roman Empire (Ephesians and 1 Peter)? Furthermore, since gifts are necessary for the proper functioning of the body of Christ, how could they not be given today and yet have the church maintain that proper functioning?

On the other hand, if a believer must know his or her spiritual gift(s) before serving, then why are there no commands to discover one's spiritual gifts? We are all commanded to use our gift (1 Pet. 4:10—"employ it"). No text says we must know what gift we have before we can be expected to serve. Yet I will risk using the word discovery in this heading in order to encourage the reader to use his or her gifts.

A. Inform Yourself About the Total Package of Gifts in Your Life

There exist three categories of gifts in every Christian's life.

1. *Natural abilities.* God-given at birth, they include things like IQ, a measure of health and strength, musical talents, linguistic abilities, mechanical aptitudes, etc.

2. *Acquired abilities.* These include things like cooking, sewing, driving a car, learning a language, learning to play an instrument, etc. Although we may tend to take such skills for granted, many people in the world have few opportunities to acquire skills in these areas.

3. *Spiritual gifts.* A believer should inform himself of the total package of these various abilities that God has placed in his life. In other words, he should take inventory to know what stock he has available for the Lord's use. Just going through the process of taking inventory periodically may help the believer ascertain what areas of service he ought to explore.

B. Prepare Yourself by Taking Every Opportunity Available

This principle applies to all three categories of abilities. Sharpen talents, acquire skills, and work on the development of spiritual gifts. If one thinks he may have the gift of teaching, then it will be necessary to study. The ability to communicate may be more directly given (though even that skill can be sharpened by education), but certainly the content must be learned.

If one suspects he has the gift of giving, then he will work on being a good steward in all areas of life (1 Cor. 4:2). The ability to be generous is God-given, but to have the wherewithal with which to be generous requires discipline in financial affairs.

The gift of evangelism in the early church not only involved the preaching of the Good News but also itinerating with the message. To be able to do this may involve paying special attention to one's health in order to have the stamina to travel in spreading the Gospel.

If one has the gift of exhortation, it certainly should be based on biblical knowledge. The only valid and worthwhile exhortation must be rooted in biblical truths. And, of course, to have biblical knowledge requires study.

C. Be Active in the Lord's Work

Gifts are both discovered and developed by activity. Practice brings perception of one's total package of abilities, and practice develops those abilities. If you are seeking to discover your gift(s), then do not turn down opportunities to serve, even if you think they do not fall within the range of your abilities. God may be trying to tell you that you have abilities you do not recognize.

If you are active in doing what you can, then other opportunities may arise that will bring to light additional spiritual gifts. For example, when we first meet Philip in the book of Acts we see him helping distribute the relief money to needy (and bickering) widows (Acts 6:5). It is doubtful that before he undertook this ministry he sat down to decide whether or not he had that spiritual gift!

Here was an opportunity to serve, and he took it. He proved faithful in performing this menial task. The Lord then entrusted him with another ministry, that of evangelizing the Samaritans (Acts 8:5), and, later, the Ethiopian eunuch. As he used that gift he became known as Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:8). But first he was Philip the helper of widows.

The same principle was true in Stephen’s life. He first served along with Philip in ministering to the widows. But he also was full of faith (Acts 6:5), and he was a great witness (Acts 7:1–53). Faithfulness in one opportunity leads to other opportunities.

Let me show you an interesting comparison between some of the spiritual gifts and some of the commands that are given to all believers. The bottom line of this comparison simply says that we are commanded to minister in many areas whether or not we think we have the corresponding spiritual gift.

| Gifts Given to Some | Commands Given to All |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Ministering | Serve one another (Gal 5:13) |
| Exhortation | Exhort one another (Heb 10:25) |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

GIFTS GIVEN TO SOME COMMANDS GIVEN TO ALL

1. Ministering 1. Serve one another (Gal. 5:13)
2. Exhortation 2. Exhort one another (Heb. 10:25)
3. Giving 3. All give (2 Cor. 9:7)
4. Teaching 4. Great Commission (Matt. 28:19)
5. Showing mercy 5. Be kind (Eph. 4:32)
6. Faith 6. Walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7)
7. Evangelism 7. All witness (Acts 1:8)

Thus all are commanded to do various ministries whether or not they possess the corresponding spiritual gift. If we faithfully obey these commands, we may discover our particular spiritual gifts.

D. Be a Good Steward of the Single or Married State

If either state is a spiritual gift (1 Cor. 7:7), then being faithful in the stewardship that goes with either state is essential. Being single or being married are spiritual gifts that need to be developed. Both categories of people need to be faithful stewards (1 Cor. 4:2). Both need to be growing in sanctification (1 Thess. 4:3). Both need to redeem the time (Eph. 5:16).

The single person needs to pay particular attention to purity, to financial discipline, to using free time to study the Word, and to seeking opportunities to serve, say, in a foreign land for a short term. The single person must be concerned for the things of the Lord and how he or she may

please Him (1 Cor. 7:32. The married person must give attention to the family and yet put the Lord's work above all (1 Cor. 7:29, 33). The proper exercise and development of these gifts may be an important factor in the use of other gifts throughout life.

E. Be Willing to Do Anything for God

Actually, dedication or willingness to do anything is more important than discovering your spiritual gift(s). The passage on gifts in Ephesians 4 begins with an exhortation to a worthy life and lowly walk (Eph. 4:1–2). The extended discussion on gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 is preceded in that letter by several exhortations to dedication (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19–20; 10:31). And the passage in Romans 12 begins with that great call to dedication of life in verses 1 and 2. One who is not dedicated will never discover all the abilities God has given him, nor will he fully develop those that he does discover.

IV. THE DESCRIPTION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

A. Apostleship (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11)

In a general sense the word means one who is sent (as used of Epaphroditus in Phil. 2:25). But the technical sense of apostleship refers to the Twelve and possibly a few others like Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:14). The gift was given for the founding of the church and was accredited by special signs (2 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 2:20). This is not a gift that God gives today.

B. Prophecy (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:10; 14:1–40; Eph. 4:11)

Like apostleship, prophecy is also used in both a general sense and a technical sense. In the general sense it refers to proclaiming and thus to preaching. But technically a prophet was not only able to proclaim God's message but he also was able to predict the future. All of his messages, whether proclaiming or predicting, came from God directly through special revelation.

The gift must have been rather widely given in New Testament times, though only a few prophets are mentioned specifically (Agabus, Acts 11:27–28; prophets in the church at Antioch, Acts 13:1; Philip's four daughters, Acts 21:9; and the prophets in the Corinthian church, 1 Cor. 14). This, too, was a gift for the founding of the church, unnecessary after that period and after Revelation was written in the New Testament.

C. Miracles (1 Cor. 12:28) and Healings (1 Cor. 12:9, 28, 30)

This is the ability to perform special signs, including physical healing. Paul exercised this gift at Ephesus (Acts 19:11–12); yet he did not or could not use this gift in the cases of Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:27), Timothy (1 Tim. 5:23), or Trophimus (2 Tim. 4:20). The gift of healing might be viewed as a category within the larger gift of miracles. For example, Paul's calling down blindness on Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 13:11) was the exercise of his gift of miracles, but it certainly was not a healing. We recognize that a miracle or healing may be done by God apart from anyone's exercising a spiritual gift (as the physical sign that accompanied the filling of the Spirit in Acts 4:31).

If this is so, then it does not follow that if one considers the gifts of miracles and healings temporary, he is also saying that God does not perform miracles or healings today. He is simply saying that the gifts are no longer operative because the need for them has ceased; i.e., to authenticate the Gospel message.

A believer today cannot necessarily expect to be healed. It is not God's will to give everyone good health. Though Paul prayed earnestly and repeatedly, and though he himself possessed the gift of healing, it was not God's will to heal Paul of his thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:8–9). If it were God's will to heal every believer, then no believer would die, for even the last illness would

be healed. Healers recognize their limitations, for they do not claim to heal decayed teeth or to instantaneously mend broken bones.

To disregard human means available for healing and to simply pray for a miraculous cure is like praying for a harvest and then sitting in a rocking chair, refusing to plant or cultivate the ground.

D. Tongues and Interpretation of Tongues (1 Cor. 12:10)

Tongues is the God-given ability to speak in a language of earth that is unknown to the speaker. Interpretation of tongues is the ability to interpret that message in a language understood by the hearers. Unquestionably the first occurrence of tongues in Acts 2 was languages (note the word “language” in Acts 2:6; 8). The presumption is that the tongues in Corinthians were no different.

The purposes of interpreted tongues were two: to communicate truth from God and to authenticate the truth of the Christian message, especially to Jewish people (1 Cor. 14:5, 21–22). Because the Corinthians were abusing this gift, Paul laid down strict regulations for its use: Only two or three were to speak in any meeting; no one was to speak in tongues unless the message could be interpreted; prophecy was always preferred; and women were to keep silent (1 Cor. 14:27–34).

Uninterpreted tongues, especially a private prayer language, is unfruitful (1 Cor. 14:14) simply because even the one praying does not know what he or she is asking for. Therefore, it is better to pray with understanding, which means using a language that the person understands.

Whether one believes the biblical gift of tongues is given today or not, the Pentecostal teaching that tongues are the necessary sign of having been baptized by the Spirit is wrong. Paul said that all the believers in Corinth were baptized (1 Cor. 12:13) but not all spoke in tongues (1 Cor. 12:30).

E. Evangelism (Eph. 4:11)

This ability to proclaim the Gospel message with exceptional clarity also included the idea that the ministry of an evangelist was itinerant. He was sent out by the church, but his ministry was done outside it. It might also be done publicly or privately. Whether or not one has the gift of evangelism, all believers are to be witnesses.

F. Pastor (Eph. 4:11)

This is the ability to shepherd, provide for, care for, and protect God’s people. In verse 11 teaching is linked to pastoring, and in Acts 20:28 ruling is.

G. Serving (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:12)

This is the ability to help or serve in the broadest sense of the word.

H. Teaching (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11)

This is the ability to explain God’s truth to people. Apparently the gift is sometimes given alone and sometimes in connection with that of pastor.

I. Faith (1 Cor. 12:9)

This is the ability to believe God for the supply of specific needs. Every believer should walk by faith, and each has a measure of faith, but not all have the gift of faith.

J. Exhortation (Rom. 12:8)

This involves the ability to encourage, comfort, and admonish people.

K. Distinguishing Spirits (1 Cor. 12:10)

This was the ability to distinguish between true and false sources of supernatural revelation when it was being given in oral form before the completion of the canon.

L. Showing Mercy (Rom. 12:8)

Like the gift of serving, this involves succoring, particularly those who are sick and afflicted.

M. Giving (Rom. 12:8)

This seems to be the ability to be very generous with what means one has. It should be exercised with simplicity, that is, with no thought of return or self-gain.

N. Administration (Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:28)

This is the ability to rule in the church.

O. Wisdom and Knowledge (1 Cor. 12:8)

Like other early-church gifts, these involved the ability to understand and communicate God's truth to people.

The list numbers eighteen separate gifts (though I have linked several together). Is this all? Nowhere is there any suggestion that there are other gifts, and these that are listed would seem to be sufficient for the building of the body of Christ.

NOTE

1. One of the most balanced and concise treatments of this entire doctrine is William J. McRae, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Gifts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976).

Chapter 66: The Spirit Filling

The concept of the Spirit filling people appears fifteen times in the New Testament, four of them before Pentecost. It seems to have a twofold thrust, and its ramifications are very significant in relation to the Christian's life and activity.

I. THE RELATION OF SPIRIT FILLING TO SPIRITUALITY

A. A Definition of Spirituality

In 1 Corinthians 2:15 we have the nearest thing to a definition of spirituality, and that is actually only a description. If the spiritual believer judges or examines or discerns all things, yet himself is not understood by others, then spirituality means a mature, yet maturing, relationship to God.

This requires at least three things: (a) regeneration; (b) the ministries of God in the believer's life; and (c) time to grow in maturity.

B. The Role of the Spirit in Producing Spirituality

If maturity is a key facet in spirituality, then the Holy Spirit must play a major role in producing it. To be able to discern involves knowledge of God's will and perspective. This the Spirit produces through His ministry of teaching (John 16:12–15). It will also include praying according to the will of God, which is directed by the Spirit (Rom. 8:26; Eph. 6:18). The spiritual believer will surely be exercising the spiritual gifts that the Spirit gives and empowers (1 Cor. 12:7). He or she will learn to war victoriously against the flesh by the power of the Spirit (Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:16–17). In short, the fullness of the Spirit is key to producing spirituality in the believer.

C. Some Ramifications of the Concept

If spirituality is related to maturity, then there can be degrees of spirituality, since there are stages of maturity. Paul apparently expected the believers at Corinth to have reached a level of maturity whereby they could be called spiritual in five or six years. The Gospel was first preached in Corinth on his second missionary journey (about A.D. 50), and his first letter to the church, in which he chided the Christians because he could not treat them as spiritually mature people, was written about A.D. 55.

Seemingly a person could backslide in an area of spirituality without losing all that he or she had gained through the years. Some sins would affect more areas of life and fellowship than others.

If Spirit filling relates to the control of the Spirit in a life, then a new believer can certainly be controlled in whatever areas he knows about. But that does not mean he is spiritual, since not enough time has elapsed for him to mature. As maturity comes, more areas of needed control come to light. As we respond positively and allow the Spirit to expand His control, then we mature more. And so on.

Being a Christian for some time does not guarantee spirituality, since the person may not have allowed the Spirit control of his life during some of those years.

There are stages of maturity. Even though one may reach maturity, there is always more maturity to be achieved. Spirituality is a mature, yet maturing, relationship to God.

II. THE FILLING OF THE SPIRIT

There seem to be two facets to Spirit filling. The first may be described as a sovereign act of God whereby He possesses someone for special activity. This is expressed by the Greek phrase *pimpl'emi pneumatou agiou*, and it highlights the event of being filled rather than the resultant state of fullness. It occurs in Luke 1:15 (John the Baptist), Luke 1:41 (Elizabeth), Luke 1:67

(Zacharias); Acts 2:4 (the group on the Day of Pentecost); Acts 4:8 (Peter), Acts 4:31 (the believers); Acts 9:17 (Paul); and Acts 13:9 (Paul).

Observe that this facet of filling was experienced by some of the same people more than once and without sin between that might necessitate a repeated filling. The repetition was caused by a new need for special service, not intervening sin (Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31). God did this as His sovereign act without imposing conditions on those to be filled.

The second facet of Spirit filling may be described as the extensive influence and control of the Spirit in a believer's life. It evidences an abiding state of fullness rather than the specific event. It produces a certain character of life and seems to be a close synonym to spirituality. It is indicated by the Greek phrase *plere* or *pleroo pneumatou agiou*. It occurs in Luke 4:1 (Christ); Acts 6:3, 5 (the first helpers of the apostles); Acts 7:55 (Stephen); Acts 11:24 (Barnabas); Acts 13:52 (the disciples); and Ephesians 5:18 (believers).

This facet of the Spirit's filling is the finest character reference one could have. It seems to be something every believer can experience (Acts 13:52) but not something every believer does experience (Acts 6:3). Though specific conditions are not mentioned in these contexts, the normal requirements for Christian growth would be implied conditions for attaining this kind of character.

The only time Paul wrote of filling (Eph. 5:18), he emphasized this aspect of being filled. Since he commanded it, apparently he did not think all his readers had experienced it. Two questions arise in the interpretation of this verse.

The first is what is the meaning of "spirit"? Does it refer to the Holy Spirit or to the human spirit? If the latter, then the verse means to make use of the human spirit in corporate worship (though there is no other New Testament reference to filling of the human spirit). Indeed, the other occurrences of *en pneumatou* in Ephesians (Eph. 2:22; 3:5; 6:18) and Colossians (Col. 1:8) all clearly refer to the Holy Spirit. So one would assume Paul meant the Holy Spirit also in Ephesians 5:18. Note that the verb *pleroo* is used in relation to God (Eph. 3:19) and to the Son (Eph. 4:10). Why would Paul switch to the human spirit in Eph. 5:18?

The second question concerns the use of *en*. Does it mean with the Spirit or by the Spirit? In other words, is the Spirit the content of our filling or the Agent? The case can mean either or both. (For the idea of "content" see Rom. 1:29 and 2 Cor. 7:4.) Perhaps both ideas are to be understood here. The Spirit is the Agent who fills us with Himself.²

To sum up: Spirit filling is both God's sovereign empowering us by the Spirit for special activity and the Spirit's filling us with His own character.

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRIT FILLING

A. Christlike Character (Gal. 5:22–23)

When the Spirit controls a life, His fruit will be produced in that life. And, of course, the description of the fruit of the Spirit is a description of Christlikeness. However, each of these characteristics must be viewed in all their aspects, not just as a facet that is compatible with our ideas of Christlikeness.

Many undoubtedly conceive of Christlikeness as a reflection of their own personalities. An introvert will probably think of our Lord as shy and retiring, whereas an extrovert will see Him as an aggressive Leader. When the nine words that comprise the fruit of the Spirit are fully defined, we will have a well-rounded picture of true Christlikeness.

For example, love consists not only of tenderness but sometimes sternness. When Christ dealt with children, He showed tenderness. When He drove out the money changers, He showed sternness. But both acts were displays of love because He is God and God is love.

Joy is not only displayed in happiness but also in heaviness (1 Pet. 1:6). Peace involves tranquillity but may include problems in human relationships (Matt. 10:34). Longsuffering means evenness and patience but does not exclude prodding (as the Lord did with Philip, John 14:9). Gentleness and goodness mean beneficent thoughts and actions, which could include casting pigs into the Sea of Galilee as a kindness to the people who were engaged in that illegal business (Matt. 8:28–34). Faithfulness certainly includes serving with regularity and dependability, but it may include an irregular action. Meekness is gentleness but does not mean weakness. Self-control affects all areas of life (1 Cor. 9:27).

B. Evangelistic Involvement

When the filling of the Spirit is mentioned in the book of Acts, conversions are recorded. Spirit filling on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4) resulted in the conversion of three thousand people (Acts 2:41). The filling of the disciples in Acts 4:31 resulted in multitudes of men and women turning to the Lord (Acts 5:14). One of the qualifications for the choosing of the first helpers was that they be Spirit filled (Acts 6:3). This was followed by the conversion of a number of priests (Acts 6:7). Paul was filled with the Spirit after his conversion, and the fruit of his life is well known. When Barnabas, who was filled with the Spirit, went to Antioch, many were converted (Acts 11:24). Certainly those who prayed (Acts 4:24) and those who gave (Acts 4:34) were as involved as those who gave the direct witness that resulted in these conversions.

C. Praise, Worship, Thanksgiving, Submissiveness (Eph. 5:19–21)

Paul listed these four evidences of Spirit filling after writing the command to be filled in verse 18. Praise is expressed outwardly by speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Singing and making melody in the heart is evidence of the inner attitude of worship. Giving thanks should be viewed as inclusively as possible, and it was written by a man who was at the time under house arrest in Rome, awaiting trial. Submissiveness in the relationships of life (husband/wife, parents/children, masters/slaves) also characterizes the Spirit-filled life. Note that all of these are very ordinary things that affect the routines of life, not extraordinary feats of spiritual strength.

IV. HOW CAN I BE SPIRIT FILLED?

No example of praying for the filling of the Spirit exists in the post-Pentecost material of the New Testament. So praying, however earnest, is apparently not the way to be filled.

If filling relates to the control of the Spirit in one's life (whether in the sense of God's sovereign seizing of a person or of a sustained control that results in character), then filling is related to yieldedness. When I am willing to allow the Spirit to do what He wishes, it is up to Him to do or not to do with me whatever is His pleasure. I can check my willingness, but I cannot manipulate His activities.

As one matures, his knowledge and perspectives will deepen and broaden. New areas that need to be yielded will come to light. Therefore, filled people need to be filled as they continue to mature in the Lord. But no believer can afford not to be filled at every stage of his or her spiritual growth.

NOTES

1. For a statement of the human spirit view see S. D. F. Salmond, "The Epistle to the Ephesians," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), 3:362.

2. This is the view of C. J. Ellicott, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Longmans, 1868), 124.

Chapter 67: Other Ministries of the Spirit

I. TEACHING

The teaching ministry of the Spirit was one of Christ's last promises before His crucifixion. He said,

I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said, that He takes of Mine, and will disclose it to you. (John 16:12–15)

A. Time

This particular ministry of the Spirit was yet future when our Lord spoke these words. It began on the Day of Pentecost and continues throughout this age. Peter's clear comprehension as revealed in his Pentecostal sermon is evidence of the beginning of this ministry.

B. Content

In general the content of the Spirit's ministry encompasses "all the truth" (the definite article appears in the text). This, of course, means revelation concerning Christ Himself, but on the basis of the written Word (for we have no other information about Him except through the Bible). Therefore, He teaches the believer the content of the Scripture, which leads him to an understanding of prophecy ("things to come"). This particularizing of the general promise concerning teaching ought to encourage every believer to study prophecy. Notice too that the Spirit does not originate His message—it comes from the Lord.

C. Result

The result of the teaching ministry of the Spirit is that Christ is glorified. If He is not glorified, then the Spirit has not been ministering. Note also that it is not the Spirit who is glorified or who is supposed to be glorified in a religious service, but Christ. Further, if Christ is known only through the written Word, then He will be glorified when the Word of God is expounded in the power of the Spirit.

D. Procedure

How does the Spirit teach the believer? John declares: "The anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him" (1 John 2:27). This could not mean that human teachers are unnecessary in explaining the Word of God. If it could, then what would be the use of the gift of teaching? (Rom. 12:7). John wrote concerning the presence of antichrists in the group. Having stated his own conviction concerning their heresies, he simply declared that no man really had to tell them the truth, for the Holy Spirit would confirm it to them. Human teachers are a necessary link in the procedure of instructing believers, though the ultimate authentication of the teaching comes from the Spirit.

II. GUIDING

"For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Rom. 8:14). Leading is a confirmation of sonship, for sons are led. This work of guidance is particularly the work of the Spirit. Romans 8:14 states it and the book of Acts amply illustrates it (Acts 8:29; 10:19–20; 13:2, 4; 16:6–7; 20:22–23). This ministry of the Spirit is one of the most assuring ones for the

Christian. The child of God never needs to walk in the dark; he is always free to ask and receive directions from the Spirit Himself.

III. ASSURING

The Spirit is also the One who assures the Christian that he is a child of God. “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16). The word for children here is *tekna* (in contrast to *huioi*, sons) and emphasizes the fact that the believer shares in the life of the Father. Because of this, he also shares as an heir in the possessions of the Father. Assurance of all this is the work of the Spirit to the heart of each Christian.

Undoubtedly assurance is also brought to the heart of the believer by an increased understanding of some of the things that the Spirit has done for him. For instance, assurance will deepen when one understands what it means to be sealed with the Spirit and to have been given the earnest of the Spirit as a guarantee of the completion of redemption (Eph. 1:13–14). The comprehension of what is involved in the Spirit’s joining the believer to the risen, undying body of Christ will also nurture assurance. Of course, the comprehension of these great accomplishments is part of the teaching ministry of the Spirit, so in many ways the Holy Spirit is connected with and concerned about the assurance of the child of God.

IV. PRAYING

A. The Statement

Though we may not fully understand the ramifications of the Spirit’s praying in the believer, the fact that He does is perfectly clear: “And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words” (Rom. 8:26).

B. The Need

The stated reason that we need help is because of our infirmity (the word is singular). He helps our entire weakness, but especially as it manifests itself in relation to our prayer life, and particularly in relation to knowing what to pray for at the present moment. While we wait for our full redemption, we need guidance in the particulars of prayer.

C. The Method

The way the Spirit helps meet our needs is described in general by the word “helps,” which literally means “puts His hand to the work in cooperation with us.”¹ Specifically this help is given in the form of “groanings too deep for words.” These groanings, the meaning of which cannot be grasped, find no adequate or formulated expression. One thing we do know—they are according to the will of God.

In another passage we are told that the Spirit guides and directs our prayers (Eph. 6:18). This is more the guidance of the believer’s heart and mind as he prays than the unutterable groanings of the Spirit Himself.

D. The Result

The result of such a prayer life is assurance to the believer of the certainty of his future and full redemption (Rom. 8:23). This ministry of the Spirit is a kind of earnestlike guarantee of that redemption. Such a satisfying prayer life will help keep us content in this present world as we wait for the consummation. The ministry of the Spirit, then, is not only connected with answered prayer, but it cultivates our assurance and contentment in this life.

V. SANCTIFYING

A. *The Concept of Sanctification*

The word sanctify basically means to set apart. It has the same root as the words saint and holy. For the Christian, sanctification includes three aspects. The first is called positional or definitive sanctification, which relates to the position every believer enjoys by virtue of being set apart as a member of God's family through faith in Christ. This is true for all believers regardless of different degrees of spiritual growth. Paul addressed the carnal Christians with all of their sinful practices as sanctified (and thus as saints, 1 Cor. 1:2; see also 1 Cor. 6:11 where the verbs indicate accomplished facts, not something to be attained).

The second aspect of sanctification concerns the present experiential or progressive work of continuing to be set apart during the whole of our Christian lives. Every command and exhortation to holy living concerns progressive sanctification (1 Pet. 1:16).

The third aspect is usually called ultimate sanctification, which we will attain in heaven when we shall be completely and eternally set apart to our God (Eph. 5:26–27; Jude 24–25).

B. *The Agents in Sanctification*

All persons of the Trinity are involved in sanctification, and believers are too. In positional sanctification, which comes when we are saved, the Holy Spirit sanctifies us, our responsibility being to believe the truth (2 Thess. 2:13). Christ's death is the basis for our position in sanctification (Heb. 10:10). In ultimate sanctification God is the one who will present us blameless.

In the process of progressive sanctification several agents are involved. It was to the Father that our Lord prayed that He would sanctify us through the truth (John 17:17 and 1 Thess. 5:23). Thus the Bible becomes an indispensable foundation for our sanctification. How else could we know for sure what pleases a holy God except through His Word? Christ's death (to which He sanctified or set Himself apart) serves as the basis for our being able to progress in sanctification (John 17:19; Rom. 6:1–13). However, the Holy Spirit is the prominent agent in the outworking of our progressive sanctification. It is by the Spirit that we put to death the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:13). The Spirit ignites love in our hearts (Rom. 5:5). By the Spirit we are changed from glory to glory to become more and more like Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). And it is the fruit of the Spirit that produces in us Christlikeness, which is the goal of sanctification (Gal. 5:22–23).

Yet the believer must faithfully discharge his or her responsibilities in sanctification. When we present ourselves as slaves to righteousness, sanctification results (Rom. 6:19; see also Rom. 6:13; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Pet. 2:11). We must obey the commands and exhortations of the Christian life in order to progress in holiness.

To withhold or withdraw areas of our lives from God's desired sanctification for us will result in our being controlled by the flesh rather than by the Spirit. This will result in the believer's being carnal in those unyielded or rebellious areas (1 Cor. 3:1–5). Carnality exhibits the characteristics of the unsaved life because of being controlled by the flesh (Gal. 5:16–21). Thus yieldedness, Spirit filling, and the sanctifying process are involved in setting us apart more and more to the image of Christ.

NOTE

1. R. St. John Parry, "Romans," in *Cambridge Greek Testament* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1912), 120.

Chapter 68: History of the Doctrine of the Spirit

I. TO THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA

A. Orthodox Witness

Doctrinal formulation of the Christian faith did not occur all at once at some point in the history of the church. Nor did a definition of all Christian doctrines take place at any equal rate. Sometimes one doctrine came in for attention; at other times the spotlight would focus on a different doctrine.

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit did not receive much attention in the early centuries as far as formal definition was concerned. What we have come to know as the orthodox expression of the doctrine of the Spirit was witnessed to by the early church in the baptismal formula, in the Apostles' Creed, and in the castigating of error when it did appear. The use of the threefold name of Father, Son, and Spirit shows that implicitly and in practice the deity and personality of the Spirit were acknowledged by the early church.

As far as the Spirit was concerned, the principal emphasis in the Subapostolic Age was on the experience of the Spirit rather than on the doctrine. This emphasis is particularly notable in *The Shepherd of Hermas*. In the era of the apologists the Spirit is very much in the background of the literature, since the emphasis was on the Logos. At the same time there seemed to be no erroneous experience of the Spirit in spite of the lack of doctrinal definition.

B. Montanism (170)

It was in Montanism that the subject of the Holy Spirit came into more prominence. The original impetus for this movement grew out of a reaction against the increasing rigidity and frigidity of the organized church. Montanism (also called the Phrygian heresy) appeared in Phrygia about 170 through the ministry of Montanus and two women, Prisca and Maximilla. They announced themselves as prophets and announced the period as the Age of the Paraclete in which new revelations from God were to be given. They emphasized the nearness of the end of the world and insisted on very high and strict moral standards in their followers. It was this high morality that attracted Tertullian and others to the movement.

Montanism was also a reaction against gnosticism with its intellectualism, which seemingly raised a barrier against the soul's personal communication with God. For many, Montanism stood for the active presence and ministry of the Spirit in the church and for a more spiritual type of church life. However, Montanism was officially rejected because of its insistence on additional revelation, and in so doing, the church affirmed the belief that the Spirit does not give new revelations apart from the Scriptures. Still, with all this emphasis on the experience of the Spirit, the doctrine remained for the most part without formulation at that time.

C. Sabellianism (215)

Monarchianism was the predecessor of Sabellianism. In its modalistic form, Monarchianism taught that the Son was merely another mode of expression of the Father. Noetus and Praxeas were leaders in this movement, and they also taught patripassianism (i.e., the Father was crucified). Since the Monarchians taught that the Son was another mode of expression of God, it was inevitable that the church was forced to consider the relation of the Spirit to the Son and to the Father. Sabellius taught that God is a unity but that He revealed Himself in three different modes or forms. These three forms were not three hypostases but three roles or parts played by the one God. Sabellianism was the first major error concerning the Trinity that gained a large following in the church.

D. Arianism (325)

The Arian controversy is thus called because it was occasioned by the anti-Trinitarian views of Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria. The monotheistic principle of Monarchianism was a dominant concept in his view. However, he distinguished the one eternal God from the Son who was generated by the Father and who had a beginning. He also believed that the Holy Spirit was the first thing created by the Son, for all things were made by the Son. Arius was opposed by Athanasius, and the Council of Nicaea was called to discuss the dispute.

The principal statement of the council concerned the deity of the second person, and the conclusion was that Christ was “of the same substance” as the Father. The attention of the council was focused on the Son rather than on the Spirit, and the Nicene Creed merely mentions the Spirit: “I believe in the Holy Spirit.” The statement can be said only to infer the deity and personality of the Holy Spirit because of its connection with the specific declaration concerning the Son. Why the council was not equally specific concerning the Spirit is only a matter of conjecture. Possibly the church was content not to anticipate heresy or to go beyond what the occasion demanded. Athanasius, however, was much more definite in his own teaching, vigorously maintaining that the Spirit, like the Son, was of the same essence as the Father.

II. FROM NICAEA TO THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

A. The Council of Constantinople (381)

Not all was settled by the Nicene Council. Though Athanasius’s own teaching was clearly orthodox and detailed, the Nicene Creed had been indefinite concerning the Spirit. A new controversy soon arose, and people began to assert their unbelief in the deity of the Spirit. As a result, there arose the Macedonians, whose founder, Macedonius, bishop of Constantinople, maintained that the Spirit was a creature subordinate to the Son. His party was nicknamed Pneumatomachians (“evil speakers against the Spirit”). The mainstream of orthodox teaching was that the Holy Spirit was divine or else the Son was not divine either. Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa were leaders in propagating the orthodox view and preparing the way for the Council of Constantinople.

The controversy grew to such proportions that Emperor Theodosius had to call a council at Constantinople consisting of 150 orthodox bishops representing the Eastern church only. In 381 the council met and under the guidance of Gregory of Nazianzus formulated the following statement concerning the Holy Spirit: “And we believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Life-giving, who proceeds from the Father, who is to be glorified with the Father and the Son, and who speaks through the prophets.” It has been pointed out that the creed used remarkable moderation in avoiding the term “of the same substance” (which was used of Christ in the Nicene Creed) to express the Spirit’s oneness with the Father and the Son. Actually the Spirit is not even called God in the creed, though the terms in which His work is described cannot possibly be predicated of any created being. Nevertheless, the statement did counter the Macedonians, even though it did not assert the consubstantiality of the Spirit with the Father or define the relation of the Spirit to the Father and the Son; and it settled the question of the deity of the Spirit just as the Nicene Council had settled the question of the deity of Christ.

B. Augustine (354–430)

1. De Trinitate. The concept of the Trinity in the Western church reached a final formulation in this work by Augustine. His interest in the doctrine of grace would naturally lead to a consideration of the Spirit, for his own experiences taught him how necessary the power of the Spirit is to the believer. In this treatise he stated that each of the three persons of the Trinity possesses the entire essence and that all are interdependent on the others. He declared that he was not satisfied with the word “persons” to express the three hypostases, but he used it “in order not

to be silent.” In his conception of the Trinity, the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son.

2. *The Pelagian controversy (431)*. Augustine also laid great stress on efficacious grace as the work of the Spirit. This profoundly influenced not only his doctrine of man and of sin but also his doctrine of the Spirit. Pelagius, his opponent in the controversy, advocated a practical denial of original sin and emphasized the ability of man to do good apart from the enablement of the Spirit. The Council of Ephesus dealt with the controversy in 431 and condemned Pelagius and his views and upheld Augustine and his. Though Pelagianism was condemned officially, it was not eradicated from the church, for Pelagianism and semi-Pelagianism (as well as Augustinianism) have come down to this present day.

C. The Council of Chalcedon (451)

In 451 the Council of Chalcedon, representing the sees of Rome, Constantinople, Antioch, and Jerusalem, confirmed the decisions of Nicaea and Constantinople. The council explicitly stated that the Nicene Creed was sufficient as a proper statement of the doctrine of the Trinity and that the clauses added by the Council of Constantinople in 381 were only intended to clarify, not change, the Nicene Creed. This firmly established the doctrine of the deity of the Holy Spirit.

D. The Synod of Toledo (589)

Though the question of the deity of the Spirit had been settled at Constantinople and Chalcedon, there still remained the important and mysterious question of the Spirit’s precise relation to the Father and the Son. This was a problem that developed in the West (the matter of the deity of the Spirit was Eastern). The term “generation” was used to describe the relation of the Son to the Father, while the term “procession” was employed to denote the relation of the Spirit. The question was: Did the Spirit proceed from the Father only, or from the Father and the Son? Though the Council of Constantinople did not declare that the Spirit proceeded from the Son as well as from the Father, this was the belief of many church leaders. It was felt necessary to believe that, lest procession from the Father only look like a denial of the essential oneness of the Son with the Father. However, there was not unanimity on this point, for others felt that to say that the Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son would mean that the Spirit was dependent on the Son and would thus infringe on His deity.

The Western theologians held to the procession from the Father and the Son, and they added the famous “filioque” (“and Son”) clause to the Constantinopolitan Creed at the Synod of Toledo. The clause stated that the Spirit “proceedeth from the Father and the Son.” How the filioque clause came into the creed is a matter of discussion. Some think it was the “blunder” of a copyist. In any case, the clause never caused suspicion but was repeated synod after synod as orthodox doctrine. Leaders in the Eastern church felt that the Western church was tampering with the creed set at Constantinople and never adopted the filioque addition, declaring it heresy to this day.

Thus three things concerning the Trinity were settled beyond all question, at least in the Western church. The deity of the Son was settled at the Council of Nicaea; the deity of the Spirit at Constantinople; and the procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son at the Synod of Toledo. The presence of heresy had forced the church to settle these great doctrinal matters.

E. Abelard (1079–1142)

Abelard spoke of the Trinity in ways that caused him to be charged with Sabellianism. The name of the Father, he said, stands for power; the Son, for wisdom; the Spirit, for goodness. Sometimes he seemed to indicate real personal distinctions in the Godhead, but his illustrations and expressions at other times were modalistic.

F. Thomas Aquinas (1225–74)

In Thomas there was the usual orthodox understanding of the Trinity. Generally speaking, however, the centuries preceding the Protestant Reformation added little to the doctrine of the Spirit beyond what was so well systematized by Augustine. In the West, while the influence of Augustine was still at work, the church became semi-Pelagian (de-emphasizing original sin and emphasizing the freedom of man's will). This together with the increasing sacerdotalism and its consequences (which promoted special powers of the clergy) tended to keep the minds of many away from any further study of the Holy Spirit. Though there were tendencies toward mysticism on the part of some, no real fresh study of the doctrine of the Spirit was made until the time of the Reformation.

III. FROM THE REFORMATION TO THE PRESENT

A. The Protestant Reformation (1517)

Up to the time of the Reformation the church's attention had been directed only toward the person of the Spirit. In the Reformation, attention was given to His work. As far as the Spirit's person was concerned, all the Reformed confessions express the orthodox doctrine of the Spirit in relation to the other persons of the Trinity. As far as His work is concerned, there was renewed emphasis on the necessity of His work in regenerating man because there was a return to the Augustinian emphasis on the total depravity of man.

Another important contribution of the Reformers was their emphasis on the need of illumination by the Spirit. The Roman church taught that only the priest could interpret the Word of God, whereas the Reformers advocated openly the study of the Bible, asserting that all believers could be taught its truths by the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Luther's emphasis on justification by faith caused him to say much about the Spirit's work in this connection. Calvin emphasized those aspects of the work of the Spirit that are associated with the Trinity and the ministry of the Spirit in the hearts and lives of believers.

The various documents and creeds growing out of the Reformation are uniform in their orthodoxy. The Augsburg Confession, the Anglican Articles, the Formula Concordiae, the Helvetic Confession, and the Westminster Confession all asserted the deity of the Spirit following the Council of Chalcedon, including the filioque clause as well as the particular emphases brought to light by the Reformation itself. Indeed, it may be said that it was not until the time of the Reformation that there was a developed doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

B. The Socinians and Arminians

Almost every religious movement is followed by excesses and reactions. The Reformation was no exception. Some went to an extreme of unbalanced enthusiasm and mysticism. Others tended toward a rationalism that almost completely ignored the work of the Spirit in the life. In the sixteenth century the Socinians declared that it was erroneous to believe that the persons of the Trinity possessed a single essence. In this teaching they echoed the Arians, but they went beyond them in denying the preexistence of the Son and defining the Holy Spirit as "a virtue or energy flowing from God to man."

From the Reformed church itself there arose the serious trouble in connection with what is known as Arminian theology (Arminius, 1560–1609). The entire tendency of this teaching was to emphasize human effort and will and to make salvation a work of man rather than a work of God, with the human will replacing the work of the Spirit in regeneration.

The Synod of Dort (1618–19) met to deal with the matter, and it condemned Arminian theology, emphasizing in the strongest possible way the need of the working and power of the Holy Spirit.

However, the synod did not erase Arminian theology, which flourishes to this day. The Puritan movement in England did much to counter Arminianism by its emphasis on the doctrine of grace.

C. John Owen (1616–83)

One of the most important contributions of the Puritans was Owen's book *Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit*. Many think his work has never been superseded. It is a development of the great Reformation principles in relation to the Holy Spirit and the Christian life.

D. Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920)

The work of Kuyper is also a classic in its field, particularly in view of the rationalism that had swept over Europe. Swedenborg (1688–1772) denied the Trinity. Schleiermacher (1768–1834), though he countered the prevalent rationalism by emphasizing the need and reality of personal religion, denied the objective realities of the Incarnation, the Cross, and the coming of the Spirit. His doctrine of the Trinity was Sabellian—the persons of the Godhead were only modes of manifestation. The distinct personality of the Spirit was denied, and the Spirit's work was defined as “the collective Spirit of the new corporate life that was initiated by Christ.” Ritschl (1822–89) revived the Monarchianism of Paul of Samosata. His was a theology without metaphysics, which necessarily affected his view of the Spirit.

E. The Plymouth Brethren (1825)

It is to the Brethren that we owe a proper understanding of the baptizing ministry of the Spirit and the distinct nature of the New Testament church. The church owes much to the Brethren's testimony to the importance of the Word of God, the illumination of the Spirit, and the position that the believer has in Christ by the work of the Spirit. There were deplorable schisms within their group, but the Brethren had an important witness to the presence, power, and guidance of the Spirit in the church.

F. Neo-orthodoxy

Neo-orthodoxy is a twentieth-century movement arising out of the theology of Karl Barth (1886–1968). It was a reaction to the liberalism that held sway until the horrors of a world war forced men to think more seriously about sin and their lack of competency to solve their own problems. The neo-orthodox movement claimed to be a new reformation that called men back to the Bible. It did this, but not to the Bible of the Reformers, for neo-orthodox theologians have willingly embraced the teachings of liberalism concerning the accuracy and truth of the Bible, while at the same time trying to preach the message of the Bible.

Though neo-orthodoxy has about as many exponents as there are neo-orthodox theologians, it may be said that in general its view of the Holy Spirit leaves much to be desired. Most neo-orthodox writers deny the distinct personality of the Spirit and affirm His deity only in that He is represented as a divine manifestation of God. The Holy Spirit is regarded as more of an activity of God than a person of the Godhead.

Barth's own view of the Trinity has been called modalistic, though he would reject the term. He rejected what is commonly conceived of as modalism of divine manifestation of God in three ways as saying too little in rightly expressing the doctrine of the Trinity. On the other hand, he rejected the term “person” in regard to the Trinity as teaching too much; i.e., tritheism or three Gods. His view seemed to be that the Trinity is a threefold mode of manifestation and less than three persons. Barth, in contrast to most neo-orthodox teachers, did believe in the deity of the Spirit.

G. Neoliberalism

The rise and wide acceptance of neo-orthodox theology has caused liberalism to examine its own tenets. The result has been the new liberalism, which is the old liberalism with a tendency to take sin more seriously and to be less optimistic. Its approach to world problems may be different, but its teachings differ little from the older liberalism. The new liberal dispenses quickly and completely with the orthodox doctrine of the Spirit simply because he does not believe in the deity of the second person of the Trinity. Hence there is in reality no Trinity, and of course no divine third person. The Spirit is merely a function of God without possessing any distinct quality of personality.

H. Pentecostalism

Undoubtedly modern Pentecostalism is a reaction to the sterility that began to characterize the established churches in the modern era. It emphasizes the baptism of the Spirit as a second work of grace for endowment with power, and it promotes a return of experiencing all the gifts that were given and used in New Testament times. The orthodox doctrine concerning the person of the Spirit is assumed; it is the reality of the work of the Spirit in the lives of Christians that is promoted and not always correctly.

Thus in the sweep of church history one sees first the formulation of what has come to be known as the orthodox doctrine of the Spirit, then the definition of it in the early councils, and the development of it during the Reformation. With every surge toward defining or developing the truth, there have been movements away from it, either in the form of rationalistic coldness or unbalanced enthusiasm and mysticism. History should teach us that orthodox doctrine is not only important to faith but equally vital to life. Perhaps in no doctrine is this wedding of truth and life more important than in the doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit.

Section XII—“I Will Build My Church”

Chapter 69: What Is the Church?

The importance of the church can scarcely be overstated. It is that which God purchased with the blood of His own Son (Acts 20:28). It is that which Christ loves, nourishes, and cherishes (Eph. 5:25, 29), and which He shall present to Himself blameless in all her glory one day (Eph. 5:27). Building His church constitutes Christ’s principal work in the world today (Matt. 16:18) through His giving of spiritual gifts (Eph. 4:12). Thus the exercise of those gifts by believers aligns us with what Christ is doing today.

I. THE MEANING OF THE WORD CHURCH

A. *The English Word*

The English word church (and the cognate form kirk) are derived from the Greek word *kyriakon*, which means “belonging to the Lord.” The only two uses of that word in the New Testament occur in 1 Corinthians 11:20 (referring to the Lord’s Supper) and Revelation 1:10 (referring to the Lord’s Day). The word came to be used to refer to other things such as the place or people or denomination or country related to the group that belong to the Lord.

B. *The Hebrew Word*

The Hebrew word *qahal* means simply an assembly and is usually translated in the Septuagint by *ekklesia*. However, it does not necessarily refer to a religious assembly (Gen. 28:3; 49:6; Ps. 26:5), nor even to a congregation of human beings (Ps. 89:5), though most often it does refer to the congregation of Israel.

C. *The Greek Word*

The Greek word *ekklesia* meant an assembly and was used in a political, not a religious, sense. It did not refer to the people but to the meeting; in other words, when the people were not assembled formally they were not referred to as an *ekklesia*. The word is used in this same secular Greek way two times in the New Testament (Acts 19:32, 41).

When the Greek word is used in the New Testament, it takes on much richer and fuller aspects to that basic secular meaning. For example, the people themselves, whether assembled or not, are the *ekklesia*. Nevertheless, the word as used in the New Testament still retains the basic meaning of an assembly and does not take on a supposed theological meaning (based on the breakup of the word into its two parts, “call” and “out of”) of a “called out” people. If the word is going to be translated on the basis of etymology, then it should be translated “called together,” not “called out.”

II. THE USES OF THE WORD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

If the word church has to do with an assembled group, then different uses of the concept in the New Testament should tell us (a) what is the character or nature of the group assembled, and (b) what are the foci and reasons that draw that particular assembly together.

A. *Acts 19:39, 41*

Here the group was composed of heathen people whose reason for assembling was to exercise a political privilege. The citizens of this free city had the right to meet in a legislative assembly, which they did three times a month. But this occasion was an illegal assembly on which Rome would not look kindly; hence the town clerk’s urgency to dismiss the people.

B. Acts 7:38

Here the group were Israelites assembled to receive God's Law through Moses. The spiritual character of this group was mixed—some personally and individually rightly related to God and some not. Of course, all were related to Him in the sense that God had chosen the nation, but this alone did not guarantee the spiritual salvation of each person. This national calling was the reason for the gathering at the base of Mt. Sinai.

C. Ephesians 1:22–23

Here the assembly is the church, which is Christ's body. The character of this group is 100 percent regenerated, and the reason for its existence is the baptizing ministry of the Spirit, which places those who believe into this body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). This church is universal, including every believer in every place on earth and those who are in heaven (Heb. 12:23). Strictly speaking, the church is not invisible, for many of its members are quite visible. A better designation is the universal church.

D. -Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2

Here are groups of people very much localized—churches in houses. The nature of the people (at least in New Testament times) would have been those who professed to have accepted Christ as Savior. In some instances those who only professed but who did not possess salvation would have been associated with local churches (1 John 2:19; Rev. 3:20), but to be Christian churches, the people would have had to make a Christian profession.

What were the foci of these local churches? One was geographical. Another was that profession of faith in Christ. Another was the practice of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Another was the exercise of group responsibilities, like teaching.

III. THE NEW TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH

Customarily the concept of the church has focused on the universal and local church. Sometimes, erroneously, the categories are stated as invisible and visible. But even universal and local do not seem to cover all the facets of the concept. Universal serves well as a label for the body of Christ, whether on earth or in heaven (Heb. 12:23). But local needs further defining. How local is the local church?

As we have seen, sometimes local stands for a church in a house. This is as local a unit as is pictured in the New Testament. But the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:2) must have included several house churches. Yet it was "local" in that it was confined to the city of Corinth and did not include other churches in Greece such as the church in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 1:1).

Yet the singular "church" is used to designate several churches in a region (Acts 9:3). Here "the church" included groups throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria. When Paul persecuted the church in his preconversion days, he did not confine himself to one local church (1 Cor. 15:9). So the concept of the local church can include a group in a single house, the several groups in a city, or even the many groups in a region. Even with these categories 1 Corinthians 10:32 may not fit any of them. Giving no offense to the church of God must relate to visible groups, yet not all of them even in a region. It must concern any aspect of the visible church one comes in contact with.

Apparently we need more than the customary twofold categorization of the church—universal and local. (1) There is the universal church—all believers in heaven or on earth. (2) There is the visible church—local churches in various areas, especially those I am acquainted with. (3) There is the local church—the particular assembly with which I have my primary and sustained relation. Every believer actually belongs to all these three aspects of the church, and 1 Corinthians 10:32 applies to any of them with which he has contact at any time.

IV. OTHER CONCEPTS OF THE CHURCH

A. The Roman Catholic Concept

The Roman Catholic concept of the church is that “it is a divinely constituted society consisting of members from every race and nation, all holding one faith, all using the same sacraments as means of holiness and salvation, and all governed benignly by the successor of St. Peter, the Vicar of Christ, the pope . . .”¹

B. The Anglican Concept

The Anglican concept states that “the visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ’s ordinance. . . .”² The Anglican Church is, of course, under the temporal headship of the King or Queen of England.

C. The Reformed Concept

The Westminster Confession of Faith states: “The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect. . . . The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the Gospel, consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children . . .” (chap. XXV).

D. The Baptist Concept

The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1646 says that “the church is a company of visible saints, called and separated from the world by the Word and Spirit of God, to the visible profession of the faith of the Gospel; being baptized into that faith” (Article XXXIII). Some contemporary Baptists acknowledge the reality of the universal church and some do not.

NOTES

1. C. B. Pallen, “Catholic Church,” in *The New Catholic Dictionary* (New York: The Universal Knowledge Foundation, 1929), 180–81.
2. Article XIX of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England.

Chapter 70: The Distinctiveness of the Church

The church stands unique in the purposes of God. Although God has related Himself to other groups, His activity with the church remains distinct. “I will build My church,” the Lord said, and that is His special work today. Those words of Christ indicate specific distinctions about the church: (a) it was a work future to His earthly life; (b) it was not the same as the kingdom about which He also taught; (c) it must have been something different from the theocracy of Israel. These distinctions, and others, we shall now examine.

I. THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO THE KINGDOM

Much confusion exists because of the failure to carefully define, distinguish, and compare the church and the kingdom. Based on Augustine’s City of God, the equation of the church and the kingdom resulted in the absolute authority of the church on earth. Postmillennialism builds the earthly kingdom on the growth and success of the church. The mistaken concept of theonomy sees the church’s mission as establishing the Old Testament Law of God in the kingdoms of the world today. Reformed theology, less frontal than theonomy, builds on the concept of the lordship of Christ over all the structures of the world and sees the church as a principal agent in accomplishing this. What is the relation between the church and the kingdom?

A. *The Meaning of the Kingdom*

The dictionary defines kingdom as a politically organized community. It therefore involves ruler(s), ruled, and realm. To define a particular kingdom, one needs to ask several questions: Who is the ruler? Who are the ruled? When and where is the kingdom? The various kingdoms of Scripture can and need to be distinguished by asking such questions.

B. *The Various Concepts of Kingdom*

1. *The universal kingdom.* The Scriptures reveal God as Ruler of the whole world (1 Chron. 29:11; Ps. 145:13). As such He exercises jurisdiction over the nations of the world, appointing rulers of His choosing and judging the world (Ps. 96:13; Dan. 2:37). In Jewish thought this concept of the kingdom began with Adam, was disfigured when sin entered, yet continued on until Abraham, who recalled people to the kingdom with only partial success (witness the rebellion of Sodom and Gomorrah). However, when Israel accepted the Mosaic Law, this kingdom was reestablished, though rebellion erupted almost immediately (with the golden calf) and repeatedly throughout Israel’s history. Only the godly remnant revived the kingdom. Only Messiah would bring the full realization of this kingdom.

Christian theology acknowledges this concept of a universal kingdom (though usually including angels in it, which Judaism did not). God is Ruler of the nations (Rev. 15:3), and ultimately they will answer to Him when He judges them (Ps. 110:6).

In summary, in the universal kingdom God is the Ruler; He rules over all; and He does it in all time and eternity.

2. *The Davidic/messianic kingdom.* Both Judaism and premillennial Christian theology give a major place to this concept of kingdom. It is Davidic in that the promises concerning the kingdom were made in the great covenant with David (2 Sam. 7:12–16). It is messianic since Messiah will be the Ruler. It will be realized at the second advent of Christ when He will establish His kingdom and fulfill those promises made to David. (See further discussion under eschatology, beginning with chapter 77.)

In summary, in the Davidic messianic kingdom Christ is the Ruler; He will rule over the earth and its inhabitants during the one thousand years that follow His second coming.

3. *The mystery form of the kingdom.* In Matthew 13 Christ revealed mysteries concerning the concept of the kingdom (Matt. 13:11). In accord with the meaning of “mystery,” this means He told the disciples some things about the kingdom that were previously unknown. This idea of the kingdom, then, began when the Lord was teaching and will end at His second advent (Matt. 13:39–40). In other words, it is the concept of kingdom used to encompass the period between the two advents of Christ. The Ruler is God. The ruled are people on the earth who have related themselves in a positive, neutral, or negative way to “Christendom” (including true believers, professing people, rejecters, and even opponents). The time is the period between His comings.

4. *The spiritual kingdom.* Spiritual may not be the best label,¹ but nothing seems better to characterize this concept of kingdom. It refers to the kingdom into which all believers have been placed (Col. 1:13), and it is entered by the new birth. The Ruler is Christ; in this concept of the kingdom He rules over believers only; and the relationship exists now.

C. The Relationship of the Church to These Kingdoms

1. *To the universal kingdom.* In the sense that the church is in the world it is part of God’s universal kingdom. He designed it, brought it into being, and rules over it, as He does all aspects of His universe.

2. *To the Davidic/messianic kingdom.* The church is not a part of this kingdom at all. When this kingdom is established the church will have been resurrected and will reign with Christ over the millennial kingdom.

3. *To the mystery form of the kingdom.* Since the church is part of Christendom, she is part of this concept of the kingdom.

4. *To the spiritual kingdom.* The true church, the body of Christ, is equivalent to this concept of the kingdom.

If one were to try to summarize the relationship of the church to the kingdom, he would have to say that it is related but not equivalent to certain concepts of the kingdom; it is unrelated to another concept; and it is equivalent to another. The concept of the kingdom must be defined before one can determine the relationship of the church to it.

II. THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO ISRAEL

The church stands distinct from Israel and did not begin until the Day of Pentecost, and thus did not exist in the Old Testament period.

The distinction between Israel and the church is verified by several facts. (1) In the New Testament natural Israel and Gentiles are contrasted after the church was clearly established (Acts 3:12; 4:8, 10; 5:21, 31, 35; 21:19). (2) Natural Israel and the church are clearly distinguished, showing that the church is not Israel (1 Cor. 10:32). The apostle’s distinction would be meaningless if Israel were the same as the church. (3) Galatians 6:16 provides no clear proof that the church is equated with Israel. Only if the kai is explicative would the phrase equate the Israel of God with the New Creation, the church. But the kai may be emphatic, emphasizing an especially important part (Jewish believers) in the benediction on the whole church (as the kai is in Mark 16:7 and Acts 1:14). Or it may simply connect Jewish Christians to the New Creation. The thrust of the book of Galatians argues against the explicative use (the only one that would identify the church as Israel). Since Paul had severely attacked the Jewish legalists, it would be expected that he would single out for special blessing those Jewish people who had forsaken legalism and truly followed Christ.

III. THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO THIS AGE

The church did not exist in Old Testament times but was constituted on the Day of Pentecost. It is distinct to this present time period. Four lines of evidence support this conclusion.

(1) Our Lord said: “I will build My church” (Matt. 16:18). He did not say that He would continue to add to something already in existence, but that He would do something not yet begun.

(2) The church could have no functioning Head until after the resurrection of Christ; therefore, it could not exist until some time after He rose from the dead (Eph. 1:20).

(3) The church could not have been an operating entity with functioning spiritual gifts until after Christ’s ascension (Eph. 4:7–12).

(4) The mystery character of the one body was unknown in Old Testament times (Eph. 3:5–6; Col. 1:26). In classical Greek, *musteion* means something hidden or secret. It designated the sacred rites of the Greek mystery religions, secrets that only the initiated shared. In the Dead Sea Scrolls the relevant words indicate not so much something unknown but wisdom far above finite understanding. In the Old Testament the equivalent word occurs only in Daniel 2:18–19, 27–30, 47; 4:9. Thus the concept of a mystery is that of a secret that only the initiated share. It also includes two ideas: (a) a time when the secret was not known followed by a time when it became known and (b) deeper or higher wisdom that is revealed to those initiated.

What is the content of the mystery in these passages? It is that Gentiles would be fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, fellow partakers of the promise in Christ by the Gospel. That Gentiles would share in God’s plan of redemption was revealed in the Old Testament (Gen. 12:3; Isa. 42:6–7), so that truth is no mystery. But that there would be a joint body in which Jews and Gentiles would share was not revealed in the Old Testament. A concordance examination of the use of the word “body” will reveal quickly and conclusively that the idea of the body of Christ or of any body into which the redeemed were placed is nowhere found in the Old Testament. The first time Paul used the word “body” meaning the body of Christ was in his extended discussion of that concept in 1 Corinthians 12:12–25. The next occurrence was in Romans 12:4–5, and all the other uses appear in Ephesians and Colossians. In Ephesians 2:15 a synonym for that one body (Ephesians 2:16) is “new man.” Clearly, this mystery was unknown in the Old Testament, and because the body is the new man it is not a continuation or remaking of Israel.

Though there is a continuity between the redeemed of all ages (simply because they are redeemed and their common destiny is heaven), there is a discontinuity because redeemed today are placed in the body of Christ and not in some sort of Israel. Similarly the redeemed before Abraham’s day (like Enoch and Noah) did not belong to Israel, yet they belonged to the family of God. So there are pre-Israel redeemed (pre-Abrahamic saints) and post-Israel saints (Christians in the body of Christ).

But does not the “as” in Ephesians 3:5 merely mean that this mystery of one body was only comparatively unknown in the Old Testament? Observe that no such idea of “lesser known/better known” exists in the parallel passage in Colossians 1:26, where the contrast is clearly unknown/known. To bring these two passages into harmony, the “as” in Ephesians 3:5 must not be comparative. Of course, *as* can have other meanings. It may introduce a clause that adds additional information (as clearly in Acts 2:15—the disciples were not simply less drunk than the crowd thought). Or with a negative preceding it the word may mean “but” (as in 1 Cor. 7:31). In other words, the new body was not known in other ages, but is now revealed. And since the church is the body of Christ, and since that body was not revealed and operative until the New Testament era, the church is distinct to this age.

IV. THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO JESUS CHRIST

During His earthly ministry our Lord announced that He would do a new thing in building His church (Matt. 16:18). “I will build” is clearly future tense, indicating that this was something Christ had not yet done up to that time. Actually the church did not begin as a functioning reality until the Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost. What then was the Lord’s relationship to the church since during His earthly life it was not yet in operation?

In one word, He was the Founder. It is His church (Matt. 16:18). He is the Foundation (1 Cor. 3:11). (1) As Founder He chose the disciples who would also occupy a place in the foundation of the building (Eph. 2:20). (2) As Founder He taught the disciples about matters that would become effective when the church began to function. Most of that teaching is recorded in the Upper Room Discourse (John 13–17). Some of Christ’s teachings related to the Mosaic Law under which He lived, some to the future millennial kingdom, and some to the future church. The Upper Room Discourse serves as a seed-plot of that which is found later in the epistles of the New Testament. Some of the new things He revealed include a new command (John 13:34), a new hope in the Rapture of the church (John 14:1–3), a new relationship (you in Me and I in you, John 14:20), and a new basis for prayer (John 16:24).

(3) The Founder also became the Cornerstone by His death and resurrection (Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20). He purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). His resurrection and ascension made Him the Head over the church (Eph. 1:20–23) in which capacity He, among other things, gives gifts to the members of His body (Eph. 4:8).

(4) As Founder He also was the One who sent the Holy Spirit, who activated the church into a functioning entity (Acts 2:33).

What is the Rock on which the church is built? (Matt. 16:18). Some understand it to refer to Peter. If so, Christ was playing on the words *petros* (Peter) and *petra* (rock). The first word is masculine and means a stone, whereas the second is feminine and means a massive rock. Because of these differences in words and genders, it seems unlikely that the reference is to Peter. Sometimes one suspects that some are afraid that such an interpretation will lend support to the claim of the Roman Catholic church that Peter is the rock on which the church is built (as the Latin inscription around the base of the dome of St. Peter’s church in Rome indicates, since in Latin the different words and genders do not show up). However, the apostles do constitute the foundation of the church (Eph. 2:20), though Peter, as prominent as he was, certainly had no papal primacy (Acts 2:14; 10:34; Gal. 2:11).

Others understand Christ to be the Rock referred to in this passage as He is in other Scriptures (1 Cor. 3:11; 1 Pet. 2:5–9). However, this seems to create a disjuncture between the two rocks contrary to their close connection in the text itself. A modification of this view sees the rock as Peter’s confession of Christ (Matt. 16:16).

Perhaps the truth combines elements of both ideas; that is, the rock is Peter using the keys to the kingdom (Matt. 16:19; Isa. 22:22) in proclaiming the truth about Christ to Jews and Gentiles.

Thus Christ is the Founder of His church in that He chose the apostolic foundation, gave basic teaching concerning relationships in the church, gave His life to become the Cornerstone, and then sent the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost to activate the church.

V. THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

Pentecost marks the beginning of the church as a functioning body by the outpouring of the Spirit on that day. Before His ascension the Lord promised that the disciples would be baptized with the Holy Spirit soon (Acts 1:5). Though the word “baptism” does not appear in the account of Pentecost in chapter 2, it is quite clear from Acts 11:15–16 that the baptism occurred for the first

time on that day. Since, according to Paul (1 Cor. 12:13), Spirit baptism places people in the body of Christ, and since the body of Christ is the church (Eph. 1:22–23), the church, the body, began when those first individuals were baptized at Pentecost.

Several other things occurred on the Day of Pentecost. The disciples were filled with the Spirit (Acts 2:4). Three thousand were baptized with water (Acts 2:41). The visible church began that day (Acts 2:42–47).

In addition to baptizing those who believe into the body, the Spirit also indwells individual Christians (1 Cor. 6:19), local churches (1 Cor. 3:16), and the body of Christ (Eph. 2:22). The Spirit also empowers, leads, comforts, and gives gifts to the church (Acts 1:8; 9:31; 1 Cor. 12:4). In a very real sense, the Spirit is the energizing life and power of the church.

NOTE

1. I take the term from J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 2:346.

Chapter 71: Principles and/or Pattern?

Before considering the biblical teaching concerning organization, order, and ordinances for local churches, a basic question should be raised. Does the New Testament give principles for these areas to be followed generally, but to be adapted to various cultures and times; or does it expect the pattern practiced in New Testament times to be followed today in all cultures? For example, does the New Testament teach principles of church government that can be adapted in a variety of ways, or does it also prescribe the particular pattern which must be followed? Many would say that flexibility in this area is permitted. The church must have leaders, but it makes little difference whether they are called elders or deacons or whether a group has both. One might even call them stewards and still follow the New Testament principle of leadership.

Or take another example. The New Testament teaches the principle of believers gathering together. But in New Testament times they gathered in homes. Are we today allowed the flexibility of building church buildings, or should we follow the pattern of meeting in homes? Most would allow for flexibility in this case.

Or another example: The principle in water baptism (whatever mode is used) is to show leaving the old life and entering into the new. Is there any way that principle can be followed without using the pattern of actual baptism? Almost all would say no. But why not erect a little closet on the church platform, have the candidate enter it in old clothes, change his clothes inside the closet, and then emerge in new clothes? Would that not illustrate the same truth as baptism does? And is it not a scriptural illustration? (Col. 3:9–12). In church government we allow some flexibility between principle and pattern. In using church buildings we permit complete flexibility between principle and pattern. In water baptism we insist on no flexibility between principle and pattern. Whatever be a person's or group's theoretical views on this question, I doubt that anyone is totally consistent in practice.

Arguments for flexibility are mostly historical and analogical. Historically, it is pointed out that since the early church was influenced by its culture and adopted its forms from that culture, we can do the same today. To be sure, elders came from the synagogue organization (though Gentile communities also had them). Whether the idea of deacons was taken over from the synagogue is much less clear. Baptism was practiced as one of the requirements for proselytes to Judaism and in the mystery religions. The Lord's Supper was new to the church, though it grew out of the Passover feast. Instruction in the Jewish synagogue and instruction in the Christian church were similar. Excommunication was practiced by both groups. Unquestionably many practices that the church used had their antecedents in Judaism. This is to be expected. But the question still remains: When the church took over these practices, did they become divinely sanctioned (to be followed today) or simply divinely exemplified (not necessarily to be followed today in every detail)? The historical argument really does not settle the matter.

Analogies are often drawn to support flexibility between principles and patterns. For example, the Gospel is an inviolable principle, but there are many patterns to follow in presenting it. Salvation is an absolute; but conversion experiences vary. Therefore, it is argued, though the church is an absolute, its forms and functions are variable. But because it is not exegetical the argument is weak.

Those who feel that church practices should conform closely to the principles and patterns of the New Testament point out that the Scriptures claim to be sufficient for every good work, including the work of the local church (2 Tim. 3:16–17). Specifically, Paul wrote 1 Timothy with all its details about church life and government so that Timothy might know how to conduct himself in the house of God and how to instruct others in those same specifics (2 Tim. 3:15). And in the same epistle, cultural conditioning of truth is specifically ruled out (2 Tim. 2:11–14).

Furthermore, Paul expected the churches to follow the “traditions,” which included both principles and practices (1 Cor. 11).

Can this matter be settled? Probably not conclusively (and no one is entirely consistent). But to conclude, much flexibility seems to ignore the detailed patterns that are revealed in the New Testament. It is one thing to acknowledge a difference of interpretation about some detail, but it is quite another to say it is unimportant. My own feeling is that we should attempt to follow as many details as possible of the patterns for church life as they are revealed in the New Testament. Otherwise, there is no satisfactory answer to the question of why the patterns are there. And since they are there, I want to use them today.

Chapter 72: Types of Church Government

What constitutes a local church? Does a church exist wherever and whenever two or three believers are gathered in the name of Christ? If so, then every Christian home would also be a Christian church. How much organization is necessary to have a local church? Some say the less the better, while others opt for a developed organization.

The New Testament does not contain a formal definition of a local church. However, it does describe the normal features of a local assembly. On the basis of these features we can formulate a definition of a local church. It is an assembly of professing believers in Christ who have been baptized and who are organized to carry out God's will. Notice the important facets of that definition. (1) Those who do not make a profession of faith are excluded. The profession may not be genuine, but it must be made. (2) Without debating the mode of baptism, it is clear that the New Testament knows nothing of unbaptized church members. (3) A church always has some kind of organization, and in the New Testament organization was instituted as soon as possible (Acts 14:23). (4) A church exists for a purpose—to do God's will. This includes a number of things: observing the ordinances, evangelizing, building up believers, worship, giving, ministering to all age groups, etc. A specialized ministry to a particular age group cannot be a church even though it may have features and activities similar to a church. Because it does not open its doors to all professing believers, it is not a church.

Though the definition may seem to some to be too rigid, notice that there is latitude in it. The mode of baptism may be debated, but the fact of baptism for church members cannot (if the New Testament example is followed). The specific type of organization may be unclear, but the fact of organization is not. Nothing is said about place of meeting, number of meetings, frequency of the ordinances, or structures for carrying out the ministry.

Because there has been and continues to be debate over the specifics of organization of the church, there exist different basic types of churches. But that the early church was organized is undebatable. At the very first (though not later), they numbered the group (Acts 2:41; 4:4). Soon they had to choose helpers for the apostles (Acts 6:1–7). Relief activities for the poor had to be organized early (Acts 4:32–37). Elders were recognized as leaders (Acts 11:30). On the return leg of the first missionary journey, Paul ordained elders in the newly established churches (Acts 14:23).

I. MINIMAL GOVERNMENT

A. *Characteristics of This View*

Generally those groups that endeavor to keep organization at a minimum are led by a small group of elders, emphasize the exercise of spiritual gifts by all members, downplay the concept of membership, and give prominence to the headship of Christ.

B. *Some Observations*

Such groups are obviously not without organization. For example, they practice church discipline more than some more highly organized groups, and that requires organized activity. They lean toward a federal system of government, though probably with even less congregational involvement in decision making. A single minister is usually not a part of the structure. We need not think of this type of government applying only to small groups; it can work well in large groups too. Some Quaker groups and the Plymouth Brethren favor minimal government.

II. NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

A. Characteristics of This View

A national church is a group of churches organized under the head of state or within the limits of the state. The implicit right of the state to be involved with and to exercise control in the churches exists within this organizational structure. How explicitly and extensively those rights may be exercised varies from state to state. The state may or may not allow the coexistence of free churches along with the national church. It may or may not convene councils or synods. It may or may not be involved in the exercise or ratification of discipline. It may or may not collect tithes and be involved in the support of individual churches. Whatever be the particulars of the relationship between the national church and the state, a formal relationship does exist, and that constitutes the basic characteristic of this form of church government. The Anglican Church in England and the Lutheran Church in Germany are national churches.

B. Some Relevant Scripture

Arguments for the separation of church and state are based on the following Scriptures. As recorded in Matthew 22:21, Christ distinguished the two spheres of responsibility (Caesar and God) and His followers' relationship to each. Other passages detail the Christian's responsibility to the state (Rom. 13:1–7; 1 Pet. 2:13–17; Titus 3:1). When a conflict arises between the two spheres in which the state seeks to contravene the law of God, there are biblical examples of civil disobedience (Dan. 3; 6; Acts 5:29). There is also at least one example of passive resistance (not illegal) to force the secular power to acknowledge an injustice (Acts 16:37).

State involvement is totally absent from all the instances of church discipline in the New Testament (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3:11–15). If a national church be the scriptural kind of organization, one would expect in Matthew 18:17 that the steps involved in trying to correct a problem would include as a final step taking the matter to the state authorities. However, the church is the last court to hear the matter in the New Testament.

Some difficult practical problems arise in the effort to keep church and state separate. Should churches accept tax exemptions? To what extent should churches use the legislative process to promote religious goals in society? Should the church advocate tax credit for tuition paid to Christian schools?

III. HIERARCHICAL GOVERNMENT

A. Some Examples

In a hierarchical system the ruling body of clergy is organized into orders or ranks, each of which is subordinate to the one above it. In the Methodist system the authority of the hierarchy is less absolute; in the Episcopal Church the hierarchy of authority is more pronounced; but in the Roman Catholic Church authority rests totally in the hierarchy, which is carried to its logical end in the person of the pope. The government of the Church of England combines both the hierarchical and national forms of government.

B. Alleged Support

Support for this concept is based on (a) the primacy of the apostles, especially Peter, and (b) an unbroken line of succession from the apostles to today. Although it is true that the apostles constituted the foundation on which the church was built (Eph. 2:20), and although it is also true that Peter was prominent though not primary (Gal. 2:11), the apostolate disappeared by the end of the first century and there has not been any kind of unbroken line of succession of bishops (the apostles' successors) to the present time.

Clearly the two offices of elders and deacons existed in New Testament times. But a third distinct office, that of bishops, is not seen in the New Testament, bishops and elders usually being considered as referring to the same office. The ascendancy of a single bishop over other officials began as early as the second century. But such transference of power from the apostles to the bishops is never enjoined or regulated in the New Testament. Actually, at the end of the first century, the *Didache*, a church manual, instructed each congregation to choose its own bishops and deacons (15.1), which is totally contrary to the concept of apostolic succession. To be sure, there is a legitimate facet to apostolic succession in that the doctrine of the apostles is what all succeeding generations should teach (2 Tim. 2:2), but that is a succession of doctrine, not of ordination.

IV. CONGREGATIONAL GOVERNMENT

A. Description

1. *Authority.* Basically the congregational form of government means that ultimate authority for governing the church rests in the members themselves.
2. *Autonomy.* Additionally, it also means that each individual church is an autonomous unit with no individual or organization above it, except Christ the Head.
3. *Responsibility.* Congregationalism does not imply that the entire congregation votes on every decision. Responsibility is delegated to officials and leaders, though, like other members, they have only one vote in the congregation.
4. *Fellowship.* Neither does it mean that churches are so autonomous that they have no fellowship with each other. Berkhof calls congregationalism a system of independency that denies the unity of the body of Christ,¹ but this is not so.

B. Support

1. *Local autonomy.* Though the apostles and their delegates did exercise authority over more than one local church, elders and deacons in New Testament times did not. Therefore, today, since apostles have passed off the scene, local churches are autonomous.
2. *Discipline.* The whole church was empowered to exercise discipline (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:4–5; 2 Cor. 2:6–7; 2 Thess. 3:14–15). Since the important matter of discipline was not committed to the leaders only but to the whole congregation, this supports the concept of congregational government.
3. *Leadership.* The whole church was involved in choosing leaders. Certain passages clearly support this (Acts 1:23, 26; 6:3, 5; 15:22, 30; 2 Cor. 8:19). Others, like Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5, seem to argue against congregational involvement in choosing. Acts 14:23 records the appointing of leaders on the return leg of the first missionary journey. The verb *cheirotoneo* does mean appoint, though congregationalists would prefer a more etymologically related understanding of the verb as indicating a choice by raising the hands; that is, a congregational vote. However, even congregationalist Baptist theologian A. H. Strong recognizes that the idea of a popular vote cannot be sustained by the verb. He negated the use of this verse, as well as Titus 1:5 (where Titus was instructed to appoint elders in every city), to support the federal type of government by stating that the verses “decide nothing as to the mode of choice, nor is a choice by the community thereby necessarily excluded.”² It might be better for the congregationalist simply to acknowledge these examples as apostolic and not instructive for us today.
4. *Ordinances.* Several passages commit the ordinances to the whole church, not simply to the leaders or to a hierarchy (Matt. 28:19–20; 1 Cor. 11:2, 20).

5. *Government.* The priesthood of all believers argues for a democratic, congregational concept of government (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).

C. An Appraisal of Congregationalism

1. *Authority.* That ultimate authority rests in the local church under Christ's headship does seem to be clearly taught in the New Testament. This does not preclude fellowship with other congregations, but it does not allow for organizational structure above the local church.

2. *Choosing leaders.* That the whole church was involved in many of the affairs of the congregation also seems clear. But it was not involved in everything. In some instances leaders were clearly appointed and not voted on by everyone. The choosing of the first nonapostolic helpers in Acts 6 exemplifies a gracious harmony between the apostles, who asked the congregation to choose and the congregation, which placed their choices before the apostles for ratification. We are not told what would have happened had the congregation chosen someone the apostles did not approve of. Presumably such a person would not have been allowed to serve (which means that the congregation was not the final authority).

3. *Restrictions.* Sometimes there seems to be a subtle but consequential blurring of the distinction between what all believers possess equally as members of the body of Christ and what all believers can do as far as ministry within that body is concerned. Because all believers are priests does not mean that all believers can function in the same offices. The qualifications for leadership do exclude some. To cite an analogy, though all adult United States citizens can vote, not all can be members of Congress (they must have reached a certain age) and not all can be president (the president must be a natural-born citizen). Although there is a democratic base, there are restrictions that eliminate some citizens from certain activities. So it seems equally true in the church, and congregationalism may consciously or unconsciously sublimate this.

4. *Plurality of leadership.* In practice, congregationalism is not fully congregational. The congregation does not make all the decisions. Leaders do take authority that is not always specifically given to them. The deacons often function like elders so that in effect there is a plurality of leadership. Actually some congregational and federal churches function very similarly. This is especially true when the federally governed church is autonomous. If it is part of a denomination, then it differs clearly from the autonomous congregational church.

V. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

A. Meaning

In relation to a governmental concept, the federal system means, according to the dictionary definition, that individual units "surrender their individual sovereignty to a central authority but retain limited residuary powers of government." In relation to church government, the federal pattern means that individual members give some of their powers to leaders, and in cases where there is also a denominational structure, it also means that individual churches give up aspects of their autonomy to a higher organizational structure. By contrast, the congregational pattern retains the authority in the hands of individual members and local, autonomous churches.

Among denominations, the Presbyterian and Reformed groups are structured along this line. But so also are a number of independent, Bible churches, except that their federalism is limited to the local church and does not involve any kind of organization that has power over a group of churches. In other words, federal-type denominations involve presbyteries, synods, and general assemblies; whereas federal-type local churches do not.

B. Support

1. *Leadership.* Unquestionably leaders occupy a prominent place in the picture of New Testament church government. Admittedly they seem to hold a position of responsibility that does not require them to be accountable in every matter to the members of the church. In Hebrews 13:17 members are enjoined to submit to leaders; thus the authority is given to leaders, not to members. To be sure, leadership is not dictatorship. It is leadership, and leadership to which membership is responsible.

2. *Appointment.* In some instances it is quite clear that leaders were appointed, not elected. This is the obvious meaning of Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5. A congregationalist might argue that, at least in Acts 14:23, this was a practice unique to the apostles. Conceivably Titus's commission to appoint leaders might also come under the apostolic umbrella. But, even if this be so, it does not follow that congregational vote was the New Testament method of choosing leaders. No specific verse indicates this, whereas specific verses do indicate appointment.

3. *Discipline.* Though the whole congregation was involved ultimately in discipline problems, leaders gave instructions as to what should be done (1 Cor. 5; 1 Tim. 5:20).

4. *Ordination.* Federalists point out that "ordination" was signified by the laying on of the hands of the elders (1 Tim. 4:14).

Congregationalists argue that the elders simply act on behalf of the entire congregation and that the authority for ordination lies with the congregation.

C. Observations

In practice many churches are a blend of congregationalism and federalism. Too much federalism often places too much authority in some organizational structure above local churches. If doctrinal defections come into a denomination, history teaches that it is difficult, if not impossible, for a local church to call the superstructure to account; and if the local church feels it necessary to leave the denomination it can often do so only at considerable cost and sometimes even the loss of all its property.

Too much congregationalism fails to profit from the gifts of leadership. It also allows immature and carnal believers to have equal say with others.

In this debate, some things are clear. The church and the Roman government were separate. There was no national church in New Testament times. The hierarchical church was a postbiblical development. The early church did have a governmental structure. Local churches, though they fellowshiped and cooperated with each other, were not organizationally linked together. The congregation was involved in some matters. Leaders did take the reins in other matters. The New Testament picture seems to include a blend of congregational and federal government, limited to the local level.

NOTES

1. L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941), 580.

2. A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Judson, 1907), 906.

Chapter 73: Qualified Leadership for the Church

I. THE NECESSITY OF LEADERSHIP

Whatever be a person's or organization's preferences concerning the classes of leadership, no one can deny that leadership was considered necessary in New Testament churches. Recall a few facts. (1) Early in the life of the churches, relief funds were sent from Antioch to the elders in the churches in Judea (Acts 11:29). (2) Paul appointed elders almost immediately in the churches founded on the first missionary journey (Acts 14:23). (3) The council at Jerusalem was called, conducted, and concluded by leaders (Acts 15). (4) Elders and deacons appear as part of the normal picture of the life of various churches (Acts 20:17; Phil. 1:1). (5) Paul seemed to consider leaders a necessity for the proper functioning of churches (Titus 1:5). (6) Leadership is one of the spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:8) that functions in local churches (Heb. 13:7, 17).

II. THE CLASSES OF LEADERSHIP

All agree that there existed at least two classes of leaders in New Testament churches—elders and deacons. Not all agree that both are necessary today. It has been argued, for example, that since Paul mentioned only elders in Titus 1 (though he wrote of both elders and deacons in 1 Tim. 3), deacons are optional in the organization of the church. Neither do all agree on the matter of a single versus several elders in each congregation (though probably all concur on plurality of deacons). In the Baptist-Congregational system, the single pastor of the church fills the office of elder, whereas in the Presbyterian-Federal system, the pastor serves as one of several elders.

A more basic question is whether or not there exists a third class of leaders—bishops. The word is used once of Christ (1 Pet. 2:25); otherwise it refers to human leaders of the churches. That bishops and elders referred to the same group seems clear for the following reasons. (1) Paul commissioned Titus to appoint elders in every city in Crete, and then described them immediately as bishops (Titus 1:5–7). (2) When Paul called the elders of the church of Ephesus to meet him at Miletus, he described their position as overseers (bishops) (Acts 20:17, 28). He also recognized that one of their functions was to shepherd or pastor the people (Acts 20:28). (3) When Paul listed qualifications for the bishop and deacons (1 Tim. 3:1–13), he did not mention elders (though we know from 1 Tim. 5:17 that the church had elders), strongly suggesting that bishops and elders referred to the same group. (4) In Philippians 1:1 Paul mentioned only bishops and deacons. Why would he omit elders if there were in fact three classes of leaders?

Some claim that bishops were a distinct third class of leaders because of James's prominence over the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) and because they say that Timothy and Titus served as bishops over the churches in Ephesus and Crete respectively. However, Ignatius (ca. A.D. 50–ca. 115) was the first to distinguish bishops from elders and deacons as three separate classes of officials (Ad Smyrna, vii). The necessity for bishops was related to the need to preserve the unity of the church, to the need to guarantee the continuance of the true apostolic faith, and later to the need to have a human channel to minister divine grace.¹

To sum up: the evidence points to only two classes of officers in the church, bishops-elders (or overseeing elders) and deacons.

III. DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN GIFTS AND OFFICES

Confusion often exists between the gifts God bestows in a Christian's life and the offices he may hold in the organization of the church. For example, pastor and pastorate are often equated rather than distinguished as they should be. Pastor is a spiritual gift, whereas pastorate (in our contemporary ecclesiology) is an office occupied by the principal leader of the church (particularly in the congregational system). Notice some important distinctions, however, between spiritual gifts and offices.

1. *Gift vs. office.* A person may have certain spiritual gifts but not occupy any office in the local church. In fact this is the case with the majority of believers. They have gifts (for all believers do) but are not officials in the church. However, those who do hold offices should also exercise certain spiritual gifts. Elders teach and rule, and deacons should exercise the gift of service (Rom. 12:7). Thus a gifted person may not occupy an office, but an officer must also be a gifted person.

2. *Men and women.* Gifts are given to both men and women, but the principal offices in the church are to be filled by men. The only gift not given to women was the gift of apostleship. But God gave the others to both men and women. Even the gift of pastor can be exercised by women if one understands correctly the gift as being the ability to shepherd. But this is not to say that a woman may occupy what is called today the pastorate. The principal offices in the New Testament churches were held by men. This is perfectly clear because both elders and deacons are expected to be “husbands of one wife.” No woman could meet that qualification!

3. *In and out of church.* Spiritual gifts may be exercised in and out of the local church. The offices relate only to the local church. The gift of evangelism, for example, can and should be exercised in and out of the church. Elders and deacons, on the other hand, function only with respect to their particular local assembly.

IV. ELDERS

A. Their Number

Considerable debate exists over the question of the number of elders each church had (in New Testament times) or should have (today). Those who hold to elder rule (the federal system) believe that each congregation had several elders; while congregationalists see only a single elder (the pastor) in each congregation. Both agree that each church had more than one deacon.

The fact that the early church met in homes (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15) makes it more difficult to settle this debate conclusively. Clearly the church in each city (that is, the sum total of the house churches in each city) had elders (Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5), but whether this also means that each house church had more than one elder is not certain. In other words, each house church might have had a single elder who, together with the other elders in other churches, constituted the elders of the church in that city.

Furthermore, the letters from the risen Lord to the churches in Asia Minor were sent to “the angel” of each church. If this refers to an angelic creature, then it has no relevance to the question. But if “angel” designates the human leader of each church, then obviously there was only one, which reinforces the view that each church did not have several elders.

Another intriguing argument for a single elder in each congregation is found in 1 Timothy 3. When Paul described the qualifications for the bishop, he did so consistently in the singular (1 Timothy 3:1–7). But when he listed the qualifications for deacons, he switched to the plural (1 Timothy 3:8–13). Does this indicate that there was one elder and several deacons in each church?

Or perhaps each church had at least one elder and often more than one. The one was a “ruling elder” (1 Tim. 5:17) who because of his place of prominence was the elder of the church (even though the church may have had other elders as well). Some would not even give consideration to this idea lest it would seem to support the concept of a single bishop ruling over elders. However, the very fact that that is exactly what developed in later centuries may mean that there was a ruling elder in each assembly in the first century.

B. Their Ministry

If elder and bishop refer to the same person, then the principal ministry of the elders consists of overseeing the work of the church in all its aspects. Elders are not responsible only for the

spiritual welfare of the church while deacons care for the financial matters, as is sometimes thought. Elders have the oversight of all facets of the work. Notice that the famine offering in the early church was sent to the elders in Jerusalem for distribution (Acts 11:30). Thus the basic organizational chart for a church is not like this:

| | |
|---------------|----------------|
| Elders | Deacons |
| (Spiritual) | (Financial) |

But like this:

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Elders | Deacons |
| (All aspects) | (Whatever is delegate to them by the elders) |

1. General oversight involves ruling. This means presiding (1 Tim. 5:17) and leading (Heb. 13:17), not as lord and dictator, but nevertheless with control and authority (1 Pet. 5:3; Heb. 13:17). A presiding officer, for example, does not even have a vote, except in case of a tie, but he does have control (over the agenda, length of discussions, whom to recognize, etc.). Desirably this aspect of the elder’s ministry would involve the spiritual gift of government (1 Cor. 12:28—the different word used here has the basic idea of steering, as in Acts 27:11). Thus an elder leads, guides, rules, steers his flock, piloting it skillfully through the treacherous waters of this world.

2. General oversight also includes guarding the truth. (Titus 1:9). This means both the positive proclamation and explanation of doctrine as well as its defense against false teaching. This is why elders must be able to teach (1 Tim. 3:2). Certainly no one should ever be chosen an elder unless he knows well the doctrines of our faith and is able to explain and defend them accurately.

C. Their Qualifications

1. In relation to personal character. Two passages list qualifications for elders, 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9, the largest number being related to his personal character. In 1 Timothy 3:2–4 and Titus 1:7, thirteen items are listed.

a. An elder must be blameless. That is, of such character that no accusation can be brought against him.

b. He must be the husband of one wife. Does this mean he must be married? Those who say no point out that if Paul meant that an elder must be married he would have written “husband of a wife.” On the other hand, those who believe that an elder must be married observe that an elder is always described not only as having a wife but also children. Further, all these qualifications are headed by the word “must.” What about Paul? Several observations are in order: he is never said to be an elder; he was clearly unmarried (either never married or a widower) when he wrote 1 Corinthians 7:8; and it is difficult to prove he was married on the grounds that he was a member of the Sanhedrin, since Acts 26:10 does not necessarily indicate membership, and it is uncertain if marriage was a requirement for membership before A.D. 70.

Does this mean an elder cannot be remarried after a divorce? Some argue that if a divorce is justified, then remarriage is permitted, and thus a divorced and remarried elder may serve. In other words, “husband of one wife” means one wife at a time.² However, the same phrase exactly reversed (“wife of one man”) occurs in 1 Timothy 5:9 where it precludes an enrolled widow

having had a second husband.³ To conclude that a man remarried after a divorce cannot serve as an elder does not necessarily also mean that a divorced but not remarried man may not serve. That would involve the question of whether or not he was above reproach in what was involved in the divorce. Clearly this is not a prohibition against bigamy or polygamy since these were not practiced among the Greeks and Romans. They had multiple women in their lives, but only one wife. It is a question of whether Paul was prohibiting digamy (being married twice legally). Personally I see the evidence as prohibiting digamy for an elder.

Does the phrase mean that a widower who remarries cannot serve as an elder? Paul did permit (1 Cor. 7:39–40) and encourage (1 Tim. 5:14) the remarriage of widows (and presumably widowers). But some conclude nevertheless that remarried widowers cannot serve as elders. This may have been a matter of stricter discipline for elders as an example to others.⁴

- c. He must be temperate. The word originally meant wineless.
- d. He must be of sound and sober mind; that is, sensible.
- e. He must be orderly (from the word *kosmos*).
- f. He must be hospitable.
- g. He must be able and willing to teach (in order to instruct others and refute error [Titus 1:9]).
- h. He must not be given to wine.
- i. He must not be given to physical violence.
- j. He must be forbearing, not determined to have his just due.
- k. He must not be contentious.
- l. He must be free from the love of money. This certainly includes misusing his position for personal gain.
- m. He must not be self-willed (Titus 1:7).

2. *In relation to family life.* The smaller, intimate circle of the home serves as the proving ground for an elder's ability to guide the church. Therefore, he must (the "must" of 1 Tim. 3:2 still governs this requirement as well) rule (lit., preside) over his family well so that his children are in a dignified subjection. Must his children be born again? The words in Titus 1:6, "who believe," might indicate that, or it may mean that they must be faithful to the family, though not necessarily born again. This qualification assumes that an elder will not only be married but also have children of sufficient age to show their voluntary allegiance to the family. Of course the very word "elder" signifies an older man.

3. *In relation to spiritual maturity.* An elder must not be a new convert lest he be lifted up in a cloudbank of conceit and that pride cause his downfall, as it did Satan's.

4. *In relation to community life.* His testimony in the community must also be good.

Obviously a man might not exhibit all of these characteristics all of his natural life, for he might have been converted from a rough background. But he certainly needs to demonstrate these qualifications when he serves as an elder. What he was before salvation need not limit his qualifying as an elder with one possible exception. By the interpretation that husband of one wife means married only once; then, of course, this is not something that can be changed by conversion. By this interpretation, then, if a man were married twice before or after he was saved, he would not meet the requirements for the eldership.

D. Their Selection

1. How are elders chosen? The term “elder” was used in Israel and in other nations to designate leaders. The Jewish synagogue had elders who were responsible for the government of the Jewish community. The Jerusalem Council apparently took over the concept of elders from the synagogue. As new churches were started, the apostles appointed elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). How they were chosen thereafter, the Scripture does not say. How they will be chosen today will probably be determined by the type of church government the congregation has. In the hierarchical arrangement, they will be appointed. In the federal setup, they will likely be chosen by the existing elders. In the congregational system, they will be elected by the congregation. Many churches use a combination of methods; e.g., the elders nominate and the congregation votes or ratifies.

2. How long should they serve? Again the New Testament is silent on this question. Certainly an elder should not continue to serve if for any reason he becomes disqualified.

3. Should they be ordained? The apostles laid their hands on the first helpers who were chosen in Acts 6:6. The church laid hands on Paul and Barnabas when they sent them on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:3). Elders laid their hands on Timothy (1 Tim. 4:14). Titus appointed elders in Crete (Titus 1:5). Paul warned against laying on hands hastily (1 Tim. 5:22). If this was a kind of ordination, it indicated public recognition, attestation of calling and ability, and association of the congregation with the ministry of the one or ones being ordained. Laying on of hands seemed to be the visible symbol of “ordination.” That rite has its roots in the Old Testament where it had the ideas of (a) setting apart for office (Num. 27:23); (b) blessing (Gen. 48:14); (c) dedicating to God (Lev. 1:4); and (4) transfer and participation in the action (Lev. 1:4, the verb means to lean on).

Ordination in the New Testament was not appointment to an office, but a recognition of approval and support. Notice too that a continuing relationship existed between those who ordain and the one ordained (1 Tim. 5:22). That is why it should not be done hastily. If practiced today, it does not have to be restricted to “pastors.” Elders may be ordained, deacons also, and even missionaries, according to the New Testament example.

V. DEACONS

A. Their Number

No disagreement exists over the number of deacons in an assembly. There were several. The first clear reference to an official group of deacons occurs in Philippians 1:1, where they are plural in number (as are the bishops or elders, thus not necessarily proving that there were several deacons in each congregation any more than there were several elders in each congregation). The same is true in 1 Timothy 3:8–13. Here several deacons are associated with the single elder, stronger evidence that there were several deacons in each church.

B. Their Ministry

The word means to serve and it is used most often in an unofficial sense, both before and after the office of deacon becomes clear in the New Testament (Col. 1:7; 1 Tim. 4:6). “Deaconing” was ministry in general, both officially and unofficially. What official deacons did specifically remains unclear in the New Testament. Some use Acts 6 as an indication that deacons should be involved in distributing alms. But whether the seven men chosen at that time were in fact official deacons is far from clear. Probably it would be more accurate to call them the first nonapostolic helpers. The fact that deacons were not to be double-tongued and that their wives were not to be slanderers (1 Tim. 3:8, 11) may indicate that they had some kind of personal, one-on-one,

counseling ministry with individuals in the congregation, making it especially necessary that they not break confidences learned in the course of that ministry.

In Greek writings “deacon” described a waiter, a messenger, a steward, and a servant. These uses may reinforce the concept that official deacons in the church did whatever kinds of service the elders delegated to them.

C. Their Qualifications (1 Tim. 3:8–10, 12–13)

1. *Personal.* (1 Tim. 3:8). Deacons should be (a) grave, dignified, serious, (b) not double-tongued (saying one thing to one person and another to another), (c) those who do not care for or pay attention to wine, and (d) those who are not greedy.

2. *Doctrinal.* (1 Tim. 3:9). Deacons should hold to the objective body of Christian truth (“the faith”) with a clean conscience, that is, with a life that is consistent with what they believe.

3. *Spiritual.* (1 Tim. 3:10). Deacons are to be tested and approved and without reproach.

4. *Family.* (1 Tim. 3:12). Like elders, deacons are to be husbands of one wife whose families are presided over well.

D. Their Selection

Nothing clear and definite is said about choosing deacons or their term of office. The congregation was deeply involved in choosing the helpers of Acts 6.

VI. DEACONESSES

A. An Office or a Ministry?

Two passages relate to this question: Romans 16:1–2, where Phoebe is designated as a servant (lit. “deacon”) and “helper” of the church at Cenchrea; and 1 Timothy 3:11, where *gunaikas* may refer to a distinct group of women leaders or simply to the wives of the deacons. Unquestionably women performed a ministry in the early church, but it is not clear whether some of them were considered as occupying the office of deaconess.

In favor of the office are the following considerations. (1) “Helper” in Romans 16:2 is used outside the New Testament of an official in a religious society. However, this is true only of the masculine form, not the feminine form, which is what is used in verse 2. (2) In 1 Timothy 3:11, “likewise” introduces the women as it does the deacons in verse 8, possibly indicating a distinct office for these women.

Against seeing an office of deaconess are the following considerations. (1) A Greek word for deaconess does exist, but this is not used in the New Testament. (2) Although Phoebe was called a “helper” and although this title was used of an officeholder, there is no known example of its use with respect to a woman (unless Phoebe be the exception). (3) If verse 11 introduces a new office (that of deaconess), then why did not Paul finish listing the qualifications for deacons before introducing it? Instead, he continues with the list of qualifications for deacons in verses 12–13. This may indicate that he was referring to the deacons’ wives in verse 11, rather than to a separate office in the church. Some liberals, feeling the force of this point, argue that verse 11 is out of order in the text and should follow verse 13.

In A.D. 112 Pliny, the Roman governor of Bithynia, wrote to Trajan and mentioned two Christian female *ministrae*. But that these were official deaconesses is far from clear, especially since no deaconesses are mentioned by that specific word (*diakonissa*) in any literature until the third-century writing called the *Didascalia*. Here deaconesses appear as a well-recognized and established order of helpers who were either to be virgins or once-married widows.⁵

B. Their Qualifications

The only biblical list of qualifications would be in verse 11 if indeed that verse refers to deaconesses. The nonbiblical list appears in the *Didascalia* where they are to be virgins or once-married widows, faithful and honorable.

C. Their Ministry

The *Didascalia* lists their duties as assisting in the baptism of women, visiting the sick, ministering to the needy and to those recovering from illness (III.16.12).

VII. TRUSTEES

Trustees are, of course, a nonbiblical, but contemporary (and not antibiblical) necessity in some societies. They hold the property in the name of the group to prevent legal complications when someone dies. If property were held in individual names, then it would not belong to the group, but the individual's portion would pass to his heirs (who might be unbelievers) upon his death. Having trustees prevents such complications.

NOTES

1. See Edwin Hatch, *The Organization of the Early Christian Churches* (London: Rivingtons, 1881), 83–112.
2. A. T. Robertson says, without elaboration or proof, that this is the meaning “clearly” in *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (New York: Harper, 1931), 4:573.
3. On this verse Robertson inconsistently concludes that “widows on this list must not be married a second time,” *Word Pictures*, 4:585.
4. Alan G. Nute, *A New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), 510.
5. For added documentation see Charles Ryrie, *The Role of Women in the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1979), 85–91, 102–3, 131–36.

Chapter 74: Ordinances for the Church

I. THE CONCEPT OF AN ORDINANCE

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are generally referred to as ordinances today, though some groups prefer to call them sacraments. The word "sacrament" means to make sacred, to dedicate to a god or to sacred use. The Latin word was used in the Vulgate to translate the Greek *mysterion*, which gave it the idea of something mysterious or magical. Thus groups that prefer to call these rites of the church sacraments usually connect with them some mysterious power or actual conveying of grace. The Council of Trent defined a sacrament as "something presented to the sense, which has the power, by divine institution, not only of signifying, but also of efficiently conveying grace."

By contrast, "ordinance" (though a synonym of sacrament in the dictionary) does not incorporate the idea of conveying grace but only the idea of a symbol. Thus the ordinance itself has no inherent power to change those observing it, though God may use it to minister to them.

II. THE NUMBER OF ORDINANCES

Many (like Thiessen) restrict the ordinances to those ordered by Christ to be administered in the church. By this kind of definition baptism and the Lord's Supper are clearly ordinances, though foot-washing might also be.

If an ordinance may be more broadly conceived (yet within the parameters of being God-ordained and related to the church), then marriage and the rite of praying for the sick in James 5 might also be considered ordinances. Marriage was God-ordained and symbolizes the important relationship between Christ and the church, and praying for the sick involves the church through its elders. All agree, however, that baptism and the Lord's Supper qualify as ordinances of the church.

III. THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM

A. *The Importance of Baptism*

The importance of baptism is underscored by the following considerations.

1. *Christ was baptized* (Matt. 3:16). Though the meaning of His baptism was entirely different from the significance of Christian baptism, nevertheless there exists a sense in which we follow the Lord when we are baptized. To be sure, we can never fully imitate a sinless Person; yet we are to follow His steps, and baptism was one of them (1 Pet. 2:21).

2. *The Lord approved of His disciples baptizing* (John 4:1–2).

3. *Christ commanded that people be baptized in this age* (Matt. 28:19). Clearly this command was not only for the apostles who heard it but for His followers throughout the entire age, since He promised His presence to the end of the age.

4. *The early church gave an important place to baptism* (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12–13, 36, 38; 9:18; 10:47–48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5). The early church never conceived of a believer remaining unbaptized.

5. *The New Testament used the ordinance to picture or symbolize important theological truths* (Rom. 6:1–10; Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:21).

6. *The writer to the Hebrews termed baptism a foundational truth* (Heb. 6:1–2). It is no more optional or less significant than the doctrines of repentance, resurrection, and judgment.

B. The Meaning of Baptism

Biblically, baptism is associated with forgiveness (Acts 2:38; 22:16), union with Christ (Rom. 6:1–10), making disciples (Matt. 28:19), and repentance (Acts 2:38). This is not to conclude that water baptism effects forgiveness, etc., but that it is closely connected with those things that begin the Christian life.

Theologically, baptism may be defined as an act of association or identification with someone, some group, some message, or some event. Baptism into the Greek mystery religions associated the initiates with that religion. Jewish proselyte baptism associated the proselyte with Judaism. John the Baptist's baptism associated His followers with His message of righteousness (he had no group for them to join). (Incidentally, John was apparently the first person ever to baptize other people—usually baptisms were self-administered.) For James and John to be baptized with Christ's baptism meant to be associated with His suffering (Mark 10:38–39). To be baptized with the Spirit associates one with the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13) and with the new life in Christ (Rom. 6:1–10). To be baptized into Moses involved identification with his leadership in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt (1 Cor. 10:2). To be baptized for the dead means to be identified with the Christian group and take the place of a believer who had died (1 Cor. 15:29). Christian baptism means identification with the message of the Gospel, the person of the Savior, and the group of believers. Some of the baptisms listed do not involve water. Also observe how impoverished we would be without a proper understanding of the meaning and ramifications of baptism.

C. The Subjects of Baptism

The question is: Should only believers be baptized or should infants of believing parents also be baptized? Arguments in favor of infant baptism include these.

1. *The circumcision argument.* Colossians 2:11–12 clearly links circumcision and baptism. Since infants were circumcised under the Old Covenant, they should be baptized under the New Covenant. The argument rests on the covenant theology concept of a single covenant of grace that involved an initiatory rite into that covenant, the rite being circumcision in the Old Testament and baptism in the New. These rites indicate membership in the covenant, not necessarily personal faith.¹

2. *The historical argument.* From early times the church practiced infant baptism; therefore it is permissible. The Fathers did support infant baptism, often relating it to circumcision, but the fact that the early church practiced or believed something does not in itself make it right. Some in the early church taught baptismal regeneration, which is heretical.

3. *The household argument.* Households were baptized in New Testament times. It would be likely that some infants at least were included in some of the households (see Acts 11:14; 16:15, 31, 33; 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:16). Some also cite the household promise of 1 Corinthians 7:14 as not only permitting but expecting the baptism of infants of a household where there is one believing parent.

The position against infant baptism and thus for believers' baptism points out (a) that the scriptural order is always believe and then be baptized (Matt. 3:2–6; 28:19; Acts 2:37–38; 16:14–15, 34); (b) that baptism is the initiatory rite into a believing community, the church; therefore it should only be done to believers. By contrast, circumcision initiated people (including infants) into a theocracy, which did have unbelievers in it. (c) The age of children is never mentioned in any passage that mentions household baptism. But it is said that all who were baptized in those households believed. This, then, would exclude infants from being included in the baptisms. (d) If 1 Corinthians 7:14 allows or requires the baptism of children in a household where there is a believing parent, then it would also allow or require the baptism of the unbelieving adult mate.

D. Rebaptism

There is only one clear example of people being baptized twice (Acts 19:1–5). These twelve men, who had been baptized by John the Baptist, were rebaptized by Paul after they believed the Christian message. This furnishes an example for counseling those who today were baptized either as unbelieving infants, adolescents, or adults and who then came to faith in Christ. It also serves as an argument against infant baptism, for why baptize an infant if later, after he personally receives Christ, he should be baptized again?

E. The Time of Baptism

The examples in the New Testament indicate that believers were baptized right after they believed. No probationary period is indicated, though such might be justified in order to attest to the genuineness of the faith.

F. The Mode of Baptism

1. The case for sprinkling. (1) Certain Old Testament rituals of cleansing involved sprinkling (Exod. 24:6–7; Lev. 14:7; Num. 19:4, 8), and these are classified as washings (lit. “baptisms”) in Heb. 9:10. (2) Sprinkling best pictures the cleansing of the Spirit as in Ezekiel 36:25. (3) *Baptizo* may have a secondary meaning of “bringing under the influence,” and sprinkling can readily picture this. (4) Immersion was improbable or impossible in certain instances (Acts 2:41, too many people; Acts 8:38, too little water in a desert place; Acts 16:33, too little water in a house). (5) The greater majority of the visible church practices nonimmersion.

2. The case for pouring (or affusion). (1) Pouring best pictures the ministry of the Spirit coming on and into the life of a believer (Joel 2:28–29; Acts 2:17–18). (2) The phrases “into the water” and “out of the water” may equally well be translated “to the water” and “away from the water.” In other words, the one to be baptized went to the water, perhaps even into the water, but not under the water. (3) Drawings in the catacombs show the candidate for baptism standing about waist deep in water while the one doing the baptizing pours water over his head from a vessel he holds.

3. The case for immersion. (1) Immersion is unquestionably the primary meaning of *baptizo*. The Greek language has words for sprinkle and pour that are never used of baptism. (2) Immersion best pictures the significance of baptism, which is death to the old life and resurrection to the new (Rom. 6:1–4). (3) Immersion could have been done in every case. Sufficient pools existed in Jerusalem to permit the immersion of three thousand converts on the Day of Pentecost. The road to Gaza was deserted, but not waterless. Houses often had pools outdoors where, for example, the Philippian jailer’s family could have been immersed. (4) Proselyte baptism was performed by self-immersion in a tank of water. This mode would naturally carry over to the Christian church. (5) Pouring, not sprinkling, was the first exception to immersion and was allowed in cases of sickness. This was called “clinical baptism.” Cyprian (ca. A.D. 248–258) was the first to approve of sprinkling. Even nonimmersionists acknowledged that immersion was the universal practice of the apostolic church (see Calvin Institutes IV.XV, 19).

An observation: It seems to me that those who wish to justify sprinkling proceed this way in their thinking. If you can show that any form of nonimmersion (like pouring) was practiced early then you can legitimately practice sprinkling, even though it evidently was not practiced in the apostolic church. In other words, if pouring can be a hole in the dike of universal immersion, then sprinkling can flood in also. However, if anything, the evidence only says that pouring (if it was practiced) was considered the same as immersion, but sprinkling was not considered valid as baptism.

G. Trine Immersion

Trine immersion is the immersion of the candidate three times (usually forward) to symbolize the association with the Trine God. The Didache states that if immersion is not possible then water was to be poured three times on the head (chap. 7). Notice that this early work does not say to immerse three times, only pour three times. Proponents of trine immersion point out that some lexicons say that baptizo means to dip repeatedly (but some do not). The evidence for this view is not strong.

IV. THE LORD'S SUPPER

A. Its Institution

Apparently the Lord instituted the Supper in connection with eating the Passover meal before His crucifixion even though this poses a chronological problem. Assuming a Friday crucifixion, John's Gospel seems to state that Passover was not celebrated until after Jesus' death and burial (John 18:28; 19:14). However, some think that the Galileans and/or the Pharisees ate the Passover on Thursday night, while the Judeans and/or the Sadducees celebrated on Friday night. (The imperfect tense, "were sacrificing," used in Mark 14:12 may indicate that priests offered the sacrifices both days.)

B. Its Order

The ordinance alone (without the meal) consisted of Christ taking unleavened bread, giving thanks, distributing it to the disciples, and doing the same with the cup.

During the early centuries the more extended service included a love feast, various prayers of thanksgiving and confession, reading and instruction from the Scriptures, the Supper itself, a collection for orphans, widows, sick, and needy, and a holy kiss. See Didache 7–15; Justin Martyr Apology C.lxvii, and C. lxxv.

The first reference above from Justin Martyr states that the wine was mixed with water. The Scriptures do not use the word "wine" in connection with the Supper, only "the cup" or "the fruit of the vine." Of course it was juice from the grape, but whether fermented or not is not stated. Unfermented wine was used more in the time of Christ than most suppose. Nevertheless, if this was fermented some it was apparently diluted with water. For the sake of converted alcoholics or even to forestall anyone beginning to drink, unfermented juice is preferable in the light of today's worldwide problem with alcohol.

C. Its Significances

1. *It is a remembrance of Christ.* (1 Cor. 11:24). It recalls His life (the bread), His death (the cup), His resurrection and living presence (the service itself).

2. *It is a proclamation of His death.* (1 Cor. 11:26). The service itself states the Gospel message as well as the claims of the Gospel on the redeemed person. A missionary whom I knew was directed to service on the mission field when he, as a pastor presiding at a Lord's Supper in his church, was meditating on its meaning while the deacons were distributing the elements.

3. *It is an assurance of Christ's second coming.* (Matt. 26:29; 1 Cor. 11:26).

4. *It is a time of fellowship with Christ and His people.* (1 Cor. 10:21). In what sense is Christ present in the Supper? The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the literal body and blood of Christ are present in the bread and cup and at the time of consecration the elements are actually changed (transubstantiation). The Lutheran Church teaches that the individual partakes of the true body and blood of Christ in, with, and under the elements. The elements remain unchanged, but the prayer of consecration communicates Christ to the participants (consubstantiation). The

Reformed view (Calvin) teaches that though the elements are only symbols, partaking of them involves partaking of Christ in His redemptive presence. However, Zwingli taught that the Supper was only a memorial. It is a memorial, but it is also a service in which the presence of Christ in His people effects a real communion.

D. Its Requirements

1. *Regeneration.* Only believers can experience Communion.
2. *Fellowship with a local church.* Unrepentant believers under discipline were excluded from the Supper (1 Cor. 5:11–13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 2 Thess. 11–15).
3. *Cleansing before partaking.* (1 Cor. 11:27–32).

E. Its Frequency

The Scriptures do not specify on this point. After Pentecost the believers broke bread from house to house, but this does not prove a daily observance of the Supper (Acts 2:46). For one thing it is not clear that “breaking bread” in this text meant anything other than taking a fellowship meal together. For another thing, the text does not even imply that whatever was done was done daily in each house. At Troas the believers evidently included the Supper in their first day of the week meeting (Acts 20:7). However often a church observes this ordinance, it should be given sufficient time so that it is not “tacked on” to a service.

F. Some Questions

1. *At what service of the church should the Supper be observed?* The example of the early church answers Sunday. But since it was a Supper, it seems appropriate to observe it during an evening service on Sunday, at least sometimes.
2. *Should it only be observed in the church?* This seemed to be the normal pattern (1 Cor. 11:18, 20).
3. *Should only church members partake?* Again, this seems to be the New Testament example, since only baptized believers were clearly associated with a local assembly. Should visitors be excluded if they are believers? Not necessarily. As a courtesy they could participate. But since discipline by a local church and fellowship within a local church are related to the Supper, then normally only those who are clearly associated with that local church should partake of the Supper in that group.

V. THE LOVE FEAST

As part of the extended service that included the Lord’s Supper, a full meal was also eaten in and by the church. This feast of love is mentioned specifically in 2 Peter 2:13 (in some manuscripts) and Jude 12 and implied in 1 Corinthians 11:20 (and possibly also in Acts 2:42, Acts 46; 6:1).

Whatever the origin of the meal was (pagan feasts, Jewish common meals, Christians’ desire to avoid meats offered to idols, etc.), it had fallen into abuse by the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. Some were making it an excuse for gluttony, taking as much as possible for themselves, and refusing to share what they had brought with others. Paul instructed that church to have the people eat at home rather than negate the ideas of fellowship and love that the agape stood for. During the fourth century the love feast came into increasing disfavor and is seldom practiced today. The fact that Paul could counsel its suspension in the church excludes it from being an ordinance.

VI. FOOT-WASHING

In accord with the common custom in the East because of the effect of dusty or muddy roads on sandaled feet, the Lord at the Last Supper washed and dried the disciples' feet (John 13:1–20). This act served as an example of humility (John 13:15), as an exhortation to forgive one another (John 13:14), and as a lesson in the need for cleansing in the Christian life (John 13:10). As baptism symbolizes the cleansing of the forgiveness of sin, foot-washing symbolizes the cleansing needed for fellowship.

Those who focus on cleansing find ground for continuing the observance of this as an ordinance today. Those who emphasize the example or forgiveness aspects do not feel it is necessary to perform the ritual but rather to practice the spiritual truths the ritual illustrated. It is true that the exhortation to follow Christ's example in verses 14 and 15 related to forgiving one another in humility, rather than to God's forgiving our missteps in life. This, then, would argue against considering foot-washing as an ordinance.

NOTES

1. See J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 2:262.

Chapter 75: The Worship of the Church

I. THE MEANING OF WORSHIP

A. The Words Involved

1. *Proskuneō*. This primary word for worship is connected with the idea of kissing (as kissing the earth to honor the deities of the earth); it came to connote prostrating oneself in reverence. This showed that the worshiper considered the object worthy of whatever he was offering. Even the English word “worship” (a shortened form of “worthship”) means to attribute worth to the object worshiped. Our Lord used this word in His classic statement on worship in John 4:24. In relation to the church the word occurs only in 1 Corinthians 14:25 and refers there to the worship of an unbeliever who comes into the assembly. Perhaps the use of this term was avoided to describe the worship of the early church because of its associations with heathen rites, and the idea that *proskuneō* worship was done in the visible presence of the object worshiped. That may be why most of its occurrences are in the Gospels and the Revelation (in relation to both true and false worship but in the presence of the visible object). Nevertheless, the idea of prostrating oneself in reverence of the object worshiped remains a legitimate facet of Christian worship.

2. *Latreuō*. This highly significant word conveys the idea that worship is priestly service. The believer’s entire life should be one of service-worship (Rom. 12:1); prayer reflects this kind of worship (Acts 13:2; Rom. 1:10); the word occurs several times in relation to giving (Rom. 15:27; 2 Cor. 9:12); and then general ministry of the Gospel is service-worship (Rom. 15:16; Phil. 3:3). Perhaps the reason this word is used of the believer’s worship rather than the first one is simply that since Christ is not visible today our worship is to be shown in service.

B. The Concept

The worship of the church, then, consists of individual, corporate, public, and private service for the Lord, which is generated by a reverence for and submission to Him who is totally worthy.

II. THE CHARACTER OF WORSHIP (JOHN 4:24)

Our Lord revealed two basics about true worship when He declared it must be in spirit and in truth. “In spirit” includes three things about the center of worship. (1) Worship can and should take place anywhere and everywhere since spirit is not confined to a particular place or time. (2) Worship comes from man’s spirit (Heb. 4:12). It is no mere surface ritual. (3) True worship is a person-to-Person experience, honoring with our spirit God who was revealed through the Lord Jesus at all times and in all places.

“In truth” means that the character of true worship must be genuine and without pretense. God hates insincere worship (Isa. 1:10–17; Mal. 1:7–14; Matt. 15:8–9). Fake worship is that which is not in accord with the revealed Word of God. Therefore, to worship in truth necessitates a growing knowledge of the Word, which will also increase our appreciation for the worth of the God we worship.

III. THE CONTENT OF CORPORATE WORSHIP

Actually the New Testament says little about the form and content of worship in the local church. Still, there are some indications given in Acts 2; 20; 1 Corinthians 12–14, and other scattered passages.

A. The Word

From the beginning the church put prime importance on doctrine (Acts 2:42). This was used both to build up believers (Acts 2:42; Acts 11:26; 1 Cor. 14:26; 2 Thess. 2:5 where Paul taught eschatology to new converts; 2 Tim. 4:2) and in evangelism (Acts 4:2; Acts 13:5; Acts 17:2,

reaching unbelievers outside the church; 1 Cor. 14:23–24, when unbelievers come into the church service). All of the epistles demonstrate the kind of teaching that must have been customary in the churches, and these include all aspects of doctrinal teaching with application.

Within the assembly the procedure for preaching and teaching seemed to be flexible. Clearly any male believer could speak if it was done in an orderly fashion and if his message passed the test of truth (1 Cor. 14:26–33). Women were restricted in public and mixed groups, though older women were commissioned to minister to younger women (1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:12; Titus 2:3–5).

B. Prayer

Prayer was practiced both individually and corporately (Acts 4:24; Acts 6:4; Acts 10:9; Acts 12:5; Acts 13:3; 1 Tim. 2:1–8). According to the last passage, men led in public prayer in the church (for the word in 1 Tim. 2:8 is males). Whether women also prayed in public worship depends on one's interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:5. Paul may have been allowing such a practice, or he may have only been acknowledging that it happened at Corinth without approving it.

C. Singing

The New Testament exhorts both private and public singing as a facet of worship. When one is happy he should sing (James 5:13). Paul and Silas sang hymns of praise in jail (Acts 16:25). Singing was part of corporate worship as well (1 Cor. 14:26, this was likely a solo; Col. 3:16). Though distinctions have been made between psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, they cannot be held rigidly. Psalms possibly refers to Old Testament psalms, though perhaps with Christians' additions. Hymns may be praises directed to God (yet might include using the psalms, Acts 16:25). Spiritual songs may include a wider variety of themes. Music is an important part of worship in most churches today.

Several New Testament passages may contain parts of hymns that the early church used (Eph. 5:14; 1 Tim. 3:16). The many doxologies also underscore this important aspect of worship (Rom. 9:5; Rom. 11:33–36; Rom. 16:27; Phil. 4:20; 1 Tim. 6:16; 2 Tim. 4:18).

It is not improbable that some of these verses reflect creedal statements that were spoken without musical accompaniment. 1 Timothy 3:16 serves as the clearest example. Others may include 1 Corinthians 12:3; 1 Corinthians 15:3–5; 1 Corinthians 16:22. These glimpses suggest that the reciting of a church covenant (not so much practiced today as formerly) may be appropriate and helpful.

Can we glean any principles for the use of music in the church today? Singing should be encouraged on many levels: by individuals privately, together as a group in the church, solos in the church, with or without instruments. The New Testament examples, including doxologies, praise the character of God and His works with language that is rich, not thin and repetitious. The New Testament gives no indication of particular musical forms used.

D. Giving

The New Testament says more about giving than about any other single aspect of church life. Giving to others serves as clear proof of one's love for God (James 2:15–17; 1 John 3:17–18), should stem from a life that has first been given to Him (2 Cor. 8:5), and should be done voluntarily (2 Cor. 8:11–12; 9:7), liberally even in poverty (2 Cor. 8:12), cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:7), and according to the measure of prosperity God gives to the individual (1 Cor. 16:2). As far as New Testament revelation is concerned, giving was the principal area in which there was a cooperative effort among a number of churches (Acts 11:27–30; 2 Cor. 8–9).

E. Fellowship

The early church continued in fellowship (Acts 2:42). This means they had a close relationship with each other. This closeness consisted of their common doctrinal allegiance, their willingness to share material things, the experience of Communion in the Lord's Supper, and in sharing prayers.

In other words, all the aspects of worship constitute fellowship. It is not a separate entity that exists by itself. It is the practice of corporate worship. Based on the illustration in 1 Corinthians 1, it may be called body life. But based on the illustration in Ephesians 2, it may just as well be called household life. The goal, whatever the label, is to increase the health, strength, commitment, and numbers of the body or household (Eph. 4:12–17).

IV. THE DAY FOR CORPORATE WORSHIP

The New Testament church used Sunday as their day of corporate worship. They did this in spite of the fact that it was not a weekly holiday that people had free. Undoubtedly many Christian slaves were on call all day every day; yet they made time for corporate worship.

A. The Origin of the Lord's Day

Though modern writers invariably attempt to emphasize the connection between the Lord's Day and the Sabbath, the early church and the church Fathers did not make that emphasis. They did see a moral value in applying the Ten Commandments but made an exception of the fourth one concerning the Sabbath. Notice the absence of a Sabbath-Lord's Day problem in Acts 15:29 and the clear teaching of the New Testament as to the end of the Mosaic Law, including the Ten Commandments (except as nine of them, all but the Sabbath one, are repeated in the epistles, 2 Cor. 3:7–11; Col. 2:16). The idea of a particular day for worship may have been connected with the Sabbath, but the particular day was unrelated to the Sabbath.

Neither did the concept of the Lord's Day originate from the calendar. Though the Jews observed a seven-day cycle (based on the Creation week), a weekly division of time was unknown in the Greek and Roman world till after the establishment of the church in the first century. By the third century the weekly arrangement had spread, because the Roman calendar was in shambles until Constantine. Before that time there were both four- and eight-day "market" weeks. The seven-day delineation arose from putting together the sun, moon, and the five known planets of that time. Even as late as the French Revolution in the 1800s an attempt was made to have three ten-day weeks in each month with each tenth day a day of rest plus five holidays each year to make up the 365 days in the year.

The only explanation as to why the early church established a new day of worship unrelated to the Sabbath and the existing calendar was that Sunday was the day of the Lord's resurrection. He not only arose on Sunday, but six post-Resurrection appearances were also on Sunday, and the Day of Pentecost when the body of Christ was formed fell on Sunday. Almost always the day is designated as the first day of the week (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2). In Revelation 1:10 it is called the Lord's Day, a term similar to the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20) and used by the believers to protest and contrast the Emperor's or Augustus's Day. The Lord's Day, then, is the first day of the week, the day of His resurrection, and the day used by believers to celebrate that greatest event in history.

B. The Distinctiveness of the Lord's Day

Clearly the early church made this day distinct, for though they went to the synagogue services on the Sabbath they went to evangelize. When they met with other believers it was on Sunday. Romans 14:5 does not mean that Christians did not distinguish the first day for worship. Rather

Paul was exhorting them not to be pressured by the Jewish element in the church to observe or fast on certain days.

C. The Activities of the Lord's Day

1. *Remember and celebrate Christ's resurrection.*
2. *Gather together for corporate worship.* (Heb. 10:25; 1 Cor. 3:16).
3. *Do your accounting relative to giving.* (1 Cor. 16:2).
4. *Observe the Lord's Supper.* (Acts 20:7).

D. The Contemporary Neglect of the Lord's Day

1. *The reason.* In Christianized countries the civil Sunday with its partial cessation of regular activities has become filled with other activities (special games, opportunities to shop, etc.). Believers too are caught up in these secular uses of the Lord's Day. Churches also abandon opportunities to use available hours on Sunday for their activities. The result may soon be that Sunday will be like every other day of the week, requiring normal work hours as well, and believers will be back in the first century trying to find early morning or late evening hours for worship.

2. *The results.* To neglect the Lord's Day is to slight Him, to blunt the testimony to His resurrection, and to miss the benefits of the ministry and protection of corporate worship.

Chapter 76: Other Ministries of the Church

In addition to the ministries involved in worship, the New Testament also gives examples and commands concerning other ministries. Worship is primarily directed toward the object worshiped, Christ, the Head of the church; but it also has an effect on the members of the church and reaches out to those who are not committed.

I. THE MINISTRY OF DISCIPLINE

Christ's purpose for the church is to sanctify it and present it to Himself without spot or wrinkle (Eph. 5:26–27). All the activities of a church should also aim at this goal, including discipline, for it, too, is designed to produce a holy character in the one who has to be disciplined.

A. Objectives in Discipline

Scriptures give at least four reasons discipline is necessary. (1) To remove the defilement and leavening influence that sin brings (1 Cor. 5:6–8). (2) To protect other believers from sinning and challenge them to godliness (Gal. 6:1; 1 Tim. 5:20). (3) To produce soundness in faith (Titus 1:13). (4) To reclaim and restore the erring brother (2 Cor. 2:5–11).

B. Attitudes in Discipline

Those involved in the process of disciplining should show these attitudes: (a) meekness (Gal. 6:1); (b) uncompromising stand against sin (Titus 1:13); (c) love (2 Thess. 3:9–15); (d) forgiving spirit at repentance (2 Cor. 2:5–11).

C. Principles for Discipline

The three main principles for discipline are (a) no partiality (1 Tim. 5:21), (b) not hasty, but with deliberate steps (Matt. 18:15–20), and (c) with the goal of correction and eventual restoration (2 Cor. 2:6–8).

D. People to Be Disciplined

The Scriptures mention seven kinds of people (some of these overlap) who need discipline.

1. *An accused elder* (1 Tim. 5:19–20). In the case of persistent sin in an elder, two or three witnesses need to be involved, and the rebuke must be public to make others fearful of sinning.

2. *A sinning brother* (Matt. 18:15–20). The steps include private rebuke (how often is unstated), involvement of other people (again how often is unstated), then exposure to the whole church if the person is still unrepentant. The church then must cut off both spiritual and social fellowship with the individual.

3. *An overtaken brother* (Gal. 6:1). This refers to someone tripped up by sin in an unguarded moment, rather than persistent sin. He needs the help of someone mature to readjust his life and make it usable again (the word “restore” is used also in Matt. 4:21, “mending”; Eph. 4:12, “building up”; and 1 Thess. 3:10, “complete”).

4. *An unruly brother* (2 Thess. 3:6). This concerns someone who has gotten out of step with the teachings of Scripture, specifically, in this passage, of someone who refused to work, thinking that the Lord's coming was immediate. Paul's discipline was to tell them to get to work because other believers need not feel any obligation to support them.

5. *False teachers* (Titus 1:10–16). When false teachers make inroads within the church, they are to be rebuked severely. Hymenaeus and Philetus, who apparently taught that the resurrection was to be understood spiritually or allegorically, were to be avoided; Paul delivered Hymenaeus and Alexander over to Satan for punishment (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17–18).

Although Paul dealt severely with false teachers, he showed considerable patience with people who were misled doctrinally. He did not counsel excommunication for those in Corinth who denied the resurrection; rather he patiently taught them the truth. Presumably, if they had then rejected what he taught and in turn promoted heresy he would have disciplined them in some way.

6. *Factional people* (Titus 3:8–11). These include those who cause divisions over worthless and unprofitable disputes, unsettling the church. Such people are to be warned twice, then rejected or avoided. Romans 16:17 commands similar action, “turn away” which includes personal, social, and spiritual contact.

7. *The immoral brother* (1 Cor. 5). Because the sin of incest in this case was both persistent and public, the guilty party was to be delivered to Satan; that is, excommunicated from the fellowship of the church and given back to Satan’s domain of the world for whatever ruin that might bring, such as sickness or death. For other sins mentioned in verse 11 that believers commit (immorality, covetousness, idolatry, abusiveness, drunkenness, swindling), the punishment was cutting off fellowship (including social—do not eat with such).

John Wesley was well known for his emphasis on sensitivity to sin and discipline. Leaders of the small home classes (the forerunner of the mini-church) were instructed to inquire each week into each member’s spiritual life and behavior. Every three months those who truly lived the Gospel received a ticket attesting to that fact and those who did not were excluded from the weekly meetings.¹

Failure of the church to exercise this ministry of discipline can only lead to weaker (though probably larger) churches.

II. THE MINISTRY TO WIDOWS

Pure religion, James declares, includes visiting (overseeing) orphans and widows (James 1:27). No detail as to what this involves with regard to orphans is found in the New Testament, but there are detailed guidelines for the church’s ministry to widows.

A. The Family’s Responsibility

At the time of Christ there existed a fund in the temple that was used to support widows and orphans. When many Jewish widows were converted to Christianity the church undertook their continued support. However, Paul made it crystal clear in the central passage on the subject that a widow’s family has the first and primary obligation to care for the widow. This is true of both younger, unenrolled widows (1 Tim. 5:4, 8) and of any older, enrolled widows (1 Tim 5:16).

B. The Church’s Responsibility

If there are no relatives to support a widow, then the church must assume that obligation, regardless of the age of the widow. A “widow indeed” is not necessarily an enrolled widow but one who is destitute in that she has no family to support her (1 Tim. 5:5). Therefore, her church family must underwrite her support. Younger widows are encouraged to remarry (1 Tim. 5:14); widows who qualify can be put on the church roll after age sixty (1 Tim. 5:9–10).

What should a church do about this responsibility in a day of social security, insurance, annuities, and other financial provisions often made for a widow? The principles seem clear: to whatever extent her own family cannot support her (whether through living relatives or through the provision of relatives who have died), the church should assume the obligation whether it means partial or full support. Needs often exist today for widows of Christian workers who are left in need through no fault of their own.

III. THE MINISTRY OF CHARITY

The church also should minister to others who are in need.

The circles of responsibility toward those in need spread out from the local church. Those whose needs we come in contact with in the church (whether believers or unbelievers) have first claim (James 2:2–3, 15–16; 1 John 3:17). The early church was also concerned with the needs of believers in other places (Acts 11:27–30). Paul spent considerable effort and time collecting money for the poor believers in Jerusalem. It involved the cooperative effort of a number of churches. The money did not pass directly from donors to recipients but was supervised by a committee chosen by the churches and apparently distributed under the direction of the leadership (2 Cor. 8:18–22).

Sometimes the early church concerned itself with the support of missionaries. Though Paul worked to support himself and his associates, he also received gifts. Apparently the Philippian church gave gifts to Paul on at least three occasions (Phil. 4:16), and he clearly defended the right of those engaged in ministry to be supported by others (1 Cor. 9:4–14).

No individual or church can possibly meet all the needs that they have knowledge of in this day of mass communication, which brings so many needs across our paths almost daily. What, then, should be our priorities? As far as people to whom we should give, the priorities should focus on the Lord's servants, the Lord's people who are in need, then others (Gal. 6:10). Normally a church or individual would give priority to those under its care and responsibility in the local area, then to those in other places.

NOTE

1. See Works of John Wesley, VIII.250ff.

Section XIII—Things to Come

Chapter 77: Introduction to Eschatology

I. THE MEANING OF ESCHATOLOGY

Eschatology means the theology of last things. That study can cover all things that were future at the time of their writing, or it can include only those things that are still future from our present vantage point. It deals with the consummation of all things, both those things that relate to individuals and to the world.

Everyone has some sort of eschatology. For many moderns, eschatology is a study in despair, for all things will end in death—the death of the individual and the death of the universe. Even evolution does not promise immortality. For others the despair is modified by a vague hope in some sort of life after death. For the Christian the Bible provides clear and detailed teaching concerning the future so that he may know with certainty what lies ahead.

II. THE SCOPE OF ESCHATOLOGY

The study of last things (those that are yet future from our viewpoint) includes the biblical teaching concerning the intermediate state, the resurrections, the Rapture of the church, the second advent of Christ, and the Millennium.

III. THE DEVELOPMENT OF ESCHATOLOGY

The study could be developed in a number of ways. One would be to separate the future for the individual from the future for the world. Another would be to catalog the future for the church, the future for Israel, the future for Gentiles, and the future for the world. Another approach might study the various teachings in their chronological order. A biblical theology approach would study the eschatology of the Old Testament, the eschatology of Jesus, the eschatology of Paul, the eschatology of John, etc.

No one method is necessarily superior to another. Most writers seem to combine various approaches, and so shall I. Some of the topics, such as resurrection, will be discussed from the individual viewpoint. Others, such as the Tribulation, will be outlined chronologically. The three basic approaches to eschatology—premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism—need to have a more systematic treatment in order to see their distinctive approaches as a whole. Because of the contemporary debate concerning the relation of the Rapture of the church to the Tribulation, this will need special attention.

IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF ESCHATOLOGY

Because there is much divergence in this area of doctrine, and because some things are not crystal clear, some assume that eschatology should be given a lesser importance than other areas of biblical truth. Is there any area of doctrine that has not been debated? Think of the Trinity, or the nature of the person of Christ, or church government, or predestination, or eternal security, or the effects of Adam's sin. And think of some of the difficult concepts to interpret in these areas, concepts like the triunity of God, Deity and humanity united in one Person, the meaning of only begotten, the concept of imputed sin, etc. Yet we do not, nor should we, shy away from a detailed study of these teachings. Similarly we must not slight what the Bible says about the future.

For the believer, the knowledge of prophecy (a) provides joy in the midst of affliction (2 Cor. 4:17), (b) cleanses and encourages holy living (1 John 3:3), (c) is profitable, like all Scripture, for a number of important needs in the Christian's life (2 Tim. 3:16–17), (d) gives facts about life after death (2 Cor. 5:8), (e) gives truth about the end of history, (f) gives proof of the reliability of all Scripture, for the number of prophecies that have come to pass precisely as predicted cannot

be accounted for by chance but only by God, and (g) draws our hearts out in worship to the God who is in complete control and who will accomplish His will in history. To slight prophecy is to miss these benefits.

Chapter 78: A Survey of Postmillennialism

I am a premillennialist, and this will be the framework in which this section on eschatology will be discussed. However, before explaining the premillennial understanding of the future, I think it would be helpful to first survey the three major systems of eschatology: postmillennialism, amillennialism, and premillennialism.

I. A DEFINITION OF POSTMILLENNIALISM

Lorraine Boettner gave a careful descriptive definition of postmillennialism. It is

That view of last things which holds that the kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the Gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of individuals, that the world is eventually to be Christianized, and that the return of Christ is to occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace commonly called the “Millennium.” . . . The second coming of Christ will be followed immediately by the general resurrection, the general judgment, and the introduction of heaven and hell in their fullness.¹

A. H. Strong described the Millennium as “a period in the later days of the church militant, when, under the special influence of the Holy Spirit, the spirit of the martyrs shall appear again, true religion be greatly quickened and revived, and the members of Christ’s churches become so conscious of their strength in Christ that they shall, to an extent unknown before, triumph over the power of evil both within and without.”²

II. DOCTRINAL CHARACTERISTICS OF POSTMILLENNIALISM

A. Concerning the Bible

Biblical postmillennialists believe in the authority of the Bible. Of course, liberals who expect a Golden Age to come through human efforts have a kind of postmillennial view of history, though it is not biblically based.

B. Concerning the Power of God

Their confidence in the power of God causes them to believe that the Great Commission will be fulfilled in that most of the world will be saved. To believe otherwise makes the Commission ineffective and the power of God impotent.

C. Concerning the Church

The church, fulfilling the Great Commission, will be the instrument to bring about and promote the Millennium on earth.

D. Concerning the Return of Christ

Postmillennialists believe in the actual return of Christ at the conclusion of the Millennium. His return will be followed immediately by the general resurrection and judgment.

E. Concerning the Millennium

1. *Length.* The Millennium, according to postmillennialism, will be an extended period of time, not necessarily a thousand years. It may perhaps be much longer than a literal thousand years.

2. *Beginning.* Some understand that the Millennium will begin gradually; others see a more abrupt beginning to the spread of righteousness throughout the earth.

3. *Characteristics.* The Millennium will be a time of peace, material prosperity, and spiritual welfare on the earth. However, not all will be saved, nor will all sin be eradicated. But Christian principles will be the rule, not the exception, and sin will be reduced to negligible proportions.

4. *Activities.* Some postmillennialists allow for a brief time of apostasy at the conclusion of the Millennium just prior to the return of Christ.³

F. Concerning Satan

Postmillennialists understand Satan is bound at all times in that he is always under God's control. But he will be bound at the beginning of the Millennium in a special way according to Revelation 20. However, this has not yet occurred since we are not yet in the Millennium but are at this time laying the foundations for the Millennium.

III. EVIDENCE THAT THE WORLD IS GETTING BETTER

If we are not yet in the Millennium but are laying the groundwork for it, then we ought to be able to see evidence that things are getting better in the world. Postmillennialism believes we can. That evidence includes a number of things. (1) Social conditions are certainly improved in many parts of the world. As one example, the status of women has been greatly improved wherever the Gospel has been received. (2) The enormous amount of money given to Christian causes promotes better conditions in the world. (3) The Bible continues to be the world's best-seller. It is now translated into more languages than ever before in the history of the world. (4) The Gospel is disseminated in many more ways and to many more places than ever before. Radio and literature distribution are two ways this is being done.

Of course this evidence is true, and no believer can be anything but thankful for it. But whether this presages an imminent Millennium is another question that must also take into account the contemporary increase of evil before it can be answered accurately.

IV. SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT FOR POSTMILLENNIALISM

A. Passages That Tell of a Golden Age

Since the many passages that speak of a triumphant reign of Christ have not been fulfilled in history, they are yet to be fulfilled in the future but before the second advent of Christ. Many of these Scriptures are the same ones that premillennialists understand as referring to the millennial kingdom. The postmillennialist sees them fulfilled before Christ returns, while the premillennialist expects them to be fulfilled after Christ returns. Such passages include Psalms 2:8; 22:27; 47; 72; 86:9; Isaiah 2:2–4; 11:6–9; Jeremiah 31:34; Daniel 2:35, 44; and Micah 4:1–4.

B. Passages That Characterize the Gospel as Powerful and Worldwide

Because the Gospel is the power of God (Rom. 1:16), it is unthinkable, postmillennialists argue, that the world will not be converted. God wishes all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4), so to pray expecting this will happen is to pray in the will of God.

C. Other Passages

Christ's Parable of the Leaven affirms the universal extent of the kingdom (Matt. 13:33). Romans 11 predicts the conversion of a great number of Jews and Gentiles. Revelation 7:9–10 pictures a great multitude of redeemed people from all peoples of the world.

V. HISTORICAL SKETCH OF POSTMILLENNIALISM

A. Joachim of Fiore (ca. 1135–1202)

An early exponent of a postmillennial scheme, Joachim explained history as being trinitarian; that is, the first age was that of the Father when mankind lived under the Law of the Old Testament;

the second was that of the Son, the period of grace covered in the New Testament; and the third age was to be that of the Spirit, beginning about A.D. 1260, in which the world would be converted.

B. Daniel Whitby (1638–1726)

An erudite clergyman, Whitby published thirty-nine works, including *A Treatise of the True Millennium*.⁴ He taught that after the world would be converted, the Jews restored to the Holy Land, and the pope and Turks defeated, the world would enjoy a time of peace and righteousness for a thousand years. At the close of this Millennium, Christ would personally come to earth, raise the dead, and judge all people. His views were very popular and were adopted by many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century preachers and commentators.

Whitby's postmillennialism was quite Jewish-oriented. He described the Millennium as the reign of converted Jews with Gentiles "flowing in to them." All spiritual blessings in the Millennium will be conveyed from the Jews to other nations. He believed that the church will live in a revitalized state during the Millennium, though bodily resurrection will not occur till after the Millennium.

C. Other Postmillennialists

Liberals who hold to inevitable progress through natural (or evolutionary) processes may rightly be labeled postmillennial. However, they do not take the Scriptures seriously and see world improvement coming through the power of man.

Conservative postmillennialists do take the Scriptures as the Word of God and attribute improvement to the power of God. James Snowden understood the Millennium to be the entire time between the first and second advents of Christ.⁵ His scheme differed from amillennialism in that he taught that the world was getting better. He interpreted the events of Revelation 20 either as already past or as describing heavenly bliss.

Charles Hodge taught that the Second Advent will be preceded by the universal diffusion of the Gospel, the national conversion of the Jews, and the coming of Antichrist. When Christ comes, there will be the general resurrection and judgment of all mankind.⁶

The postmillennialism of the post-World War II era has till recently generally been of the liberal variety. The great advancements of the twentieth century through man's achievements gave credibility to the concept. There were scarcely any biblical postmillennialists (Lorraine Boettner being an exception).

But in the latter part of this century an interesting phenomena has developed. Some former amillennialists have become postmillennialists because of their belief in theonomy. Theonomy is the state of being governed by God. Theonomists promote subduing the earth by means of science, education, the arts, and all other pursuits in order to effect God's dominion over all things. For some, this means imposing the Law of the Old Testament on life today not only in moral matters but also in governmental, financial, and other areas. Now, of course, if this is done, conditions in the world will improve and we will then experience the rule of God over life in the world. Thus, many Reformed theologians who strongly support the use of the Law and who were amillennial have switched to embrace postmillennialism as the goal of their theonomic program.

To sum up: Liberals promote a postmillennial goal through humanism. Biblical postmillennialists promote it through the church's preaching of the Gospel. Theonomists promote it through the Gospel and the imposition of Old Testament Law.

NOTES

1. Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1957), 14.
2. A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1907), 1013.
3. See Boettner, *The Millennium*, 69.
4. Daniel Whitby, *A Treatise of the True Millennium* (London: W. Bowyer, 1700).
5. James Snowden, *The Coming of the Lord* (New York: Macmillan, 1919).
6. Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (New York: Scribners, 1887), 3:792.

Chapter 79: A Survey of Amillennialism

I. A DEFINITION OF AMILLENNIALISM

Amillennialism is the view of last things that holds there will be no Millennium before the end of the world. Until the end there will be a parallel development of both good and evil, God's kingdom and Satan's. After the second coming of Christ at the end of the world there will be a general resurrection and general judgment of all people.

II. DOCTRINAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AMILLENNIALISM

A. Concerning the Bible

In general, amillennialists hold a high view of the inspiration and authority of the Bible. If some do not, it is not their amillennialism that causes this. One need only recall names like Oswald T. Allis, William Hendriksen, and Anthony A. Hoekema, all amillennialists, yet strong proponents of the infallibility of the Scriptures.

B. Concerning the Millennium

Among conservative amillennialists two views exist concerning the Millennium. One sees fulfillment of millennial passages to be in the present age by the church on earth (e.g., Allis and Berkhof). The other finds fulfillment by the saints in heaven now (e.g., Warfield and Floyd Hamilton). Both views agree that there will be no future earthly kingdom.

C. Concerning the Covenants

Premillennialists lean on the argument that the biblical covenants contain promises yet unfulfilled and requiring an earthly Millennium if they are fulfilled literally. Amillennialists say that those promises are fulfilled spiritually in the church, or that the promises need not be fulfilled at all since they were conditional and the conditions were not met.

D. Concerning the Church

Amillennialists see the church as fulfilling God's promises in an antitypical and spiritual way. The church is a heavenly, spiritual kingdom, whereas the Millennium of premillennialism is a carnal, earthly kingdom. (But cannot the church be described as earthly and carnal? And cannot the future kingdom be described as spiritual?) The church fulfills the promises, and the new heaven and new earth that immediately follow the Church Age consummate history.

III. THE HERMENEUTICS OF AMILLENNIALISM

Unquestionably, different millennial views result from different hermeneutics, that is, different interpretive principles. Premillennialists use literal or normal interpretation in all areas of biblical truth, whereas amillennialists employ a nonliteral or spiritual principle in the area of eschatology. All conservatives, whatever their eschatological persuasions, use literal or normal interpretation everywhere except eschatology. Floyd Hamilton, an amillennialist, acknowledges that "a literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies gives us just such a picture of an earthly reign of the Messiah as the premillennialist pictures."¹ The amillennialist, of course, does not accept that picture of the future because he employs a different hermeneutic in the area of prophecy.

Although writers generally do not detail their hermeneutics before detailing their commentaries or developing their theologies, Oswald T. Allis does discuss the hermeneutical principles he employs in interpreting prophecy.² I want to summarize his ideas about how to interpret prophecy and briefly interact with them.

(1) He first seeks to establish that both the literal and figurative methods of interpretation have their proper places and their necessary limitations. However, he seems to place all the limitation on the literal and none on the figurative.

(2) Some of those limitations on literal interpretation include: (a) the presence of figures of speech that cannot be interpreted literally allows us freedom to interpret in other ways; (b) the fact that the main theme of the Bible is spiritual gives validity to figurative or spiritual interpretation; and (c) the fact that the Old Testament is preliminary and preparatory to the New Testament causes us to expect that the New Testament will interpret the literal Old Testament prophecies in a figurative manner.

No literalist denies that the Bible contains figures of speech. But he insists that they depict very literal truths. For example, the best roses grown in the part of the country where I live are grown in Tyler, Texas. Tyler roses are famous. Now, if I see an advertisement that says, use such-and-such brand of fertilizer and you, too, can grow Tyler roses, I do not understand this to mean that I must live in the city of Tyler but that wherever I live I can grow the same kind of magnificent roses that are grown in Tyler. The figure of speech has a very literal and plain meaning about the actual roses I can grow. Tyler roses means roses, not tomatoes; but Tyler roses also stands for roses that are outstanding, whether actually grown in Tyler or not.

(3) If his first two theses be true, then the question naturally arises, how does one know whether to interpret a passage literally or figuratively? Allis's answer is, whichever gives the true meaning of the passage! Comment is unnecessary.

(4) Allis continues by saying that the only way prophecy can be understood literally is when its literal meaning is clear and obvious. Almost all prophecy is filled with figurative and parabolic language, which must be interpreted accordingly. So in reality, most prophecy will be interpreted nonliterally.

(5) To interpret and understand a prophecy correctly and fully, its fulfillment must also be known. Every prophecy ever given was given before its fulfillment was known. Otherwise it would not have been a prophecy. If we follow Allis's principle, then no prophecy could ever have been or will be understood until after the fulfillment came. No Israelite needed to have taken the prophecies about the coming Assyrian or Babylonian Captivities literally, because he could not be sure those prophecies would be fulfilled literally until the Captivities actually happened. By such a principle of interpretation, what force would those prophecies have had? But, you see, amillennialists want to be able to claim that we cannot be sure that the Old Testament prophecies concerning the millennial kingdom will be fulfilled literally because no such kind of fulfillment has yet come to pass. But since the church has some similar characteristics to the kingdom, the church must be fulfilling those Old Testament prophecies.

(6) As if to reinforce his idea that we should expect a vagueness in how to interpret prophecy, Allis, throughout his discussion of hermeneutics, characterizes prophecy as indefinite, enigmatical, even deceptive, filled with symbols, imprecise, and subject to various interpretations. These are his phrases, not mine. But, of course, those alleged characteristics are true only if the interpreter abandons the principles of literal or normal interpretation.

IV. INTERPRETIVE EVIDENCES FOR AMILLENNIALISM

Amillennialists interpret certain key passages and doctrines in ways that support their system.

A. Interpretation of the Abrahamic Covenant

Premillennialists point out that if the yet unfulfilled part of that covenant is to be fulfilled literally (the promise of the land of Palestine), this will have to occur in a future Millennium, since there has been no place in past or present history for a literal fulfillment. Amillennialists say that we

need not expect a future fulfillment because either (a) the promises were conditional and the conditions were never met; or (b) the land promise was fulfilled in the time of Joshua (Josh. 21:43–45); or (c) it was fulfilled by David (2 Sam. 8:3); or (d) it was fulfilled during King Solomon’s reign (1 Kings 4:21); or (e) it is now being fulfilled by the church on earth; or (f) it is being fulfilled now by the church in heaven; or (g) it will be fulfilled by all the redeemed on the future new eternal earth. If any of these seven options be correct, then the other six are unnecessary. It appears that amillennialists do not really know how or when or if the Abrahamic Covenant needs to or has been or will be fulfilled. They are only certain that it will not be in a future, earthly Millennium, since there is no such period in their system.

B. Interpretation of Ephesians 3:5

To the amillennialist the mystery in this passage is that the church actually was in the Old Testament and therefore fulfills those Old Testament promises. This was discussed under the church.

C. Daniel’s Seventy Weeks

Amillennialists have certain common features in their interpretation of Daniel 9:24–27. These include (a) the beginning of the seventy weeks was in 536 B.C. in the time of Cyrus, not (as premillennialists say) in 445 B.C. under Artaxerxes. This has the effect of allowing the seventy sevens to be imprecise in duration. (b) The seventieth week is the entire Church Age, not a future seven-year period of Tribulation.

These characteristic interpretations of amillennialism stem from not consistently practicing literal interpretation.

V. HISTORY OF AMILLENNIALISM

A. From the New Testament to Augustine

Up to the time of Origen (ca. 185–ca. 254), stress on a literal hermeneutic caused apologists to be premillennial. The fathers felt that they were in the last days and expected the immediate second coming of Christ to bring in the kingdom. Origen, using an allegorical method of interpretation, spiritualized the future kingdom and understood it to be the present Church Age from Adam on. This amillennial eschatology was popularized by Augustine.

B. Augustine (354–430)

By spiritualizing the concept of the kingdom, Augustine made it mean the existence of the church in this world. The Millennium is the time between the first and second comings of Christ.

“During the ‘thousand years’ when the devil is bound, the saints also reign for a ‘thousand years’ and, doubtless, the two periods are identical and mean the span between Christ’s first and second coming” (City of God xx.9). However, he understood the binding of Satan not to mean that Satan has no power to deceive, but that during this interadvent period he is not allowed to exercise his full powers. Just before the end, Satan will be free to deceive the nations against the church, a rebellion that God will put down. This will be followed by the general judgment and eternal state.

Augustine did understand the thousand years literally and expected that the second coming of Christ would occur within one thousand years after His ascension. When the year 1000 came and went without the Second Coming occurring, the thousand years were spiritualized to mean an indefinite period of time or the whole period between the first and second comings of Christ.

C. Reformation Eschatology

The great leaders of the Reformation were amillennial in their eschatology. They were content to follow the Roman Church’s teaching, which in turn followed Augustine.

Luther saw the Great Tribulation and the bodily return of Christ. He believed he was in the midst of that Tribulation. As many did, Luther also divided history into six ages of one thousand years each, followed by the seventh age of eternal Sabbath rest. He taught that the sixth age was the age of the popes, beginning in 1076 but not lasting the full thousand years. Thus he believed that he was living in the time just before the Second Advent.

Calvin taught that Israel and the church were the same and looked for the Second Coming to usher in a general resurrection and judgment and the eternal state. He did criticize chiliasm, (belief in a millennium), describing its teachings as “fiction,” “insult,” “dream,” and “intolerable blasphemy.” He objected strenuously to a thousand-year limitation on the eternal blessedness of the saints (a misunderstanding of what premillennialism taught).

D. The Modern Era

Though Augustinian amillennialism is generally followed in this modern time (i.e., the Millennium is the interadvent period on earth), another form of amillennialism arose. B. B. Warfield (following Kliefoth who wrote in 1874) taught that the Millennium is the present state of the saints in heaven.³ In general, Reformed creeds say little about the millennial question, focusing rather on the general resurrection and judgment and eternity. One of the popular reasons for preferring amillennialism over premillennialism contrasts the premillennial concept of fulfillment in an earthly kingdom (usually the adjective carnal is placed with this phrase) with the amillennial concept of fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies in the church in this age (and usually the adjective spiritual is put with this phrase). Thus the system that emphasizes the spiritual church rather than the carnal kingdom is to be preferred. When I hear or read this argument, I want to ask, Since when is the church only spiritual and the kingdom only carnal? The church (look around) has carnal people in it, and the kingdom will have many spiritual facets to it. Spiritual and carnal characterize both the church and the future kingdom.

Always, of course, the conclusive evidence for the truth of a doctrine is not historical but exegetical.

NOTES

1. Floyd Hamilton, *The Basis of Millennial Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1942), 38.
2. Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1945), 17–30.
3. B. B. Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines* (New York: Oxford, 1929), 643–44.

Chapter 80: A Survey of Premillennialism

Though the rest of this section will be a development of premillennial eschatology, it may help to give a brief survey of it at this point.

I. A DEFINITION OF PREMILLENNIALISM

Premillennialism is the view that holds that the second coming of Christ will occur prior to the Millennium, which will see the establishment of Christ's kingdom on this earth for a literal one thousand years. It also understands that there will be several occasions when resurrections and judgments will take place. Eternity will begin after the thousand years are concluded. Within premillennialism there are those who hold differing views as to the time of the Rapture.

II. DOCTRINAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PREMILLENNIALISM

A. Concerning the Bible

Premillennialists hold a high view of Scripture. It is probably safe to say that pretribulational premillennialists believe in the inerrancy of the Bible almost without exception.

B. Concerning the Millennium

All forms of premillennialism understand that the Millennium follows the second coming of Christ. Its duration will be one thousand years; its location will be on this earth; its government will be theocratic with the personal presence of Christ reigning as King; and it will fulfill all the yet-unfulfilled promises about the earthly kingdom.

Although premillennialists generally view the coming kingdom literally, some interpret it less so. For George E. Ladd the prophecies concerning Israel are spiritualized, and the millennial kingdom is viewed more as an extension of the spiritual kingdom of God.¹ For Robert Mounce the thousand years of Revelation 20 are literal, but the coming kingdom is not "the Messianic Age foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament."²

C. Concerning the Covenants

Premillennialists understand that the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant giving to Abraham's descendants the land from the river of Egypt to the River Euphrates has never been fulfilled but will be fulfilled in the coming millennial kingdom (Gen. 15:18). The promises of the Davidic Covenant also necessitate the establishment of the millennial kingdom for their fulfillment (2 Sam. 7:12–16).

D. Concerning the Church

Dispensational premillennialists consistently distinguish the church from Israel. Because the church does not fulfill the yet-unfulfilled promises made to Israel, there must be a time when they will be fulfilled, and that time is in the Millennium.

The extent to which a theological system consistently distinguishes Israel and the church will reveal its eschatological position. Observe the following chart.

III. THE HERMENEUTICS OF PREMILLENNIALISM

Premillennialists employ a literal or normal hermeneutic. And this, of course, gives their picture of future events.

IV. HISTORY OF PREMILLENNIALISM

A. *The Ancient Period*

In the earliest centuries of the church, a general premillennial scheme was widely held, though chronological details were not always clear. Descriptions of the Millennium are literalistic, the future reign of Christ in Jerusalem is a prominent theme, and that reign will follow the return of Christ. Church historian Philip Schaff summarized as follows. “The most striking point in the eschatology of the ante-Nicene Age is the prominent chiliasm, or millenarianism, that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for a thousand years, before the general resurrection and judgment. It was indeed not the doctrine of the church embodied in any creed or form of devotion, but a widely current opinion of distinguished teachers.”³

With the union of church and state under Constantine, the hope of Christ’s coming faded some. The Alexandrian school of interpretation attacked the literal hermeneutic on which premillennialism was based, and the influence of the teachings of Augustine reinterpreted the concept and time of the Millennium.

B. *The Medieval and Reformation Periods*

In the medieval period most doctrines, including eschatology, were eclipsed by the darkness of those centuries. As we have seen, the reformers were generally amillennial in their eschatology, though Anabaptists and Huguenots were chiliasts.

C. *The Modern Period*

The modern period has witnessed the rise of premillennial teaching. A number of commentators (like J. A. Bengel and Henry Alford) wrote from this viewpoint. The spread of dispensationalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries brought with it a lively interest in prophetic studies.⁴

NOTES

1. George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 64–69, 629–32.
2. Robert Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 359.
3. Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (New York: Scribners, 1884), 2:614. For quotes from some of those “distinguished teachers” see Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith* (Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux, 1954), pp. 17–33.
4. For detailed discussions see Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970); and C. Norman Kraus, *Dispensationalism in America* (Richmond: John Knox, 1950).

Chapter 81: God's Covenant with Abraham

I. THE ESCHATOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE OF THIS COVENANT

The interpretation of the Abrahamic Covenant is a watershed between premillennialism and amillennialism. The central question concerns its fulfillment. All agree that certain aspects of it have been fulfilled. But all do not agree on the fulfillment of other aspects of it, particularly the land promise. Amillennialists, while not agreed on the time of fulfillment of the land promise, unanimously agree that it will not be fulfilled in a future earthly millennial kingdom. Premillennialists, on the other hand, insist that since there has been no literal fulfillment in the past or present, there must be one in the future, and theirs is the only system that includes a future time when it may be fulfilled on this earth.

II. THE PROMISES OF THE COVENANT

A. Personal Promises to Abraham (Gen. 12:2)

Three short clauses addressed to Abraham (using the Hebrew cohortative form of the verb) contain the personal promises God made to Abraham.

1. *"I will make you a great nation."* When God said this, Abraham had no heir. The promise refers, of course, to the Jewish nation, the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob.
2. *"I will bless you."* In fulfillment of this promise, God gave Abraham temporal blessings of land (Gen. 13:14–15, 17), servants (Gen. 15:7), and wealth (Gen. 13:2; 24:34–35), and He gave him spiritual blessings (Gen. 13:18; 21:22).
3. *"I will make your name great."* God promised Abraham fame, renown, and good reputation.

The last clause of Gen. 12:2 states the purpose or result of God's blessing Abraham—"so you shall be a blessing."

B. Universal Promises (Gen. 12:3)

1. *The promise of divine blessing or cursing people on the basis of their treatment of Abraham.* Abraham's relationship with God was so close that to bless him or curse him was, in effect, to bless or curse God (Gen. 20:2–18; 21:22–34; 23).
2. *The promise that all the families of the earth would be blessed.* Paul made it clear that Christ fulfilled this promise (Gal. 3:16). "Seed" may be both collective and individual; that is, the seed was one line, one family, and especially one Person, Christ (Gal. 3:19). Paul's concluding point in that chapter is this: do not try to become sons of Abraham by being circumcised but by being in Christ (Gal 3:27, 29). Our position in Christ makes us heirs of this particular promise of the Abrahamic Covenant. Note carefully that Paul was not saying that the church fulfills the entire covenant. He focused only on this one promise concerning blessing in the seed (Gal. 3:16—the plural, "promises," is used because the covenant was repeated several times to Abraham, not because Paul wanted to indicate that the church fulfills the entire covenant).¹

C. National Promises (Gen. 15:18–21)

1. *The promise that Abraham would father a great nation was both a personal and a national promise.* Abraham did have an heir miraculously by Sarah (Gen. 21:2).
2. *The promise to that nation of specific land as an inheritance.* See Genesis 12:7; 13:15, 17; 15:7–8, 18; 17:8; 24:7; 26:3; 28:13–14; 35:12; 48:4; 50:24. Genesis 17:1–8 emphasizes that the land was to be an everlasting possession; and Gen. 15:18 describes the boundaries as from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates.

Debate continues on the identity of the river of Egypt. One view equates the river (*nahar*) of Egypt with the wadi (*nahal*) of Egypt, the modern *wadi el- 'Arish*, which, during the rainy season, flows from the middle of the Sinai Peninsula into the Mediterranean ninety miles east of the Suez Canal (Num. 34:5; Josh. 15:4, 47; 1 Kings 8:65; 2 Kings 24:7; 2 Chron. 7:8; Isa. 27:1; Ezek. 47:19; 48:28). This is the view of Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.² The other view identifies the river of Egypt as the Nile, specifically its eastern channel. The word *nahar* used in Genesis 15:18 always refers to a continuously flowing river, which the Nile is and the *wadi el- 'Arish* is not. This is the view of Bruce K. Waltke and K. A. Kitchen.³

To be sure, in some passages the focus is on Canaan, or some part of that larger area promised in Gen. 15:18 (Gen. 17:8; 1 Kings 8:65; Ezek. 47:13–20). Israel has occupied at various times part of the larger area, but never the larger area, nor ever as an everlasting possession.

III. THE SOLEMN RATIFICATION OF THE COVENANT

The ratification ceremony described in Genesis 15:9–17 when compared with near Eastern custom indicates that God alone obligated Himself to fulfill the terms of the covenant since only He walked between the pieces of the sacrificial animals. The significance of that is striking: it means that God swore fidelity to His promises and placed the obligation of their fulfillment on Himself alone. Abraham made no such oath; he was in a deep sleep, yet aware of what God promised.⁴ Clearly the Abrahamic Covenant was not conditioned on anything Abraham would or would not do; its fulfillment in all its parts depends only on God's doings.

IV. ALLEGED CONDITIONS IN THE COVENANT

The unconditionality of the Abrahamic Covenant furnishes an important support for premillennialism, since the land promise needs a future time (the Millennium) in which it will be fulfilled. Therefore, amillennialists allege that there were in fact conditions attached to the fulfillment of the covenant that make it impossible to view the covenant as unconditional.

A. Genesis 12:1

The imperative, “Go forth from your country,” expresses a condition that would have invalidated the covenant if Abraham had not obeyed. However, grammatically this imperative, followed by two imperfects and a series of cohortative imperfects in Gen. 12:2–3, expresses an intention, namely what God intended to do for Abraham. Other examples of this use are found in Gen. 30:18 and Gen. 45:18.

B. Genesis 12:2

The phrase “be a blessing” is seen by some to be a condition for fulfillment of the covenant. However, grammatically this expresses a consequence that is expected to occur with certainty or an intention. The Gesenius, Kautzsch, Cowley Hebrew grammar cites this passage as an example of intention.⁵

C. Genesis 17:1

Some understand “walk before Me” as a condition for fulfillment of the covenant. However, the grammar is the same as in Gen. 12:1 and expresses intention.

D. Genesis 22:16–18; 26:5

Since the covenant had been firmly established several times before these events, it would be incongruous to view these passages as conditions imposed after the clear statements of unconditionality. Rather, in these instances God acknowledged the worthiness of Abraham to remind him and his descendants that faith and obedience were necessary for participation in the benefits of the unconditional promises of the covenant.⁶

V. VIEWPOINTS AS TO THE FULFILLMENT OF THE COVENANT

A. The Amillennial Viewpoint

Amillennialism teaches that all the provisions of the covenant have been fulfilled, including the land promise. This is done either by spiritualizing the land promise so that the church fulfills it, or by seeing it fulfilled in Israel's past history. One such supposed fulfillment occurred in the days of Joshua. In Joshua 21:43–45 we read that God told Joshua that He had now kept the promises made to Israel in giving them the land which He promised to their fathers. Of course, they did not possess the land of Canaan forever, nor had they fully conquered it at that time. But, those considerations aside, God did declare that what had happened was a fulfillment of the covenant. How could this be? In the several statements of the covenant, the land promised was both from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates (Gen. 15:18) and the land of Canaan (Gen. 17:8). The former, which was greater, included the latter, which was smaller. Under Joshua the Israelites in no way occupied the larger limits of the land, but they had staked their claim to the land of Canaan. So neither promise has been fulfilled everlastingly.

In 2 Samuel 8:3, the "he" who went to restore his rule at the river is not David; "the subject of the sentence is Hadadezer."⁷ Though Solomon's kingdom was extensive, he did not reign over all the territory promised to Abraham, nor did he do it eternally.

Perhaps an illustration will help. Suppose I promise to pay for a student's entire college education. This might normally mean four one-year payments. At the end of the first year I could say that I have kept my promise. And I could even say (like Gen. 26:5), "Because you have made such good grades, I am happy to pay the next year's tuition." The larger promise of paying for the total education includes the lesser promises to pay for each year's expenses.

The larger promise of the land between the two rivers includes the land of Canaan and the territory Solomon ruled, but it does not mean that the land of Canaan or Solomon's kingdom is equivalent to the larger area.

Please observe the inherent self-contradiction of the amillennial position. If the covenant is conditional, then even the amillennialist does not need to look for a fulfillment in the days of David, Joshua, or Solomon. If the covenant was fulfilled in either of those times, then it was not conditional. If it was fulfilled under Joshua or Solomon, then the church does not fulfill it. If the church fulfills it, then one need not look for a fulfillment in the days of Joshua or Solomon. It would appear that the amillennialist needs to have the spare tires of possible fulfillments under Joshua or Solomon or by the church in case the argument for conditionality goes flat!

A novel approach to the fulfillment of the land promise was proposed by Anthony Hoekema, who sees multiple fulfillments of the land promise during Israel's history but an ultimate antitypical fulfillment on the new earth. He expands the Promised Land to include the entire earth and the recipients of the promise to include all the redeemed. He clearly denies any fulfillment on the present earth during a future Millennium.⁸

B. The Premillennial Viewpoint

Premillennialism insists that all the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant must be fulfilled since the covenant was made without conditions. Much of the covenant has already been fulfilled and fulfilled literally; therefore, what remains to be fulfilled will also be fulfilled literally. This brings the focus on the yet-unfulfilled land promise. Though the nation Israel occupied part of the territory promised in the covenant, she has never yet occupied all of it and certainly not eternally as the covenant promised. Therefore, there must be a time in the future when Israel will do so, and for the premillennialist this will be in the coming millennial kingdom. Thus the Abrahamic Covenant gives strong support for premillennial eschatology.

NOTES

1. See J. B. Lightfoot, *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (New York: Macmillan, 1892), 142.
2. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Promised Land: A Biblical-Historical View," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138: 311 n.6.
3. Bruce K. Waltke, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 5:121; K. A. Kitchen, *The New Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 353–54.
4. See Cleon L. Rogers, Jr., "The Covenant with Abraham and Its Historical Setting," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 127:241–56.
5. William Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. E. Kautzsche and A. E. Cowley (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1898), 325.
6. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 93–94.
7. A. F. Kirkpatrick, "The Second Book of Samuel," in *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 1897), 106.
8. Anthony Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 206–12, 274–87.

Chapter 82: God's Covenant With David

God's covenant with David, like His with Abraham, also gives strong support to premillennial eschatology.

I. THE PROVISIONS OF THE COVENANT (2 Sam. 7:12–16)

David desired to build a temple for the Lord to replace the temporary tentlike tabernacle. Since David himself lived in a house of cedar, it seemed only fitting that there be a more permanent building for the worship of God. But God revealed to Nathan the prophet that He had something far greater in mind for David, and that revelation is the Davidic Covenant.

A. Promises Related to David

1. *Descendants.* David would have a son who would succeed him and establish his kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12).

2. *Kingdom.* David's house, throne, and kingdom would be established forever (2 Sam. 7:16). However, the covenant did not guarantee uninterrupted rule by David's family, though it did promise that the right to rule would always remain with David's dynasty. The Babylonian Captivity did, of course, interrupt the Davidic rule.

B. Promises Related to Solomon

1. *Temple.* Solomon, rather than David, would build the temple (2 Sam. 7:13a).

2. *Throne.* The throne of Solomon's kingdom would be established forever (2 Sam. 7:13b).

3. *Punishment.* He would be chastened for his sins, but not deposed (2 Sam. 7:14–15).

God did not promise specifically that the posterity of David would be through the line of Solomon. Jeconiah (or Coniah), one of Solomon's descendants, was decreed by God to be "childless" (Jer. 22:30). Actually Coniah had seven sons (perhaps adopted, 1 Chron. 3:17–18), though none occupied the throne.

Thus as far as a continuing dynasty was concerned, Coniah was "childless." His line did retain legal throne rights, which were claimed for Jesus through His legal father Joseph (Matt. 1:7, 12, 16).

Again it is important to remember that these promises were made unconditionally. Still some attempt to deny that it was unconditional, claiming that the covenant could be broken and citing the "if" (KJV) in 2 Samuel 7:14 and verses like 1 Kings 2:4; 8:25; 9:4–5; Isaiah 24:5; and Ezekiel 16:59. The resolution is simply this:

The "breaking" or conditionality can only refer to personal and individual invalidation of the benefits of the covenant, but it cannot affect the transmission of the promise to the lineal descendants. This is why God would staunchly affirm His fidelity and the perpetuity of the covenant to David in spite of succeeding rascals who would appear in his lineage. For in that case, He "finds fault with them" but not with His Abrahamic-Davidic-New Covenant.¹

II. OLD TESTAMENT CONFIRMATION OF THE COVENANT

Actually all Old Testament passages that describe the Messiah as King and His coming kingdom confirm the promises of the Davidic Covenant. All the royal psalms, for example, give more information about the Davidic kingdom (Psalm 2; 18; 20–21; 45; 72; 89; 101; 132; 144). Psalm 89:3–4, 19–37 provides strong confirmation of the immutability of the covenant. It seems almost as if God was anticipating the amillennial claim that the kingdom promise should be spiritualized

into the church when He said that even though chastisement for sin would come, the covenant would not be broken or altered (Ps. 89:32–34).

A number of passages in Isaiah also predict and describe the visible, earthly kingdom promised in the Davidic Covenant. Isaiah predicted the reign of Messiah “on the throne of David and over his kingdom” (Isaiah 9:7). In other places he described some of the characteristics of that kingdom (Isaiah 11; 24–25; 54; 60–61).

Other significant Old Testament promises concerning the Davidic kingdom include Jeremiah 23:5–6; 30:8–9; 33:14–17, 20–21; Ezekiel 37:24–25; Daniel 7:13–14; Hosea 3:4–5; Amos 8:11; and Zechariah 14:4, 9.

III. NEW TESTAMENT CONFIRMATION OF THE COVENANT

The crucial question concerning the New Testament evidence about the kingdom is this: Did the teachings of Christ or the apostles in any way change or alter the Old Testament concept of an earthly kingdom? At the time of our Lord’s first advent the national hope for a kingdom was exceedingly strong among the Jewish people. The terms “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven” were on everyone’s lips. The chief characteristics of this kingdom in the conception of the Jewish people were that it would be (a) earthly, (b) national, (c) messianic, (d) moral, and (e) future. This meant (a) on this earth, (b) specifically related to the nation Israel, (c) ruled by the personal presence of Messiah, (d) with high, God-given standards, and (e) not yet in existence. Did the teachings of the Lord or others change this conception?

A. In the Preaching of John the Baptist

His message was simplicity itself: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:1–2). His emphasis was on repentance and not on describing the kingdom, though his preaching confirmed the promises of the Davidic Covenant.

B. In the Preaching of Christ

Gabriel announced to Mary that God would give to her Child the throne of His father David and rulership over Israel forever (Luke 1:31–33). The magi sought the “King of the Jews” (Matt. 2:2). Our Lord proclaimed the kingdom was at hand (Matt. 4:17, 23; 9:35). He insisted on righteousness for entrance into the kingdom (Matt. 5:20). He also commissioned the seventy disciples with this same message (Luke 10:1–9).

However, as His message continued to be rejected by the people, and especially by their leaders, our Lord introduced the mysteries of the kingdom (Matt. 13). These described aspects of the kingdom not revealed up to that time, for they describe what form the kingdom would take between the first and second advents of Christ. Did this mean that the Davidic kingdom would take a new form with the church fulfilling the promises made to David? No, for the simple reason that the Lord continued to speak of the Davidic kingdom to the end of His earthly life (note esp. Matt. 25:34). Also, when the disciples questioned the Lord just before His ascension concerning when the kingdom promised to Israel (not to the church) would come, He did not tell them that the kingdom had been changed to the church, but only said that He could not reveal the time when the kingdom would come (Acts 1:6–8). In other words, whatever form the kingdom would take in the present age (i.e., the mysteries of the kingdom) would not change or abrogate the promises of the Davidic Covenant concerning the future, earthly kingdom.

Thus the teaching of the New Testament confirms the Davidic Covenant.

NOTE

1. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 157.

Chapter 83: An Outline of Future Events

This chapter will present an outline of future events according to the pretribulation premillennial understanding of the Scriptures. This will serve as a framework for further detailed discussions of selected future events.

I. EVENTS SURROUNDING THE END OF THE CHURCH AGE

A. Increasing Apostasy

The term “last days” covers the entire period from the first to the second advents of Christ (Heb. 1:2). Defection and apostasy, among other things, will characterize that entire period (2 Tim. 3:1). So the presence of apostasy is not in itself indicative of the end of the Church Age, but the increase of it is. Apostasy is both present and future, when the climactic apostasy will occur that leads to the religious reign of the man of sin during the Tribulation period (2 Thess. 2:3). We may expect apostasy to become increasingly widespread as we draw nearer to the Tribulation days.

1. *The doctrinal characteristics of apostasy.* These include at least three, including (a) a denial of the doctrine of the Trinity (1 John 2:22–23); (b) a denial of the doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ (1 John 2:22; 4:3; 2 John 7). In John’s day this took the form of denying the true and real humanity of Christ, though it also takes the form of denying the true deity of Christ. Rejecting either the Trinity or the Incarnation denies the existence of the God-man, which is essential to our salvation. If Jesus Christ were not a man, He could not have died; but if He were not also God, that death could not atone for sins. The third point is (c) a denial of the doctrine of the return of Christ (2 Pet. 3:4).

2. *The lifestyle characteristics of apostasy.* Defection in doctrine always brings a decline in morals. Paul listed eighteen characteristics of such declension in 2 Timothy 3:1–5. They are love of self, love of money, a spirit of pride, blasphemy, disobedience to parents, lack of thankfulness, lack of holiness, lack of natural affection, unceasing enmity so that men cannot be persuaded to enter into treaties with each other, slander, lack of self-control, savagery, opposition to goodness, traitors, headiness (rashness or recklessness), high-mindedness, love of pleasure, a pretense of worship without godliness of life.

B. Preparation for the Ecumenical Church

During the first part of the Tribulation days, organized, ecumenical religion will have its heyday. This apostate religious system is described in Revelation 17 under the label “Mystery, Babylon” (KJV). It will be worldwide (Rev. 17:15), be unfaithful to the truth and to the Lord (the term “harlot” appears in Rev. 17:1, 5, 15–16), have extensive political clout (Rev. 17:12–13), have a “gold cup full of abominations,” that is, be inwardly corrupt while outwardly glorious and splendid (Rev. 17:4), and will persecute the saints of the Tribulation days (Rev. 17:6).

The groundwork for such a system will apparently have to be laid before the Tribulation begins, that is, during the closing years of the Church Age. The preparation will likely include both organizational moves toward unity in Christendom as well as the ascendancy of doctrines to which diverse groups can give support.

II. THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

A. The Concept of the Rapture

Our modern understanding of rapture appears to have little or no connection with the eschatological event. However, the word is properly used of that event. Rapture is a state or experience of being carried away. The English word comes from a Latin word, *rapio*, which means to seize or snatch in relation to an ecstasy of spirit or the actual removal from one place to

another. In other words, it means to be carried away in spirit or in body. The Rapture of the church means the carrying away of the church from earth to heaven.

The Greek word from which we take the term “rapture” appears in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, translated “caught up.” The Latin translation of this verse used the word *rapturo*. The Greek word it translates is *harpazō*, which means to snatch or take away. Elsewhere it is used to describe how the Spirit caught up Philip near Gaza and brought him to Caesarea (Acts 8:39) and to describe Paul’s experience of being caught up into the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2–4). Thus there can be no doubt that the word is used in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 to indicate the actual removal of people from earth to heaven.

B. The Components of the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13–18)

1. *The return of Christ* (1 Thess. 4:16). The Lord Himself will return for His people, accompanied by all the grandeur His presence deserves. There will be a shout of command (whether uttered by the Lord or an archangel is not stated), and the trumpet of God will summon the dead in Christ to their resurrection as well as sounding a warning to those who have rejected Him and thus have missed the Rapture.

2. *A resurrection* (1 Thess. 4:16). At this time only the dead in Christ will be raised. This means believers since the Day of Pentecost, for though there were believers before then, none of them were placed “in Christ.” The dead in Christ will be raised just before the living are changed. Yet both groups will experience their respective changes “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:52). The entire procedure will be instantaneous, not gradual. The word for “moment” is the word from which the word “atom” comes. When the atom was discovered it was thought to be indivisible; therefore, it was named “atom.” Even though subsequently the atom was split, the word retains its meaning of indivisible. The resurrection of the dead and the translation of the living will occur in an indivisible instant of time.

3. *A rapture* (1 Cor. 15:17). Strictly speaking, only living believers are raptured (though we use the term to include all that happens at that time). This means they will be caught up into the Lord’s presence without having to experience physical death.

4. *A reunion* (1 Cor. 15:17). The reunion will be with the Lord and with the loved ones who have died.

5. *A reassurance* (1 Cor. 15:18). The truth of the Rapture both comforts and encourages us (for the word does have both meanings).

Paul’s descriptions of the Rapture in both 1 Corinthians 15:51–58 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 give no support to the partial Rapture view, which teaches that only spiritual believers will be raptured at several times during the Tribulation period. Paul stated clearly that “we shall be changed” at that time, and he wrote those words to the Corinthians, many of whom could hardly be called spiritual.

III. EVENTS OF THE TRIBULATION PERIOD

Since the Scriptures describe so many events during the seven years of Tribulation, and since I would like to try to put them all together in as nearly a chronological sequence as possible, I think it would be best to do this in the following chapter.

IV. EVENTS AT THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

A. The Second Coming

At the climax of the campaign of Armageddon, the Lord will return to this earth to judge and to reign. His return is described in Zechariah 14:1–11 and Revelation 19:11–16. It is referred to in many other passages, but these two give the most detailed description of it.

B. The Judgments at the Second Coming

These will be discussed in a separate chapter.

V. THE MILLENNIUM

Since the Scriptures give many details about the future millennial kingdom of Christ, I would like to devote a separate chapter to the Millennium and to the events at the end of it.

Chapter 84: The Tribulation Period

I. ITS UNIQUENESS

In describing the period of the Great Tribulation, the Lord said it will be a time “such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall” (Matt. 24:21). It will be a time of trouble unique in the history of the world. There have been many difficult times since the Lord spoke these words, and He Himself warned the disciples, “In the world you have tribulation” (John 16:33). What is it, then, that makes this future period different? How will the Great Tribulation be unique?

Two characteristics will distinguish the Tribulation from all other hard times that the world has seen. First, it will be worldwide, not localized, as stated in the promise of deliverance (Rev. 3:10) and as described in detail in the judgments of the Revelation. The intense local persecutions and calamities of this present day cannot be the beginning of the Tribulation, for that time will affect the entire world.

Then too the Tribulation will be unique because of the way men act. In one of the early judgments, men will hide themselves in the dens and caves of the mountains and say, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb” (Rev. 6:16). When the Great Tribulation comes, men will act as if they think the world is coming to an end.

For years some men have been talking as if they thought the end were near, but at the beginning of the Tribulation, they will realize that the end is actually at hand. Scientists, politicians, and even church leaders warn today that the end of human history could be upon us, and even use the term “Armageddon,” but people are not behaving as if they believe it. Real estate is being bought and sold, savings are being accumulated, and plans are continually being made for the future. But when the Tribulation comes, people will hide in bomb shelters and will actually seek death rather than try to preserve life. The future, in those days, will hold no attraction.

The uniqueness of the Tribulation lies in its being worldwide and in its terror, which will cause people to want to die rather than live. For a time during the Tribulation, even suicide will be impossible, forcing people to live.

II. THE BEGINNING OF THE TRIBULATION

The Tribulation does not necessarily begin the day the church is taken to meet the Lord in the air. Though I believe that the Rapture precedes the beginning of the Tribulation, nothing is said in the Scriptures as to whether or not some time (or how much time) may elapse between the Rapture and the beginning of the Tribulation.

The Tribulation actually begins with the signing of a covenant between the leader of the “Federated States of Europe” and the Jewish people. This treaty will set in motion the events of the seventieth week (or seven years) of Daniel’s prophecy. There is an interval of undetermined length between the first sixty-nine weeks of seven years each and the last or seventieth week of seven years.

We are living in that interval. It is the time in which God is forming the church, the body of Christ, by saving Jews and Gentiles alike. Since God has not yet finished this present program, the last week of the seventy has not yet begun. When it does, God will once again turn His attention in a special way to His people the Jews and to His holy city Jerusalem, as outlined in Daniel 9:24.

When this last period of seven years begins, “He will make a firm covenant with the many for one week” (Dan. 9:27). Who does the “he” refer to? Grammatically it could refer either to

Messiah (Dan. 9:26) or to “the prince who is to come,” who will probably be related to the people who destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The latter view is better, because usually the antecedent nearer to a pronoun is preferred and in this case it is the prince, not Messiah. Then too nothing in the record of Christ’s life in any way connects Him with the making (and later breaking) of a seven-year covenant with the Jewish people.

This man is the “little horn” (Dan. 7:8, 24–25) who heads the coalition of Western nations in the Tribulation days. He is also called the “man of lawlessness” (2 Thess. 2:3) and is referred to as the beast (Rev. 11:7; 13:1; 17:11; 19:20). At the beginning of the Tribulation he will make a covenant, or enter a league, with Israel. This treaty will align the West with the Jewish nation and will guarantee protection to Israel so that she may reestablish the ancient rituals of Judaism. It appears that this provision will also assure protection while Israel rebuilds the temple in Jerusalem as the center of her religious observances. Since we know that the covenant will be broken and the man of sin will be worshiped in the temple of God, obviously a temple will have been already built during the first part of the Tribulation (2 Thess. 2:4).

The alignment of western Europe with Israel is interesting in the light of current events. It seems to indicate that Israel will not of herself be sufficiently strong to feel secure in the face of the hostile states around her. She will not be able to “go it alone” at this point, and so will form an alliance with the Western nations. Then the outlook for Israel will seem bright. She will feel secure in her land, she will be worshiping according to the Old Testament pattern, she will have a temple again in Jerusalem, and she will be important among the nations of the world. But this is only the beginning.

III. THE JUDGMENTS OF THE SEALS, TRUMPETS, AND BOWLS

A. The Sequence

Revelation 6–19 describes the Tribulation in detail. We read here about three series of judgments. The first series is related to the opening of the seven seals of a scroll, the second to the blowing of seven trumpets, and the third to the pouring out of the contents of seven bowls.

Do these three series of judgments follow each other in succession, or do the trumpets and the bowls recapitulate the judgments of the seals with greater intensity? In other words, do the trumpet and bowl judgments follow the seals as different and distinct judgments, or do they picture the same judgments?

I believe the three series follow one another in chronological sequence and that there is no recapitulation. Either way, however, the seal judgments are the first judgments of the Tribulation days and will probably occur during the first year of that period.

B. The Seals

1. The first seal judgment (Rev. 6:1–2). The opening of the first seal revealed to John a white horse ridden by one who went forth conquering. In interpreting the Revelation, always begin with what is the clearest. Here, it is quite obvious that the opening months of the Tribulation will see nations conquered by the rider on the horse. Some think this rider is the man of sin, the head of the Western coalition of nations. His method of conquest, however, we would call “cold” war. Clearly, this description coincides exactly with the picture of the beginning of the Tribulation given in 1 Thessalonians 5:3—it will be a day when men are talking about peace and safety. This may indicate that we are living in the days immediately preceding the Tribulation—but, on the other hand, there is nothing in the Word of God that would indicate that there could not be another world war in this present age, then another time of peace before the Lord comes. Other evangelical scholars agree that the first rider simply represents the spirit of conquest—an attitude

that has characterized the nations throughout human history. Doubtless this spirit will be intensified as the end approaches.

2. *The second seal judgment* (Rev. 6:3–4). In the judgment of the second seal, peace will be removed from the earth and men will war with each other. The phrase, “a great sword was given him,” confirms this interpretation. The red color of the second horse suggests bloodshed. War has always followed the spirit of conquest.

3. *The third seal judgment* (Rev. 6:5–6). The third judgment (still probably in the first year of the Tribulation) brings famine to the world. A black horse pictures this event, and the pair of scales carried by his rider bespeaks a careful rationing of food. The Roman denarius (v. 6) was a day’s wages in Palestine in Jesus’ day (Matt. 20:2). Normally it would buy ten quarts of wheat or thirty of barley. Under the famine conditions of these coming days, a day’s wage will buy only one measure of wheat or three of barley—one tenth the normal supply of food. However, there is an ironic twist to this famine. Oil and wine, the very things a majority of people cannot afford, will not be in short supply. The scarcity of basic foods and the availability of luxury items will taunt the common people in their impoverished state.

4. *The fourth seal judgment* (Rev. 6:7–8). This horse will be, literally, a yellowish green. He is the only horseman who is named, and he is called Death. Death, of course, claims the physical part of man, and it is accompanied by Hades, the place of the dead (Rev. 6:8}i}), which claims the immaterial part. The effect of this judgment will be devastating—one fourth of earth’s population will be killed by the sword (war), by hunger (the famine that often accompanies war), by death (perhaps by the plagues and diseases that follow war), and by wild beasts of the earth, which apparently will be unrestrained at this time and will roam about freely, killing men. Man’s cleverly devised schemes for bringing in peace, plenty, and longevity will be overturned in the short space of time this judgment will take.

5. *The fifth seal judgment* (Rev. 6:9–11). Though the action of the fifth seal is in heaven, it presupposes that certain events have happened on earth. The group of martyrs in heaven (Rev. 6:9}i}) implies that these people have already been killed on earth, early in the Tribulation. These people will be witnessing for Christ early in the Tribulation. They will be slain because of their testimony.

6. *The sixth seal judgment* (Rev. 6:12–17). This judgment unleashes universal havoc on the earth. It will include six catastrophic events: (1) A single great earthquake will take place. (2) The sun will be darkened so that it becomes black as sackcloth. The text does not say that the sun will be turned into sackcloth, but that it will be blackened as sackcloth. (3) The moon will become as red as blood. (4) There will be a meteor shower, with all the natural devastating consequences that follow. (5) Apparently heaven will be opened for a moment so that the men on earth can have a glimpse of that awesome scene, with God on His throne. (6) Every mountain and island will be moved.

These judgments will produce terror in the hearts of all living men. Their hearts will be filled with fear—not primarily because of the physical disturbances or the awful wars and pestilences, but because they will see God on His throne. Men will plead to be hidden “from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb” (Rev. 6:16). They will go to any length to avoid facing their Creator and Judge, even to seeking death under the rocks and mountains in which they will try to hide. All classes of people (Rev. 6:15) will be affected. As has been true throughout history, there will be no general or mass turning to God in repentance, but only a turning from God’s face.

These will be the first judgments of the Tribulation. But these will be only the beginning—the worst is yet to come.

IV. THE REDEEMED OF THE TRIBULATION

By the time of the fifth seal a number of true believers will have been martyred. In other words, during the first years of the Tribulation there will be a true witness to the Gospel, and this will be opposed by the ecumenical church, which will be “drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus” (Rev. 17:6). In the name of religion, the organized church of the first part of the Tribulation will kill true believers for their faith.

How will these true believers have been converted in the first place? With the Rapture of the church, all Christians will have been removed from earth, so none will be alive immediately after the Rapture. If there are to be martyrs, there must first be believers. How will men be saved? In Revelation 7:1–8, we are introduced to a sort of parenthesis in judgment. Even the wind does not blow. (Incidentally, can you imagine the effect on climate of the cessation of the wind even for a short time? Add the disturbance in the topography of the earth, with the shifting of islands and mountains, and you can begin to grasp the increased chaos during these early years of the Tribulation.)

The purpose of this suspension of judgment is that a certain group of people may be “sealed” (Revelation 7:3). These people are called “the bond-servants of our God.” Who they are is described in detail in Revelation 7:4–8. They are Jews from each of the twelve tribes, and they do some particular service for God. Whether the seal placed on them is a visible mark or characteristic of some kind is neither stated nor implied in the text. A seal need not be visible to be real (Eph. 4:30). It is principally a guarantee of ownership and security. Both these ideas are involved in the sealing of this group. These people are owned by God, which means that they are redeemed. They are kept secure by God, which may mean He protects them from their enemies on earth while they complete their service for Him.

But how were these people saved? Even though there will be no Christians on earth immediately after the Rapture, there will be Bibles and books about the Christian faith. In other words, information will be available to give people the facts on which to find saving faith.

What will be the important work for which God will protect these people supernaturally? Actually, this passage does not specify, but we have hints as to the answer in Revelation 14, where the same group is described as in heaven after their work has been completed. They are said to be the redeemed followers of the Lamb, which may indicate that they are a group of special witnesses to the Gospel in the Tribulation days. They will not be the only ones witnessing, but they will be the only group given special protection from their enemies.

The first judgments of the Tribulation and the religious situation in the first part of that period are repeated, in summary form, in the Lord’s Olivet discourse (Matt. 24). Matt. 24:4–14 cover the events of the first half of the Tribulation, for at Matt. 24:15 we read about an event that occurs exactly halfway through the seven-year period. Notice how the seal judgments are summarized: “And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. . . . For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes” (Matt. 24:6–7). Notice the reference to the martyrs of the fifth seal: “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you” (Matt. 24:9). Look at the false religion: “And many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many” (Matt. 24:11). The ministry of the 144,000 sealed ones, and other witnesses, will account for the fact that “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations” (Matt. 24:14). Here are all the major events of the first half of the Tribulation, in capsule form, from Christ’s lips before the Crucifixion.

V. EGYPT AND RUSSIA IN THE TRIBULATION

So far we have focused our attention chiefly on the Western federation of nations, headed by the man of sin. But during the first part of the Tribulation other powerful alliances will exist or be in

the making. Egypt, to the south of Palestine, will continue to be a strong and threatening nation until the man of sin conquers her. This defeat is predicted in Daniel 11:40–43, and though scholars do not agree as to when this will occur, it seems to be no later than the middle of the Tribulation.

So we can expect to see Egypt remain a power to be reckoned with until about three years of the Tribulation have elapsed. Then, she will be defeated and looted by Antichrist and his army. Egypt does not figure in any of the power blocs or wars of the last half of the Tribulation.

The nations of the East will be forming some sort of coalition and will not actively take part in any of the events involving Palestine until the very end of the Tribulation. All trends among Eastern nations toward independence and detachment from Western influence are significant. They may be preparatory to the alliance that those nations will form.

By far the most important bloc, besides the Western confederation of nations, is that of Gog and Magog. The names listed in Ezekiel 38–39 are identified in Genesis 10:2 as sons of Japheth. The Japhethites migrated, after the Flood, from Asia Minor to the north, beyond the Caspian and Black Seas. They settled in the area occupied today by Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. “Gog” and “Magog,” therefore, may refer to the people who live in the area north of Palestine. She will have with her as allies Persia (modern Iran), Ethiopia (northern Sudan), Put (Libya), Gomer (probably the eastern part of Turkey and the Ukraine), and Togarmah (the part of Turkey near the Syrian border) (Ezek. 38:5–6). The West will lodge a protest (Ezek. 38:13), but to no avail, and this invading army from the north will cover Israel like a cloud (Ezek. 38:16). These soldiers will go to rob and plunder the land that thought it was safe under the protection of the West.

At this point God will step in and utterly destroy the forces of Russia and her allies (Ezek. 38:21–39:7). The seemingly invincible troops will be supernaturally defeated and completely routed. The Russian army will be buried in Israel (Ezek. 38:11), and only then will Russian influence in the Middle East be ended—by the direct intervention of God.

VI. THE PROGRAM OF ANTICHRIST

The Scriptures often divide the seven years of the Tribulation into two equal parts. The last of Daniel’s seventy “weeks” of seven years is divided in the middle by a significant event (Dan. 9:27). In Revelation the two halves of the Tribulation are designated either by “time and times and half a time” (Rev. 12:14), or “forty-two months” (Rev. 11:2; 13:5), or 1,260 days (Rev. 11:3; 12:6), each of which works out to three and one half years.

With the invasion of Palestine from the north by Gog and Magog, it may seem for a time that the plans of the man of sin (Antichrist) are almost crushed. But supernatural intervention by God and the destruction of the Russian hordes will clear the way for the beast to resume his scheming.

A. Slaying the Two Witnesses

First, Antichrist must eliminate opposition from two individuals (Rev. 11:3–13) who have been plaguing him. The killing of these “two witnesses” will be the beast’s first great feat at the middle of the Tribulation.

The two witnesses will have a spectacular ministry during the first part of the Tribulation. They will have power to kill their enemies with fire, to prevent rain, to turn water to blood, and to bring plagues on the earth as often as they wish. Their frequent use of these powers will add to the general devastation. Think, for instance, what will happen when they use their power to prevent rain. Along with the climatic and topographical changes that will occur on earth, unimaginable disaster will result.

Though the witnesses will be invincible for three and a half years, God will permit the beast to kill them after they have finished their work (Rev. 11:7). Making martyrs of the witnesses will win Antichrist wide support among the people of the world. But he will not be satisfied with merely killing them; he will display their bodies in the streets of Jerusalem. People, seeing the witnesses dead, will rejoice that they will no longer have to hear their warnings.

Merely to look on the decaying bodies of these two men will not satisfy people. They will make a great holiday of the occasion and will send gifts to each other. Interestingly enough, this is the only occasion, during the entire Tribulation period, in which rejoicing is mentioned. People will be so overjoyed that the witnesses are dead that this will be a happy holiday for them. If they had believed the witnesses' preaching, their deaths would have been a sad occasion instead of a holiday.

But God will intervene. After three and a half days, the bodies of the two witnesses will be resurrected and translated into heaven in a cloud of glory. Imagine the scene. Long lines will be waiting to view the corpses. Perhaps TV cameras will be focusing on them at the very moment of their resurrection. People in Europe and America will be watching via satellite transmission. The calm, matter-of-fact announcer will suddenly become nearly hysterical as he sees a resurrection in process and realizes that millions of people are depending on him for an explanation. How will the interpreters of the news manage this one? Even the voice from heaven (Rev. 11:12) will be heard in millions of homes.

But even before the newspapers can report the story or the commentators write their analyses, there will be another great event for them to cover, an earthquake that will center in Jerusalem and that will destroy a tenth part of the city, killing seven thousand people.

At this time, apparently, the 144,000 witnesses (Rev. 7) will also be killed, and the beast will destroy the ecumenical church (Rev. 17:16) to clear away opposition to his next great act.

B. Demanding Worship

Having rid himself of all religious opposition, the beast will issue an edict: "Worship me." To enforce his command he will have to break his treaty with the Jews, which allowed them to restore Jewish worship in their rebuilt temple at Jerusalem. This he will do (Dan. 9:27), demanding that he be the object of all worship (Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:4).

How will he accomplish this?

First of all, he will have superhuman help. Satan, we are told, will give him his power and throne and great authority (Rev. 13:2). The devil will work furiously, from this point on, to do everything in his power to thwart God's plans. He will make war with Michael and his angels—and lose. This will result in his being cast out of heaven. Then God will warn the inhabitants of the earth, "Woe . . . because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time" (Rev. 12:12). The power of Satan will be behind the acts of the beast, Antichrist, and he will use him to the full.

Another reason for the beast's greatness involves his being wounded unto death. His deadly wound will be healed (Rev. 13:3), so that all the world will wonder. The phrase, "wounded to death" (KJV), literally means, "as having been slain to death," and it is exactly the same phrase as is used in Rev. 5:6 in reference to the death of Christ.

Since Christ actually died, perhaps the beast also will actually die and then be restored to life. He is said to rise out of the abyss (Rev. 11:7), which seems to confirm the idea that he experiences a resurrection. If not, the text at least means he will have some kind of spectacular restoration so that the world will wonder after him. His miraculous resurrection or restoration will make all men

acknowledge his uniqueness (“Who is like the beast?”) and his might (“Who is able to wage war with him?”) (Rev. 13:4).

The beast’s program will include blasphemy and war (Rev. 13:5–7). He will speak insolently against God (Dan. 7:25). Objects of his blasphemy will include the name of God, the dwelling place of God, and those who dwell in heaven. He will be allowed (notice that God is still in control) to make war with the saints (Rev. 12:17) and to kill them. But his power will be limited by God to forty-two months.

Here is an example of the interweaving of the many forces behind events: God will control all, but Satan will empower the beast, who in turn will act on his own in blaspheming God. Men who join his army and fight for him will do so voluntarily, and they in turn will make martyrs of God’s people who, though they are killed, will still be within God’s protecting care!

In order to promote his program more efficiently, Antichrist will have an important lieutenant. He is the “second beast” (Rev. 13:11–18), and his sole duty is to promote the purposes and expedite the worship of the first beast, the man of sin. At no time in his career does the second beast promote himself, but his concerns are always centered in the first beast. His power will be as great as that of the man of sin, but he will use it in the interests of his superior, not for himself (Rev. 13:12).

This lieutenant will be able to make fire come down on the earth, duplicating the power of the two witnesses in order to show the world that he is as great as they were (Rev. 13:13). He will be able to work other miracles (Rev. 13:13–14). He will order men to make an image of the first beast (Rev. 13:14), and apparently they will do it willingly and quickly. His next step will be to give life to the image they have made. The word for “breath” (Rev. 13:15) is *pneuma*, and this could indicate a supernatural miracle (empowered by Satan) that will actually give life to the image. Of course, the word may be translated “wind,” which may indicate some magical sleight of hand, on the part of the lieutenant, to give the image the appearance of real life. The speech and movement of an image could easily be artificial, but they could with equal ease be the work of Satan.

C. Controlling Commerce

However, the greatest feat of the second beast, who is sometimes called “the false prophet” (Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10), will be a squeeze play on men to force them to worship the man of sin. It will be a simple scheme, cleverly devised: “And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand, or on their forehead, and he provides that no one should be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name” (Rev. 13:16–17). In other words: bow or starve.

A “mark” is an impression made by a stamp, such as a brand used on slaves and animals. Men will become slaves of the man of sin and will have to bear the identifying mark of their slavery. Perhaps timid slaves will have the mark placed in their right hands. To avoid embarrassment, they may try to avoid shaking hands with people in order to conceal the mark. Bold followers of Antichrist may have the mark placed in the middle of their foreheads.

What will this mark be like? Rev. 13:17 indicates that it will be either the name of the beast or his number, and the number is further explained as 666, the number of the man of sin, not of his lieutenant. This number has been linked to so many personages as to make them all unreliable coincidences. When this great ruler comes to power, however, there will be no mistake as to who he is. In some way unknown to us now, the number 666 will play a principal part in his identification (Rev. 16:1–3; 19:20; 20:10).

This will be a grim time in the history of the world. I suppose that Antichrist would succeed completely in bringing the entire world to his feet were it not for the presence of the godly remnant, who will refuse to bow, and for the shortness of the time available to him.

VII. THE TRUMPET AND BOWL JUDGMENTS

A. The Trumpets

In the meantime, God will continue to pour out the judgments of His wrath on the earth. The first series of judgments will be unleashed as the seals of a book are opened. We have already seen what will happen as the first six seals are broken. With the opening of the seventh seal (Rev. 8:1), one would expect a holocaust to let loose. Instead, there is silence—the still silence of expectancy and foreboding. The silence will last for half an hour and will be awesome. The opening of this seventh seal introduces another series of judgments, which are announced by the blowing of seven trumpets (Rev. 8:7–9:21; 11:15–19). The last three of the seven trumpet judgments are distinguished from the first four by being specially designated as “woes,” which seems to imply that they are of harsher character.

Where is the middle (three-and-a-half-year) point of the Tribulation in relation to these judgments? The Scriptures do not specifically say, but many feel that the middle point comes either with the first trumpet judgment or with the first woe judgment (which is the fifth trumpet judgment). If this is so, the first trumpet judgment comes when Antichrist kills the two witnesses and sets himself up to be worshiped. The trumpet judgments seem to continue on into the last year of the period. They are followed by a final rapid series of further judgments in the last months of the seventh year.

1. *The first trumpet judgment.* (Rev. 8:7). There will be hail and fire, mingled with blood, on the earth so that a third part of the earth, trees, and grass will be burned. Fire and blood, here, are not symbols of something else. We are to take them literally. They will devastate vegetation on the earth and further add to the climatic disruptions.

2. *The second trumpet judgment.* (Rev. 8:8–9). This is explained with a figure of speech—“something like a great mountain burning with fire.” Probably nothing in the realm of our present experience corresponds to this. It will likely be something about which we do not yet know anything, but its effect is clear—a third part of the sea will become blood, and a third part of the world’s shipping will be destroyed. Think of how this judgment will affect the headlines in the papers and the hearts of the people.

3. *The third trumpet judgment.* (Rev. 8:10–11). This judgment will affect the supply of fresh water, making it bitter to the taste and polluting to the system. As a result, many will die from the contamination and pollution.

4. *The fourth trumpet judgment.* (Rev. 8:12–13). This judgment will affect the sun, moon, stars, and the uniformity of the day-night cycle. Since one third of the heavenly bodies will be smitten, perhaps the twenty-four hour cycle of day and night will be shortened to sixteen hours. The Lord Jesus predicted, in His Olivet discourse, “signs in sun and moon and stars” (Luke 21:25).

5. *The first woe—the fifth trumpet judgment.* (Rev. 9:1–12). Like arrows from a bow, the locusts of this first woe judgment will be discharged on the earth. They originate from the bottomless pit—literally, from the “shaft of the abyss.” This pit, entered by a shaft, is under lock and key. Incidentally, chapter 9 contains more occurrences of the words “as” and “like” than any other chapter in the Bible. It was difficult for John to describe what he saw in the vision. Nevertheless, the horror of the judgment is clear.

From the shaft will come “locusts” (Rev. 9:3–11) that are no ordinary insects. They will come straight from Satan’s domain. They seem to be animal creatures like locusts, but they are demonic

in nature. Perhaps they are demons who take on the form of these unique locusts and who are directed by the king of the shaft of the abyss (Rev. 9:11).

These locusts inflict a sting like a scorpion's. "The pain from the sting of a scorpion, though not generally fatal, is perhaps, the most intense that any animal can inflict upon the human body. The insect itself is the most irascible and malignant that lives, and its poison is like itself. . . . It is also difficult to guard against them [the locusts], if they can be warded off at all, because they fly where they please, dart through the air, and dwell in darkness."¹ Unlike ordinary locusts, these creatures will not attack vegetation, but only men. They will be released for five months, during which time men will be unable to commit suicide. This seems impossible, but somehow it will be so.

It is difficult for us to imagine such creatures, but this is no reason for thinking they are mere symbols. Remember that the power of Satan and his demons is great—and these ferocious locusts are demonic. Little wonder that this is called the first woe. Since men do not believe in or accept the existence and activity of demons, people then alive will probably try to give some natural explanation for these creatures and will try to destroy them with a hastily concocted pesticide. But they will find no explanation, and their antidotes will not work.

6. The second woe—the sixth trumpet judgment. (Rev. 9:13–21). Under the fourth seal judgment, one fourth of the earth's population will be killed; under the sixth trumpet judgment, an additional one third will die. This means that these two judgments alone will reduce the population of the earth by one half. Add to this all those who will be killed through war, famine, and disease, and it is not difficult to see how common death will be during this awful time.

The means of this judgment will be an army of horsemen numbering 200 million. Many understand these troops to be the armies of the Orient as they march to invade Palestine. Others see them as a horde of demons, for Scriptures give other examples of supernatural armies (2 Kings 2:11; 2 Kings 6:13–17; Rev. 19:14). The weapons of destruction here will be fire, smoke, and brimstone (Rev. 9:17). Since these are weapons of hell, they perhaps indicate that this army is made up of demons, the inhabitants of hell.

One would think that the long obituary columns in the newspapers would startle men into facing their responsibility toward God. Instead of repenting and turning to Him for mercy, however, those who are not killed by this army will harden their hearts. The religion of unsaved men during the Tribulation will be the worship of demons and idols, and murder, sorcery, fornication, and stealing will be common (Rev. 9:20–21). Sorcery may include the misuse of drugs, for we derive the word pharmacy from the Greek term. It is interesting to notice that three of these four practices are direct violations of the Ten Commandments. Man's ethics will be a reflection of his religion, and during those days vice, rather than virtue, will reign triumphant.

7. The third woe—the seventh trumpet judgment (Rev. 11:15–19). With the sounding of the seventh trumpet will come the announcement that the end is at hand, though seven other judgments must be poured on the earth before all will be finished. These judgments will be the bowls of the wrath of God (Rev. 16:1–21). These last plagues will come in the closing months, or possibly even weeks, of the last year of the Tribulation, without interruption or pause. The seven angels that have to do with these last judgments will all be told to pour out their judgments at one time. All this will be happening at the same time that Antichrist demands that men worship him. Men will be pressured from every side. Most will decide to cast their lot with Antichrist.

B. The Bowls

1. The first bowl judgment. (Rev. 16:2). This will bring on men a grievous sore described as "loathsome and malignant." These words could indicate some sort of cancer. This affliction will come only on those who worship the beast, believers being exempt. But apparently the beast will

be able to do nothing for his followers, for they will continue to curse God for these sores even after the fifth bowl has been poured out (v. 11).

2. *The second bowl judgment.* (Rev. 16:3). The waters will turn into blood during this judgment. Every living thing in the sea will die. The rather vivid phrase pictures ships wallowing in blood. Under the second trumpet judgment, a third of the sea creatures die (Rev. 8:9); now the destruction of marine life will be total. Can you imagine the stench and disease this will bring to people who live along the seashores of the world? Seventy-two percent of earth's surface is water.

3. *The third bowl judgment.* (Rev. 16:4–7). At this time, as in the third trumpet judgment, the fresh-water supply is affected. Now, instead of wormwood, it turns to blood. The victims of this plague will experience inexorable retribution. They will have shed the blood of the saints and prophets, so now they will have to drink blood. They will deserve what they receive. It is not easy for us to conceive of God dealing with people in this manner. For thousands of years He has been long-suffering and gracious, not dispensing the kind of judgment the world deserves.

4. *The fourth bowl judgment.* (Rev. 16:8–9). During this time the strength of the sun will be so heightened that it will scorch men with intense heat. Once again, men will harden their hearts instead of turning to God in repentance.

5. *The fifth bowl judgment.* (Rev. 16:10–11). The throne of the beast will be affected, and his capital will be darkened. This will likely slow down his attempt to force all men to worship him. The result will be that men will gnaw their tongues and blaspheme God for their pains and sores, for pain always seems worse in darkness than in the light.

6. *The sixth bowl judgment.* (Rev. 16:12–16). The Euphrates River will dry up (it was previously turned into blood). This will facilitate the crossing of the river by the armies of the kings of the East (Dan. 11:44) as they rush to the war of Armageddon.

7. *The seventh bowl judgment.* (Rev. 16:17–21). Widespread destruction and havoc will occur, and with it will be heard the cry, "It is done!" Many physical disturbances will follow. An earthquake will divide Jerusalem and cause other cities to fall. Islands and mountains will disappear, and there will be an unheard-of storm in which single hailstones will weigh one hundred pounds. But in spite of the severity and universality of these last judgments, men who survive them will persist in blaspheming God rather than turning to Him for mercy. Everything that man has built in this world will literally collapse before his very eyes, yet he will think he is still the master of his fate and that he has no need for God.

The conclusion of this judgment will bring men to the end of the Tribulation and to the second coming of Christ to begin His reign over earth. Only one more part of the picture remains to be completed.

VIII. ARMAGEDDON

To review: Before the middle of the Tribulation, the Western ruler, Antichrist (the man of sin), keeping his treaty with Israel, will invade and conquer Egypt. At that point the Russian armies from the north will invade and overrun Palestine, and when all appears hopeless for both Antichrist and Israel, God will step in and supernaturally destroy Russia's northern armies. This will give the man of sin a free hand to break his covenant with Israel, set himself up to be worshiped, and try to conquer the world.

As he proceeds with his program, however, the nations of the Orient will unite and attempt to stop him. To do this, they will march west into Palestine. The sixth bowl judgment will dry up the Euphrates River, speeding their entry into the Promised Land. In the meantime, Antichrist will have planted himself firmly in Palestine as a religious and political ruler.

The battlefield in which the armies from East and West will meet will be the Plain of Esdraelon, the area around the mountains of Megiddo. That's why the battle is called Armageddon—Ar meaning mountain. This plain is about twenty miles south-southeast of Haifa, and the valley today is about twenty miles by fourteen.

Another battlefield will focus on Jerusalem, where there will be house-to-house fighting and temporary success for the enemies of the Lord. But the Lord will send a plague and then stand on the Mount of Olives and “destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem” (Zech. 12:9; 14:12; 14:4; 12:9).

At the second coming of Christ still another area of conflict will center in Bozra in Edom, which is about twenty miles southeast of the southern tip of the Dead Sea (Isa. 63:1–6). Viewing these three areas of the war together, we see a gruesome picture of unbelievable carnage encompassing the entire land from Megiddo in the north, Jerusalem in the center, and Edom in the southeast (about 140 miles).

In the midst of the battle, the Lord Jesus Christ will return, and the armies of heaven will conquer the armies of earth (Rev. 19:11–21). The carnage will be unbelievable (Rev. 14:20; 19:17–18).

But the outcome is certain—the beast will be defeated and his armies captured. He and his false prophet-lieutenant will be thrown into the lake of fire to be tormented forever. Thus the Tribulation will close.

Why must there be such a time as this? There are at least two reasons: First, the wickedness of man must be punished. God may seem to be doing nothing about evil now, but someday He will act. A second reason is that man must, by one means or another, be prostrated before the King of kings and Lord of lords. He may do so voluntarily now by coming to Christ in faith and receiving salvation. Later he will have to do so, receiving only condemnation.

NOTE

1. J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse* (New York: Cook, 1865), 83.

Chapter 85: The Rapture of the Church

I. DEFINITION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE RAPTURE

As explained in chapter 83, the word “rapture” comes from the Latin translation of the Greek for “caught up” in 1 Thessalonians 4:17. Strictly speaking, in this text it relates only to the change in living believers at the time of Christ’s return. However, the label, Rapture, usually refers both to the translation of living believers from earthly mortality to heavenly immortality and to the resurrection of the corrupted bodies of believers to heavenly incorruption.

Three passages describe the Rapture: John 14:1–3; 1 Corinthians 15:50–58; and 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. The facets of the Rapture have been discussed in chapter 83.

II. VARIOUS VIEWS

In the nineteenth century, teaching concerning the Rapture of the church began to be widely disseminated. This raised such questions as whether the second coming of Christ involves several stages, the relation of those stages to the Tribulation period, and the distinctiveness of the church from Israel in God’s program. In the twentieth century one of the most debated questions in eschatology concerns the time of the Rapture.

To that question premillennialists have given four answers. (Amillennialists regard the coming of Christ as a single event to be followed by the general resurrection and judgment. For postmillennialists there is also no distinct Rapture.)

The four premillennial views of the Rapture are partial rapture (that is, only certain believers will be raptured), pretribulational rapture, midtribulational rapture, and posttribulational rapture. Partial rapture concerns the extent of the Rapture, whereas the other three views focus on the time of the Rapture.

III. THE EXTENT OF THE RAPTURE—PARTIAL OR TOTAL?

A. Definition of the Partial Rapture

Partial rapture teaches that only those believers who are “watching” and “waiting” for the Lord’s return will be found worthy to escape the terrors of the Tribulation by being taken in the Rapture.

B. Supporters of This View

Apparently this view originated with Robert Govett in 1835 in his book *Entrance into the Kingdom: The Apocalypse Expounded by Scripture*. It was also taught by J. A. Seiss, G. H. Pember, G. H. Lang, and the Local Church Movement.¹

C. Theological Framework of This View

1. *Salvation.* Advocates hold to salvation by grace and eternal security of the believer, but they interpret debated passages on security as Arminians do with this important exception: the danger facing the believer who fails is not perdition but millennial disinheritance. Every believer has the right to inherit the kingdom, but this can be forfeited through disobedience.

2. *Sanctification.* Often partial rapturists give strong emphasis to sanctification and holiness. They may teach that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is connected with power for witnessing and that the filling and indwelling of the Spirit are for some believers only, rather than for all. This emphasis carries over into their view of the Rapture; namely, that only spiritual believers will be raptured to escape the Tribulation.

3. *First resurrection.* The first resurrection is viewed as a resurrection for reward for spiritual believers, rather than for all. Believers who are not overcomers will be raised after the

Millennium. Therefore, that second resurrection (usually seen as involving only unbelievers) will include both believers and unbelievers.

D. Outline of This View

Partial rapturists teach that there will be several times for the Rapture and resurrection of overcomers.

1. *Before.* Just before the beginning of the Tribulation mature living saints will be translated and mature dead saints will be raised.

2. *During.* Then during the seven years of Tribulation other Church Age saints who were unprepared for the initial Rapture will be raptured at various intervals. These are seen in Revelation 7:9, 14; 11:2; 12:5 (the male child includes believers); 16:15 (a Rapture to deliver watching believers from the war of Armageddon); and a final Rapture at the end.

3. *After.* At the close of the Millennium, there will be a resurrection of believers who missed these earlier resurrections of rewards along with the resurrection of unbelievers. The believers will enter the everlasting kingdom, though they will have missed the millennial kingdom.

E. Biblical Support Cited for This View

1. *Suffering.* Many passages teach that believers must endure suffering before they can reign with Christ. Therefore, believers must either suffer now or in the Tribulation period (Luke 22:18–30; Acts 14:22; Rom. 8:16–17; Col. 3:24; 2 Thess. 1:4–5). Some identify the fire in 1 Corinthians 3:12–15 as the Tribulation. Revelation 3:5, it is said, may refer to a temporary blotting out of the Book of Life for carnal believers during the period of rewards that overcomers will enjoy.

2. *What is the first resurrection?* Since the Scriptures view the first resurrection as a prize to be gained, this means not all believers will gain it, only overcomers (Matt. 19:28–29; Luke 9:62; 20:35; Phil. 3:11–14; Rev. 2:11; Rev. 3:5).

3. *Birthright.* A believer, it is said, may lose his birthright and thus forfeit his chance to be raptured before the Tribulation (1 Cor. 6:9–10; Gal. 5:19–21; Heb. 12:14).

4. *Baptism of the Spirit.* Since the baptism of the Spirit is seen as empowerment for witnessing, not all believers are in the body of Christ and therefore not all are necessarily raptured.

5. *Reward.* The Rapture is viewed as a reward that not all believers will attain (Matt. 24:40–41; Matt. 25:1–13; 1 Cor. 9:27; 2 Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:24–28; Rev. 3:10).

F. Some Problems with This View

1. *Exclusiveness.* 1 Corinthians 15:51–52 plainly states that all will be changed, not some.

2. *Baptism of the Spirit.* The baptism of the Spirit does place all believers in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), thus all will experience the promise of the Rapture.

3. *Who will be punished?* The Tribulation period is never spoken of as a time of chastening for the church or part of the church. It is the time of Jacob's trouble.

4. *Reward?* The Rapture is not a reward for godly living; godly living will be rewarded with crowns, not Rapture (2 Tim. 4:8, and other passages on crowns).

IV. THE TIME OF THE RAPTURE

Basically there are three answers to the question of when the Rapture will occur in relation to the seven years of Tribulation. Pretribulationism says it will precede the beginning of the entire period. Midtribulationism teaches it will occur at the midpoint of the seven years; that is, the church will be on earth during the first three and one-half years but will be taken to heaven at that

point, thus escaping the last half of the Tribulation. Posttribulationism understands that the church will continue on the earth during the entire period, but that there will be a Rapture as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 at the end, followed immediately by the Second Coming. Each of these views will be examined in the next chapters.

NOTE

1. J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse* (New York: Cook, 1865); G. H. Pember, *The Great Prophecies of the Centuries Concerning the Church* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1895); G. H. Lang, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (London: Paternoster, 1948); and *The Local Church Movement* (Witness Lee, Revelation, Recovery Version [Anaheim, Calif.: Living Stream Ministry, 1976]).

Chapter 86: The Pretribulation Rapture View

I. DEFINITION OF THIS VIEW

Pretribulationism teaches that the Rapture of the church (both dead and living saints) will occur before the seven-year Tribulation period, that is, before the beginning of the seventieth week of Daniel 9:24–27. It is necessary to say “before the seven-year Tribulation period” because some who hold to midtribulation Rapture state that the Rapture is pretribulational, because they understand the Tribulation to refer only to the last three and one-half years of the seven-year period.

II. SUPPORTERS OF THIS VIEW

John Nelson Darby (1800–1882) gave the greatest initial impetus to the systematizing of pretribulationism. This is because he saw the church as a special work of God, distinct from His program for Israel. This, integrated into his premillennialism, led him to the position that the church would be raptured before the Tribulation period when God would again deal specially with Israel.

In the twentieth century the view has been expounded and defended through The Scofield Reference Bible; *Is the Rapture Next?*, by Leon Wood; *The Rapture Question*, by John F. Walvoord; *Things to Come*, by J. Dwight Pentecost; *A Revelation of Jesus Christ*, by J. B. Smith; and *What You Should Know About the Rapture*, by Charles C. Ryrie.¹

III. SUPPORT FOR THIS VIEW

A. Revelation 3:10

The promise is based on keeping the word of His patience, a reference to all believers (see similar Johannine designations in John 8:51; 14:23–24; and 1 John 2:3). It was made to all the churches, not just the one in Philadelphia in the first century (note Rev. 3:13 and the similar close to each of the letters to these representative churches). It relates to the coming hour of testing on the earth; that is, to the tribulations prophesied later on in the Revelation. It states that believers will be kept from that hour (*tereso ek tes horas*). Those who oppose pretribulationism understand the phrase to mean “I will guard”; that is, believers will be guarded throughout the seven years and then emerge from it at the second coming of Christ.

The pretribulationist’s understanding of *ek* is supported by a number of verses that have nothing to do with the Rapture and therefore do not beg the question. “He who guards his mouth and his tongue, guards his soul from troubles” (Prov. 21:23). Guarding your mouth and tongue is not the means of protecting yourself in the time of trouble; rather, it is the means of escaping trouble you are not presently in. In the Septuagint *ek* indicates an external, not internal, preservation. *Ek* also is used in the same way of external protection in Joshua 2:13 and Psalms 33:19; Psalms 56:13. Likewise in the New Testament, *ek* clearly has the same meaning. In Acts 15:29 Gentile believers were asked to keep themselves from certain practices that were offensive to Jewish believers. The only way they could do that would be by abstaining entirely from the practices. They must withdraw, not somehow protect themselves while practicing those things. In James 5:20 we are told that if a sinning Christian can be turned away from his backslidden state he will be saved from physical death. There is no way *ek* could mean he will be protected in the midst of physical death and then emerge from it in some kind of resurrection. He will escape a premature death by being exempt from it.²

The same phrase keep from, occurs in John 17:15: “I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.” Posttribulationists point out that this promise is fulfilled not by removing believers from the world but by protecting them from Satan while they

live on the earth. Then they assert that, similarly, believers will live during the Tribulation but be kept from its wrath.

Such an analogy fails to answer the basic question, How are believers kept from Satan's power? True, it is not by removing them from this world, but a removal is involved. Paul described it this way: "For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col. 1:13). John said the same thing when he wrote that "the evil one does not touch [cling to] him [the believer]" (1 John 5:18). Believers have been transferred from one domain (Satan's) to another (Christ's), and that is how we are kept from the evil one.

However, the promise of Revelation 3:10 not only guarantees being kept from the trials of the Tribulation period but being kept from the time period of the Tribulation. The promise is not, "I will keep you from the trials." It is, "I will also keep you from the hour of trial" (NIV). Posttribulationists have to resort to finding means to "undercut stress on the term 'hour'"³ by insisting that "hour" means the experiences of a time period but not the time itself. In other words, the church will live through the time but will not experience (some of) the events. But if the events of the Tribulation are worldwide and directly and indirectly affect everybody, how can the church be on the earth and escape the experiences? If our Lord had been saved from the hour of His atoning sacrifice (John 12:27) by living through that time but not experiencing the events of His passion, there would have been no atonement.

Granted, it is possible to live through a time and miss some of the events (like being present at a social function but missing some of the activities), but it is not possible to miss the time without also missing the events.

To summarize, posttribulationists teach unclearly the meaning of the promise of Revelation 3:10. (1) Some seem to say that it means protection (for some believers who escape martyrdom throughout the Tribulation) and then Rapture at the end. (2) Some seem to say that it means protection from the last crisis (which includes Armageddon and the "lull" of peace and safety that supposedly precedes it) by Rapture just before that last crisis. (3) Some seem to say that it means the church will live through Armageddon, be guarded during that time, and emerge (all believers unscathed?) in the Rapture-Second Coming. One thing is clear to posttribulationists: it cannot mean deliverance before the Tribulation begins.

But how clear and plain the promise is: "I . . . will keep you from the hour of testing." Not from just any persecution, but the coming time that will affect the whole earth. The only way to escape worldwide trouble is not to be on the earth. And the only way to escape the time when events take place is not to be in a place where time ticks on. The only place that meets those qualifications is heaven.

Perhaps an illustration will help keep the promise in its clear, uncomplicated form. As a teacher I frequently have to give exams. Let us suppose that I announce to a class that I am going to give an exam on such-and-such a day at the regular classtime. Then suppose I say, "I want to make a promise to students whose grade average for the semester so far is A. The promise is: I will keep you from the exam." If I said nothing more by way of explanation, I expect that the A students would puzzle over that promise. "Does it mean we have to take the exam or not?" they would ask. And just to be safe, I would expect, they would show up at the appointed time because they would not have understood clearly what I meant.

Now I could keep my promise to those A students this way: I could pass out the exam to everyone and give to the A students a sheet containing the answers. They would take the exam and yet in reality be kept from the exam. They would live through the time but not suffer the trial. This is posttribulationism. Protection while enduring.

But if I said to the class, “I am giving an exam next week. I want to make a promise to all the A students. I will keep you from the hour of the exam,” I very seriously doubt if the A students in that class would spend any time debating what I meant or whether or not they had to show up at the time of the exam. They would understand clearly that to be kept from the hour of the test exempts them from being present during that hour. This is pretribulationism, and this is the meaning of the promise of Revelation 3:10. And the promise came from the risen Savior who Himself is the Deliverer from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:10).

B. 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 Paul tried to allay the fears of some who thought that deceased believers might not share in the kingdom. His explanation in that paragraph was something about which they were uninformed. But, in contrast, they were well informed about the beginning of the Day of the Lord as he explained in 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11.

The beginning of that day will come unexpectedly in a time of peace and safety (1 Thessalonians 5:2), with pain (1 Thessalonians 5:3) and wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9). In the meantime, believers are to live with alertness and sobriety. The exhortations of 1 Thessalonians 5:6–10 are not to watch for signs during the Tribulation in preparation for the Day of the Lord at the end of the Tribulation, but to live godly lives in view of the coming Tribulation that believers will escape. Of this teaching Paul said they were fully aware (1 Thessalonians 5:2). How? Partly from Paul’s own teaching to them, but also from their knowledge of the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, the Day of the Lord is referred to by that phrase about twenty times, often with eschatological implications. In addition, a parallel term, “the last days,” occurs fourteen times, always eschatological. Furthermore, the phrase “in that day” occurs more than one hundred times and is generally eschatological. In Isaiah 2:2; Isaiah 2:11–12, the three phrases appear, referring to the same eschatological time. So there was ample reason for Paul to say that his readers knew about the Day of the Lord from the Old Testament itself.

But concerning the Rapture there is no Old Testament revelation. This omission from more than a hundred passages seems hard to understand if the Rapture is the first event of the Day of the Lord, as posttribulationism teaches. But if the Rapture is a mystery, unrevealed in the Old Testament, and if it precedes the actual beginning of the Day of the Lord, as pretribulationism teaches, then it is not strange that Paul had to inform them about the Rapture but needed only to remind them what they already knew about the Day of the Lord.

Posttribulationists, then, want to make a very close connection between 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11, whereas pretribulationists are better served by seeing a contrast of subjects between the two paragraphs.

Thus the posttribulationist scenario runs like this: Paul moved with ease from his discussion of the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 to the discussion of the parousia in 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 because he was talking about events that occur at the same time and not events separated by seven years. Paul’s choice of *de* (the first Greek word in 1 Thessalonians 5:1), a simple connective with only a slight contrastive sense, indicates this close connection. And since the Day of the Lord will not begin until the Second Coming, the Rapture will occur then also.

Pretribulationists point out that the contrast between the subjects of the two chapters is sharpened by the fact that Paul did not simply use a *de* to begin verse 1 but a phrase, *peri de*. This is very significant, because elsewhere in his writings Paul used *peri de* to denote a new and contrasting subject. Notice 1 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Corinthians 7:25; 1 Corinthians 8:1; 1 Corinthians 12:1; 1 Corinthians 16:1; 1 Corinthians 16:12; and 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:1. Granted, the posttribulationists’ contention that the same subject is being discussed in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11 might be supported by the use of *de* alone, but it is completely

nullified by the use of *peri de*. So the pretribulationists' use of the passage is strongly supported exegetically. The Rapture is not a part of the Day of the Lord and therefore cannot be posttribulationist.

To summarize: The question of the beginning of the Day of the Lord is a watershed between pre- and posttribulationism. Pretribulationism sees the Day of the Lord beginning at the start of the Tribulation for the following reasons:

- (1) The very first judgments (by whatever chronology one uses) include war, famine, and the death of one-fourth of the population of the earth.
- (2) The one time the Scriptures mention peace and safety during the Tribulation period is at its very beginning. This time will be followed immediately by war, destruction, and upheavals that will continue unabated until Christ comes. Thus the Day of the Lord must begin at the beginning of the Tribulation, and the Rapture must be before.
- (3) The revelation of the man of sin will occur at the beginning of the Tribulation when he makes a pact with the Jewish people.
- (4) The much more normal understanding of the verb in Revelation 6:17 conveys the idea that the wrath has already come and continues.
- (5) Paul's use of *peri de*, not simply *de*, in 1 Thessalonians 5:1 indicates contrasting subjects.
- (6) The removal of peace from the earth just after the Tribulation begins fits only pretribulationism.

If posttribulationism is correct, then it must provide much more satisfactory answers than it has to the following questions:

- (1) How can the Day of the Lord not begin with the Tribulation or any part of it and yet begin with the judgments of Armageddon?
- (2) How can the final conflict at the end of the Tribulation be shrunk into a single battle of short enough duration so that the church can be raptured before it starts (in order to escape the wrath) and yet turn right around and accompany Christ on His return to earth at the conclusion of what would have to be a very brief battle?
- (3) Does protection from wrath poured out on unbelievers really include exemption from the fallout effects of the actions of those unbelievers on whom the wrath is poured? It does not today. Why should it in the future?
- (4) How does bunching the wrath judgments at the end of the Tribulation take care of the problem that equally severe judgments seem to take place earlier in the Tribulation and fall on believers as well as unbelievers?
- (5) What is the more normal interpretation of the aorist in Revelation 6:17? Does it not indicate that the wrath has already been poured out, that it did not begin with the sixth seal?
- (6) Does not the use of the phrase *peri de* in 1 Thessalonians 5:1 indicate that the Rapture is really not a part of the Day of the Lord at the end of the Tribulation?

Only pretribulationism fits harmoniously with all the scriptural evidence and answers those questions satisfactorily.

C. The Church

Other arguments for the pretribulation Rapture include the absence of the church in Revelation 4–19 where the Tribulation is described in great detail; the removal of the Restrainer before the Day of the Lord and the revelation of the man of sin (2 Thess. 2:1–9); and the need to have some

human beings survive the Tribulation in their earthly bodies in order to become the parents of the millennial population. This last argument we shall examine in detail in the next chapter.

NOTES

1. Leon Wood, *Is the Rapture Next?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1956); John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970); J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Findlay, Ohio: Dunham, 1958); J. B. Smith, *A Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1961); and Charles C. Ryrie, *What You Should Know About the Rapture* (Chicago: Moody, 1981).
2. For an excellent discussion of these and other points related to Revelation 3:10, see Jeffrey L. Townsend, "The Rapture in Revelation 3:10," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (July 1980): 252–66.
3. Robert H. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 59.

Chapter 87: Populating the Millennial Kingdom

I. THE PROBLEM

When the Millennium begins, some people have to be alive in unresurrected bodies, who can beget children and populate that kingdom. All premillennialists agree with this.

The Millennium not only involves the reign of Christ with His people, who will then have resurrected bodies, but also the reign of Christ over people on this earth who will not have resurrected bodies. If there were only resurrected saints in the kingdom, then there would be no death, no increase in population, and no differences in the ages of millennial citizens (all of which are indicated as characterizing the kingdom—Isa. 65:20; Zech. 8:5; Rev. 20:12). Since resurrected people do not propagate, there would be no way to populate the kingdom unless some unresurrected people enter the Millennium. Thus all premillennialists see the need to have some adults who survive the Tribulation who are not taken to heaven at the end of the Tribulation but who enter the Millennium in unresurrected bodies to become the first parents of the millennial population.

II. THE PRETRIBULATIONAL SOLUTION

The pretribulational understanding of future events satisfies this need easily. The Rapture will occur before the Tribulation, removing all the redeemed who are living on the earth at that time. But many people will be saved during the Tribulation (Rev. 7:9, 14) including a specific group of 144,000 Jewish people (Rev. 7:4). Of those saved during that horrible time, many will be martyred (Rev. 6:11; 13:15), but some will survive to enter the Millennium (Matt. 25:34; Zech. 14:11). The initial group who will enter the Millennium will not only enter with natural bodies but will also be redeemed people who willingly submit to the rule of the King. In due time, babies will be born and grow up. Some will receive Christ into their hearts; others will not. But all will have to give allegiance to the King's government or suffer the consequences. By the end of the Millennium, there will be innumerable rebels who will have given outward obedience to the King, but who, when given the opportunity by Satan after his release, will join his revolution against Christ (Rev. 20:7–9).

Thus in the pretribulational understanding of these future events, the original parents of the millennial kingdom will come from the redeemed (but unresurrected) survivors of the Tribulation, the “sheep” of Matthew 25:32–34 and the faithful Jewish survivors of Ezekiel 20:38.

III. THE POSTTRIBULATIONAL SOLUTION

In contrast stands the posttribulational picture. The church, of course, will live through the Tribulation. Though some will be martyred, many will be protected and survive. The 144,000 Jews and the great multitude of Revelation 7 are included in the church. At the end of the Tribulation, all living believers will be raptured, given resurrection bodies, and return immediately to earth in the single event of the Rapture and Second Coming. This would seem to eliminate all redeemed, unresurrected people from the earth at that point in time so that there will be no one left to begin to populate the kingdom. If the wicked survivors are either killed or consigned to hades at the end of the Tribulation, then there will be no one left in an unresurrected body to enter the Millennium.

So, either the posttribulationist must find some people who will not be saved when the Rapture begins but will be saved by the time that single, instantaneous event of the Rapture-Second Coming concludes (how much time is there?), or he must allow the initial parents of the Millennium to be unsaved people who somehow are not killed or judged at or after Armageddon. Those are the only options open to the posttribulationist to find millennial parents.

We need to be reminded of another detail at this point. The millennial population includes both Jewish and Gentile people (Isa. 19:24–25). So the first generation must be made up of both races. But a posttribulation Rapture will remove all the candidates for redeemed millennial parents of every race. And the judgments of the Second Coming will remove all the candidates for unredeemed millennial parents of every race. Where will those parents come from?

Most posttribulationists do not attempt to give an answer to this question. This may be because posttribulationists do not usually put the details of their system together in an orderly way. Their picture of the future is painted with broad strokes, not fine detail. Posttribulationists do not sponsor prophecy conferences in which their speakers are expected to describe rather specifically the system they promote. Some posttribulationists may never have seen this question as a question, simply because they have not spelled out systematically and in detail their outline of future events. But whatever the reason, most do not address this question.

Robert Gundry is an exception.¹ His answer is twofold. The Jewish progenitors of the millennial population will come from the 144,000 who will not be saved at any time during the Tribulation but only at the end.² The Gentile parents will come from the wicked who will somehow escape death and/or judgment at the end of the Tribulation. Those wicked are the ones left in Matthew 24:40–41 (in contrast to the ones taken in the posttribulation Rapture). He says, “A partial destruction would leave the remaining unsaved to populate the millennial earth.”³

Furthermore, an adjustment has to be made in the time of the judgment of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25:31–46 if the posttribulation picture be correct. The reason is simple: If the Rapture is after the Tribulation, then all the sheep (redeemed) will have been removed from the earth, and there would be no sheep to be part of that judgment if it occurs at the Second Coming, which is a single event with the Rapture. There is no way the Rapture can remove the sheep and yet have sheep present on the earth to be judged immediately following the Rapture. So either the Rapture cannot be posttribulation or the judgment of the sheep and goats must be after the Second Coming (Gundry places it after the Millennium).

We need to examine three things that are necessary to the posttribulation answer: (a) the conversion of the 144,000, (b) the identification of the groups in Matthew 24:40–41, and (c) the time of the judgment of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25:31–46.

IV. THE 144,000 JEWS

Some posttribulationists consider the 144,000 Jews to be “spiritual Israel—the church.”⁴ If so, then their sealing is at the beginning of the Tribulation and relates to their spiritual salvation as well as physical protection. Gundry acknowledges that the 144,000 might belong to the church (and therefore be saved at the beginning); he prefers to regard them as unsaved throughout the Tribulation and identical with the group that will look on Christ when He returns and believe (Zech. 12:10) and with the Israel who will be saved at the Second Coming (Rom. 11:26–27). The reason for his preference is logical. If the 144,000 were saved any time during the Tribulation years—at the beginning, in the middle, or even during the last year—they would be raptured in the posttribulation Rapture, given resurrection bodies at that time, then return at the same time to reign with Christ in the kingdom. But having been given resurrection bodies would preclude their being the parents of anybody in the kingdom. On the other hand, if they were not saved until the very end of the Second Coming, they would “escape” the Rapture, yet be converted, but remain in unresurrected bodies and thus be able to become parents of millennial children.

Actually, pretribulationists understand that there will be a group of Jewish people converted at the conclusion of the Tribulation who will become the parents of the Jewish portion of the millennial population. They will come from among the Jewish people who survive the Tribulation even though they were unsaved throughout it. When the Lord returns they will be gathered and judged,

the rebels (possibly two thirds, Zech. 13:8) to be excluded from the kingdom and those who turn in faith when they see Him to enter the kingdom (Ezek. 20:33– 44). Those believing survivors constitute the “all” of all Israel that will be saved at the Second Coming (Rom. 11:26). But they will not be given resurrection bodies at that time; rather they will enter the kingdom in material bodies with the ability to propagate.

Why cannot the posttribulationist also let this group be the millennial parents? Because that group will believe when they see the Lord coming, which would be at the posttribulation Rapture. So they also would be raptured, taken to heaven, given resurrection bodies, and eliminated from parenting. The Rapture, whenever it occurs, will be the greatest separation of believers from unbelievers imaginable, so if there is to be a group of Jewish people who will believe when they see the Lord coming, and if that coming is the posttribulation Rapture-Second Coming, then they will be raptured because at that moment they will become believers. So the posttribulationist needs to have a group that is sealed in an unsaved state long enough to miss the Rapture but not long enough to miss entering the Millennium in material bodies. Thus, as one would expect, Gundry says of Ezekiel 20 that “that passage may not portray a formal judgment at all.”⁵ Actually, it cannot in the posttribulation system.

Can the 144,000 be considered unconverted throughout the Tribulation years? The answer is yes. One can hold any interpretation one wishes. The question is not, Is it possible to interpret that way? The question is, Is it reasonable to do so? What does the text of Revelation 7:1–8 say?

It states two very significant facts: the 144,000 have “the seal of the living God” (Revelation 7:2) and they are “the bond-servants of our God” (Revelation 7:3). The text does not specifically say what their service is, but it does say whom they serve. They serve God, not Antichrist. Are we to imagine here a group of 144,000 unsaved people designated as God’s bond-servants? Posttribulationists weakly explain that the designation is anticipatory of their millennial service when they will have been converted. Any explanation is possible, but is it the most likely meaning of the text? Certainly not.

But even granting that their designation as God’s servants does not apply to the 144,000 in the Tribulation period but only in the Millennium, the statement in verse 2 is very difficult to harmonize with the posttribulation system. The group is said to be sealed before the judgments of the Tribulation begin (Revelation 7:3). Try to fit this into posttribulationism. Here would be a distinct group of unconverted Jewish people on whose foreheads God has placed His seal. As unsaved people, they (or surely some of them) will follow Antichrist, who also will place his mark on their foreheads or hands. And the destiny of Antichrist’s followers has already been predetermined: they will be tormented forever with fire and brimstone (Rev. 14:9–11). None of his followers will be saved, not even 144,000 of them.

To sum up: Posttribulationism needs to have an unconverted group of Jews who will survive the Tribulation, but who, because they are unconverted, will not be raptured at the end, but will be converted by the time the Millennium begins so they can enter the Millennium in their unresurrected bodies and beget children. The only group that can qualify is the 144,000, assuming they can be described as unconverted servants of God who have on their foreheads God’s seal before the Tribulation begins and who do not follow Antichrist so they will not have his mark. Is all this possible?

V. MATTHEW 24:40–41

Not only must the 144,000 be identified in a particular way, but the groups distinguished in verses 40–41 must also be identified in a certain way to come up with the posttribulation picture.

According to the posttribulation understanding, these verses say the following: “Then [at the posttribulation Rapture-Second Coming] there shall be two men in the field; one [saved,

representing the church] will be taken [in the posttribulational Rapture], and one [unsaved, representing the wicked] will be left [for judgment, though not all will be judged, so some will be left to be parents of the Gentile population of the Millennium].” And the same for verse 41—the one taken is raptured, and the one left is judged.

By contrast, the pretribulationist sees the verses as a general statement of the results of the specific judgments on surviving Jews and Gentiles at the Second Coming. Those who are taken are taken into the judgments and condemned, and those who are left successfully pass the judgments and are left for blessing in the kingdom.

Notice that the posttribulationist must add the stipulation that not all who are left are judged and condemned so that there will be some left to populate the earth. But therein lies an inconsistency: the Rapture will take all the redeemed, but the judgment will not include all the unredeemed. Only part of the wicked will be judged.

Pretribulationists support their view by pointing out that according to verse 39 the Flood took the people of Noah’s day into judgment; therefore, those taken at the Second Coming will also be taken into judgment.

Posttribulationists observe that a different word is used in verse 39 for “took away” than in verses 40–41, indicating two different kinds of taking away—verse 39 into judgment but verses 40–41 into heaven at the Rapture. They reinforce this argument by pointing out that the word in verses 40–41 is the same word used to describe the Rapture in John 14:3, “receive you to Myself.”

The two interpretations look like this:

| PRETRIBULATIONAL | | POSTTRIBULATIONAL |
|------------------|--|--|
| INTERPRETATION | | INTERPRETATION |
| “Taken” | Into judgment | Into heaven in the posttribulational Rapture |
| “Left” | For blessing in the kingdom (in unresurrected bodies to propagate) | For judgment (but only a part part will be judged so the rest can enter the kingdom in unresurrected bodies) |

Pretribulationists note that in John 19:16 the same word used in Matthew 24:40–41 (supposedly of the Rapture according to posttribulationists) is used of taking the Lord into judgment, so obviously it could mean judgment in verses 40–41, as pretribulationism teaches. Back and forth the discussion of the words goes. What can we conclude? Simply that the words themselves are inconclusive.

But the debate is not without resolution. It can easily be settled by looking at the parallel passage in Luke 17:34–37, where the same warning about one being taken and one left is given by the Lord. However, Luke adds a question that the disciples asked: “Where, Lord?” They asked Him where those taken would be taken. They did not inquire where those left would be left. If the Lord intended us to understand that those taken would be taken in the Rapture (as posttribulationism teaches), He would have answered the question by saying heaven, or the Father’s house, or some similar expression. But His answer conveyed that they would be taken somewhere quite opposite to a blissful heaven. His answer was, “Where the body is, there also will the vultures be gathered.” Christ’s answer is a proverb about vultures appearing out of nowhere when an animal dies. Where will they be taken? Where there is death and corruption, not life and immortality. The reference is not to heaven, but to judgment. Thus the pretribulationist’s

understanding of the identity of the one taken and the one left is the correct one according to Luke 17:37. A posttribulation Rapture is nowhere indicated in these verses.

VI. THE TIME OF THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS JUDGMENT

This judgment of the sheep and goats, placed at the Second Coming by pretribulationists, has to be moved to a later time if posttribulationism be consistent. The reason is that if the Rapture occurs at the end of the Tribulation, that is, at the Second Coming and if all the sheep are taken to heaven in that Rapture, how will there be any left to be assembled before Christ when He comes? They will already have gone. Or to put it another way: the Rapture-Second Coming will separate the redeemed from the wicked; yet this judgment at the Second Coming will do the same, only there will not be any righteous on the earth to separate since they will just have been raptured.

Moving this judgment also provides for unsaved survivors of the Tribulation and Second Coming to enter the Millennium in unresurrected bodies. Gundry admits, “We are therefore forced to put the judgment of the nations after the Millennium.”⁶ Forced? Why? Because the condemnation of the goats cannot be of only a part of them, since the text says “all” will be judged. In his interpretation of those left in Matthew 24:40–41, Gundry says that represented only “a partial destruction,”⁷ but here all are specifically said to be involved (Matt. 25:32).

No text requires that there be unsaved entering the Millennium. After a few years have passed there will be people, born during the early days of the Millennium, who will grow to adulthood rejecting the Savior-King in their hearts (though outwardly obeying Him). But no text requires that there be unsaved people among the survivors of the Tribulation who enter the Millennium. Zechariah 14:16 (sometimes used to support this idea) refers to the first generation of millennial citizens who came through the judgments as redeemed, not rebels, and who will voluntarily go to Jerusalem to worship the King. But verses 17–21 move on to describe conditions throughout the Millennium, not just at the beginning. As time goes on, some will not obey the King and will have to be punished.

Perhaps the more compelling reason for the posttribulationists’ moving this judgment to the end of the Millennium is not to get goats into the Millennium as much as it is to get sheep into the judgment itself. Let me press the point again: if the judgment occurs at the Second Coming, and if the Rapture has just occurred as part of the Second Coming, and if the Rapture has removed the sheep (as it would), then where will the sheep come from to be present in this judgment?

If, however, the judgment can be moved to the close of the Millennium, then, of course, there will be both righteous and wicked people living at the conclusion of the Millennium to be present. But how, then, does one reconcile the rather diverse characteristics of Matthew 25:31–46 with those that describe what would supposedly be the same judgment at the Great White Throne in Revelation 20:11–15? Notice some of the contrasts between the judgment of the sheep and goats and the judgment at the Great White Throne.

Gundry calls the judgment of the sheep and goats a “pattern for the general judgment at the end of time.”⁸ If it is a pattern, it is rather inexact! To be sure, passages describing the same event do not each have to contain all the same details, but these two passages seem to be entirely dissimilar in their details.

If the judgment of the sheep and goats is to be moved to the end of the Millennium then, of course, Matthew 25:31 must be understood as referring to the Second Coming and verse 32 to the end of the Millennium, one thousand years later. In other words, the gap of the one-thousand-year Millennium must come between verses 31 and 32. Premillennialists recognize that such gaps occur in Scripture (Isa. 9:6 and John 5:28–29, for example), so this is not an impossible idea. But is it the likely interpretation?

| Sheep and Goats | Great White Throne |
|--|------------------------------------|
| No resurrection (though OT saints may be raised at the Second Coming, they will not be a part of the judgment) | Resurrection of the dead |
| No books opened | Books opened |
| The word “nations” used (and the word is never used of the dead) | The word “dead” used |
| Sheep present | Righteous not mentioned as present |
| Three groups mentioned: sheep, goats, brethren | Only one group mentioned: |
| Reward is the kingdom and eternal life | No mention of reward, |
| Occurs at the place Christ comes to, i.e., the earth | Earth has fled away |

Matthew 25:35–40 gives the answer. Do these verses describe millennial conditions? They have to if this judgment will occur after the conclusion of the Millennium. If they do, then the Millennium will have to be a time when Christ and His brothers (i.e., Jewish believers) are hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, and in prison. Those who disobey the King during the Millennium may be imprisoned, but the text says that during the period preceding the judgment Christ’s brothers will be in prison. As certainly as this will not be true during the Millennium, it will be true during the Tribulation. Christ’s brothers will be hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, and imprisoned during the Tribulation years, but not during the Millennium when Christ will be ruling in righteousness.

Clearly then, verses 35–40 preclude inserting a gap of one thousand years between verses 31 and 32. The judgment will immediately follow the coming of Christ and will test people on the basis of their heart reactions to conditions that will exist during the Tribulation—conditions that will not be present during the Millennium for Christ’s followers.

VII. CONCLUSION

Where has our discussion led? To the conclusion that posttribulationism cannot provide an answer to the question, Who will be the parents of the millennial population? To be sure, posttribulationism offers some wishful thinking on the subject. They wish the 144,000 would be the Jewish parents, but in order to qualify they will have to remain unconverted throughout the Tribulation as well as through the Rapture-Second Coming, and then be converted. They wish that some of the ones left in the separation of Matthew 24:40–41 would be the Gentile parents (others will be condemned to hell). But this twists the meaning of “taken” and “left,” making the taking to heaven in the Rapture contrary to the clear meaning of “taken” in Luke 17:36. And to make these suggestions consistent, the judgment of the sheep and goats must be placed at the conclusion of the Millennium, and Matthew 25:35–40 must describe millennial conditions.

How much simpler not to have to place the Rapture at the conclusion of the Tribulation. That allows for people to accept or reject Christ during the Tribulation, some of whom will survive that time (none of whom will be raptured, because the Rapture will already have occurred) to be judged at the Second Coming (both living Jews and Gentiles), and those who pass those

judgments successfully as redeemed people to go into the kingdom in earthly bodies to be the first generation of the millennial population and the parents of the next generation.

NOTES

1. Robert H. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 81–83, 134–39, 163–71.
2. *Ibid.*, 83.
3. *Ibid.*, 137.
4. George E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 114.
5. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 168.
6. *Ibid.*, 166.
7. *Ibid.*, 137.
8. *Ibid.*, 167.

Chapter 88: The Midtribulational Rapture View

I. DEFINITION OF THIS VIEW

The midtribulational Rapture view holds that the Rapture of the church will occur at the midpoint of the seven years of Tribulation; that is, after three and one-half years have elapsed. In this view, only the last half of Daniel's seventieth week is Tribulation. That is why midtribulationalism is sometimes described as a form of pretribulationalism, since it teaches that the Rapture occurs before the tribulations of the last half of the seven years.

II. SUPPORTERS OF THIS VIEW

J. Oliver Buswell, Jr. taught the midtribulation view.¹ Gleason L. Archer, well-known scholar, also holds this view.²

III. ARGUMENTS FOR THIS VIEW

A. The Emphasis on the Time Period of Three and One-Half Years

Prophetic passages emphasize the last three and one-half years of the seventieth week of Daniel as the time of intense judgments on the earth and a time that begins with some great event. It seems reasonable to conclude that that event is the Rapture of the church. Put these two concepts together (intense judgments in the last half of the seven years and some important event occurring at the midpoint of the seven years) and you must conclude a midtribulation rapture of the church. Scriptural support for this includes Daniel 7:25; 9:27; 12:7, 11; Revelation 11:2; 12:6, 14.

Unquestionably, the prophetic passages do distinguish the two halves of the seven years of Tribulation. But this does not mean that the intense judgments will only occur during the last half. Nor do any of these passages cited speak, even by implication, of the Rapture. But some of them do indicate specific events that will occur at the midpoint of the seven years. For example, Daniel 9:27 states that in the middle of the week Antichrist will cause sacrifice and oblation to cease. Daniel 12:11 mentions the same event. Revelation 12:6; 14 relate how Israel will flee to a wilderness place of refuge at the midpoint. No Rapture is indicated, for the believing remnant will flee to a place on this earth, and will not be taken to heaven as will occur at the Rapture. The fact that some of these passages do mention great events that will happen at the midpoint but nowhere state that the Rapture is one of those great events is most significant.

Midtribulationists do believe that there will be trials and judgments during the first half of the Tribulation, but these are due to the wrath of men, whereas the judgments of the second half come from the wrath of God. However, notice that Revelation 6:16–17 states that the wrath of the Lamb "has come." That indicates that the wrath of God will begin before the sixth seal is opened. To fit the midtribulation scheme one would have to place the beginning judgments of the seals in the second half of the Tribulation.

B. The Olivet Discourse

Midtribulationists find support for their view in the Olivet Discourse. The argument goes like this. Matthew 24:27 indicates the Rapture because the word *parousia* used there is also used of the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:15. Also Matthew 24:31 and 2 Thessalonians 2:1 use words from the same root word (*episynago*). To me the argument so far seems to support a posttribulational chronology, since these comparisons seem to conclude that the Rapture and the Second Coming are the same event, or at least, that they occur at the same time (the end of the Tribulation). But the midtribulationist avoids that conclusion by arguing that the Rapture in the Olivet Discourse is preceded by signs that should alert believers to the nearness of the Rapture. These signs include the spread of the Gospel (Matt. 24:14), the rise of the beast (Matt. 24:15), and general persecution (Matt. 24:10–27). Because these signs will appear during the first half of the

week, the Rapture must occur at the midpoint. But frankly, if this is a good argument for midtribulationism, it would seem to be a better argument for posttribulationism.

What about the use of some of the same words for the Rapture and the Second Coming? Does this indicate that they are the same event? (This, of course, is an argument used to support posttribulationism as well.) Of course not. One would expect to find similar vocabulary used to describe events that have some similarity. But similarity does not make sameness.

C. The Last Trumpet

Midtribulationism argues that the seventh trumpet of Revelation 10:7 corresponds to the last trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:52. If this be true, then the Rapture (described in 1 Corinthians) will occur at the midpoint of the Tribulation (the time when the seventh trumpet sounds). This is a somewhat simplistic argument that assumes that all blowing of trumpets must indicate the same kind of event. This is not true. In Jewish apocalyptic literature, trumpets signaled a variety of great eschatological events, including judgments, the gathering of the elect, and resurrection. The seventh trumpet is a trumpet of judgment, whereas the trumpet in 1 Corinthians is one of resurrection and deliverance. That they indicate the same event is a gratuitous assumption.

NOTES

1. J. Oliver Buswell, *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 2:450, 462.
2. Reiter, Feinberg, Archer, Moo, *The Rapture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 115–45.

Chapter 89: The Posttribulation Rapture View

I. DEFINITION OF THIS VIEW

Posttribulationism teaches that the Rapture and the Second Coming are facets of a single event that will occur at the end of the Tribulation when Christ returns. The church will be on earth during the Tribulation to experience the events of that period.

II. PROPONENTS OF THIS VIEW

Though a number of writers have held and do hold this view throughout church history, three works have been especially influential: *The Approaching Advent of Christ*, by Alexander Reese; *The Blessed Hope*, by George E. Ladd; and *The Church and the Tribulation*, by Robert H. Gundry.¹

III. PRE- AND POSTTRIBULATIONISM CONTRASTED

Since pretribulationism and posttribulationism are the two Rapture views most debated today, let me contrast their principal differences.

IV. ARGUMENTS FOR POSTTRIBULATIONISM

A. *The Vocabulary for the Second Coming*

Briefly stated the argument is this. Since New Testament writers use several words to describe the Second Coming, if the Rapture and the Second Coming are different events separated by seven years, why did they not reserve one word for the Rapture and another for the Second Coming instead of seeming to use them interchangeably?

For example, *parousia*, meaning “coming,” “arrival,” or “presence,” is used in relation to the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4:15. It also describes the second coming of Christ in Matthew 24:27. Two different conclusions are possible from this evidence. (1) *Parousia* describes the same, single event, meaning that the Rapture and the Second Coming are a single event at the end of the Tribulation. (2) *Parousia* describes two separate events, both characterized by the presence of the Lord, but events that will not happen at the same time. Either conclusion is valid.

Consider an illustration. Suppose proud grandparents should say to their friends. “We are looking forward to enjoying the presence (*parousia*) of our grandchildren next week”; then later in the conversation add, “Yes, we expect our grandchildren to be present at our golden wedding celebration.” If you heard those statements you could draw one of two conclusions. (1) The grandchildren are coming next week for the golden wedding anniversary. In other words, the grandparents were speaking of the coming and the anniversary as a single event, occurring at the same time. Or (2) the grandchildren will be making two trips to see their grandparents—one next week (perhaps as part of their vacation) and another later to help celebrate the golden wedding anniversary.

Likewise, since the Lord’s presence (*parousia*) will characterize both the Rapture and the Second Coming, the word itself does not indicate whether these are a single event or separate events. In other words, the vocabulary used does not necessarily prove either pre- or posttribulationism.

A second word used for the Lord’s coming is *apokalupsis*, meaning “revelation.” It occurs in Rapture passages like 1 Corinthians 1:7 and 1 Peter 1:7; 4:13, because when Christ comes for the church He will reveal Himself to her. At His coming we shall see Him as He is. The word also appears in passages that describe His coming to the earth at the close of the Tribulation (2 Thess. 1:7), because that event also will reveal Christ to the world.

Two conclusions are possible. (1) The Rapture and the Second Coming are the same single event. Since both are called a revelation of Christ, they must occur at the same time and be part of the same event at the end of the Tribulation. (2) Both the Rapture and the Second Coming will reveal Christ, but not at the same time or under the same circumstances. Therefore, the Rapture and the Second Coming can be separated as pretribulationism teaches.

Notice that the first conclusion used the word revelation as a cataloging word; that is, it catalogs whatever event is referred to in all the passages where the word is used as the same, single event. The second conclusion sees the word revelation as a characterizing word; that is, it is used to characterize different events in the same way, as a revelation.

It becomes more obvious, then, that the vocabulary used in the New Testament does not seem to prove either pre- or posttribulationism. The third principal word for the Second Coming is *epiphaneia*, meaning “manifestation.” At the Second Coming, Christ will destroy Antichrist by the sheer manifestation of His coming (2 Thess. 2:8). The word is also used in reference to the hope of the believer when he will see the Lord (2 Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:13). Are we to conclude that the word is cataloging those references to refer them to the same single event? Or can we conclude that it is characterizing two different events as both involving a manifestation of Christ but not occurring at the same time? The answer is either (but not both!).

Clearly, then, the vocabulary does not prove either a pre- or posttribulational Rapture of the church.

Why, then, does this argument continue to be used? Simply because posttribulationists continue to believe that it is a valid support for their view, even claiming that it “substantiates” their view.²

But the posttribulationist’s underlying assumption in continuing to use this argument is that these words catalog rather than characterize. To be sure, vocabulary might do that; but to be equally sure, it might not.

Take the word “motor.” My automobile has a motor. My wife’s washing machine has a motor. My moped has a motor. Our furnace fan has a motor. My camera has a motor that automatically advances the film. Is the term “motor” a characterizing feature of these rather diverse machines? Or is it a means of cataloging them that would force us to conclude that everything that has a motor is the same thing? The answer is obvious.

Do presence, revelation, and manifestation characterize different events or catalog the same event? The pretribulationist says the former; the posttribulationist concludes the latter.

B. The Church Is Not Said to Be in Heaven but on Earth During the Tribulation According to Revelation 4–18

Pretribulationists point out that though the word “church” occurs nineteen times in Revelation 1–3 and once in Revelation 22, it does not appear even once in Revelation 4–18, which describe the Tribulation period. Therefore, they conclude, the church is not on earth during the Tribulation but in heaven.

In response, posttribulationists say the church (that is, the last generation of the church) will be on earth during the Tribulation according to Revelation 4–18 for these reasons. (1) Nowhere in these chapters is the church said to be in heaven, something we would expect the text to say if it were true. (2) The occurrence of the word “saints” in Revelation 13:7, 10; 16:6; 17:6; and Revelation 18:24 shows that the church is in fact on the earth during the Tribulation. (3) Other descriptions of believers in the Tribulation aptly apply to Church Age believers, indicating that Tribulation believers will be the last generation of Church Age believers and that they will go through the Tribulation. Let’s examine and critique each of these arguments in more detail.

(1) Is the church in heaven during the Tribulation? To this question pretribulationists reply along either or both of two lines. Most identify the twenty-four elders as representing the church, and since they are seen in heaven in Revelation 4:4 and Revelation 5:8–10, the church is mentioned as in heaven. Some think this argument is nullified since the critical text of Revelation 5:9–10 has the elders singing of redemption in the third person as if redemption were not their own experience (thus they could not represent the church, which has been redeemed). But this is really not a strong argument. Notice that Moses sang of redemption that he experienced in the third person (Exod. 15:13, 16–17).

Pretribulationists also point out that the background of Hebrew marriage customs argues for the church's already being in heaven before the coming of Christ at the end of the Tribulation. Jewish marriage included a number of steps: first, betrothal, which involved the prospective groom traveling from his father's house to the home of the prospective bride, paying the purchase price, and thus establishing the marriage covenant; second, the groom returning to his father's house and remaining separate from his bride for twelve months, during which time he prepared the living accommodations for his wife in his father's house; third, the groom's coming for his bride at a time not known exactly to her; fourth, his return with her to the groom's father's house to consummate the marriage and to celebrate the wedding feast for the next seven days (during which the bride remained closeted in her bridal chamber).

In Revelation 19:7–9 the wedding feast is announced, which, if the analogy of the Hebrew marriage customs means anything, assumes that the wedding has previously taken place in the father's house. Today the church is described as a virgin waiting for her bridegroom's coming (2 Cor. 11:2); in Revelation 21 she is designated as the wife of the Lamb, indicating that previously she has been taken to the groom's father's house. Pretribulationists say that this requires an interval of time between the Rapture and the Second Coming. Granted, it does not say seven years' time, but it certainly argues against posttribulationism, which has no time between the Rapture and Second Coming.

(2) Does the word "saints" refer to Church Age saints? Actually the appearance of the word "saints" in chapters 4–18 does not prove anything until you know what saints they are. There were saints (godly ones) in the Old Testament (Ps. 16:3); there are saints today (1 Cor. 1:2); there will be saints in the Tribulation years (Rev. 13:7, etc.). The question is: Are the saints of this Church Age distinct from saints of the Tribulation period (pretribulationism) or not (posttribulationism)? The uses of the word will not answer the question.

(3) Do other phrases identify Tribulation believers with Church Age saints to indicate the church will go through the Tribulation? Such phrases include "die in the Lord" (Rev. 14:13; cf. "dead in Christ" of 1 Thessalonians 4:16–18), "who keep the commandments of God" (Rev. 12:17; 14:12; Rev. 1:9). To use these similarities to prove that the church will be present in the Tribulation requires that similarity means sameness (a major assumption). On the other hand, one would expect distinct groups of saints (i.e., church saints and Tribulation saints) to be described in similar ways since they are all saints.

The same holds true for the use of the word "elect" or "chosen." Some have concluded that since the elect are mentioned as being in the Tribulation in Matthew 24:22, 24; 31, the church will go through the Tribulation. But what elect people are meant? The heathen king Cyrus was called God's anointed (Isa. 45:1). So was Christ (Ps. 2:2). Israel was called God's chosen one (Isa. 45:4) even though the nation was a mixture of redeemed and unredeemed people. Christ is also God's chosen One (Isa. 42:1). So is the church (Col. 3:12). So are some angels (1 Tim. 5:21). All elect are not the same, and the chosen ones of the Tribulation days do not have to be the same as the elect of the church simply because the same term is used of both groups.

C. 2 Thessalonians 1:5–10 Is Best Interpreted as Teaching Posttribulationism

Posttribulationists understand this passage to say that “Paul places the release of Christians from persecution at the posttribulational return of Christ to judge unbelievers, whereas according to pretribulationism this release will occur seven years earlier.”³ In other words, since release comes at the Second Coming and release is connected with the Rapture, the Rapture must be at the same time as the Second Coming.

Let us examine the posttribulationist’s answers to three questions about this passage.

(1) What is the subject of Paul’s discussion in these verses? The posttribulational answer is release for Christians from persecution.

(2) When will this release occur? At the posttribulational return of Christ.

(3) What group of people will experience this release? Obviously, just those Christians who survive the Tribulation and are alive at the posttribulational Rapture.

First of all, observe the posttribulational answer to question 3. The passage only addresses the release of Christians living at the conclusion of the Tribulation. If that is true, why did Paul seemingly ignore the Thessalonians, who had suffered persecution and who had already died? Death was the means of release for them. Indeed, why did he not mention that avenue of release, which some of those to whom he was writing might yet experience? To be sure, the rapture of the living will bring release from persecution, but only a relatively small percentage of believers will ever experience that means of release, since most will have died prior to the Rapture. If release was Paul’s chief concern here, and if that release will come at the posttribulational Rapture, then Paul was offering that hope of release to a very small group of believers.

Viewing this passage from a posttribulational slant, one must conclude that the release for Christians is connected with flaming judgment on unbelievers. It is not described in terms of meeting the Lord and forever being with Him, nor in terms of a resurrection for those who have died, as other Rapture passages describe it. Obviously if one’s enemies are punished, then there will be release from their persecution. But the point is this: where is the Rapture described in this passage at all? The judgmental aspect of the Second Coming is given the prominence, and though, according to posttribulationism, the Rapture is the initial part of the Second Coming, that initial part is entirely absent from this discussion.

If Paul so clearly believed in a posttribulational Rapture, then why did he not at least mention that Rapture in passing since it is the moment of Rapture that brings release, not the following judgment on the enemies of God? Christians who live through the Tribulation (if posttribulationism be correct) will be released from persecution the instant they are raptured, whether or not Christ judges their enemies at that same time.

Notice some of the words in this passage that emphasize God’s judging of His enemies: “righteous judgment” (2 Thess. 1:5), “just” (2 Thess. 1:6), “repay” (2 Thess. 1:6), “affliction” (2 Thess. 1:6), “flaming fire” (2 Thess. 1:7), and “retribution” (2 Thess. 1:8). This vocabulary is strangely absent from the Rapture passages of John 14:1–3; 1 Corinthians 15:51–58; and 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. Actually the Rapture can be found in this passage only if one’s eschatological scheme superimposes it there. Exegesis does not produce the Rapture from this passage.

Why is the posttribulationists’ use of this passage so jumbled? Simply because they have answered the first question wrongly. That question was, What is the subject of Paul’s discussion here? And the answer is not, as posttribulationists say, the release of Christians from persecution.

The subject of the passage is not release but vindication. Paul did not focus on when or how the persecuted Thessalonians will be relieved of persecution; rather, he assured them that God will judge His enemies and thereby vindicate those who have suffered.

One of the most spectacular displays of God's judging will occur at the second coming of Christ when the armies of the world arrayed at Armageddon are defeated by Him and when all living people will have to appear before Him (Ezek. 20:33–4; Matt. 25:31–46). It is on those people living at that time that vengeance will fall. Dead rejectors of Christ will not be judged until after the Millennium at the Great White Throne. Looking back, we know for a fact that none of the unsaved who actually persecuted the Thessalonians will be judged at the Second Coming but at the Great White Throne.

Since vindication is the subject, that explains why Paul did not mention that Rapture in this passage, for the Rapture is not a time of vindication of God's righteousness by judging the world. It is a time of release, of hope, of meeting the Lord. Some Thessalonians had found release through death even before Paul wrote. Eventually all of them found it that way. Since the first century, many persecuted Christians have found the same release through death. Some will find it at the pretribulation Rapture. But only those believers living at the end of the Tribulation will find it then, not because a Rapture takes place then, but because they successfully pass the judgments and see their enemies condemned.

But if vindication at the Second Coming falls on a relatively small group of Christ's enemies (think, by comparison, of the many who have opposed Him through the centuries), why should this particular time of vindication be given such prominence? Simply because the end of the Tribulation brings to a climax the long rebellion of mankind, a rebellion that will be halted by the personal intervention of the Lord. Not all of the Lord's enemies will be judged then, but those who will be are the epitome of rebellion. Awful as the persecution of the Thessalonians may have been, horrible as subsequent persecutions of believers have been and are, those in the past or present do not compare with that which will transpire during the Tribulation period.

Think of an analogy. Antichrists were present in the first century (1 John 2:18). Antichrists have come and gone throughout the centuries. But one great Antichrist is yet to appear on the scene of history, and he will be the epitome of opposition to God. Other antichrists are now in hades awaiting the judgment at the end of the Millennium that will cast them into the lake of fire forever. But the coming great Antichrist will be judged at the Second Coming, and when he is, God will be vindicated over all antichrists, though their particular judgment will occur much later.

All persecutors of believers will be judged later, as well. The judgment of those living at the Second Coming will vindicate God's righteousness with respect to them and to all persecutors who died before them.

If death or the Rapture brings release from personal persecution, why should believers be concerned with this future vindication? Because the case against persecutors cannot be closed until Christ is vindicated and righteousness prevails. Persecution may cease when death occurs, but the case against the persecutors is not closed until they are judged. And believers are concerned not only about relief but about vindication.

Notice a biblical example of that principle. Hear the Tribulation martyrs in heaven, before the end of the Tribulation, crying out to God for vindication (Rev. 6:9–11). "When will You settle the score against those who killed us?" they ask. Of course, they have already obtained release through physical death and are in heaven; yet they are concerned about vindication. And the Lord replies that they will have to wait a little longer for that vindication until others are also martyred on earth.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 1 Thessalonians 5:9, Paul extended the hope and assurance of escape from wrath by means of a pretribulational Rapture. In 2 Thessalonians 1, he assured his readers that the enemies of the Lord will be judged.

In summary, chapter 1 does not teach that release from persecution will necessarily occur at the same time as the Second Coming. It does not picture the Rapture at all but focuses on the judgment on the wicked and the vindication of Christ that will occur at the Second Coming. That vindication gives assurance to saints of all ages that righteousness will prevail.

NOTES

1. Alexander Reese, *The Approaching Advent of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1975); George E. Ladd, *The Blessed Hope* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956); and Robert H. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973).
2. Ladd, *The Blessed Hope*, 70.
3. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 113.

Chapter 90: The Millennium

To build the kingdom on the first coming of Christ produces a theological error with many serious ramifications. By kingdom, I mean the rule of Messiah on earth as promised to David (2 Sam. 7:12–16). To claim that Christ established this Davidic kingdom at His first advent requires a deliteralizing of the promises made to David and results in confusion between the church and the kingdom. Among other things, church ethics and kingdom ethics are intermixed, usually with the result that kingdom ethics are promoted more than church ethics. Thus Christians are urged to live the kingdom here and now.

That mistake was made by some during the earthly life of Christ (Luke 19:11). The truth is that the messianic kingdom will be inaugurated at the second coming of Christ. At that time the land promise made to Abraham and his descendants will be fulfilled (Gen. 15:18–21). Then the promise made to David that his descendant (Messiah) will sit on the throne of the kingdom forever will be fulfilled. Without a Millennium in which all these promises can be fulfilled, the promises have to be canceled for some reason or be fulfilled in Israel's past or in the present nonliterally.

I. THE LENGTH OF THE MILLENNIUM

Six times in Revelation 20:2–7 the length of the Millennium is stated to be 1,000 years. The repetition of this figure underscores both its literalness and its importance. George E. Ladd, a premillennialist who denies the literalness of the figure, says: “It is difficult to understand the thousand years for which he [Satan] was bound with strict literalness in view of the obvious symbolic use of numbers in Revelation. A thousand equals the third power of 10—an ideal time.”¹ Apparently Augustine first conceived of 1,000, the cube of 10, as representing the perfection or fullness of time.² Amillennialists usually interpret the number in this same manner. One may properly ask why 10 raised to the third power is ideal instead of 10 raised to the tenth power, or some other power? Furthermore, to deny the literalness of the number because Revelation is a symbolic book is to ignore that not everything in the book is symbolic, and therefore it would be necessary to give reasons why any given passage is symbolic. There is no reason to reject the literal meaning of 1,000 as indicating the length of the millennial reign of Christ.³

II. THE GOVERNMENT OF THE MILLENNIUM

A. *The Type of Government*

The government of the messianic, millennial kingdom will be a theocracy. This is the same form of government God used for Israel in Old Testament times; only in the Millennium the Lord Jesus Christ will personally and visibly reign over the affairs of all mankind (Dan. 7:14). His rule will be as a benevolent despot (Rev. 19:15). As a result, there will be perfect and complete justice for all, and sin will be immediately punished (Isa. 11:4; 65:20).

B. *The Center of Government*

The topography of the earth will be changed by the time the kingdom begins to function, and the city of Jerusalem will be the center of government (Isa. 2:3). That city will be exalted (Zech. 14:10); it will be a place of great glory (Isa. 24:23); it will be the site of the temple (Isa. 33:20) and the joy of the whole earth (Ps. 48:2). Jerusalem, scene of so much war and turmoil both in the past and present and victim of future judgments during the Tribulation, will never again need to fear for her safety (Isa. 26:1–4).

C. The Rulers in the Government

David will apparently be a regent in the millennial kingdom. A number of prophecies speak of David's important place in the kingdom (Jer. 30:9; Ezek. 37:24–25). Apparently David, who with other Old Testament believers will be resurrected at the second coming of Christ, will act as a prince under the authority of Christ, the King.

Authority over the twelve tribes of Israel will be vested in the hands of the Twelve Apostles (Matt. 19:28). Other princes and nobles will likewise share in governmental duties (Isa. 32:1; Jer. 30:21). It seems too that many others of lesser rank will have responsibilities in various departments of the kingdom government. The Parable of the Minas (Luke 19:11–27) indicates that those who have proved their faithfulness will be given much authority. The church, too, will have a part in governing the earth (Rev. 5:10). Though many of the normal procedures of government will be carried out by subordinates, Christ will be King over all.

D. The Subjects of the Government

The first subjects of the rule of Christ during the kingdom will be the Jews and Gentiles who survive the Tribulation and enter the kingdom in earthly bodies. At the very beginning of the Millennium all the people on earth will be redeemed, for all unredeemed will have been judged at Christ's return. Of course, babies will be born right away so that in a few years there will be many who will be of age to decide for themselves their own spiritual relation to the King. They will have to be subject to Him at least outwardly, but whether they give heart allegiance will be a matter of personal choice. All will have to accept Him as King; some will also accept Him as personal Savior. All of these people will be living in mortal bodies. Resurrected saints will, of course, have resurrection bodies, not subject to physical limitations. This also means they will not contribute to space, food, or governmental problems during the Millennium.

III. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MILLENNIUM

A. Spiritual

Some allege that the millennial kingdom cannot be a spiritual one if it is earthly. But “earthly” and “spiritual” are not necessarily mutually exclusive. If the two concepts were incompatible, Christians today could not be expected to live spiritual lives in earthly bodies. During the Millennium, God will join the spiritual and the earthly in a full display of His glory on this earth. The earthly kingdom will manifest the highest standards of spirituality.

B. Righteous

Our Lord will be a King who reigns in righteousness (Isa. 32:1). Righteousness will be the belt of His loins (Isa. 11:5}). With righteousness He shall judge the poor (Isa. 11:4; 16:5). Zion shall be called the city of righteousness (Isa. 1:26). Only the righteous shall enter the kingdom at its inauguration (Matt. 25:37), and those who thirst after righteousness shall be filled (Matt. 5:6).

C. Peaceful

As a consequence of righteousness, the Millennium will be an era of peace. Former enemies, like Egypt, Israel, and Assyria, will be at peace with each other (Isa. 19:23–25). Jerusalem, site of many conflicts throughout the centuries, will be at peace (Zech. 8:4–5). Indeed, the whole earth will be at peace (Isa. 2:4). One ramification of this will be the elimination of defense budgets, which will release resources for other purposes.

D. Prosperous

The earth will be increasingly productive throughout the Millennium as wilderness and desert places become useful (Isa. 35:1–7). One harvest will be followed by another (Amos 9:13–14).

Social needs and injustices will be eliminated (Ps. 72:12–13). The curse to which the earth was subjected when Adam sinned will be reversed, though not completely lifted until the end of the Millennium when death will be finally conquered.

E. Religious

Full knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth during the Millennium (Isa. 2:2–3). Apparently sacrifices will again be offered in a temple which will be built and in operation during the Millennium (Ezek. 40–48). Premillennialists understand these sacrifices as a means of memorializing the death of Christ. Religious holidays will also be observed during the Millennium (Ezek. 46:1–15; Zech. 14:16).⁴

IV. WHAT THE MILLENNIUM WILL MEAN TO CHRIST

In premillennial eschatology much is made of what the Millennium will mean to the world, to Jerusalem, to Palestine, to Israel, to the nations, etc., and rightly so, for it will affect many changes for good in the entire earth. But there is another perspective perhaps more important to consider: What will the Millennial Age mean to our Lord?

In Psalm 2:7–8 King Jesus was promised authority to rule the earth in righteousness. Certainly He did not see that promise fulfilled during His first advent, though He paid the price of His own life for it. In Revelation He is proclaimed worthy to take the sealed book, open it, and receive the inheritance that is rightfully His. This will be fulfilled when He comes again (Rev. 11:15).

Why is an earthly kingdom necessary? Did He not receive His inheritance when He was raised and exalted in heaven? Is not His present rule His inheritance? Why does there need to be an earthly kingdom? Because He must be triumphant in the same arena where He was seemingly defeated. His rejection by the rulers of this world was on this earth (1 Cor. 2:8). His exaltation must also be on this earth. And so it shall be when He comes again to rule this world in righteousness. He has waited long for His inheritance; soon He shall receive it.

NOTES

1. George E. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 262.
2. Augustine, *The City of God* 20.7.
3. See Jack S. Deere, “Premillennialism in Revelation 20:4–6,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 135, (January–March 1978): 58–73.
4. For a detailed discussion of these matters see J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 512–31.

Chapter 91: Future Judgments

In the program of God, there are several judgments yet in the future. It is not accurate to speak of one great Judgment Day to come, for these future judgments will occur at different times.

I. JUDGMENT OF BELIEVERS' WORKS

A. *The Scriptures Involved*

Two principal passages recount the fact and details of this judgment (1 Cor. 3:10–15; 2 Cor. 5:10). Other relevant passages include Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:1–5; 9:24–27; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4; and Revelation 2:10; 3:11; 4:4, 10.

B. *The Judgment Itself*

Though not specifically stated, this judgment will apparently take place immediately after the Rapture of the church, since the twenty-four elders who likely represent believers have their crowns in the scene in heaven at the beginning of the Tribulation (Rev. 4:4, 10). Further, when the bride returns with Christ at His second coming, she is clothed with the righteous deeds that have survived the examination of this judgment (Rev. 19:8).

The site of this judgment is the bema of Christ. Earthly bemas were raised, thronelike platforms on which rulers or judges sat when making speeches (Acts 12:21) or hearing and deciding cases (Acts 18:12–17).

Only believers will stand in this judgment, for Paul made clear that it relates to those who have built on the Foundation, Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11–12).

The nature of the believer's works will be examined in this judgment to distinguish worthy works from worthless ones. These works are the deeds done by the believer during his Christian life. All will be reviewed and examined. Some will pass the test because they were good; others will fail because they were worthless. Both good and bad motives will be exposed; then every believer will receive praise from God (1 Cor. 4:5). What grace!

C. *The Outcome of Judgment*

The outcome will be either reward or deprivation of reward. Salvation is not in question, for those deprived of reward "shall be saved, yet so as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:15). Yet, as mentioned above, apparently every believer will have done some things that God can praise.

Nevertheless, the deprivation is real and may involve forfeiture and shame. Certainly it means forfeiting rewards that otherwise might have been received. The word *zemioo* in 1 Cor. 3:15 carries no idea of suffering in the sense of physical or mental suffering. Its basic idea is loss in the sense of forfeiture of reward that could have been received.¹

John clearly taught that rewards may be lost because of unfaithfulness during one's lifetime (2 John 8). His concern was that his readers would receive a full reward, that is, receive all that could be theirs through continued faithfulness. This same idea of loss is part of Paul's analogy of the Judgment Seat with running a race (1 Cor. 9:24–27). His concern was that he not be disapproved, that is, do nothing that would make him unworthy to receive rewards. Perhaps even more vividly John wrote about the possibility of a believer being ashamed at Christ's coming (1 John 2:28). "The passive voice coupled with the expression *autou* suggests that a believer withdraws in shame. It suggests a shrinking back from Christ, perhaps from a sense of guilt, with the believer producing the action [rather than Christ putting the believer to shame]."²

Summarizing in a very balanced way, Hoyt concluded as follows:

The Judgment Seat of Christ might be compared to a commencement ceremony. At graduation there is some measure of disappointment and remorse that one did not do better and work harder. However, at such an event the overwhelming emotion is joy, not remorse. The graduates do not leave the auditorium weeping because they did not earn better grades. Rather, they are thankful that they have been graduated, and they are grateful for what they did achieve. To overdo the sorrow aspect of the Judgment Seat of Christ is to make heaven hell. To underdo the sorrow aspect is to make faithfulness inconsequential.³

II. JUDGMENT OF OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS

Daniel 12:1–3 speaks of the Tribulation period (Daniel 12:1), resurrections of the righteous and the wicked (Daniel 12:2), and rewards for the righteous (Daniel 12:3). Many understand the resurrection and reward of the righteous to refer to the resurrection and judgment of believers of the Old Testament at the conclusion of the Tribulation. New Testament revelation places the resurrection and judgment of the wicked of all time at the conclusion of the Millennium (Rev. 20:11–15). Of course it is not unusual for Old Testament prophets to place side by side events that later revelation separates by some period of time.

It is possible that Daniel 12:1–3 refers only to the resurrection and rewarding of Jewish believers of the Tribulation days. They will be rewarded for having insight for seeing through Antichrist’s deception and for leading others to faith during the Tribulation days.

III. JUDGMENT OF SAINTS OF THE TRIBULATION PERIOD

Revelation 20:4–6 relates the resurrection of saints of the Tribulation period who died during that time. Because of their opposition to Antichrist’s program, they were martyred, but God raises them from the dead just before the Millennium begins. No specific mention is made of a judging and rewarding; it can only be assumed to take place at the time of resurrection. (The phrase “judgment was given to them” in Rev. 20:4 refers not to being judged but to the activity of saints judging people in the millennial government.)

IV. JUDGMENT OF JEWISH SURVIVORS OF THE TRIBULATION

Before the inauguration of the millennial kingdom, the survivors of the Tribulation, both Jewish and Gentile, must be judged in order to ensure that only believers will enter the kingdom.

The judgment of Jewish survivors is described in Ezekiel 20:34–38 and illustrated in Matthew 25:1–30. Ezekiel states that it will occur after all surviving Israelites have been regathered from the ends of the earth to the land of Palestine. Christ will cause them to “pass under the rod” (see Lev. 27:32) to purge out the rebels. As a result, those rebels (unsaved) will not enter the land of Israel (Ezek. 20:38) but will be cast into the outer darkness (Matt. 25:30). In contrast, those who successfully pass through this judgment will enter the millennial kingdom to enjoy the blessings of the New Covenant (Ezek. 20:37). This group will not be given resurrection bodies at this time, but will go into the kingdom in their earthly bodies and will become the parents of the first millennial Jewish babies.

V. JUDGMENT OF GENTILE SURVIVORS OF THE TRIBULATION

Also at the second advent of Christ, Gentile survivors of the Tribulation will be judged by Him. Matthew 25:31–46 describes this in detail. Joel predicted that it would take place in the “valley of Jehoshaphat” (Joel 3:2), which may refer to the Kidron Valley on the east side of Jerusalem. Jehoshaphat simply means “Yahweh judges.”

Both passages say that these Gentiles will be judged for their treatment of Israel during the Tribulation period. Christ is the Judge; the Gentiles are being judged; by all rapture schemes the church has already been raptured to heaven; the “brethren,” the treatment of whom becomes the basis for the judgment, can only refer to Christ’s natural brethren, other Jewish people (Rom. 9:3). For a Gentile to treat any Jewish person with kindness during the Tribulation will place his life in jeopardy. No one will do this merely out of a beneficent attitude, but only out of a redeemed heart. Therefore, this is not a judgment of works, but of genuine faith that produced such selfless works (or the lack of it which produced no such works).

Those who lack saving faith and demonstrate that lack by not doing good works will be sent to the lake of fire. Those whose good deeds prove the presence of saving faith will enter the kingdom. Like the Jewish survivors of the preceding judgment, they will enter in earthly bodies and become parents of the first millennial Gentile babies.

You will notice that I have understood this judgment to concern individual Gentiles, and not, as some translations imply, national groups of people. The word used in the passage is translated in the New Testament by “people” two times, “heathen” five times, “nation” sixty-four times, and “Gentiles” ninety-three times. Other references to a judgment at the second advent of Christ depict a judgment of individuals (Matt. 13:30, 47–50).

VI. JUDGMENT OF SATAN AND FALLEN ANGELS

Satan and his angels will also be judged, evidently at the conclusion of the millennial kingdom. To be sure, Satan has had other sentences passed on him, but this will be his final one that confines him forever in the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10). The angels who are judged at this time also will experience the same fate (Jude 6–7). Believers will apparently be associated with the Lord in judging (1 Cor. 6:3).

VII. JUDGMENT OF THE UNSAVED DEAD

At the conclusion of the millennial reign of Christ, unbelievers of all time will be raised and judged. Their resurrection is the resurrection of judgment spoken of by the Lord in John 5:29. Their judgment will take place before a Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11–15). Their Judge is the Lord Christ (see John 5:22, 27).

Those judged are simply called “the dead”—unbelievers (in contrast to “the dead in Christ,” which refers to believers). This judgment will not separate believers from unbelievers, for all who will experience it will have made the choice during their lifetimes to reject God. The Book of Life that will be opened at the Great White Throne judgment will not contain the name of anyone who will be in that judgment. The books of works that will also be opened will prove that all who are being judged deserve eternal condemnation (and may be used to determine degrees of punishment). It is not that all their works were evil, but all were dead works, done by spiritually dead people. It is as if the Judge will say, “I will show you by the record of your own deeds that you deserve condemnation.” So everyone who will appear in this judgment will be cast into the lake of fire forever.

NOTES

1. See A. T. Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1914), 65.
2. Samuel L. Hoyt, “The Negative Aspects of the Christian’s Judgment,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137 (April–June 1980): 129–30.
3. *Ibid.*, 131.

Chapter 92: Resurrection and Eternal Destiny

I. THE FACT OF RESURRECTION

The Bible teaches clearly and in many places the truth of resurrection of the body. Bodily resurrection is primarily a biblical revelation, for Greek philosophy, which saw the body as a hindrance, taught only the immortality of the soul.

A. In the Old Testament

1. Job 19:25–27. During his affliction Job longed for death as a way of relief and wished that he could know there was some sort of hope beyond the grave that would make his present suffering tolerable (Job 14:13–14). He expressed that hope in Job 19:25–27, a hope in a living God who would vindicate his case even after his death. He is sure that even after his body is decayed, he will see God from his flesh (Job 19:26). When the Hebrew preposition, *min*, is used with the verb “to see,” it indicates the vantage point from which a person sees; i.e., Job expected to be in a body in his resurrected state.
2. Exodus 3:6. In His debate with the Sadducees, the Lord cited this verse as proof of the fact of resurrection (Matt. 22:31–32). The argument is based on the fact that when God identified Himself to Moses at the burning bush He did so by associating Himself with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in a living relationship that did not cease when those patriarchs died.
3. Psalm 16:8–11. In these verses David was writing of his own future resurrection. These verses were cited by Peter in Acts 2:25–28, 31 as finding their ultimate fulfillment in the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the first Easter.
4. Psalm 49:14. Here the psalmist asserts that the righteous will ultimately triumph over the wicked, either in this life or in the life to come (“in the morning”).
5. Isaiah 26:19. Here the prophet explicitly teaches the bodily resurrection of the redeemed.
6. Daniel 12:2. Here both the resurrection of the righteous and the resurrection of the wicked are taught. The New Testament reaffirms these two resurrections (John 5:28–29) but reveals they will not occur at the same time (Rev. 20:4–5).
7. Zechariah 14:5. If “holy ones” refers to believers, then this prophecy assures their resurrection, for they come with Christ at His second coming. Some, however, think it refers to angels, though possibly to both resurrected believers and angels.

B. In the New Testament

1. Matthew 16:21; 17:23; 20:19. Christ predicted His own resurrection on the third day after His death.
2. Matthew 22:31–32; John 2:19–22; John 5:28–29; John 11:25–26. Christ taught the truth of resurrection.
3. 1 Corinthians 15:20–24, 1 Corinthians 15:35–50; 2 Corinthians 5:1–4; Philippians 3:21; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18. Paul not only taught bodily resurrection but also gave added details about the resurrection body.

II. THE ORDER OF RESURRECTIONS

As already noted, all bodily resurrections fall into two categories: the resurrection of life or the first resurrection, and the resurrection of condemnation or the second resurrection (Luke 14:13–14; John 5:28–29). These resurrections will not occur at the same time, so time is not the distinguishing feature; life or eternal death is.

A. The Resurrection of Christ

First in the order of resurrections was the resurrection of Christ. Though others had been raised from the dead before Christ, He was the first to rise from the grave with a body that was no longer subject to death (Rom. 6:9; Rev. 1:18). This is why Paul called Him the Firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18). His resurrection is the first of many to come (1 Cor. 15:23).

B. The Resurrection of Those Who Are Christ's at His Coming

This resurrection will include several groups: the dead saints of this Church Age (1 Thess. 4:16), the dead saints of Old Testament times (Dan. 12:2), and martyrs of the Tribulation period (Rev. 20:4). These resurrections of the saints of all ages constitute the first resurrection (Rev. 20:6), the resurrection of life (John 5:29, or the resurrection of the righteous (Luke 14:14).

C. The Resurrection of Unsaved Dead at the End

The last group to be raised will include the unredeemed dead of all time, and they will be raised at the end of the millennial kingdom to stand before the Great White Throne in a judgment that will sentence all of them to the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11–14).

III. BETWEEN DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Strictly speaking, death is the separation of the material from the immaterial (James 2:26). In the case of every death, the body is disposed of, usually by placing it in a grave. But the immaterial facet of a person continues to exist for all eternity. The question before us now is, What is the state of the immaterial part between physical death and bodily resurrection?

A. For the Unredeemed Person in Old Testament Times

When such a person died, his soul, spirit, or immaterial nature went to sheol to wait for the resurrection of the body at the end of the Millennium. But the body is also said to be in sheol, for about half the times the word for sheol is used in the Old Testament it refers to the grave (see Num. 16:30, 33). Other times it refers to the place of departed spirits, of both the righteous (Gen. 37:35) and the wicked (Prov. 9:18). This is the place of darkness where the unredeemed dead are confined until death (which claims the body) and hades (the Greek equivalent of sheol, which claims the soul) give up their dead at the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:13).

B. For the Unredeemed Person in New Testament Times

The body goes to the grave, and the spirit goes to hades to wait for the resurrection of the body at the close of the Millennium (as with Old Testament unredeemed people) (Luke 16:23). Hades stands in contrast to heaven (Matt. 11:23; Luke 10:15) as a fiery place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 13:40–42), a place of eternal torment (Mark 9:43–48), and a place of outer darkness where there is no light at all (Matt. 22:13).

C. For the Redeemed Person in Old Testament Times

In the case of the Old Testament saint, the debated question is, Where did his soul (spirit or immaterial nature) go at the time of death? Was he taken immediately into the presence of the Lord, or did he go to the saved compartment of sheol/hades from where he was taken into heaven when Christ descended into hades between His death and resurrection?

Hoyt expressed this latter option this way: “As a result of the resurrection and ascension of Christ, a reorganization took place in the intermediate state. There was a removal of all the righteous from the upper part of sheol-hades, and its gates were barred to entrance by any saved soul thereafter. From this time on paradise is above where Christ is, and the spirits of all the saved go to be with Christ at the moment of physical death.”¹

Several passages are cited in favor of this viewpoint. In Ephesians 4:9, Paul wrote that Christ “descended into the lower parts of the earth.” Some understand this to mean that our Lord descended into hades between His death and resurrection to take those in the “saved compartment” of hades into heaven. However, the phrase “of the earth” may be an appositional phrase, meaning that Christ descended (at His Incarnation) into the lower parts (of the universe), namely the earth.

Also cited is the account of the rich man and Lazarus, which supposedly shows that both men went to hades, the rich man to punishment in one compartment of hades and Lazarus to bliss in the other compartment (which is labeled “Abraham’s bosom” [Luke 16:22 in the story]). Clearly the account teaches some important facts about death and hell: (a) there is conscious existence after death; (b) hell is a real place of torment; (c) there is no second chance after death; and (d) the dead cannot communicate with the living. But does it teach two compartments in hades? Not really, for Abraham’s bosom is not said to be in hades but rather “far away” (Luke 16:23) from it. Abraham’s bosom is a figurative phrase for paradise, or the presence of God. It was paradise that was promised to the repentant thief by the Lord (Luke 23:43), not a blissful compartment of hades.

1 Peter 3:18 is also linked with the supposed descent of Christ into sheol/hades. While there between His death and resurrection He announced His victory over sin and removed those in the paradise compartment to heaven. More likely, however, the verse means that the preincarnate Christ preached through Noah to those who, because they rejected that preaching, are now spirits in prison.

According to Harry Buis, the two-compartment theory was a development of the intertestamental period. “The main development of the doctrine of eternal punishment in this period comes from the fact that sheol is now divided into two compartments: one for the good, called paradise; the other for the evil, called gehenna.”²

I believe that the Old Testament saint at death went immediately into the presence of the Lord. The repentant thief was promised he would be in paradise the day of his death (Luke 23:43), and paradise was the presence of the Lord (2 Cor. 12:4). At Christ’s transfiguration Moses and Elijah appeared in His presence talking with Him.

Are we to understand that this conversation between Christ, Moses, and Elijah took place in the upper compartment of hades where Moses at least would have been until after the death of Christ? Are we to understand then that the transfiguration of Christ took place in paradise-hades? Are we to understand that Elijah was taken at his translation to sheol/hades and not heaven? I think not; rather, the Old Testament saint went immediately to heaven to wait for the resurrection of his body at the second coming of Christ.

IV. UNIVERSALISM

Simply stated, universalism states that sooner or later all will be saved. The older form of universalism, which originated in the second century, taught that salvation would come after a temporary period of punishment. The new universalism of our day declares that all men are now saved, though all do not realize it. Therefore the job of the preacher and the missionary is to tell people that they are already saved. Though Karl Barth denied that he taught the universal reconciliation of all men, he clearly did teach the universal election of all in Christ. Others plainly state, for example, that God’s radical love pursues men until all are saved.

A. Biblical Evidence

Verses that universalists appeal to are John 12:32, “will draw all men to Myself”; 1 Corinthians 15:22, “in Christ all shall be made alive”; Philippians 2:11, “every tongue should confess”; and 1

Timothy 2:4, “who desires all men to be saved.” But these verses do not teach that all people will ultimately be saved. John 12:32 says that the Cross of Christ makes possible the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles. Notice that the Lord in the same passage warned of judgment on rejecters (John 12:48). 1 Corinthians 15:22 states that all who are in Christ will be raised, not that everybody will. Philippians 2:10–11 assures us that someday all people will acknowledge Jesus as Lord, but not necessarily as Savior. 1 Timothy 2:4 expresses God’s desire that all be saved, but does not promise that all will be.

Universalists conveniently overlook other verses. Consider, for example, some of the Lord’s own words. “He who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36). “These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matt. 25:46). Because the same word is used it is impossible to argue that eternal punishment is not unending in the same way that eternal life is.

Other New Testament passages that teach eternal damnation include 2 Thessalonians 1:8–9, “will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord”; 1 Corinthians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 4:3; and Hebrews 2:3. Everyone is either saved or lost, and anyone who dies without receiving Christ as personal Savior will be eternally condemned.

B. Theological Evidence

Some universalists prefer to argue theologically. They appeal to the nature of God as being totally love. How, then, they ask, could such a God condemn anyone either in this life or the life to come? God is too good to reject anyone. However, God’s character involves not only love and goodness but also righteousness, holiness, and wrath. Universalists sacrifice God’s righteousness to His love, which results in a god different from the God of the Bible.

Others argue that a just God would not give infinite punishment for finite sin. But this ignores that important principle that crime depends on the object against whom it is committed (an infinite God) as well as on the subject who commits it (finite man). Striking a post is not a culpable act as striking a human being is. All sin is ultimately against an infinite God and deserves infinite punishment.

V. CONDITIONALISM

Conditionalism or conditional immortality defines everlasting punishment as utter extinction into oblivion forever.

A. Biblical Arguments

Eternal destruction in such a passage as 2 Thessalonians 1:9 means, for the conditionalist, a quality of destruction, namely, extinction. “Eternal” is also understood to be a qualitative word mainly; thus, eternal fire means a fire that neither begins nor ends with the present age, which gives us no clue as to what happens to those thrown into it. Concerning the parallelism between eternal punishment and eternal life in Matthew 25:41; Matthew 25:46, one conditionalist says that “we must be careful in pressing the parallel between ‘eternal’ life and ‘eternal’ punishment that we do not fall into any spirit of vindictiveness or ungodly joy at the fate of the wicked.”³ No further exegesis of that passage is offered. The same author states that there is “no clear exegetical basis in Luke 16 for any conclusion concerning the end of the wicked.”⁴

This sample shows the kind of artificial exegesis conditionalists must resort to in order to substantiate their position.

B. Theological Arguments

Traditionalists usually understand death as separation. Conditionalists define it as nonlife, that is, eventual extinction. Of course, such a definition will not work in the case of the death of Christ, or of physical death, or of death to self.

Conditionalists insist that God alone has immortality (1 Tim. 6:16) and human beings, therefore, do not. However, a number of other attributes are predicated of God alone that do have correspondence in man (e.g., wisdom, Rom. 16:27).

The unanswerable question for the conditionalist is this: If the wicked are to suffer an unspecified length of punishment before being annihilated, could we not expect that such a climactic event as that annihilation be stated somewhere in the many eschatological passages in the Bible?

Will it be possible for believers to be without tears in heaven when some they knew on earth will be in hell? Apparently so, and only because the believer's own perspective will be so changed to realize the serious consequences of sin (Isa. 66:24).

Of course no one takes any delight in the eternal punishment of the wicked. That doctrine should serve to compel even more to persuade people to come to Christ to receive eternal life.

NOTES

1. Herman A. Hoyt, *The End Times* (Chicago: Moody, 1969), 45.
2. Harry Buis, *The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1957), 18. The following pages give proof from the apocalyptic literature of that period.
3. Edward William Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes* (Houston: Providential Press, 1983), 195.
4. *Ibid.*, 208.

Section XIV—Central Passages

Chapter 93: Some Central Passages for the Study of Theology

For the Christian, theology must be built on the Bible. We recognize that it is Scripture that gives us the doctrines of our faith. It does this not only by providing clear proof texts, but also by giving clear principles and by offering the data from which we can make deductions or inductions or logical conclusions. But the basis of all our theology, however derived, must be the Scripture.

Through the years of teaching I have tried to insist that students know not only how to state a doctrine correctly but also what are the principal biblical passages from which it is formulated.

In this chapter I want to list useful central passages with a brief description of their contribution to theology. If a person could use this list in both directions, he or she would have a great grasp of the Bible and theology. By “both directions” I mean: (a) if one were given a passage, he could describe its major doctrinal content; and (b) if one were asked where a doctrine is taught in the Bible, he could cite the most important references.

If this is “proof-texting” so be it. What is wrong with that?

Both liberalism and neo-orthodoxy have strongly castigated the orthodox use of proof texts, and not with good reason. There is no doubt that the Scriptures quoted closely yield the doctrines of orthodoxy, not liberalism nor neo-orthodoxy. . . . The conservative insists the citation of Scripture is nothing more than a special application of “footnoting” which is standard scholarly procedure. . . . The liberal and neo-orthodox objection to the use of proof texts reflects a deep theological prejudice . . . rather than a rebuttal of a false method of scholarship. . . . The mere listing of proof texts is of no value unless each verse is underwritten by sound exegetical work. . . . Many of the older theologians were guilty of citing a verse in the Old Testament to prove something with reference to salvation and justification, and treating it as if it were as clear and lucid as something in Romans and Galatians. This is one of the most unhappy features of the older theologies which has been happily corrected by a much better sense of historical and progressive revelation, nor can the beneficial influence of dispensationalism be gainsayed at this point.¹

AREA OF THEOLOGY

PROLEGOMENA

1 Corinthians 2:10–16; Need for the Spirit’s teaching

GENERAL REVELATION

Psalms 19:1–6; Revelation is worldwide and continuous

Romans 1:18–32; Revelation of the wrath of God

Acts 14:17; The providence of God

Matthew 5:45; The goodness of God

Acts 17:28–29; God is intelligent and living

THE LIVING AND TRUE GOD

His attributes

Psalm 90:2; Eternality

James 1:17; Immutability

Psalm 99; Holiness

Psalm 139:7–11; Omnipresence

1 John 1:5; God is light

1 John 4:8; God is love

John 4:24; God is spirit

His names

Genesis 1:1; Elohim

Exodus 3:14; Yahweh

His triunity

Deuteronomy 6:4; The unity and uniqueness of God

Isaiah 48:16; Suggestion of Trinity

Matthew 28:18–20; Oneness (name) and threeness

2 Corinthians 13:14; Trinitarian benediction

THE BIBLE

Its Inspiration

2 Timothy 3:16; Bible is God-breathed

2 Peter 1:21; Spirit moved human authors

1 Timothy 5:18; Deut. 25:4; Luke 10:7; Scripture

2 Peter 3:16; Paul's writings called "Scripture"

1 Corinthians 2:13; Words of Bible are inspired

Its Inerrancy

Matthew 4:4; Every word came from God

Matthew 5:17–18; Jot and tittle (KJV)

Matthew 22:23–33; Tense of verb is accurate

Matthew 22:41–46; Letters of words are accurate

Galatians 3:16; Singular is accurate

Its Canonicity

Luke 11:51; The limits of the OT canon

Its Illumination

John 16:12–15; The Spirit's ministry

1 Corinthians 2:9–3:2; in understanding the Bible

ANGELS

Ephesians 3:10; Their ranking and organization

Genesis 3:24; Cherubim

Isaiah 6:2; Seraphim

Luke 1:26; Gabriel

Jude 9; Michael the archangel

Exodus 3; Angel of Yahweh

Hebrews 1:14; Their service

SATAN

Ezekiel 28:11–19; His creation and sin

Isaiah 14:12–17; Details of his rebellion

Matthew 4:1–11; His temptation of Christ

John 12:31; Ruler of the world

Revelation 12:10; Accuser of the brethren

2 Corinthians 4:4; Blinding unbelievers

Ephesians 6:11–18; Armor for believers

DEMONS

Matthew 17:18; Demons are

Mark 9:25; Unclean spirits

Ephesians 6:12; Their ranking and organization

1 Timothy 4:1; Doctrines of demons

Matthew 25:41; Destiny in lake of fire

MAN

Genesis 1:26–27; His creation by God

Exodus 20:11; The days of Creation

Matthew 19:4–5; Christ and creation of man

1 Thessalonians 5:23; Aspects of the immaterial nature of man

SIN

Genesis 3:1–7; Original sin

Genesis 3:8–24; Penalties for sin

Romans 3:23; 1 John 3:4; The meaning of sin

Ephesians 2:3; Inherited sin

Romans 5:12–21; Imputation of sin

Hebrews 7:9–10; An example of imputation

Romans 3:9–18; Personal sins

JESUS CHRIST

John 8:58; His eternity

Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:35; His Virgin Birth

John 1:14; His Incarnation

John 1:1; John 10:30; His Deity

Luke 2:52; Gal. 4:4; His humanity

Philippians 2:7; His kenosis

John 8:29; 1 Pet. 2:21–22; His sinlessness

Hebrews 4:15; His impeccability

Matthew 28:6; His resurrection

Acts 1:9–11; His ascension

SALVATION

Election

Ephesians 1:4; Pretemporal

Romans 8:29–30; Predestination

1 Peter 2:8; Preterition

The Death of Christ

Mark 10:45; Substitution

1 Peter 1:18; Redemption

2 Corinthians 5:18–21; Reconciliation

1 John 2:2; Propitiation

The Plan of God

Matthew 11:28; General call in Salvation

Romans 8:30; Effective call

John 16:8–11; Conviction of the Spirit

Acts 16:31; Faith

Romans 3:24; Justification

Titus 3:5; Regeneration

Galatians 4:5; Adoption

2 Corinthians 3:7–11; End of the Law

Rom 6:1–4; Union with Christ

Assurance/Security

1 John 5:10–13; Based on the Scripture

Romans 8:31–39; Because of the love of God

Ephesians 4:30; Because of the Spirit's seal

Extent of the Atonement

2 Peter 2:1; Ransom paid for all people

2 Corinthians 5:19; Reconciliation for the world

1 John 2:2; Propitiation for all

THE HOLY SPIRIT

John 16:13–14; 1 Cor. 2:10–11; His personality

Acts 5:3–4; His Deity

John 14:17; Contrast between OT and NT ministry of the Spirit

Matthew 12:22–37; Blasphemy against the Spirit

Romans 8:1; Indwelling

1 John 2:20, 27; Anointing

Ephesians 4:30; Sealing

1 Corinthians 12:13; Baptism into the body

1 Corinthians 12:7–11; Gifts of the Spirit

Ephesians 5:18; Filling

John 16:12–15; Teaching

Galatians 5:22–23; Fruit of the Spirit

THE CHURCH

Acts 19:39, 41; A nonreligious assembly

Acts 7:38; Israel as an assembly

Ephesians 1:22–23; Church, the body of Christ

Romans 16:5; Church in a house

1 Corinthians 1:2; Church in a city

Acts 9:31; 1 Cor. 15:9; Church in a region

1 Timothy 3:1–13; Qualifications for elders and deacons

Titus 1:7–9; Qualifications for elders

Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 12–14; Activities of the church

Matthew 18:15–20; 1 Cor. 5:6–8; Discipline by the church

THE FUTURE

Postmillennialism

Daniel 2:35, 44; Stone fills the whole earth

Amillennialism

Galatians 6:16; Israel-church

Premillennialism

Revelation 20:1–7; 1,000 years mentioned six times

Genesis 15:9–17; Ratification of unconditional covenant with Abraham

2 Samuel 7:12–16; Covenant with David

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; The Rapture

Pretribulationism

Revelation 3:10; Kept from the hour

1 Thessalonians 5:1–11; Kept from the wrath

Against Partial Rapture

1 Corinthians 15:51–52; All will be changed

The Millennium

Revelation 19:15; Christ the Ruler

Isaiah 2:1–4; Jerusalem the capital

Isaiah 11:4; Righteousness

Isaiah 35; Productivity

Isaiah 19:24–25; Peace

The Judgments

1 Corinthians 3:10–15; Of believers

Ezekiel 20:34–38; Of Jewish survivors of the Tribulation

Matthew 25:31–46; Of Gentile survivors of the Tribulation

Revelation 20:11–15; Of unbelievers at the Great White Throne

Matthew 25:46; 2 Thess. 1:8–9; Punishment is eternal

NOTE

1. Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Wilde, 1950), 175–78.

Section XV—Definitions

Chapter 94: Some Definitions for the Study of Theology

Precise definitions are the sign of careful theological thinking. Every definition must be an accurate reflection and summation of the biblical truth involved.

When insisting on good definitions from students, and especially when challenging a word that a student used because it was not the most precise one, I often received this retort: “It’s only a matter of semantics. One word is as good as another.” That retort is totally without merit. Definitions are very much a matter of semantics; therefore, one word is not necessarily as good as another. Accurate definitions have to be constructed with carefully chosen words. Sloppy formulation is never acceptable.

I have tried to generously sprinkle this work with accurate and concise definitions of various doctrines. In this section I have culled many of these definitions from the pages of this book and listed them in alphabetical order. After each definition I have placed the chapter number so that you can locate that subject in the body of the work for further study.

Adoption

Placing the believer in God’s family as an adult son (52).

Aseity of God

His self-existence (6).

Amillennialism

View that holds that there will be no Millennium before the end of the world and that teaches a parallel development of good and evil until the end (79).

Anthropological argument for the existence of God

The several facets of man, and all of them together, demand some explanation as to their origin and argue for a being who is moral, intelligent, and living who could have produced man (5).

Arianism

Taught that the Son was generated by the Father and thus had a beginning (8, 68).

Arminianism

Teaches that Adam was created innocent, that we inherit from him pollution but not guilt or a sin nature, and that man has the ability to do good (36, 57).

Assurance

The realization that the believer does possess eternal life (57).

Attributes

Qualities that inhere in a subject (6).

Baptism of the Spirit

The Spirit’s activity that joins the believer to the body of Christ at the time of salvation (64).

Barthianism

System of theology taught by Karl Barth (1886–1968). Emphasizes God sovereignly revealing Himself through the Word, which is ultimately Christ, the Bible being a fallible pointer to Christ (11, 68).

Biblical theology

Deals systematically with the historically conditioned progress of the self-revelation of God in the Bible (1).

Canon of Scripture

The collection of books that met certain tests and thus were considered authoritative, and are our rule of life (15).

Carnality

To exhibit the characteristics of an unsaved life either because one is an unbeliever or because, though a believer, one is living as an unsaved person (67).

Chalcedon

Church council (in 451) that formulated a definitive statement concerning the two natures of Christ and gave a clear affirmation of the deity of the Holy Spirit (68).

Church

An assembly of people who have been called together (69).

Church, local

An assembly of professing believers in Christ who have been baptized and who are organized to carry out God's will (72).

Conditionalism or conditional immortality

Everlasting punishment is utter extinction into oblivion (92).

Constantinople, Council of (381)

Produced a statement that affirmed the Holy Spirit's deity (8, 68).

Conviction

Ministry of the Holy Spirit that gives proof of the truth of the Christian message (56).

Cosmological argument for the existence of God

The universe around us is an effect that connotes an adequate cause to account for it (5).

Cosmos

That organized system headed by Satan that leaves God out and is a rival to Him (25).

Creationism

A view of the transmission of the immaterial aspect of man that teaches that God creates the soul at the moment of conception or birth and immediately unites it with the body (31).

Creationism, progressive

The same as threshold evolution (29).

Cultural mandate

Mankind is to bring all this world's structures under the lordship of Christ, demolishing all opposition against God (33).

Depravity, total

The unmeritoriousness of man in the sight of God (36).

Dichotomy

Man is viewed as a bipartite unity of material and nonmaterial entities (32).

Election

God's pretemporal choice of those who would be saved (54).

Elohim

Name of God that means the strong One, the mighty Leader, the supreme Deity (7).

Eternality of God

God's endless existence (6).

Volution

The process of organization and development of all things from lower, simpler, or worse to higher, more complex, or better through natural means (29).

Evolution, theistic

God directed, used, and controlled the processes of naturalistic evolution to "create" the world and all that is in it (29).

Evolution, threshold

God stepped in to create at the major steps of history, but otherwise allowed the naturalistic processes of evolution throughout the long period of geologic time (29).

Faith

Giving credence, confidence, trust or holding something or someone as true (56).

Heart

The center and seat of life, both physical and psychical, including intellectual, emotional, volitional, and spiritual life (32).

Hermeneutics

The study of the principles of interpretation (16).

Holiness of God

God is separate from all that is unclean and evil, and He is positively pure and thus distinct from all others (6).

Impeccability

The inability of Jesus Christ to sin (45).

Inerrancy

The Bible tells the truth, which may include approximations, free quotations, the language of appearances, and different accounts of the same event as long as these do not contradict (12).

Inspiration

God superintended (or carried along) the human authors of the Bible so that they composed and recorded without error His message to mankind in the words of their original writings (10).

Justification

To announce a favorable verdict, to declare righteous (52).

Kenosis

Christ's emptying Himself of retaining and exploiting His status in the Godhead and taking on Himself humanity in order to die (44).

Kingdom, Davidic or messianic

The millennial kingdom on earth ruled by Messiah (70).

Kingdom, mystery form

Christendom during the time between the first and second comings of Christ (70).

Kingdom, spiritual

That into which all believers are placed in the Church Age (70).

Kingdom, universal

God's rule over the entire world (70).

Last days

The entire period from the first to the second coming of Christ (83).

Limited atonement or particular redemption

The effect of Christ's death for sin was limited to a particular group known as the elect (55).

Lordship salvation

The teaching that to be saved a person must not only trust Jesus as Savior but also the Lord of his or her life, submitting (or at least being willing to submit) his or her life to His sovereign authority (58).

Love of God

God's seeking the highest good and glory of His perfections (6).

Monarchianism, dynamic (adoptionism)

Belief that Jesus was a man endowed with special power by the Spirit at His baptism (8).

Monarchianism, modalistic (Sabellianism, Patripassianism)

The Persons of the Godhead were modes in which God manifested Himself (8).

Montanism

A movement around A.D. 170 that taught God was giving new revelation to people (68).

Omnipotence of God

He is all-powerful; He can do anything consistent with His own nature (6).

Omnipresence of God

God is everywhere present with His whole Being always (6).

Omniscience of God

God knows everything, things actual and things possible, effortlessly and equally well (6).

Ontological argument for the existence of God

Since the idea of a most perfect Being exists, it must come from a most perfect Being (5).

Ordinance

A God-ordained rite or symbol administered in the church (74).

Ordo salutis

The attempt to arrange in logical (not temporal) order the activities involved in applying salvation to the individual (56).

Pantheism

God is the mind or soul of the universe. Process theology teaches that His Being penetrates the whole universe, yet is not exhausted by it (6).

Pelagianism

Man was created neither sinful nor holy and with the capacity and will to choose freely to sin or to do good (36, 68).

Perseverance

The Calvinistic belief that a believer cannot fall away from grace but will continue (persevere) in good works to the end of his life (57).

Postmillennialism

The kingdom is now being extended in the world by preaching the Gospel so that the world will be Christianized for a millennial time after which Christ will return (78).

Predestination

God's pretemporal planning of the destiny of His children, the elect (54).

Premillennialism

The second coming of Christ will be followed by the establishing of His kingdom on earth for 1,000 years (80).

Preterition

The passing over of those not chosen to salvation (54).

Prolegomena

Prefatory remarks (1).

Propitiation

The turning away of the wrath of God because of the offering of Christ (51).

Rapture

The catching away of the church from earth to heaven (83).

Regeneration

The work of God that gives new life to the one who believes (56).

Repentance

A genuine, not superficial, change of mind about something, which is followed by some change (58).

Revelation, general

All that God has revealed in the world around us, including man (5).

Revelation, special

God's message in what was codified in the Bible as communicated by various means (5).

Salvation

Rescue, deliverance, remedy, especially from sin (49).

Sanctification

God setting the believer apart for Himself: positionally at salvation, progressively throughout life, and ultimately when the believer arrives in His presence in heaven (67).

Satan

Means adversary or opposer (22–25).

Security, eternal

The work of God that guarantees that the gift of salvation, once received, is forever and cannot be lost (57).

Semi-Pelagianism

Teaches that man retains a measure of freedom by which he can cooperate with the grace of God (36).

Simplicity of God

God is not a composite or compounded being (6).

Sin

Any defection from God's standards; missing the mark (34).

Socinianism

Denies the deity of Christ, predestination, original sin, and penal substitution (8, 36).

Soul

Can refer to the whole person, alive or after death; can designate the immaterial part of a person with its many feelings and emotions; an important focus of spiritual redemption and growth (32).

Spirit

Indicates the immaterial part of a person, not the whole, with its various functions and feelings; in Paul's thought it assumes prominence in relation to the spiritual life (32).

Systematic theology

The correlation of the data of biblical revelation as a whole in order to exhibit systematically the total picture of God's self-revelation (1).

Teleological argument for the existence of God

The organization of the world requires that someone planned it (5).

Toledo, Synod of

In 589 declared that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father and the Son (filioque) (8).

Traducianism

The view that holds that the transmission of the immaterial aspect of man is transmitted along with the body through the process of natural generation (31).

Trichotomy

View that man is composed of three parts: body, soul, and spirit (32).

Trinity

In the one living and true God there are three coeternal and coequal Persons, the same in substance but distinct in existence (8).

Vicarious

Someone taking the place of another (51).

Worship

The individual, corporate, public, or private service for the Lord, which is motivated by a reverence for and submission to Him who is totally worthy (75).

Yahweh

The active, self-existent God (7).