

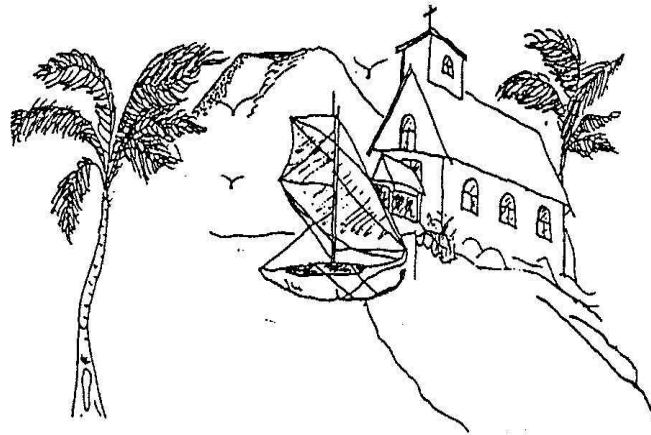
CHRISTIAN FOUNDATIONS: BASIC TEACHINGS

formerly titled
Christian Foundations for the South Pacific

BY
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1992 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of these basic foundational doctrines is to introduce new believers to the evangelical Christian Faith. The studies are interdenominational in nature and brief in content. The theology is conservative and evangelical, reflecting those core teachings held dear by the Bible believing church through the centuries. Denominational distinctives have been avoided.

Though new converts are the primary readers in mind, the studies will be helpful for those older Christians who have not had the opportunity to survey and learn the basic teachings of Christianity. I also hope that this little volume will be helpful to the individual who is not a Christian, but is honestly searching for God in a real, personal way.

In conjunction with the study of this ebook, I encourage you to read the many Scripture verses that are listed throughout the chapters.

This ebook is a genuine labor of love to the kind and generous South Pacific Island people who over the years, I have grown to deeply appreciate and love. I desire that this book will help motivate Island people to continue on with the Faith of Christ that was first delivered by the faithful pioneer missionaries of so many years ago – and by which the Pacific has so greatly benefited. I pray that many Islanders will be saved, become productive Christians, firmly grounded in our Lord Jesus Christ, and taking the gospel to neighboring South Pacific nations.

I extend my gratitude to those many people who have helped in the preparation of this book: my former teachers in Bible School and Seminary (any flaws in the book are mine, not theirs), the writers of the books on Evangelical Christianity, Graham Carter for initiating these studies for UCB Pacific Radio, Graham Swinburne and David May for its publication, and the many generous supporters and friends of Polynesian Missions.

Willis C. Newman
Nuku'alofa, Tonga, 1992.

2008 INTRODUCTION

Much has happened since I first wrote this little book. The lessons were first designed for a radio program in Tonga. They have been studied by many people and students. My experience in Tonga and the South Pacific was a fruitful delight. God enabled us to start a Tonga Bible College, and a teaching site for Faith Evangelical Seminary, which is still thriving, and managed by Dr. Uili Fukofuka. I was able to write many manuals.

In 1998 I moved back to the USA where I continued on with Faith Evangelical Seminary, and began teaching in a local community college. My Filipina wife, Esmie, introduced me to the wonderful world of Filipinos, and our teaching and seminar ministry now

extends across the Pacific to the great land of the Philippines. God has also permitted me to continue on with the work in Tonga.

God also has given us much training and experience in online teaching; consequently, we started Newman International LLC, and Bible-teaching-about.com website. Our ministry now extends all over the globe. I trust this little ebook will be of important value as you read and study the Word of God. I have made little change in the original content of the book. Its truths are timeless.

Since the book was first written to South Pacific Islanders, I have retained the illustrations common to that region of the world. It may not fit your culture, but I hope you can identify with the truths. Though they are not quite as clear as the original printing, I have also included some of the pictures that will give you a bit of the color of the Islands. I lived 12 years in the middle of the Pacific, and much of my heart still lives there among the sandy beaches, swaying palm trees, and easygoing lifestyle.

Willis C. Newman
Tacoma, Washington USA, 2008.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I was born and raised on a cattle ranch in central Idaho, USA. The closest village was about a 30 minute drive, and its population was about 150 people. After spending a short hitch in the Army, and working in a sawmill, I went to work on road construction in central Oregon. That is where a pastor led me to Christ in 1965.

I decided to try college, and eventually completed a bachelor's degree (B.A.) in psychology, and master's degree (M.Ed.) in counseling from the University of Portland. Finding some success at higher education, I took a one year certificate course at Multnomah School of the Bible, and finished up with a master of divinity (M.Div.) in pastoral studies at Western Conservative Baptist Seminary. From there I completed my Ph.D. in church administration at California Graduate School of Theology (1978), and a doctor of ministry (D.Min.) in cross cultural studies at Faith Evangelical Lutheran Seminary in Tacoma, Washington.

God gave me time in pastoral ministry for eight years, and from there I started teaching. First, I serve as director of pastoral studies and taught Bible, counseling, and church history at International College and Graduate School of Theology in Honolulu, Hawaii.

From there, I had the opportunity to establish a Bible school and Seminary in the Kingdom of Tonga, South Pacific. That project started in 1985. There I served for eight years as the South Pacific director for Faith Evangelical Lutheran Seminary and Polynesian Missions. I kept my hand in teaching courses in theology, Bible, missions, apologetics, etc. I also was guest lecturer for International School of Theology – Asia (Campus Crusade in Manila).

In 1998 the Lord moved me back to the Pacific Northwest, USA where I still lecture for Faith Evangelical Seminary (they changed their name), and teach several courses in psychology and sociology at a local community college. I also picked up credentials for counseling. My Filipina wife of nine years, Esmie, is a graduate of Faith Evangelical Seminary, University of the East (Manila), and University of Washington. She is an accountant and office manager.

We both tend to this website, and travel to Tonga and the Philippines to establish the work of Newman International, LLC.

The next page deals with how to become a Christian. The Apostle, John, wrote, "Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:30, 31).

Consequently, it is good for me to deal with first things first, and make sure that I fulfill the purpose of the New Testament in obedience to Jesus Christ.

HOW TO BE SAVED

The Bible gives us the message (gospel) of how to be saved. By this we mean how to gain forgiveness for our sin and how to gain eternal life. Summarized below are the steps for salvation as presented in the Bible. I invite you to receive Christ as Savior.

AGREE

1. Agree in your heart with God that you are a sinner in need of His salvation, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

KNOW

2. Know in your heart that there is a penalty to your sin, "for the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a).

BELIEVE

3. Believe in your heart that Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead to pay the penalty for your sins and to give you eternal life, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

"Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24).

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

"But the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

RECEIVE

4. By faith pray to God. Tell Him you believe the above in your heart and ask Him to save you through Jesus Christ. Remember that God is more concerned with the attitude of your heart rather than your exact words.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one would boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

"If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses resulting in salvation" (Romans 10:9, 10).

“Behold, I (Jesus) stand at the door (of your heart) and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me” (Revelation 3:20).

“But as many as received Him (Jesus), to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12, 13).

ASK

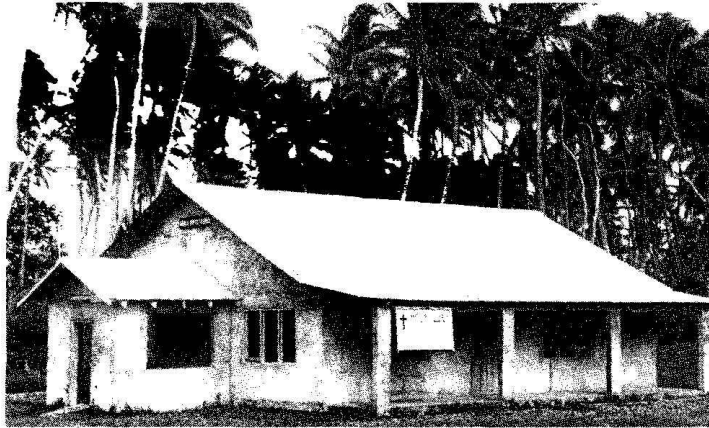
The following is a suggested prayer:

Heavenly Father, I admit to you that I am a sinner in need of your salvation. I believe that Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead to pay for my sins and go give me eternal life. I believe that only through Christ can I be saved. I ask for and accept by faith your free gift of salvation. Please come into my heart and be my Savior and Lord. Thank you for doing so. In Jesus' name, amen.

**CHAPTER ONE
CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION ONE:
THE BIBLE**



Man shall not live on bread alone – Matthew 4:4 – photo, Fiji



The Church...Which He purchased with His own blood – Acts 20:28 – photo, Fiji

The first foundational block we will study is the Bible itself. Our understanding of Christianity comes from the Bible; thus, we need to know some vital facts about that wonderful Book. I answer three questions in this lesson: what is the Bible? How do we know what the Bible is? Why did God give us the Bible? Some of the key Bible verses I

will show you are Hebrews 1:1, 2; 2 Timothy 3:14-17 and 2 Peter 1:20, 21; Revelation 22:18, 19.

I. WHAT IS THE BIBLE?

The Bible is the only true word of God to humanity. That is a bold statement, but it is true. The Bible tells us that God has revealed Himself to mankind, that is, God has given man information about Himself that mankind could not know in any other way except that God Himself should disclose that knowledge. God has made Himself known in a **general** way through nature (Romans 1:18-21), our conscience (Romans 2:14-16) and God's management of the universe (Colossians 1:16, 17). But these avenues many times leave us contused about what God is like and how He relates to us.

Because of this, God has revealed (disclosed, unveiled) Himself to man in a **special** way with very specific information. Let me illustrate. Living life on an island can be very isolated while at the same time many things happen overseas. Millions of people live in America, New Zealand, Australia, England and other places. People there do things and live a life that we know nothing about - unless someone sends or brings the news by magazines, newspapers, letters, radio or whatever. In a similar way, God has revealed, or sent, special information to us - information we could never know unless He were to bring or send that "news".

Hebrews 1:1, 2 says that during Old Testament times God revealed Himself and/or His message in many ways. Some of those ways were through judges, laws, ceremonies, kings, and prophets. When God sent Jesus, however, He gave his final special revelation to man, until He comes again.

The words in verse 2, "has spoken," indicate a final and completed action. Jesus communicated His revelation through the original Apostles and confirmed it with mighty miracles and signs (Hebrews 2:3, 4). God then terminated any further special revelations to man. In the last few verses of the last book of the Bible Jesus strongly orders that no one should add or take away from the Bible (Revelation 22:18, 19). Revelation was the last book written in the New Testament.

According to the Bible, then, we have no need for people or other books claiming to have messages from God. Peter said that we already have everything we need that pertains to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). What good news that is, to know that God did not forget to tell us something that we must know in order to be saved, to go to Heaven, have our sins forgiven or to live life pleasing to Him!

I do not mean that the Bible is just a dry rule book to follow, because Christianity is a living, dynamic personal experience with Jesus Christ. But our Christian experience is defined, instructed, and affirmed by the Bible as taught to us by the Holy Spirit.

The Bible tells us more specifically how God communicated to us through the Bible. In 2 Timothy 3:14-17, it says that "all" the Scripture is "inspired" by God. Inspired means

“God breathed,” that is, the Bible is the result of the breath of God. Breath carries our words as we communicate. The Bible then, is the very words of God. “All” Scripture refers to all the parts of Scripture, whether it is history, culture, geography, or matters dealing with our life and faith. The word, “all” also limits the scope of God’s special revelation to the Bible. He did not say, “all Scripture and newspapers, and some novels.”

What an encouragement to us, knowing that we do not have to guess which parts of the Bible are from God and which are not! Jesus even went on to say that His word would never pass away (Matthew 24:35) and that Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35). What a confidence that gives when we face problems in life, problems such as death, economic crisis, or family trouble.

We are told in 2 Peter 1:20, 21 the mechanics of how God gave Scripture to His messengers. It says that Scripture is not of any man’s opinion or will, but that they were moved along by the Holy Spirit to speak the words of God - much like the wind fills a sail and carries the boat along over the swells of the beautiful blue sea. In other words, we can say that God directed the human authors so that without hindering their individual personalities and styles, they wrote without error God’s exact and complete thoughts in the original manuscripts.

II. HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT THE BIBLE IS?

It would not be reasonable for us to say these wonderful things about the Bible without offering evidence that what we say is true. For example, let’s say that we want to buy a boat to go fishing. Perhaps we see a used boat advertised on the bulletin board down at the local store. The owner said that the boat, tied up at the wharf, had a new engine, paint job, no rot in the hull and made many other great claims about the vessel. We would not just take the owner’s word, but we would drive down to the wharf to see for ourselves if the evidence matched up to the owner’s claims. In the same way we need to examine the evidence about the Bible.

Though there are many convincing proofs that the Bible is the Word of God, we offer only four in this short space.

A. First, the Bible itself claims to be God’s word. Adding to the verses we have already referred to, we see that the Old Testament Prophets, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel said their writings were the Word of God (Jeremiah 1:9; Isaiah 8:1, 5, 11; Ezekiel 3:4). Even Moses said that “... the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God (Exodus 32:16).

Scriptures are called by Paul the “Word of God” and the “Oracles of God,” and the “Sacred writings” (Ephesians 6:17; Romans 3:2; 2 Timothy 3:15). The examples go on, but suffice it to say that the Bible claims to be the Word of God.

B. Second, we have the amazing facts of fulfilled prophecy. If men could predict the future we would be rich. If we could predict where the fish were biting, how good the

pumpkin and copra prices would be, and then we could become rich. But no one can predict the future except God. According to Bible scholars, 27% of the Bible deals with predictive prophecy. There are over 1,800 predictions recorded.

Some of the predictions are to be fulfilled in the future, and some have already been fulfilled in past history. Prophecies in the Bible are clear and with pinpoint accuracy, not like the fuzzy talk by some so-called prophets.

For example, there are over 300 prophecies concerning the first coming of Jesus Christ. I offer just six to illustrate the amazing quality of Bible prophecy.

- It was predicted that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:3; Matthew 2:1-6).
- Isaiah predicted that Christ was to suffer and make atonement for our sins (Isaiah 53:4-6; 1 Peter 2:24, 25).
- The Psalmist said Christ would be given gall and vinegar to drink (Psalm 69:21; Matthew 27:34, 48).
- Again, that men would divide Christ's garments and cast lots for His clothing (Psalm 22:18; Matthew 27:35).
- Finally, the Psalmist predicted that Christ's body would be resurrected from the dead (Psalm 16:9, 10; Luke 24:1-47).

All of these predictions came true. Only God can predict the future; therefore, the Bible is from God.

C. The third proof I offer is the testimony of Jesus Christ. He called the Old Testament the Scriptures (Luke 24:44, 45). Jesus believed as true the Old Testament creation story of Adam and Eve, the miracles of Jonah and the big fish, and of Moses and the burning bush (Matthew 19:4; 12:39-41; Luke 20:37). Christ communicated His New Testament revelation to us through His appointed apostles and confirmed His message by many miracles.

It was climaxed by that grandest miracle of all, His resurrection from the dead (John 20:30, 31; Acts 1:1-3; Romans 1:1-4). Think of it this way, Jesus rose from the dead to prove what He had to say. Nobody can offer evidence like that. Further, to say the Bible is not of God is calling Jesus a liar! Nobody in their right mind would do that!

D. The last proof I offer is the character of God. God loves us. He is kind, honest, and cannot lie. He is holy, righteous, and true - beyond defect in character. God knows everything, is everywhere and is all powerful. In a word, God is perfect. We must, then, ask ourselves the question: would God lie to us? Would He mislead or deceive us? No, God forbid such a thought! The conclusion is this: the character of God extends to His Word, and the Bible is His Word.

When we decide to take a trip to an outer island, for example, we take the word of the boat operator that the boat will survive the sometimes rough and choppy sea. We get in

the boat and entrust ourselves to the captain and boat as it chugs out through the waves. We trust him because he is a man of good character and skill, we can believe him. In the same way, God is of perfect character, so surely we can trust Him and His Bible.

We must believe that whatever we say about God we must say about His Bible - His special revelation to mankind. We can trust God. We can trust the Bible. To the farmers in the bush who grow talo, manioke, siaine and 'ufi: you can believe and trust the Bible. To the fisherman who takes his little boat and nets and goes to fish on the reef or beyond into deep ocean: you can take the Bible seriously. The house wife pounding out tapa, feeding the pigs, washing clothes, making school uniforms for the children: you, too, can trust the Bible.

To the wife and children whose husband and daddy is overseas or out somewhere on a ship: believe God and His Bible. To the government workers and leaders who try their best to run the country: take God and His Bible seriously.

In the Bible you will find comfort, wisdom, encouragement, instruction, correction, and blessing. Through the Bible you will find the mind of God. Through the Bible you can find how to have your sins forgiven, go to Heaven, have peace with God through Jesus Christ, and have fulfillment in this life.

The Bible is incapable of teaching deception. It is sufficient in all questions of faith and practice. It is understandable. Just every day people can comprehend what it says. The Bible is authoritative. It is not forged, and the texts are truthful. The Bible is a wonderful treasure that God has given us. Now let's go to the third question: Why did God give us the Bible?

III. WHY DID GOD GIVE US THE BIBLE?

A. The first of three reasons is that the Bible is the standard of judgment used against those who reject our precious Savior, Jesus. Christ Himself said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

When a thief, or someone who is convicted of a crime, comes before the judge to be sentenced, the judge bases his sentence upon the constitution and laws of that country. In the same way, Jesus is saying that when those who reject Christ step up before the judgment seat of God, that person will receive his or her sentence based upon the Bible.

B. A second reason God gave us the Bible is to tell us how to be saved - that is very good news! God revealed this wonderful news to us through His great Apostle Paul, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

When a ship or fishing boat comes in to a harbor there is a great danger of running aground on the jagged reefs. That would mean loss of the ship. To help ships to come safely through the channel, governments have put up a series of lights and markers to guide the ship. If the captain or pilot goes by those lights, then they will safely berth at the wharf.

The same is true of the Bible. It is a light and marker to point us safely to the harbor of salvation, spiritually speaking. Just as the harbor is salvation for the ships, Christ is our harbor of salvation. And just as the deep channel is the way to the harbor, faith is the way to Jesus Christ, according to the Bible.

There is nothing we can do to get safely to heaven except to personally receive Jesus Christ as our Savior. Just as we place our trust in those channel markers (to turn the metaphor a wee bit), we place our trust in Christ to save us from our sins and take us to heaven when we die. That is faith. Baptism, good works, church membership (even religion) or anything else cannot get us to heaven, only faith in Jesus Christ, according to the Bible. Salvation is a personal relationship with Christ, not keeping a set of religious rules or rites.

C. The third reason for the Bible is to give the Christian doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction that we may be adequate and equipped for good works in this life (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). We do not do good works to become a Christian, but because we are Christians. We must be careful to keep the cart after the horse and not before. This brings us to a close for this lesson. I have answered the three key questions: what is the Bible? How do we know what the Bible is? Why did God give us the Bible?



Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation - Mark 16:15.
Sing His praise... you islands and those who dwell on them - Isaiah 42:10.
Photo is a coast line with palm trees in Solomon Islands.

CHAPTER TWO

CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION TWO: GOD

The second Christian foundation block I will explain is the Bible's teaching of God. Who is God? What is God like? What does God do? These are the questions to be answered from the Bible in this lesson. Everyone has an idea of who God, but here I will show you the true God.

I begin with some thoughts. First, mere men and women cannot fully understand or define God. We are limited in our ability to understand the universe, and God is even bigger than the universe. We can, however, know exactly and accurately many things about God, because He has given us that capacity, and has told us much about Himself. As a side note, I use the masculine gender, because that is how He describes Himself in the Bible.

It is to our advantage to carefully search the Holy Scripture to know, experience, worship, and to serve the true God - the God of the Bible. To make sure we worship the right God, we cannot rely on our imagination, dreams, or what others have said. Put simply: if we do not worship the true God, then we are worshipping a false god - and the consequences of that action are terrible (Deuteronomy 5:6-9).

Second, God is not just a perfect exalted man, a state that other men will someday attain. Neither is He some impersonal force in nature, nor just one of several gods or spirits. The God of the Bible is the one and only true God, a living, spiritual Being who is active and personal. He has intellect, emotion, will, and enjoys fellowship with His people who are created in His image.

On the one hand God is separated from His creation and governs it from afar. On the other hand, God is actively involved in the detailed workings of His creation.

Finally, God does exist: the Bible assumes it and mankind intuitively knows it (Genesis 1:1; Romans 1:18-20; 2:14-16; John 3:19, 20). Mankind throughout history and in every culture has within him the intuition (or heart knowledge) that God exists. The old Tongan religion, for example, believed there to be four principal gods: Maui who pulled up the islands out of the sea with a hook and line, and Hikuleo who lived in and governed Pulotu, the place of departed spirits. There was Tangaloa who resides in the sky and was the god of foreigners, and Hea-Moana-uli-uli who governs the sea and is worshipped under the form of the sea-serpent.

Their notions were false, but they still had a belief in god or gods. The question becomes: who is the real, true God? To the Christian, I say He is the God of the Bible who gave us special revelation about Himself and confirmed that testimony with mighty

miracles - the greatest being the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (John 20:30, 31).

Now for those three big questions: who is God? What is He like? What does He do?

I. WHO IS GOD?

One key section to set before us is Exodus 3:14 (see 6:2-8) "And God said unto Moses. I AM THAM THAT I AM: and HE SAID, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

God had many names in the Old Testament, each describing something about Himself, which was a customary practice. Here we have the name "Yahweh," translated usually as Jehovah or LORD. Scholars tell us the word means "the Existent One," or better, "the Self-Existent One."

This means God's existence does not depend on something other than Himself. For example, a fish depends on water; animals depend on air and food and even parents to produce them. Everything in this universe depends on something for its existence. Not so with God - He is the "Self-Existent" one, dependent on nothing other than Himself. Life itself is sourced in God. God has no limits or boundaries to time or space. He is unchangeable, the same yesterday, today, and forever. God is perfect. Now, let's compare ourselves to God.

We have many imperfections. People, governments, business, and families are all imperfect, but not God. We are limited by time and space. The days of our life are limited. Some of you have passed only your 20th birthday, some your 40th, others have passed 60 or 70. Someday, who knows, maybe today, tomorrow, next year - but some day the funeral will be yours.

The things we can do in this life are limited by distance, money, status in life. We miss our loved ones overseas and wish we had money to go and visit them, or maybe just buy food. Not only are we limited, but also dependent - totally dependent upon God. Our existence, life, health, food, shelter, the air we breathe - all come from God. We live in a fragile world in fragile bodies - utterly dependent upon God. How good it is to know that God is "self-existent," unchangeable, perfect in every way, and that He wants us to depend on Him!

Trinity

Another facet of God is His Trinity, or Tri-Unity. Though the actual word "Trinity" is not used in the Bible, this very complex teaching is clear, and also is a central doctrine of Christianity. The Creed of Saint Athanasius articulates the doctrine. When The Bible teaches that God is a Trinity it does not mean there are three Gods, or that there is one God who acts out in three different ways. And certainly the Bible does not say there are three Gods and one God at the same time.

The Bible teaches that in the nature of the one true God there exists only three eternal, co-equal Persons who fully share one nature, yet are distinct in their existence. The Father (John 6:27), Jesus Christ the Son (John 20:28), and the Holy Spirit are all called God (Acts 5:3, 4). The verse that puts it together the best is Matthew 28:19 where the disciples are to baptize in the “name” (singular) of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (plural). No illustration in creation can fully illustrate the Trinity, but this is helpful: there is the sun itself, then the sunlight by which we see the ocean and islands, and finally the power of the sun that grow the coconut, flowers and trees. All possess the same qualities, yet are distinct.

Although the teaching is clear, in the final analysis, it is impossible for us mere mortals to completely understand the nature of God. The issue is like this: the Bible teaches there to be one true God. However, it refers to the Father as God, Jesus Christ as God, and the Holy Spirit as God. Consequently, when Christians refer to the Trinity, we are not making up something, but trying to explain the best we can what God has revealed about Himself in the Bible. The teaching of the Trinity is not a contradiction, but a complexity.

If we are to worship the God of the Bible, then we must believe the Trinity - otherwise, we worship another God which is very much to our disadvantage! Secondly, because there is fellowship within the Godhead, and we are created in His image, we may have fellowship with both God and each other (1 John 1:3). Let us now turn and take up the second question: what is God like?

II. WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

1. The First of seven qualities I explain is that God knows everything (1 Kings 8:39; Acts 15:18; John 21:17). God knows all about science, languages, history, the future - everything there is to know about everything. There are no secrets, because God knows our thoughts. He knows what the copra price was 20 years ago, what the pumpkin price was last year, what it will be next year, and who made or lost money. He knows who passed form 5 last year. He knows who cheated, stole, cried, had surgery, died - even who went to New Zealand. Beloved, God knows everything.

2. Second, God is all-wise. He knows what to do and how to do it (Romans 11:33; 14:7, 8). He does not wring His hands and worry about the holes in the ozone, the population of the world, the arms race, or global warming. We worry and fret about many things in life, and we do things wrong and make mistakes. But God? He is all-wise. He is never at a loss for knowing what the right thing to do is.

3. Third, God is good. He is bountiful and kind to His creatures (Psalm 36:6; 104:21; Matthew 5:45). God causes the rain to fall and the food to grow for all His creatures - both good and evil. The sun never ceases to come up and the fish still bite the hooks and come into the nets. He gives abilities and medicine to doctors to cure diseases.

4. Fourth, God is love (1 John 4:8). The kind of love that we speak of is that which

seeks the best for the object loved. It is not lustful or selfish. God's love is displayed in His undeserved favor and grace toward a rebellious mankind. He has mercy, pity, and compassion on the helpless. He has great patience. The greatest exhibition of His love is that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us, the rebel and/or indifferent sinners and enemies of God (Romans 5:6-10)

5. Fifth, God is Holy (Isaiah 6:3-5; Exodus 15:11). God Himself is the standard of right and wrong. He hates sin and He demands purity in His creatures. God is distinct from all His creatures and stands above them in absolute, pure majesty. God does not leave it to governments, anthropologists, or judges to decide right or wrong. In fact, He didn't leave it up to school teachers, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, government workers or public opinion polls to decide! God Himself is the standard of right and wrong.

6. Sixth, God is righteous (Psalm 99:4; Romans 2:5-8). He is ruler of the universe and in that position God will reward good and punish evil. Many times we wonder why evil people seem to get away with evil deeds while innocent people fall on hard times. Do not fret over justice. God in His perfect righteousness will reward good and punish evil - if not in this life, then in the next. Count on it: sin will not go unpunished; goodness will not go unrewarded.

7. Seventh, God is true (John 1:14; 1 Corinthians 1:9). All other idols, religions and gods are false. God is faithful and honest to His Word and His people. The Bible says that God "cannot" lie to us (Titus 1:2). Many times people lie to us - even our spouses, friends or family. But God is always straight and will never lie, nor deceive us. Now for our third question: what does God do?

III. WHAT DOES GOD DO?

There are many things that God does. You and I cannot possibly know everything. But, here I list three activities He is or was involved in: creation of the universe, and ruling and having absolute authority over the universe. Thirdly, He is involved in saving those who place their trust in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ to save them and transport them to heaven when they die.

1. First, God created everything. He is all-powerful and He created the universe out of nothing (Genesis 1:1). Maui did not pull the islands up out of the sea, God created both the ocean and the islands. He created the pigs, chickens, fish, coconut, mango, cows, horses, islands, ocean, sky - everything, even mankind. He made us like we are and gave us life. He made governments, nations, Samoans, English, Tongans, Filipinos, and Indians (Acts 17:24-27; Romans 13:1).

God even worked with Adam, the first man, in naming the animals and birds (Genesis 2:19). What sweet fellowship they must have had together. Can you see God, in your mind's eye, bring the little pigs, horses, chickens, turtles, and goats up to Adam in that fertile field with the rich black soil and the big fruit trees and saying, "What do you want to name this, Adam?"

Adam would say. "Well God, let's name this fuzzy little thing a cat. We can call this one a dog. That one over there we call a cow."

2. Second, God is sovereign (Ephesians 1:11). He is the Lord, Master and Ruler of the universe. He works all things by His own will, not the will or plan of man, devils, governments or any other created thing - not even a committee! God has one perfect plan for the universe and He is unfolding that plan with absolute perfection and precision even this very minute.

God directs the affairs of men, He makes history - and He is right on schedule. He is all wise, powerful and knowing: nothing confuses or is too big for God.

Not only does God guide the big things of the universe and world, not only does He create the history of nations, but He unfolds our actual history as well. He planned out the day you were born, the place you took your first breath, and please pardon me, but I want to make this real to you, He even wove you together inside your mother's womb (Psalm 139).

The Bible says that all your days in this life were numbered in God's book before you were born (Psalm 139:16). God is the God who makes history: my history, your history, South Pacific history, New Zealand's history, and America's history.

Remember this: God makes history, not the Devil. God rules the world, not Satan and his demons. True, they raise havoc and God has temporarily permitted them to do some limited things, but God is in full charge and authority. Trust God and leave the worry to someone else. Trust and obey.

3. Third, I speak of God's redemption (Genesis 3:15; Romans 1:1-6; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Man fell into sin in the Garden of Eden. He was corrupted by that awful disease the Bible calls sin. Sin carries a dreadful penalty: death and punishment. Adam's corruption was passed on to mankind, because we are his offspring. We all fall under the judgment of God. But, in His great mercy and love toward us, God planned and provided for our salvation. God sent Christ to save us from sin and its terrible penalty. Christ died a bloody death on the cross, and rose from the dead that He might give full, permanent forgiveness of all sin for all time, and then give eternal life to all who receive Him.

The Bible says "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). In another place He said, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5: 13).

What incredible news: we can know in this life whether or not we are saved and have eternal life! Maybe you are one who has never received Christ as your Savior. You can. You need to if you want to go to heaven when you die. Receive Him today.

For the believer: since we are created in the image of God, and are being conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29), then let's live like God wants us live. Let love, compassion, mercy, and kindness be the mark of your life. Let us live holy lives, confessing and putting away our sins - not to become Christians, but because we are Christians. Love God. Love people. Love His Bible. Love His church. Love your wife, husband, children, and parents. Love prayer.

This ends the lesson about God: who is He? What is He like? What does He do? I next consider the doctrine of Jesus Christ and His work. He is the most important Person to ever set foot on this earth. Let me show you why.

CHAPTER THREE

CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION THREE: CHRIST AND HIS WORK

Jesus Christ is the founder of Christianity, and the most famous man ever to live on the earth. Some people love Him; some people hate Him. Here, I briefly introduce to you what the Bible has to say about Him. The third Christian Foundation I focus upon is the Person of Jesus Christ, His work and its application to us today.

I. THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST

1. The first of four truths to know about Christ is His Pre-existence. Christ has eternally (always) existed - not just for the past 2,000 years. He existed before He entered into this world as a man. He is the eternal Son of God the Father. The Apostle John said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

The "Word" is identified as Jesus (John 1:14). To put it another way, John was saying that Jesus is just as old as the Father who is eternal. John said Jesus Christ is the Creator of all and that life itself is sourced in Him (John 1:3, 4). Amazing statements! In another place, Christ Himself said He was the mighty "I AM," the Self-Existent One of the Old Testament (John 8:58 cf. Exodus 3:14), thus claiming equality with God.

2. The second truth is what theologians refer to as the "incarnation." John wrote, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). This means that the second member of the Trinity was born in a normal human body from a normal human mother who was a virgin, but where there was not a normal human father.

God was the Father. The Holy Spirit conceived the sinless human nature of Christ (Luke 1:26-35; Matthew 1:16, 18, 23; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22). The result is that Christ is fully God, fully perfect man eternally united in one Person. When Christ came into the world, John said He "dwelt" among men. That is, He took upon Himself a human nature and in that new arrangement became the "only begotten," which refers to His unique, only-one-of-its-kind relationship with God the Father.

The Bible does not mean that Christ was just another creature made by God. Christ is the one Eternal Son of the one Eternal Father, who at His incarnation became the first born of a new race of humanity (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:18).

3. The third grand truth refers to Christ's Divinity. Jesus Christ is God. The Bible assigns to Christ Divine characteristics (John 8:58), works (John 1:1), names (Matthew 7:21, 22), and honor (John 5:22, 23).

For example, doubting Thomas was a devout Jew who would never worship a false god. When He saw Jesus after His resurrection from the dead, he even called Christ, “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). Christ even commended Thomas for that act of worship! Scripture in many places calls Christ God (Romans 9:5; 2 Thessalonians 1:12; Titus 2:13; Philippians 2:6; Colossians 2:9; Acts 20:28).

Christ said He and God the Father were one (John 10:30) - that they shared a common nature. Christ even claimed to be greater than the Temple, the Jewish Sabbath (Matthew 12:6, 8), and even the Old Testament itself (Matthew 5)!

One very good way to be clear on the Person of Christ is to examine Isaiah 40:1-10. That section is talking about the God of the Old Testament, naming Him 10 times in 10 verses. Three names for God are used: *Elohim*, (same as Genesis 1:1), *Adonai*, and *Yahweh*, or Jehovah (used in Exodus 3:14).

Now look carefully with me and note verse three, “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord (*Yahweh*) make straight in the desert a highway for our god (*Elohim*)” (emphasis mine). Why is that important? Well, if you turn to Mark 1:1-3 you will see that the God of the Old Testament is identified as being none other than Jesus Christ! Mark quotes from Isaiah, and names Jesus Christ as being the same Being described in Isaiah! Indeed, Jesus Christ is the God – not “a” god, mind you, but The God of all that exists or ever has existed.

4. The Fourth aspect of Jesus Christ is His Humanity. Christ had all the essentials of human nature: body (Luke 2:52), soul (Matthew 26:38), spirit (John 13:21). He had human names (Isaiah 53:3). Christ had the marks of personality. He had emotions (Mark 3:5; John 13:23). He had bodily characteristics in that He became weary and slept (Luke 2:40.52). He looked, acted and was recognized as a man (Matthew 16:13, 14; John 1:10). He even prayed (Matthew 26:36-44).

I bring you now to this all important question: what think ye of Christ? What about these amazing claims concerning the Person of Christ? His claims cannot be brushed off, like a pesky mosquito on a hot humid night. Neither was Christ just a good man, teacher, religious leader, or prophet. The Jesus of the Bible is not a created being of God, or a spirit being elevated in a hierarchy above other beings. Neither is He the creation of the church fathers who invented stories about Christ and put them in the Bible. His claims and works were far too dramatic and important.

No other person in history has made the claims or done the deeds as those of Christ. None. He claimed to be very God with the power to forgive sins and/or assign people to heaven or hell. He had power over nature and death (Matthew 8:26; John 11:43-45). Christ was put to death for His claims. Powerful stuff!

We have only three choices about Christ: He was either liar, a raving lunatic on the level of someone who thinks he can swim from Fiji to the Philippines in three days, or, He was who He claimed He was.

Well then, was He a liar? No, because a liar would not voluntarily go to his death for what he knew were lies. Was He insane? No, a crazy man who made the claims He did could not gain a following - and remember over 3,000 people were converted at the first Christian sermon following His death (Acts 2:41)! And, a crazy man or liar could not perform the miracles that He did.

That leaves us with one conclusion: Christ is God Himself. Question: who do you think Christ is? Consider that question as we turn to the work of Christ.

II. THE WORK OF JESUS CHRIST

Several parts of Christ's work I will introduce. Specifically, I will address His atonement, resurrection, His ascension, His future ministry, and how to receive His salvation. Under atonement I will also introduce the grand truths of His substitution for our sins, and our reconciliation to God through Christ. All are good news! Read on.

Atonement

In this section I explain that all important work: Christ's atonement, or His sacrificial work on the cross. Here is the problem. God is a holy God, The angels of Heaven said of God: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts" (Isaiah 6:3). The greatest of emphasis is placed on God's holiness. It is the standard that guides His love, mercy, and grace. Holiness demands perfection and punishes everything that violates His standard. Everything!

Adam and Eve sinned against God and became guilty. They disobeyed, and broke His law. Consequently, they were placed under everlasting condemnation, which means separation from God and banishment to hell and its fiery punishment. Some predicament!

The problem becomes very personal in that Adam passed his sin nature onto us - his children. The result was us becoming sinners along with the same punishment as Adam and Eve. Adam's sin (and guilt) was imputed, (or charged, transferred), to us. We are hopeless! Undone! Powerless! In our sin we can never approach the holy God. Never!

The Bible says that before God all humanity is helpless, ungodly, unrighteous, guilty, sinners, and enemies under the wrath of God. It is impossible to earn God's favor by being good, religious, or any means. Impossible (Romans 3:9-23; 5:1-11). Is there any escape? Fortunately, yes: here it is.

The solution

The Bible says that, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). That is great!

Motivated by perfect love, God put a solution into motion. Christ came to suffer and die in our place. That was the purpose of His incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection (Matthew 16:21; John 12:27). When we go overseas to New Zealand, or wherever, we go for a purpose: maybe to see relatives, get a job, go to school, but we go for a purpose. So Christ came into the world to pay the penalty for our sin. Only He could do that, because He is God, which gave Him the value. Second, He is perfect, sinless man so He could identify with the human race, and be our substitute.

Substitution

Substitution is one important idea in the atonement of Christ. Man could only pay for his own sin by suffering the penalty for all eternity. But God in His great love appointed a substitute to take our place. That substitute was Christ. His suffering and death was enough payment to bring eternal redemption for all those who personally accept Him as Savior.

In basketball, for example, when a player gets tired a substitute is sent in to replace him or her. Likewise, Christ became our substitute, and in His suffering, God's wrath and righteous demands were fully satisfied.

Two great transactions took place in this event: our eternal guilt was transferred to Christ, and His eternal righteousness was transferred to sinners who come to Christ for salvation (Romans 3:20-26). Hallelujah! What a Savior! How can you turn away a deal like that? Take Christ as your Savior! Quickly!

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a second great truth tied to Christ's atonement (Romans 1:18; 5:10, 11). Mankind had greatly offended God, like a husband or wife unfaithful to their spouse. The problem is how we can repair the breach, because we became God's enemies and objects of His deserved wrath.

The wonderful truth is that God took the initiative and through Christ alone we may be reconciled to Him. Our good works, persuasive speech, money, religious activity will not reconcile us to God - only through Christ may we approach God. And in Christ alone, we have passed out of the domain of darkness, death, and eternal judgment into light, life, forgiveness and eternal hope (Colossians 1:13, 14).

Resurrection of Christ

The second part of Christ's work was His resurrection (Luke 24; John 20, 21; 1 Corinthians 15). On that glorious day almost 2000 years ago Christ came out of the grave. His resurrection was not just a spirit that appeared, nor was the body stolen. Christ arose in the same body that was put into the grave: a physical, genuine, identifiable body! It was glorified.

The tomb was empty. Christ appeared to over 500 people at one time and many others on many occasions (1 Corinthians 15:1-7; Acts 1:1-3). Over 3,000 were converted to Christ just a few weeks after His resurrection (Acts 2:41). The resurrection of Christ was Peter's central theme in that first Christian sermon.

My ebook, *You Can Believe The Bible*, gives many proofs of Christ's resurrection.

Ascension of Christ

A third enormous aspect of Christ's work was His ascension into heaven (Acts 1:9-11). After Christ spent 40 days on the earth after His resurrection, His earthly ministry was completed. He went up into heaven and began His present ministry (Hebrews 4:14-16).

He was exalted by the Father to be above all creation (Ephesians 1:20-23). He is our High Priest who ministers to us daily. He prays on our behalf. He answers our prayer. He is preparing for us a place in heaven. He is building His church here on earth. He is giving special help for our needs, and He is concerned about our fruitfulness (Hebrews 7:25; John 14:14; 14:3; Matthew 16:18; Hebrews 4:16; John 15:1-16).

In New Zealand and other places there are great flocks of sheep. They graze on the beautiful grassland, fertile meadows, and open hillsides. They feed, grow and multiply - but always under the careful, watchfulness of a shepherd. He leads them to green pastures, tenderly cares for them and watches out for dangers. We are like sheep. Jesus is our Great Shepherd - very much involved in our lives. He is concerned, compassionate, caring, and corrective.

Future ministry of Christ

The fourth part of Christ's work is His future ministry. I will give more details at another time, but now I can say that He is coming back to this world. The Bible teaches a specific sequence to His return. First, He will take His church out of the world (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Second, He will judge the world during a seven year tribulation (Revelation 6:16, 17). Third, He will return to rule the world (Revelation 19:11-16).

When will Christ return? No one knows the day, hour, time or epoch (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:6, 7). Not the angels in heaven or even the Devil himself knows the date of His return. Many people have tried to predict the return of Christ, but they were wrong and humiliated.

Receiving salvation

The final thing we can say about the Person and work of Christ is this: how can we receive this wonderful salvation? The New Testament gives us the secret over 200 times! The Philippian jailer asked the Apostle Paul the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul told him to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:30, 31). John said

that as many as received Christ would be saved (John 1:12, 13). He said salvation was not based on what class we were born into, any decision by any man or woman, or by hard efforts on our part.

SALVATION IS RECEIVED BY FAITH! What an ingenious plan by God! Faith makes everyone equal. If it was based on being an important person, wealth, rank in society, intelligence, abilities, then some would have more advantage than others. But anyone can trust, believe or have faith in Christ. Kings, nobles, pastors, deacons, sailors, or farmers are all equal before God when it comes to salvation. But, that access is only through Jesus Christ.

Now what does it mean to trust in Christ? Let me give an example. Let's say you wanted to take a boat to an outer island. You walk down to the wharf and find two boats that offer to ferry you to your destination. The seas are rough and the wind is blowing. You look at one boat, but it has an old rotten wood hull with several large holes right at the water line, no pump to pump out water, the engine sputters badly and the captain and crew have never even been on a boat before!

We will name that boat the "Works" boat. Now look at the second boat. It is nearly new with a strong, freshly painted steel hull, two new diesel engines that run smooth as silk, a pumping system that works perfectly, and an experienced captain and crew. We will call this boat the "Faith in Christ" boat.

Now you must make a decision. If you decide to take the Works boat, undoubtedly you will either get lost or sink into the ocean. So it is when we try to trust in our good works, baptism, church membership, status in society, or because our family and parents are Christians - or whatever it is that we are trusting in to get us to heaven. We cannot ever get to heaven by trusting in these things, just as we will never get to any outer island in the Works boat.

If you choose to board the Faith in Christ boat, you will get to the island destination. No problem. In the same way, if you trust in Christ alone to save you, then you are certain to get to heaven. How can we be sure? Because, Christ said we will be saved, and we can trust His word. It doesn't depend on your feelings, but your faith. Feelings follow faith.

Now I come to a third choice that many people make: they trust in both Christ and their goods works. Isn't that OK? Well, let me put it this way: what will happen if you decide to take both the Works and Faith in Christ boat?

Try putting one foot in one boat and the other foot in the other boat. What will happen when you hit the first wave? You will fall into the ocean because it is impossible to stay in both boats at the same time! You must get into one or the other. We must make up our minds. It is the same with Christ and works: we cannot have both, they are mutually exclusive (Galatians 2:15-21)! Choose Christ today. Quickly!

With this I conclude our study on the Person and work of Christ, and its application to us. We discovered that Christ is fully God and fully man. Regarding His work, we studied about His atonement, resurrection, ascension, future ministry, and return. Under the atonement I presented Christ's substitution for our sins and our reconciliation to God through Christ. Indeed, Jesus Christ is the most important Person to ever set foot on this planet. Don't you agree? I take up next the subject of humanity, as seen from the Bible. Who are we? What are we like? Let us go to the next lesson and find out.

CHAPTER FOUR CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION FOUR: MANKIND OR HUMANITY

The fourth Christian foundation I examine with you is the Bible teaching of mankind – or humanity. We all ask ourselves the questions: where did we come from? Why do we exist? What are we like? Where are we going after this life? I will answer these questions under three headings: the origin of man, the fall of man and the future of man. Exciting and personal stuff! Let's go study.

I. THE ORIGIN OF MANKIND

God created

The Bible says that God created mankind, the first two people being Adam and his wife, Eve (Genesis 1:26, 27; 2:7, 18, 20-23; 3:2). According to most evangelical Bible scholars, the biblical data indicates that the time of their creation is fairly recent, not more than probably 20,000 years ago. The Lord Jesus also confirms the Genesis account of creation (Matthew 19:3-6). I realize that the Bible account of man's origin conflicts with the theories of evolution.

Without going into details, I believe the evidence fits the creation account better than an evolutionary model, it is better to believe God than the ever changing opinions of man, and the theory of evolution is just that - an unprovable and unproven theory. Finally, for the Christian the choice becomes one of whether or not to believe Jesus. It is unthinkable to call Him a liar.

Humanity's creation was preceded by divine counsel within the Godhead (Genesis 1:26). Man was made distinct from lower creation, which includes the animal and plant world (Genesis 2:7), and was placed over God's creation. Mankind was the climax of God's creation, and from these original two came all the races and peoples of human history (Genesis 3:20).

Mankind's condition

What was the condition of man? He was in a state of untested holiness and probation. That is, he had a theoretical holy nature that over time and with right choices would have been confirmed or established in holiness. Man had, however, the freedom to choose evil, which unfortunately he did. Man originally was free from sin, thus, sin is foreign to the human constitution. It is something that does not belong there, like germs and disease.

What is mankind like? We are created in the "image of God" (Genesis 1:26; Colossians 3:10; 1 Corinthians 11:7; James 3:9; Ephesians 4:24). We actually correspond to the divine original.

To illustrate, the government in each country has “official” rubber stamps with which clerks stamp approved documents. They put ink on the stamp and press it on the paper, leaving an imprint or image of the stamp on the paper. In the same way, mankind is the imprint or image of God, we are made in His likeness - we are the image of God.

Like God we have the dimension of the soul: emotion, intellect, will, personality, and conscience. We have a moral dimension: true knowledge and righteousness (Colossians 3:9, 10). Like God we have a spiritual dimension (John 4:24; 1 Thessalonians 5:23). We have an immortal dimension: our existence extends to eternity (Revelation 20:10; 21:8; 2:5). Finally, we have a body that will someday be glorified after the manner of Christ (Colossians 1:15; Philippians 2:6; Genesis 1:26).

Our value, worth and dignity are grounded in God. This world tries to force us to believe that we get our worth as humans from what we contribute to family or society. But what about those who have less abilities or intellect than others, or are too old or crippled to work? What about those with handicaps? Should we call them “worthless?” The Bible says no.

Just down the street from where I live there is a young girl who is confined to a wheelchair. She can barely talk and someone else even has to push her wheelchair along the bumpy road. Some people think she is worthless, and even ridicule her. The fact is she is not worthless, because she is created in the image of God and draws her value and self-worth from God Himself. God is the One who decides what is truly valuable or not valuable.

Another application: many times people become critical of others. Some think that because they are rich, have power or are educated that they are better than others - often ridiculing those less fortunate. Some think that people of other countries or races are inferior to those of “our” country or race. When we talk bad about other people it is good to keep in mind that we are talking about creatures that are created in the image of God, and who derive their value and worth from the same place we do: from God.

Why did God create us? God made us that we could have rational understanding (Genesis 1:28); that we would obey in morals (Genesis 2:16); that we could have religious communion or fellowship with Him (Genesis 3:8, 9; 4:3); to perpetuate the human race (Genesis 1:28); and to manage His world (Genesis 1:28, 29).

It is wonderful that we are created in the image of God. No other creature has this breathtaking privilege! Think of it. Do you realize that the angels are not created in the image of God? Look about you. Look at the fish in the ocean, the rat that scampers up the coconut tree, the bird that flits from tree to tree, the whale that blows water into the air, or the pigs that waddle across the road. Look at the turtle, sheep, cow, or snake. Nothing in this universe is patterned after God: except you, me, and the rest of humanity. My friend, that is who you are.

II THE FALL OF MANKIND

Tragically, something very bad happened to mankind in the Garden of Eden. God permitted sin to enter the world through humanity, initiated by the temptation of Satan (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12; 2 Corinthians 11:3, 14). Note well: God did not “cause” sin and evil to enter the world. The key word is “permit.” He permitted it, because He had given free will to humanity, and even to Satan with his followers.

Adam and Eve lived in a perfect environment and were without a sin nature that would incline them to sin. They were creative and brilliant and had unhindered fellowship with God. God had forbidden Adam and Eve to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17). Satan tempted (through his mouthpiece the serpent) Eve by causing her to doubt and question the good character, words, and work of God.

Satan still works the same today: he causes us to doubt the Person and Word of God. Satan challenged God’s authority - the same as he does today. Sadly, Eve gave way to the temptation and disobeyed God. Later she persuaded Adam to disobey God as well. The eating of the fruit was not the sin. Disobedience to the expressed word and will of God was the original sin. And, their disobedience caused devastation to the world and its inhabitants.

God cursed the serpent, Satan and nature. Sin separated God and man, resulting in man’s condemnation: spiritual and physical death. Evil and wickedness entered into the world. Man was placed under the temporary domination of Satan. Mankind had shame and self-righteousness. The relationship between men and women changed. Work became a burdensome labor. Life became sorrowful and brief (Genesis 3:14-19).

Even the nature of mankind changed. Oh yes, we are still created in the image of God, but that image became scarred and corrupted. We became sinners with a sin nature (Psalm 51:5). Our intellect, emotions and will were corrupted. We lost the capacity and desire to please God (1 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 3:10-18). Our hearts became springs from which ooze evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, envy, wickedness, deceit, slander, pride, and lies, according to Jesus (Mark 7:20-23).

These things defile us. Since we are the offspring of Adam and Eve we inherited their sin nature. Even their sin became ours, along with the guilt that goes with it. I can vividly recall the days before I became a Christian. I did not want to do what was pleasing to God. I even wanted to sin. Maybe sometimes, when I thought about what would happen to me when I died, then I would give a feeble attempt to do right before God.

At those times, however, I discovered that I was helpless and powerless to please God. Some people do religious things such as go to church and even hold positions in the church, but it is only a feeble attempt to become acceptable before God. Our sin nature has rendered us with no capacity or desire to please God or to do spiritual good. You might be asking about our future since we are so guilty and helpless. I don’t blame you.

It is a stark future. Consequently, I turn to the next question: what about the future of mankind?

III. THE FUTURE OF MANKIND

For the unbeliever the future is dismal. Upon their death in this life their body goes back to dust and their soul goes to a place the Bible calls “Hades,” or hell (Luke 16:19-31). They are confined to this temporary prison until after the Millennium and to the time of their final judgment and sentence before God’s great white throne (Revelation 20:11-15). Let us look first at this intermediate state.

Intermediate condition for the unsaved

In Hades the unsaved are very much aware of their environment. They are in severe torment and agony. They are aware of those in heaven and the family and friends left behind on earth, though they cannot communicate with either. They cannot leave Hades, and there is no second chance to be saved. Our eternal fate is sealed forever in this life. Once we die there is nothing we or anyone else can do to rescue us from hell and get us to heaven. Nothing! The Bible says that, “it is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). We can only choose in this life.

The souls and spirits of those who have died never stay behind and linger by their bodies and/or graves. It is impossible to communicate with departed loved ones. It may be of some comfort to realize that they still think about you and love you, and even desire that someone would bring you the gospel of Christ so you won’t go to Hades.

Final destination of unsaved

The unsaved have a final destination called the lake of fire and brimstone (Revelation 19:20; 20:14, 15). On that frightful time of judgment they will all be brought before the throne of God. Only the unsaved will be before God at that time, and the judgment is not on their salvation, but the severity of their sentence. Their sentence will be based upon their deeds in this life.

After they receive their sentence they will be cast forever into the lake of fire and brimstone where Satan, his demons and all the rest of the unsaved will reside forever. Jesus likens the place as one of eternal fire and punishment, one where their worm does not die, the fire is not quenched, and where everyone is “salted” with fire (Matthew 25:41, 46; Mark 9:48). For the unsaved this ending is a very solemn, sad, tragic destination. Heartbreaking. Actually, it is horrible, awful, and terrible. Don’t go there. You don’t have to.

Future of believers (Christians)

For the believer, the future prospects are much brighter – in fact, very bright. We first need to talk about what is happening to the believer in this life.

Our present life

Do you recall that at the fall of man in the Garden of Eden the image of man was scarred by sin? Well, God is restoring that image, conforming us to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). When we become a Christian the Holy Spirit comes to indwell, change, and empower us (Romans 8:9). By using primarily the Bible and our obedience He conducts the transformation process. We also grow when we partake of the ordinances (Sacraments) of Christ, have Christian fellowship, pray, surrender to the Lordship of Christ in our lives, and become involved in Christian service to God and others.

There is, however, a savage war that rages: three things hinder the work of God in our lives - the world, our flesh and Satan (1 John 2:15-17; Galatians 5:16-26; Ephesians 6:10-20). The "world" refers to that organized system of this world that opposes God and His people.

The "flesh" is that old sin nature that we inherited from Adam and Eve. When we become a Christian we get a new nature, but the old nature remains with us until the next life. The power of the old nature is broken, but it still vigorously opposes the Spirit as it is not yet destroyed (Romans 6:6-14; Galatians 5:17).

Satan with his fallen angels is the third force in this world that desperately wages war against the work, Word, and people of God – and even spreads evil, mayhem, and wickedness upon all humanity. He hates people.

Someday the warfare and struggles of this life will end. We will die. Upon departure from this life the believer's body goes to the grave, but his soul and spirit go immediately and directly to be with Christ in heaven (Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Luke 23:43). We remain there until the resurrection of our body. Death, then, does not mean that we cease to exist, or even become unaware of our environment. We are just separated from our body, and our souls and spirits go to heaven.

After our resurrection we will receive our rewards for service here on earth (1 Corinthians 3:13-15; 4:5; Romans 14:10-12). Understand that His judgment on Christians does not concern their salvation, but rather, the amount of reward for their faithful service on earth. There is a future "payday" for Christians – not for our salvation, but for our faithful life and service on earth.

The Christian resurrection

For the believer another dramatic, major event will occur: our bodily resurrection (1 Corinthians 15; 1 John 3:2; Acts 1:10, 11; John 20, 21; Luke 24:39, 43; Mark 14:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Romans 8:11). There is a great deal of mystery surrounding this event, but still we can know many things. 1 Corinthians chapter 15 gives the greatest detail. The biblical evidence claims that the same body we now have will be resurrected (1 Corinthians 15:42, 53). Just exactly how God will accomplish this feat remains a

secret with Him. But since God is God He can do whatever He wants, however He wants.

There will be a radical transformation to our present bodies. We will be patterned after Christ's body: it will be flesh and bone, yet spiritual and glorified. Our life-sustaining force will be the Holy Spirit, not blood (Leviticus 17:11; Romans 8:11). We will be free from decay, disease, death, and dishonor. Our bodies will be dignified and permanent. We will have great physical and adaptive powers.

In fact, the best way to find out what our resurrected body will be like is to look at the passages of Scripture that tell of Christ after His resurrection, because our body will be like His body (Philippians 3:20, 21).

The time of resurrection

When is our resurrection? We do not know the exact time. It will occur at the same time as the future rapture of the Church (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). We know one thing: it will happen. The resurrection will be instant, like the twinkling of an eye (1 Corinthians 15:51, 52). Great fanfare will occur. Death will finally be overcome (1 Corinthians 15:54-56). The final phase of our salvation will be complete. All that we lost in the Garden of Eden will be reclaimed. Sin, death, corruption, curse, sin nature, sickness - they will terminate in our existence.

Our future will not be over, because we have a special niche in God's program. But, we who have been born into this life with the ugly, powerful impact of sin upon us, we have our final and complete victory over all the bad things that we live through in this life.

What should be our response? Paul tells us that we are to be steady, solid, always abounding in the Lord's work. We are assured that our hard work for Christ is not pointless and futile. Our reward is sure. Our victory is certain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

My friend, this is real. Your short life in this world will soon end. So will mine. It is awesome and exciting to know where our future destination will be. That is, for those who know Christ as their personal Savior.

With this I conclude our insightful study on the doctrine of mankind, and turn next to the Bible's teaching about the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER FIVE CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION FIVE: THE HOLY SPIRIT

Everyone talks about the Holy Spirit. Well, nearly everyone. But, there is a big question. Just who or what is the Holy Spirit, and how do we know. Let me explain from the Bible's point of view. This is the fifth Christian foundation in this study. I will show you what the Bible says about His Person, work and filling of believers. It is exciting. Join with me.

I. THE PERSON OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The first thing to recognize is that the Holy Spirit is a Person. And, in the Bible, He is referred to in the masculine gender. He is not just an invisible force of God, nor is He one of several gods, nor is He a god that was once a man. Scripture portrays Him with intellect, emotion and will (1 Corinthians 2:1 1; Romans 15:30). The apostle Peter listened to His words and obeyed Him (Acts 10:19-21). Christ Himself nailed the issue down best when He used the personal pronoun in referring to the Holy Spirit as a Person (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit is a "He" not an "it!"

Secondly, the Holy Spirit is God. He is the third Person of the Trinity who fully, equally, and eternally shares in one common nature with the Father and Son, yet is represented in Scripture as being a distinct Person. He is called God by the Apostle Peter and displays characteristics of God: all wise, all powerful, all knowing, eternal, and holy (Acts 5:3, 4; 1 Corinthians 2:10, 11; Luke 1:35; Psalm 139:7-10; Hebrews 9:14).

He does the works of God. He was involved in creation, He wrote the Bible, was involved in the conception of Christ, regenerates believers, and convicts the unsaved (Genesis 1:2; 2 Peter 1:21; Matthew 1:18; John 3:5; 16:9-11).

To recap, the Holy Spirit is a Person. He is God and He is intimately interacting in your life, whether you are a Christian or not. Now let's get an overview of how the Holy Spirit is working in the world today.

II. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN GENERAL

The first of four general activities is that of restraining sin and evil in the world (Genesis 6:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:6, 7). When we look at history of the rapidly changing world scene today we see great evil inflicted upon humanity. You and I live in a very brutal world. Hitler, for example, killed six million Jews plus untold others in World War II. That is twice as many people as now live in New Zealand! The Japanese inflicted much cruelty upon the Pacific islands. The sinister forces of communism dealt death to untold millions, some sources estimate over 20 million - more than the entire population of Australia!

Those forces savagely sought world dominion, yet they were thwarted. Something put a stop to Hitler, Japan and now we see communism crumbling before our eyes. What stops or hinders the march of evil? The Bible says it is the Holy Spirit. God permits evil, but He limits, will punish and finally banish it to the lake of fire.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin (John 16:8-11). He is presently convincing the world of the truth of the gospel and Jesus Christ. Obviously, the entire world is not convinced, much to their disadvantage! Specifically, the Holy Spirit is pressing the matter that mankind has sinned, that righteous is available only in Christ and that ultimate judgment is certain. The Holy Spirit uses the Bible. Christians are His witnessing mouthpiece; consequently, it is well if we devise and align our message with His designs and purposes.

Third, the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ (John 16:14). Famous and powerful people have large staffs and spend millions of dollars to draw attention to themselves. The advertising industry spends billions to attract people and sell them their goods. Even here in Tonga stores advertise in newspapers, magazines and on TV. The Holy Spirit is in the advertising business also, promoting Jesus, stimulating adoration, worship, and loyalty toward Jesus Christ. He does not spotlight Himself or any signs and wonders He performs, but He glorifies Christ. That is His job.

Fourth, the Holy Spirit is building Christ's church (Acts 1:5; 2:4; 1 Corinthians 12:13). God is in the process of drawing out of the world a people of His own. This group includes people of every race and nationality. He named this group the Church. He started this process when Christ was on the earth almost 2,000 years ago, and soon that body of people (which is the church) will be complete.

Now that we have the big picture in mind of the Holy Spirit and what He does, I turn to His special work in the lives of believers.

III. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN BELIEVERS

In this section, I will show you seven ways that the Holy Spirit interacts in the actual lives of all those who place their trust in Christ for their salvation and become Christians. It gets somewhat scary, but also comforting, to know of His intense interest and concern for us.

Regenerates

First, the Holy Spirit regenerates the believer (Titus 3:5; cf. John 3:3-8). You might ask, "Why does He do that for?" The Bible says that we are spiritually dead in our trespasses and sin, but by His grace He made us alive in Christ (Ephesians 2:1, 5). This act of imparting eternal life to a believer is sometimes called being "born again".

There are many graves here in the islands. When I drive out in the bush or to beaches, I often see many graves. They are covered with sand and elaborately decorated with bottles, flowers and signs. The graves contain dead bodies that can never give life to themselves. They are dead physically. So we are dead in a spiritual sense, we can never give life to ourselves. God knows this and that is why the Holy Spirit must give us life. He calls it eternal life.

Baptism

His second work the Bible refers to as Spirit baptism (1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 6:1-4; Gal 3:27). Two major events happen: we are literally placed into Christ, that is, spiritually united as one with Him. This experience gives us the basis for victory in the Christian life. The second event is that we are placed in the body of Christ, the church, which includes all true believers from the day of Pentecost until the future rapture (1 Corinthians 12:12,13; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 4:3-6). This spiritual experience is unique to this church age.

Sealed

Third, believers are sealed in the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; 2 Corinthians 1:22). A seal indicates possession and protection, which is a guarantee of the security of our salvation. It means that we belong to God. He owns us forever. He will keep us, because He has given us His permanent pledge and promise. It is a legal transaction.

Indwelling

Fourth, the Holy Spirit literally comes to live, or dwell, within the believer (Romans 8:9; John 14:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 6:19). This is an astonishing truth: God comes to dwell within every believer. Occupancy coincides instantly with the moment you become a Christian. This awesome experience is permanent and constant. In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came upon people in a selective and temporary basis for a special endowment for a specific reason.

However, in the case of believers during the present church age it is different. What an intimate and personal relationship we have with God. How important to live our lives in such a way as not to offend Him. If a king came to live with you, you would live in such manner as to not offend him or cause him grief and sorrow. How much more should we live to please the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.

It is also great to know that He personally knows of our problems and trials in life. In that way He can give us strength and courage to overcome hard times and sad times.

Guides

Fifth, The Holy Spirit guides the believer (Romans 8:14, 16, 26; John 16:12-15; Psalm 138:8; 139:10, 16, 23, 24). This involves teaching, giving assurance, assisting in prayer,

using the Bible and counsel of other mature Christians. He leads by circumstances, subjective impressions, and giving resources for tasks and opportunities He sets before us. He directs our thoughts to focus on areas of ministry. We praise Him that He is a personal God who deals with us in personal way - but always in a way that is in keeping with His written Word, the Bible.

Spiritual gifts

Sixth, the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts, which are special abilities for service in His work (1 Corinthians 12; 1 Peter 4:10, 11; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:7-12). Every Christian has been given at least one gift. These gifts can be developed. When Christians faithfully exercise their respective gifts, complementing each other, then the work of Christ proceeds smoothly.

A society works the same way. In each country the farmers, fishermen, teachers, doctors, government leaders, businessmen, bankers, technicians, and secretaries all do their part and the country functions. Likewise in the church, when we all exercise our gifts, then things go well.

Sins against the Holy Spirit

Before I go on to the final major point, I must mention three specific sins Christians can commit against the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; Acts 5:3).

The Bible says that we can “quench” the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19). In other words, we can hinder His ministry in individuals or the church.

Next, we can “grieve” the Holy Spirit by being bitter, angry, hateful, vengeful and unkind toward others (Ephesians 4:30). Too often in churches people are hostile and angry, backbiting, gossiping against one another, or complaining about petty, trifling matters. This kind of shameful activity brings humiliation on the church, the people involved, and even to Christ.

Christians can also “lie” against the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3). This sin involves hypocrisy and cheating.

These sins against the Holy Spirit involve a heart attitude and relationships with other people. It is vital to understand that we cannot fool God about our attitudes, words and actions toward others. We cannot hide how we treat our husband or wife, children, parents, co-workers, or church members. God knows if we keep our word or if we are faithful to our boss.

Sometimes we volunteer for service and do not follow through and do a good job. God knows that, and your fellowship with Him is harmed. He knows if we steal, commit adultery – remember, He lives within us! We cannot hide anything from God. He will discipline and chastise believers who stray into the paths of sin (Hebrews 12:5-7).

When we realize that we have sinned against God (and we all sin) we must confess our sins, put them away and walk by faith with Him in kindly fellowship (1 John 1:9; Proverbs 28:13; Galatians 5:16, 25, 26).

Keeping things in balance, we are also comforted to know that God knows of our heartaches, troubles, temptations, and struggles in this life (Hebrews 4:15, 16). He is tender toward us, compassionate, understanding, merciful, and sympathetic of our weaknesses. He is our friend and desires our fellowship. Friend, God is for us, not against us! Nothing can separate us from His love, and the good work He has started in our lives He will complete (Romans 8:31-39; Philippians 1:6).

I have shown you the Bible teaching about the Person of the Holy Spirit, His work in general, and His special work in the lives of Christian believers. But, there is more. We now turn to that extraordinary experience of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

IV. THE FILLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN BELIEVERS

I first need to point out the tremendous need in our lives as Christians. It is impossible for Christians to live the Christian life on their own power. Impossible. We have that old sin nature within us that wages wars against the Holy Spirit, the world system that confronts us on every side, plus Satan and his onslaught against the work and people of God (Galatians 5:16-26; Romans 7:15-25; 1John 2:15-17; Matthew 13:18-23; Ephesians 6:10- 20; 1 Peter 5:8-10).

God has given us provision, however, to live a victorious life. Jesus said: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). To live the Christian life, God has given us a new nature, which is a capacity to please God and do good for mankind and ourselves. We have literally become a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:4; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 2:10; 4:24; Colossians 3:10).

God has also given to us the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer. Thirdly, He has given to us what the Bible calls His "filling," and it is to that experience I now turn to explain.

The Bible commands us to, "be not drunk with wine, in which is excess, but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). The key thought in this passage is "control". As a drunken person is under the control or influence of alcohol, we are to be under the control or influence of the Holy Spirit. This filling is broken by sin in our lives, thus we need many fillings. Let me list many benefits.

1. We experience Christ daily in our lives and He strengthens our inner man, and gives us awareness of His abundant love toward us (Ephesians 3:14-19).

2. We experience a new ability to worship Christ with happy hearts full of thanksgiving toward God in Christ (Ephesians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:16).

3. We experience a new relationship with people. We become nice, humble people who encourage and love others. We become positive, loving, and thankful (Ephesians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:16). Friend, remember this: mean, fighting, cranky, faultfinding, negative Christians are not filled with the Holy Spirit!

4. We experience a new quality of life: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22, 23).

5. We experience a new power to defeat temptation in our lives (Luke 4:1-14). Temptation itself is not sin, but when we yield to temptation we sin. Someone said, "We cannot stop the birds from flying over us, but we can stop them from nesting in our hair!"

6. We experience power for effective Christian service (Acts 1:8; 2:14, 37, 41; 6:1-3). Our preaching, teaching, soul winning, helping, administration, and projects will have power to bring about spiritual results.

How to be filled

Now the big question arises: how can we be filled with the Holy Spirit? Let me suggest four steps, as I understand the Bible.

1. We must confess and forsake our sin (1 John 1:5-9; Proverbs 28:13). Sin breaks fellowship with God. We lose that intimate closeness with God, like the special bond between parents and a rebellious youth is broken. We sin and fall many times in life. Some bad habits linger for years. The good news is that fellowship and companionship can be restored. Not, however, by punishing ourselves or being consumed in remorse, but by the simple act of coming to God with a tender, humble, repentant heart and confess to Him our sin, sorrows and struggles. Then, we believe that God has forgiven and cleansed us. He promised that He would.

2. Second, we make the decision that we will quit walking in sin, and surrender in obedience to God. We dedicate our self unto God's service (Romans 12:1.2; Galatians 5:18). Submission and surrender to God and His plan for our lives is crucial.

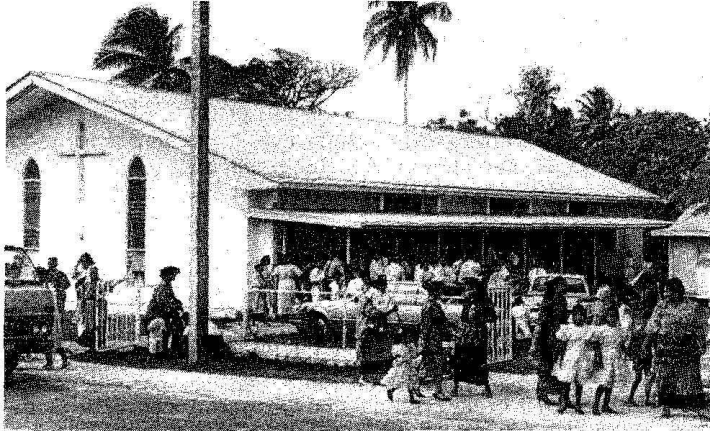
3. Third, we renew our mind through the Bible (Ephesians 3:14-19; Colossians 3:16; Romans 8:4-7; 12:2; Ephesians 4:22-24). The Holy Spirit speaks through the Bible and gives us God's viewpoint on life. Our knowledge of correct attitudes and actions comes from the Bible.

4. Fourth, we walk our life by faith and prayer (Galatians 2:20; 5:16, 18, 25; Ephesians 3:14-17; Acts 4:31). We permit ourselves to be led and guided by the Holy Spirit. We believe, talk, commune and fellowship with God. With a willing and expectant heart, we

step out in the direction the Holy Spirit has indicated, believing He will empower us as we go and correct us as needed. As we begin to practice new behavior, new habits begin to develop.

I must make one final point. Being filled with the Holy Spirit does not mean that we become sinless and perfect. That comes in the next life. It does not mean that all our problems will cease. They may get even worse. It does not mean that we walk in ecstasy. Sometimes we grieve and are crushed. It does mean, however, that our lives will take on a new power, purpose, and perspective as we deal with life. This brings us to the end of this lesson on the Holy Spirit: who He is, His work and His filling of Christians. Next we turn to the church.

CHAPTER SIX CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION SIX: THE CHURCH



Regarding church, the Bible states that we are “Not (to be) forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (Hebrews 10:25). Christians need to be together for help, support, encouragement, and reinforcement of the Christian values that hold us together. Come with me as you and I consider the doctrine of the church. In this lesson I will cover the uniqueness, structure and importance of the church. Let’s study.

I. THE UNIQUENESS OF THE CHURCH

Unique identity

The first thing to note is the identity of the church. There are two vast dimensions: the universal and invisible dimension along with the local and visible dimension. The church started on the day of Pentecost. We know this because during His earthly ministry Christ said, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). Thus, you can see that its establishment was yet future to when Christ spoke those words.

Combining other portions of Scripture we can pinpoint the church’s beginning to the day of Pentecost, seven weeks after Christ’s resurrection (Acts 1:5; 2:1-5, 33; 11:15-16; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:22-23). The event started the dispensation, or age of the church. Its completion will be at a yet future date that scholars call the “Rapture” (Acts 15:14-18; Romans 11:25; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17).

The Church Universal, then, includes all true believers from Pentecost to the future Rapture. The church is also spiritual, with Christ at its head and individual believers making up the entire body. Some members are now in heaven, and others are alive on earth.

The church also has a local, earthly, and visible aspect. It can be defined as a group of

professing, baptized believers in Christ who are organized to carry out God's will. The people, not the building, constitute a local church. To clarify, a Christian school, missionary agency, hospitals, specialized non-profit ministry, or Bible study and prayer group is not a local church. These groups are, however, valid extensions of the church, and are called "parachurch" organizations.

According to New Testament data, a local church is organized, has a membership, officers, divisions of labor, government, meetings, elections, discipline, registers, letters of commendation, qualifications for membership and excommunication procedures (Acts 13:1-3; 14:23; 19:9; 20:28, etc.).

Unique relationship

Second, from the Bible you can note the unique relationship between the church and Christ (Matthew 16:18; 18:17). The church is the only institution founded by Christ. He leads, maintains, and defends it against its enemies. The New Testament gives six pictures of this unique relationship to illustrate the special relationship to Christ.

The church is likened to a bride of whom Christ is the groom (Ephesians 5:25-27), and a branch with Christ as the vine (John 15: 1). It is also pictured as a flock of sheep with Christ as the shepherd (John 10:7-27). It is seen as a temple with Christ as the cornerstone (1 Peter 2:5). It is described as ministering priests with Christ as the high priest (1 Peter 2:5-9). Finally, it is explained as a new creation with Christ as the head and first fruits (1Corinthians15:45). Christ, you can see, purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). The church is very important and special to Jesus Christ.

Unique purpose

Third, we note the purpose of the church. The biblical church can operate in any society, economic or political system. It has a special role in any and every society. It promotes righteousness through changed individuals who in turn promote good works. I list for you the particular functions of the church.

1. The church preaches the Bible. The church is entrusted with the truth from God (only revealed in the Bible) and is the household of the living God of the universe. It is to proclaim that truth to all humanity (1Timothy 3:15; 4:13; John 8:31, 32, 47; 14:23; 17:17). No other earthly institution or organization is charged with that responsibility.
2. The church edifies, or equips Christians for good service and works (Ephesians 2:10, 4:12; Titus 2:14). This is accomplished by fellowship, education, training, motivation, preaching and creating opportunities for service.
3. The church worships God in spirit and truth (Acts 2:42; Philippians 3:3; John 4:23, 24). This corporate worship is the job of the church, not car companies, grocery stores, sports teams, government agencies, or other religions – but the church, according to the Bible. Of course, individuals and small groups can worship God too. Sometimes

churches must worship underground, because of oppression from government or other religious restrictions.

4. The church is involved in social concern (James 1:27; 2:15-17; 1 John 3:17, 18; Galatians 2:10). Great distress exists in this world: broken homes, sickness, poverty, orphaned children, the helpless and displaced - the list is very long. As Christians we are the vessels by which God channels His pity, mercy, compassion, love and care to the needs of the world.

5. The church administers the ordinances of our Lord (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:23-30). The two ordinances are water baptism and the Lord's Supper. Some churches add more ordinances, and call them different names – such as Sacraments. Different churches understand the ordinances to have different meanings.

6. The church has as its primary task, however, the evangelization of the world (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). Christ has chosen and appointed us to go into the entire world with the gospel: the good news that men and women can be saved through faith alone in Jesus Christ (John 15:16). Individually, and corporately as a church, we have been entrusted with this exclusive message.

There is no other way by which people can be saved (Acts 4:12; Galatians 2:7; Romans 10:9-15). The central objective of the church is world evangelism. I repeat myself here, but, no other institution, organization, or religion in the entire world or through history has been given the unique privileges, responsibilities, and commission that were given the church by its Head, Jesus Christ. We should guard against straying from our central assigned purpose.

Think about this a moment. It is important for us to minister to the needs of others in the name of Christ. But, what good is it to feed a hungry person, but let their soul go to hell? Evangelism is the core responsibility of the church.

And now I turn your attention to the structure of the church. It is in this area of church government and the ordinances that good people of God differ in their views, even though they believe the Bible and take it seriously. It is in this area of denominational distinctives that we must be kind toward each other and our fellow brethren in Christ. We simply agree to disagree and not be mean and angry toward those who disagree with our view!

As Christians it is vitally important to look for areas of cooperation rather than trying to find areas to fight about. We must head for common ground, not fighting ground. With this caution in mind, I now proceed to the issue of church government and the ordinances.

II. THE STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH

Governmental structure

As to church government there are basically five types.

1. First is the Episcopal. There are varying degrees in this structure with the most rigid, hierarchical form being the Roman Catholic system with the Pope at its head. Chiefly, the bishops govern the church, although there are elders, pastors, deaconesses, and deacons. Anglicans some Lutherans and Methodists have this form of government.

2. Second, there is the federal system. Presbyterian and Reformed churches along with some independent Bible churches have adopted this form. The church is governed by elders who are given their authority by the congregation. It is a representative government where the people govern through representatives, the elders.

3. Third, there is the congregational type of government. Groups who hold to this type are Baptists, Evangelical Free, Disciples, Congregational, some Lutherans, and Independent churches. The local churches are independent and self-governing. The officers are voted on by the congregation as well as decisions affecting the life of the church.

4. The fourth type is the national church in which the head of state is also the head of the church. Church leaders are appointed by some agency in the government. Examples are the Lutheran church in Scandinavia and the Church of England. The boundaries of the church can be the boundaries of the state. However, Lutherans and Anglicans are found around the world.

5. Last, we have the type which has no official government structure. The Quakers and Plymouth Brethren have this type. They say that Christ is the head and there is no need for human leaders.

Bible scholars teach that the federal and congregational system seem to have the most biblical support. The other types were developed throughout Church history.

As a final note, there is a distinction between associations of churches, and denominations. A denomination is a legally organized and related number of local churches. They are bound together by an official hierarchical organizational structure.

An association is a group of local independent churches that loosely affiliate and cooperate together at some level, but which the final authority rests with the local church. Most Baptist churches follow this type.

The Ordinances

Now I approach the issue of the ordinances. An ordinance may be defined as an outward rite or observance commanded by Christ to be performed by His church. Protestants believe there are two: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Throughout history there have been sharp differences of opinion on their exact meaning and purpose and in this space I cannot present all the views.

Baptism

First, I take up baptism. Baptism is something Christ commanded. Therefore, it is important. General agreement can be found on three issues: adults who receive Christ as Savior are to be baptized, it is to be administered by the local church, and it is at least a symbolic act of identification with Christ and His church.

Major points of disagreement can be boiled down to three: does baptism save a person, are only believers in Christ to be baptized (as opposed to infants and children) and should the actual means be by immersion, pouring or sprinkling of water.

The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper (or communion) is the second ordinance (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19, 20; John 6:48-63; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17; 11:23-34). The Bible does not say how often to take communion, nor does it give details on the way it is to be conducted. The Lord's Supper is an important celebration for believers, never to be taken lightly. General agreement can be established that, at a minimum, communion is a memorial, or a reminder of the gospel.

In its simplest biblical form the Lord's Supper has two elements: bread and wine. Some groups use red grape juice. The ceremony consists of prayer, the distribution of the bread and wine, and the eating and drinking. The service symbolizes at least two things: the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and the Christian's faith, commitment and identification to Christ.

The latter is because the partaking is a witness to others and demonstrates the Christian's oneness with Christ and other believers. Some groups believe that the Lord is spiritually present during the Lord's Supper; others believe that the bread and wine actually turn into Christ's body and blood. Some believe that grace as an empowering force is transferred to the partaker during the rite.

I take up next the issue of the value of the church to believers. Is church important? Do we really need to be involved in a local church? Can't I just go when I feel like it? Again, I turn to the Bible for the answers.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CHURCH

First, there are the examples in the New Testament. Christ Himself, along with the early Christians, regularly attended the central place of worship where God's people gathered and were deeply involved (Luke 4:16; Acts 2:41-47; 5:14). The Bible admonishes Christians to attend church (Hebrews 10:24, 25), even in the face of severe persecution. But again, believers must be careful in some countries because of persecution. Sometimes they are forced to meet in secret and in small groups.

Second, there is the importance of the church to God. All the books of the New Testament were written either to or for the eventual benefit of the church. Acts is a history of the church. The Gospels tell of the founder of the church, Jesus Christ. The church is Christ's agent to carry out His primary purpose in the world (Matthew 16:18; 28:18-20; Acts 15:14-16).

There are many fine extensions of the church in Christian work (mission agencies, etc.), but support for those works comes basically from the church, and the Individuals who make up the church.

Think of it this way: Christ loved the church so much He left the power, glory, honor and wealth of heaven, and came to poverty, shame, disgrace and pain in this world. Why? That He might purchase the church with His own blood (Ephesians 5:25-28; Acts 20:28). The church is made up of people who have received the salvation Christ provided. If I say I love Jesus, then I must love the things Jesus loves. If the church is important to Christ, then it should be important to me – and all believers.

Special benefits

Third, the church has special benefit for the believer. I mention just three.

Divine instruction

The church is a place of divine instruction (1 Timothy 3:15). It is the place where the Bible is preached faithfully through the years. The bank gives instruction on how to balance a cheque book. A garage will tell us how to fix and maintain our car. A doctor will tell us how to stay healthy. But for divine instruction we must go to the church. Its job is to maintain and perpetuate the truth of God through the ages. The church is the base for seminaries, Bible schools and Christian publishing houses - and the local church preaches the Word out in the grass roots of society.

Spiritual food and protection

Second, the church is a place of spiritual food and protection (Acts 20:28-30). In the community of believers we are cared for, helped in crisis, nourished with encouragement, protected from false doctrine, coaxed back into the flock when we want to leave. The local church is family that helps our faith to grow. It is called the household of God (1 Timothy 3:15), and the children of God should be raised in God's household.

When we put many pieces of wood together into a fire they will burn brightly and cause heat. But if we take one of those pieces of wood and place it onto the cold, damp ground by itself, it will cool and go out. So it is with us as Christians, if we stay together we will stay strong in Christ. If we depart from the church, we will grow cold and indifferent in our faith. Our Christian joy, fellowship and useful service will sputter out.

Christian service

A third benefit from the church is that it provides a stimulus and outlet for our God given creative skills. The local church is a wonderful place to learn and develop the abilities God has given. We can teach, manage, visit, be involved in children's work, care for the sick and elderly, and develop music abilities. Whatever our skills are, we can use them weekly in service that inspires, teaches, encourages others and bring glory to God. We even have a place to give financially to advance the precious cause of the God of the universe. As a team we can accomplish much more than we can as individuals.

For example, if you take one match stick into your fingers, it is easy to break. If, however, you place many match sticks together and wrap them tightly together, it is almost impossible to break the bundle. So it is with Christians. By ourselves we are not very strong, and we do not accomplish much. But banded together, we stay strong and effective and grow in our strength, ability, and usefulness to God.

In this lesson you learned four things about the Church. I explained the uniqueness, structure, and importance of the Church. From here I shift your focus to the fascinating subject of future things. What is going to happen in the future, according to the Bible? I can say, "There are very many exciting, sobering, and stunning events to ponder." Come with me as we examine future things.

CHAPTER SEVEN CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION SEVEN: THE FUTURE

In this chapter I look at the topic of future things, as seen from the Bible. Some major things about the future are very clear, and agreed upon by virtually all Bible believing Christians. Other events are murky, and hard to understand. It is as Paul stated, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

I cannot cover in detail every perspective regarding future things. I think the best way to proceed is to first list the events that are clear to all. After that, I will introduce the perspective known as Premillennialism, or sometimes known as Dispensationalism. It is one perspective believed by Christians for centuries.

BASIC FUTURE EVENTS

The major events of the future can be seen in the earliest creeds of the Church. The Creed of Saint Athanasius states of Jesus now residing in heaven as, "from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead, At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies: and shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting: and they that have done evil into everlasting fire. This is the Catholick Faith: which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved."

Here are several facts believed by historic Christianity that is reflected in this creed.

- God is in control of history and the future.
- There is the coming of Christ from heaven.
- There is the bodily resurrection of both the saved and unsaved.
- Included in this experience would be the Rapture, which is the taking up from earth the Church.
- There is a day of judgment that involves both the saved and unsaved.
- There is a next life, a life to come after this world that is everlasting.
- There is a life everlasting, which Christians call heaven.
- There is an everlasting fire, which Christians call hell.
- There is a final assignment of people to heaven or hell.

From other places, we learn the belief of an Antichrist who will torment the world, and a Great Tribulation that the earth will undergo.

With these basic future events, all Bible believing Christians do adhere. The problem is when do these events occur, how do they unfold in history, and what exactly is their nature. The details and sequence is where disagreement occurs.

I. THE DISPENSATIONS OF HISTORY

There are several valid perspectives regarding how future events do unfold. Following, I give one of those perspectives: Premillennialism, or more popularly known in the America version as Dispensationalism.

The position starts off with three presuppositions: a literal interpretation of the prophetic sections of the Bible. Second, they believe that there is a clear distinction between the Church and Israel.

Third, Dispensationalists believe that God has distinct methods of dealing with or governing humanity at different periods in history - thus, they are called Dispensationalists. The word, "dispensation," is Latin and is used to translate the Greek *oikonomia*. The latter refers to the law, arrangement, government, or management of a house hold – to manage, administer, regulate, or plan (Cf. Ephesians 1:10).

When you approach the Bible, using a plain, literal interpretation, you will observe that God has a carefully thought out plan that He is unfolding in history. He has revealed His purposes in discernible and progressive stages through the Bible, all leading to a grand climax in history. These several distinct stages of history are named "dispensations."

Each dispensation has a central unifying factor that focuses on man's response by faith and obedience to God's revealed will for that period. Each dispensation continues some previous regulations, voids others and introduces a new set of regulations. Dispensationalists define a dispensation as a discernible administration in the unfolding of God's purpose in history.

It is how God deals with humanity during a specific segment of history. Understanding the dispensations gives a birds-eye view of God's history, or plan for the world, and helps us to understand both the Bible and future times. If you believe that God works differently with the people of earth during the time of Adam & Eve, Abraham, Moses and Israel, presently, and in the future in heaven, then you are a Dispensationalist. It is as simple as that. Life is different now than in the Garden of Eden, and than it will be in heaven.

The dispensations

One major benefit of this perspective on the Bible is that it helps us to interpret the Bible. It can explain, for example, why the church does not sacrifice bulls on a stone altar every Sunday. The sacrificial system was for Israel in that dispensation. There is difference of opinion among Dispensationalists on how many dispensations there have been in history.

Seven dispensations are usually identified in the Bible. For a more complete understanding of the dispensations, read *Dispensationalism Today* by Charles Ryrie. Here are the commonly accepted dispensations. Some are arbitrarily identified, and others are more clearly seen. I will use the word "Administration" rather than

“Dispensation,” because I think it makes a better descriptive sense of the block of events or time.

1. The Administration of Innocence. The key Individual was Adam, the time span was from creation until the fall of man and the biblical record is from Genesis 1:28-3:6. Adam failed in the responsibilities God gave him. Judgment ended the era.

2. The Administration by Conscience. Key individuals were Cain, Able, Seth, Enoch and Noah. God governed mankind with the prompting of man’s conscience (Romans 2:15). This era ranged from the fall until the flood (Genesis 4:1-8; 14). As usual, humanity in general failed, and was judged. God started over again with a small remnant.

3. The Administration by Civil Government. The main person of this era was Noah, the administration ended in disaster at the tower of Babel, and the Scripture record is from Genesis 8:15-11:9. Judgment again ended the era.

4. The Administration of Promise. This era stretched from the call of Abraham to the giving of the Law of Moses (Genesis 11:10-Exodus 18:27). God designated one representative family which grew into one nation. They were simply to believe the promises of God and serve Him. Israel was promised a glorious future, promises still to be fulfilled in the future. This was the time of the patriarchal families. Humanity also failed in this arrangement.

5. The Administration by Mosaic Law. This law included not only the Ten Commandments but 613 laws regulating all areas of life. The era spanned from Moses until the death of Christ (Exodus 18:28-Acts 1:26). The people were to follow the law, but again, failed (Romans 10:1-3). Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman armies in A.D. 70 and the Jews were scattered to live among the nations (Luke 21:6, 20-24; 23:28, 29)

6. The Administration of Grace. This dispensation is better called the Administration by the Church, since God has always operated by grace. The responsibility to man is to receive the gift of righteousness through faith in Christ (Romans 5:15-18). God deals with all mankind, and the church has center stage. The vast majority of humanity has rejected Christ and He will come to judge the world during the Great Tribulation. The dispensation extends from Pentecost to the Rapture (Acts 2:1-Revelation 19:21).

7. The Administration of the Millennium. This age will be ushered in at the second coming of Christ, and will involve His direct rule for one thousand years. Millennium means 1,000, and the period is sometimes referred to as the Messianic Kingdom. People will be responsible to obey the King and His laws. The King will be Jesus Christ, who is the Messiah. Israel will again be dominant on earth.

Following this Administration there will be a new heaven and earth and history will merge into the eternal state. The Millennium age will end in a final rebellion by man and judgment by God (Matthew 24:29-31; Revelation 19:11-16; 20:1-6; 21:1-22; 21).

There you have it: the fastest tour ever through the history of the world as seen in the Bible. I have placed before you some beliefs basic to all Christians, and a brief panorama of God's plan of history. On a time line we are located somewhere in the latter part of the Administration of the Church Age. We have now seen past history, so let us now peer into the future. The next huge event in history is not a presidential inauguration, but the Rapture.

II. THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH.

The next major event in God's time table is the second coming of Jesus Christ into this world (Acts 1:11; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 23, 51, 52; 2 Thessalonians 2:1; Revelation 22:20, 21). The transition from this Administration of the Church into the Millennium Kingdom occurs over a seven year time period, as seen by Dispensationalists. The exact sequence of details is somewhat fuzzy, but here is one view. It is called the "Pre-Tribulation" view.

The first phase of that transition involves Christ coming in the air for His church. This event could occur at any moment (1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11; 1 Corinthians 15:51-57; John 14:1-3; Revelation 3:10; 1 Corinthians 1:7; James 5:8, 9). This event is named the "Rapture." Christians who died during the Church Age will be bodily resurrected from their graves. They, along with those living on earth at the Rapture, will receive their glorified bodies. We will join Christ, return to heaven and be rewarded plus participate in the marriage of Christ to His church (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:26, 27; Revelation 19:1-10; Romans 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

This will be a glorious time for believers in Christ. Our response should be eagerly awaiting, looking forward to, and loving the return of Christ. It is our blessed hope and joy, and that which we work toward. We are also to live holy lives before God, because He is coming back to this earth (1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10; 4:18; Philippians 3:20; 2 Timothy 4:8; 1 John 3:1-3; Titus 2:13; 1 Corinthians 15:58).

Too many times we base our happiness in life on the things of this world. We are happy if we get a good job in the government, a good crop, money from overseas, when we find a spouse, celebrate a big feast or receive a visa or scholarship for overseas or make a lot of money. These things are good, but should not be the main reason for our happiness, and holy living.

Friend, remember: our money, homes, cars, canoes, crops, eyesight, strong bodies and health will all fade away, but the future we have in Christ will last forever - and this is where our happiness ought to be grounded. God has promised Christians an inheritance, eternal life, reward, salvation, reunion with saved relatives and friends who have died and gone to heaven - and much, much more.

As for living godly lives, what greater motive than the fact we will someday receive reward for our faithful service here on earth.

When will Christ return?

Concerning the date of Christ's return, I do not know. The Bible says we know not the day, hour, times or dates (Matthew 24:36; Acts 1:7). Only the Father in Heaven knows. Even the angels do not know, nor do Satan and his demons.

Unfortunately, in the past many people have predicted the coming of Christ, but they were wrong. There are some even today who attempt to match world events with Bible prophecy and predict His coming. Generally this approach is counterproductive to the cause of Christ for several reasons: one, emphasis is misplaced from the Great Commission (Acts 1:7, 8) to excessive enthusiasm of "end time" events.

Second, too frequently those who predict are wrong and cause people to ridicule Bible prophecy. Third, some relax from Christian work, because they think Christ is already here – or soon will be. Fourth, bazaar misinterpretations can happen that bring shame and contempt to Christ and His church.

Fifth, Christians can become driven by fear and dread of Christ's return when we should be eagerly awaiting His return and viewing the signs as reason for great joy. Indeed, as the Bible says concerning Christ: "Surely, I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

THE GREAT TRIBULATION ON EARTH

There is a future time on this earth that will be consumed with hard times and terror. It will be a time of great judgment poured out on earth. It does not begin until after the Rapture. This is the 70th week of Daniel (Daniel 9:27). Jesus described it a "great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matthew 24:21). Matthew chapter 24 and Revelation chapters 4-19 describe the events of the time.

Some people maintain that we are in the Tribulation now, however, its events are so distinctive and terrible no one could possibly mistake them. One fourth of the world's population will be wiped out through war, famine, disease and wild beasts (Revelation 6:8).

Enormous environmental catastrophes will occur. One third of the earth's vegetation, marine life and shipping vessels will be destroyed. One third of the earth's water supply will be polluted (Revelation 8:6-12). Nothing of this magnitude is happening now or ever has in the earth's history.

The purpose of the Great Tribulation is twofold: to judge the world for its sin (Revelation 6, 8, 9, 16; Isaiah 24), and second to prepare Israel to receive Christ as their Messiah and to enter the Millennium Kingdom (Zechariah 13:8, 9; Jeremiah 30:1--31:26). Massive evangelization will occur as the gospel of the coming King (Christ) will be

preached throughout the world (Matthew 24:14). Multitudes of people will be converted to Christ (Revelation 7:9, 14).

Another distinctive feature will be the rise and world dominion of the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2; Revelation 13). He will be a man of tremendous ability, but exceedingly corrupt. He along with his prime minister, the false prophet, will control the political, religious and economic realm of the world and wage vicious war against God and His people. These events occur during the Tribulation, not now.

The Tribulation will end with the gathering of the nations at the battle of Armageddon and the physical return of Jesus Christ to earth (Matthew 24:29-31; 25:31-33; Mark 13:24-27; Zechariah 14:4-7; Jude 14, 15; Revelation 16:16; 19:11-21; Acts 1:11; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10). Christ will return personally, literally, powerfully, quickly, in great glory, the victorious King - and with His saints.

I stress again, we are not now in the Tribulation, and if you know Christ as Savior you will not go through the Tribulation (Revelation 3:10; cf. 9:7, 15; 6:9-11).

IV. THE MILLENNIUM KINGDOM

The next phase of future events after the Tribulation will be the Millennium (Messianic) Kingdom. This administration is characterized by a 1,000 year time span in which Christ will rule as King (Revelation 19:16; Zechariah 14:9) from the world capital, Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3). The Abrahamic, Davidic and New Covenant will be fulfilled during that time (Genesis 12:2, 3; 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:6). Satan and his cohorts will be bound and placed in hell (Revelation 20: 1-3).

Utopia in nature

There will be utopia in nature. The curse will be removed from nature, and violent destruction by storms, heat and cold will be gone. Much of world geography will be renovated. Tremendous crops will grow, violence will be banished in the animal world and meat eaters will turn to grass. Children will play with lions and (formerly) poisonous snakes (Romans 8:21-23; Isaiah 49:10; Zechariah 14:4, 10; Revelation 16:18; Joel 2:22-26; Isaiah 32:13-15; 65:25; 11:6-8).

There will be utopia in the physical realm. Sickness, disease, and deformity will be gone. People living long ages even up to the 1,000 years will be normal (Isaiah 33:24; 35:5, 6; 65:20, 23).

Utopia in society and politics

There will be utopia in the social and political realm. International hostilities will cease (Zephaniah 3:9, 10; Isaiah 19:18-25). Wars and violence will end (Isaiah 2:4). There will be a tremendous increase in knowledge, perfect justice and equity will prevail (Isaiah 2:3; 11:4, 9; 42:3, 4). Believers who obtained their glorified bodies during the

resurrection will reign under Christ in three roles: judicial, regal, and priestly (Revelation 20:4, 6). But unfortunately, there will be rebels against Christ during this time, and even at the end Satan will be released and lead a final rebellion against God (Revelation 20:1-3, 7-10).

It is interesting to note that even the Marxist communists and socialists are looking forward to a man made utopia. They try to produce what Christ will produce in the future. They will fail. Only God can bring in the ultimate utopia that we all yearn for in our hearts.

There are those who believe we are now in the Millennium. Personally, I cannot see anything in the world for the past 2,000 years that even closely resembles anything like the utopia described in the Bible. Furthermore, the doctrine of a Messianic Kingdom is held by Judaism. This is how they understood their own prophets. It is how the original apostles of Jesus understood future events, which understanding Jesus commended (Acts 1:6, 7).

After the Millennium the new and final order of creation will be established.

V. THE NEW ORDER OF CREATION

Final judgment

The final judgment will occur at the end of the Millennium. Those fallen angels who followed Satan during his original rebellion in heaven will be judged by Christ and believers (Jude 6; 1 Corinthians 6:3). Satan and his followers will be cast into the lake of fire for eternal punishment. The unsaved dead from all history will be resurrected and judged at God's Great White Throne. They will be cast into the lake of fire with Satan and his followers (Revelation 20:4-15).

This awful place is the final residence of Hitler, Stalin, mass killers, child molesters, thieves, and liars. The place will be full of hatred, jealousy, fighting, and evil of every description. When one looks at all the wickedness of the world, then just imagine that its final place is in the lake of fire. Evil does not cease to exist there (Revelation 22:11).

Sadly, but this is the way the God of the Universe made things, everyone outside of Christ will have their final eternal abode in that terrible place. Christ is the only way to heaven, according to the Bible. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (John 14:6). Luke quotes the Apostle Peter, "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). He was referring to Christ.

New heaven and earth

The new heaven and earth is described in Revelation chapters 21 and 22. The present

world will be transformed by fire (Revelation 21:1; 2 Peter 3:10-13). The New Jerusalem will descend from heaven and will be evidently a 1500 mile cube that will house all believers. It will be a city with magnificent glory, splendor, wealth and beauty – devoid of the ugliness we see in this world (Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 21:9--22:5).

This is the location of the mansion that Christ is now preparing for His people (John 14:1-3). Goodness, kindness, comfort, creativity, love, peace, gentleness and things like this fill heaven. No pain, hurt, tears, death, mourning will be there. No evil of any kind will ever be permitted. Happiness and joy will prevail. Your family, if they knew Christ, will be there. No economic depressions, job losses, heart attacks, cancer will ever occur. Death will be banished.

May I ask you a personal question? Are you ready for heaven? Or are you still headed for the lake of fire with Satan, his demons and all the wicked of the ages? Choose Christ, please. By faith receive Him as your Savior and your place in heaven will be secured. Simply by prayer admit to God you are a sinner incapable of saving yourself, but that you believe Christ died on the cross to save you from your sin. Tell God that you place your trust in Christ alone to save you. Invite Him into your life.

Wow! This has been quite a trip through history. I hope you have enjoyed the tour. As your guide I pointed out a general overview of the doctrine of future things. You were introduced to the concept of dispensations, the Rapture, Tribulation, Millennium and final state. From here we go to the doctrine of salvation.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION EIGHT: SALVATION



Honestly, this lesson is very important. It tells you how you can know if you will go to heaven or not. Consequently, I take up the grand doctrine of our salvation. Though I cannot cover all the truths, I will touch on eight important subjects within that overall doctrine: regeneration, conversion, faith, justification, adoption, sanctification, glorification, and security of believers. These are separate yet interconnected truths that weave together to bring about our salvation. It is a lot of ground to cover, but you will be introduced to the most fantastic news in the universe.

I. THE DOCTRINE OF REGENERATION

I first define the doctrine of regeneration, and then tell of its need and characteristics. Regeneration is that act of God in which He implants within us new life that makes holy the governing tendency of our soul. This new life is eternal and spiritual. We become a new creature, born from above by the Holy Spirit, and partakers of the divine nature of God. We are born into the family of God (John 1:12, 13; 3:37; 5:21, 24; Ephesians 2:1,10; 4:24; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 2 Peter 1:4; Colossians 3:10; Galatians 2:20; 1 John 3:9; Galatians 5:17).

I have mentioned before that we all have a dire need to be born again. Personal holiness is an absolute necessity to gain peace, favor and fellowship with God. Holiness means conformity to His law.

We are in reality, however, just the opposite. We need a radical inner change in our nature by which our soul is fundamentally altered. The Bible says, we are spiritually dead and Christ said “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3; see John 3:3, 5, 7; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Galatians 6:15; Jeremiah 13:23; Romans 3:11; Ephesians 2:3).

Regeneration solves this problem. In a direct, creative act, the Holy Spirit brings a radical, instant change in our sub-conscious life that affects the entire person: intellect, emotion, and will (1John 5:1, 4-7, 18; 2:29; 3:7-10; 4:7; John 8:42; Romans 8:16). All parts of our being are affected.

Looking down on our need and motivated by His love, God in His grace and mercy invites sinners to receive the salvation only available through Christ. God does this through people by the preaching of the gospel and the Bible along with earnest appeal for people to receive Christ by faith and gain forgiveness of sin and eternal life. To those who believe, God regenerates their heart through the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:14; Ephesians 1:13). Pretty outstanding, I would say. Wouldn't you? Now I turn to the next phase of our salvation: conversion.

II. THE DOCTRINE OF CONVERSION

Conversion is man's outward expression of being born again. It involves turning away from sin and a turning back toward God (Acts 3:26; 9:35).

Repentance

Repentance is a key part of conversion. The mental part of repentance brings a changed view of your life. The past is recognized as a life of sin, personal guilt, profane and helpless before God. It is the personal admission of, "I have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Emotionally, repentance involves a genuine sorrow for sin committed against a Holy and Just God, and it brings about a godly change in life (2 Corinthians 7:9, 10). Repentance changes our will. From inside our hearts we choose to turn from sin and seek pardon and forgiveness (Acts 2:28; Romans 2:4).

It should be remembered, however, that the power of conversion and repentance comes from the Holy Spirit who has brought about regeneration in our hearts and enables us to live for God (Acts 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:25; John 6:44; Philippians 2:13).

Before that regeneration experience we did not and could not turn our lives to God through Christ (1 Corinthians 2:14). But, that new life principle that He places into our heart enables us and motivates us to turn from sin and toward genuine heartfelt worship and service to Jesus Christ.

Now we turn to that all important issue of saving faith.

III. THE DOCTRINE OF SAVING FAITH

The Bible says "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). What does "believe" mean? Well, faith is the instrument or channel by which we receive salvation. To understand what saving faith is we first need to see what it is not.

Historical faith

1. Saving faith is not historical faith. This kind is merely a mental acceptance of the truth of the Bible, but lacks a genuine spiritual response. Many people, for example, believe that Christ existed, perhaps He was a good man, maybe even divine, and that the Bible

is inspired by God, But simply to acknowledge Christ's existence is not saving faith. Even the Devil believes in God and he is certainly not saved (James 2:19)!

Temporary faith

2. Saving faith is not temporary faith (Matthew 13:20, 21). This kind may even be persuaded of spiritual truth and be emotionally stirred. It does not have, however, an abiding nature and fizzles under the stress of trial, temptation and persecution. This faith is grounded in the emotional life and has personal enjoyment as its goal rather than the glory of God. Sometimes this faith is exhibited by someone in deep trouble. While the trouble remains they become very religious, but when it passes away they forget about God.

Safety faith

Saving faith is not the kind that believes God will make us well, provide for our needs, give us food, make us rich, or keep us safe as we fly or sail overseas.

Saving faith

Now I focus on the positive side of saving faith. Saving faith is something the Holy Spirit plants deeply in our heart at regeneration. It is a clear, convinced belief in our hearts about the truth of the gospel and a genuine trust on the promises of God concerning salvation in Christ. There are four elements to saving faith.

The first element is intellectual (Romans 10:17). We gain knowledge which contains a sincere recognition of the truth of the gospel in the Bible. It has spiritual insight that brings a definite response deep in the heart of the sinner. It is a clear, certain knowledge that fully rests on the promises of God.

The second element is emotional (Mark 12:32: John 1:12). Though closely related to the knowledge part of faith, the emotional stresses the assent or agreement of the truth. It is that which grips the heart. It places great importance, value and desire on the object. It is that curious mixture of fear, gratitude, relief, desire, acceptance, and confidence that pushes us to an object.

The third element is the will (John 1:12: 2:24). We can know something is true, feel strongly about it, but we must also choose and take action to obtain the object desired. This is the part of our will. We act. We reach out to receive God's salvation. It is a personal trust in Christ as Savior. It means we surrender ourselves as guilty to Christ and receive Him as the only source of pardon and eternal life. We deliberately choose to surrender and trust in Christ alone – just like when we board an airplane and trust the pilot to fly us safely to Auckland, Manila, or Honolulu.

The fourth element is the object of our saving faith. People trust many things for salvation: their baptism, church membership, good works, or philosophy. Some trust

their church, denomination, or the gods of their religion. The object in which we place our trust is vital, because to trust in the wrong thing means we will go to hell - a very unfortunate choice!

TAKE NOTE: the object of saving faith is Jesus Christ and the promise of salvation through Him, and based on His death, burial, and resurrection from the grave. This the complete trust of salvation through Christ alone.

Let me illustrate saving faith this way. Let us say our family is having a big feast. We get the oven ready, the food cooked, placed on the table, and everyone is now ready to eat. You are hungry. Looking at the roasted pigs, yams, pineapples, watermelons, sweet potatoes you believe in your mind that the food will satisfy the hunger in your stomach. You are moved in your emotions with eagerness and desire to grab a chicken leg or coconut and begin eating.

Finally, you choose with your will. You walk to the table reach out and partake of the food which is the object you desire and know in your heart will satisfy your hunger. So it is with saving faith. You believe the gospel, feel moved, and cast your trust on Christ, the object of your faith. Friend, remember: it is faith alone that saves you.

From here, I leave regeneration, conversion and faith, and skip over to our fourth treasure of truth, our justification.

IV. THE DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION

Justification is that legal action of God whereby based on the righteousness of Christ, He declares and treats the sinner as righteous. This experience is instant, complete and deals with the change in our standing, or relationship before God.

Justification solves one of the great problems of the ages: how can a holy and just God justify an unholy and unrighteous man or woman?

In this world, when we rob, murder or commit a crime we are arrested, tried before a judge, and sentenced to a cold, dreary prison. There we must serve our punishment. It is the same with God. You and I have committed crimes against Him, and the law says if we commit even one little sin it is enough to send us to hell for eternity (James 2:10). Let's consider this dilemma in greater depth.

Man cannot be justified by moral goodness, good works or being religious (Psalm 143:2; Romans 3:20; 4:9-11. On the other hand God is holy and just and cannot break His law by saying that He will just let us get away with our sins (Romans 2:12,13; 3:10-19; James 2:10; Isaiah 6:1-4). A good judge would not let a guilty, convicted person go free. And God is a perfect judge.

God's law could be satisfied in two ways: paying its demands through a perfect life, and/or paying its penalty through eternity. God solved the dilemma through Christ. He

kept the demands of the law by a perfect life and paid its eternal penalty by going to the cross.

As an infinite person, Christ could satisfy the eternal penalty of the law (Isaiah 53:6). Christ had perfect value and worth, which was sufficient to satisfy the eternal penalty for all sin committed against God. The result is that God can justify us based on the law's satisfaction by Christ's death. Put simply: Christ paid the penalty for our sins. Our penalty was transferred to Him, and His righteousness was transferred to us! We gain a full pardon, justified by faith (Romans 3:28).

Justification is a onetime legal action, a decision or verdict rendered in the highest court in the universe. There are no appeals available. Paul wrote, "Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies" (Romans 8:33).

I turn now to the fifth truth about our relationship with God: our adoption as His children.

V. THE DOCTRINE OF ADOPTION

Adoption means that we have been legally admitted into the family of God (Galatians 4:1-7; Romans 8:15-17, 23; 9:4; Ephesians 1:5). We have a double guarantee: by regeneration we are born into the family of God; by adoption we are given that legal status. There can be no doubt that we belong to God in a very special family relationship. Adoption occurs when we receive Christ (1 John 3:2; Galatians 3:26).

Great, abundant blessings are automatically granted to the believer from being God's children. We become objects of God's special love, His fatherly care and protection, the family name, likeness and love, fatherly chastisement, comfort and family inheritance and status (John 17:23; Luke 12:27-33; 1 John 3:1; Romans 8:29; John 13:35; Hebrews 12:5-11; 2 Corinthians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:3-5).

In this life we have our special station. Some of you are members of a noble or royal family. Some belong to wealthy or powerful families. Some sons and daughters live on a little island or high in the mountains, and spend all your life raising yams and pigs, catching fish and gathering coconut to eat.

Other sons, like Prince Charles from England, spend their lives with wealth, travel, privilege, and honor. As Christians, you and I belong (by birth and adoption) to the family of God. We are joint heirs with the King of Kings (Romans 8:17) and our Father is the one who governs the universe and owns the cattle on a thousand hills, the gold of every mine. That is who you are, your special niche in eternity! Now I turn to our sixth topic for this lesson, our sanctification.

VI. THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification deals with our life after we become a Christian. In justification we are

declared righteous, in sanctification we are being made righteous over time. I define it as the continuous work of the Holy Spirit whereby He purifies us, renews us into the Image of Christ and enables us to perform good works (Romans 12:1,2; Ephesians 4:22-24; 1 Thessalonians 4:3).

Sanctification is a supernatural work by God, but in which the believer cooperates (Philippians 2:12, 13; 1 Peter 2:1, 2; 2 Peter 3:18). Whereas justification is a one-time event, sanctification is a progressive work to be completed on the day of our resurrection.

Sanctification results in, or produces good works. Good works are required by God as the exhibits of our faith, an expression of thanksgiving, assurance of our faith, and to glorify God (Romans 7:4; 8:12, 13; James 2:14, 17, 20-22; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 2 Peter 1:5-10; John 15:8; 1 Corinthians 10:31).

Again, good works do not save anybody, but are a result of salvation. We are saved by faith alone. The Bible says “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

John Wesley said “It is by this faith we are saved, justified, and sanctified” (Burtner & Chiles, (eds.) *John Wesley’s Theology*, p. 158). To illustrate: the other day I was driving out to the bush and saw a cart loaded with farm produce being pulled by a horse. The horse came first, then the cart followed along behind. In the same way, salvation by faith comes first, and then good works follow.

VII. THE DOCTRINE OF GLORIFICATION

Glorification is the final phase in the overall process of our salvation. It includes the perfection of our soul and body, complete possession of eternal life and complete realization of freedom. The completed experience occurs at our resurrection.

The reason we will be glorified is grounded in the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. His death solved the great problem of sin. He provided the righteousness of God to sinners (Romans 3:25), brought reconciliation between God and those who receive Him (2 Corinthians 5:18-21), executed the purification of sin (Hebrews 1:3), and won redemption for the believing sinner (Ephesians 1:7). There are four characteristics connected to our glorification.

1. The perfection of our soul is completed (Ephesians 5:27; cf. Ephesians 1:4; Colossians 1:22; Jude 24). This includes our moral purity (Colossians 1:22), absence of offensiveness, and being faultless and blameless before God (Philippians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 5:23).

2. Complete possession of eternal life is involved (John 5:24-28). Eternal life contains both a quality (abundant, John 10:10), and is everlasting as to duration (John 3:15, 16, 36; 11:23-26; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17). Though we possess eternal life at the moment of regeneration, the full and complete realization and participation in that life is at the future resurrection- our glorification.

3. Believers experience the fully realized freedom from sin (John 8:33-36; Romans 6-8; Galatians 5:1, 13), and death (1 Corinthians 15:56; Hebrews 2:14-18). Our full freedom in Christ will be experienced in that we will be in experience what we are now in position. Now we are in the process of being conformed to the image of Christ. At glorification the job will be complete.

4. Our bodies will be perfected, glorified like Christ's body (Philippians 3:20, 21; 2 Corinthians 5:1-5; 1 John 3:2; 1 Corinthians 15; Matthew 28:9; Luke 24:39, 43, 50; John 20:17, 22, 27).

This is the future we have to look for. It is called our blessed hope (Titus 2:13). Does it sound exciting to you? I confess that it sure does to me!

VIII. GOD'S SECURING OF BELIEVERS

My final wonderful truth for this lesson gives tremendous assurance to the truly born again Christian. It refers to that constant work of the Holy Spirit by which He brings to ultimate completion that salvation He began in the heart of the believer (John 10:28, 29; 11:42; Romans 11:29; Philippians 1:6; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; 2 Timothy 1:12; 4:18; Hebrews 3:14; 6:11; 7:25; 10:22; 2 Peter 1:10; Romans 8:29-39).

In the present time as we live our lives in this world, God keeps the believer from continued sin that would lead to their damnation. In the future, God will finally complete our salvation. There are two sides to look this sometimes complex issue: it is God who preserves us, and also the believer perseveres but under the influence, operation and power of the Holy Spirit (1 John 3:9; 2 Titus 2:19).

There are those, however, who once claimed to be Christians but have fallen away into sin. Unfortunate for them, they were never Christians to begin with or they are Christians who have backslidden into sin. God will bring backsliders to a hatred of their sin and back to fellowship with Himself. The Bible says that though Christians will sin, we cannot continue to live in a persistent state of sin as a way of life (1 John 1:8; 3:9).

Sometimes, if Christians persist in sin, God will take them home (1 John 5:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 11:29-31).

Here I bring this lesson to a close. The doctrines are absolutely the best news in the universe. They are full of richness and power. It might be good if you take some time and dwell on each doctrine, and to look up all the Bible verses I have added.

As a final note, I you have not, let me urge you to personally receive Christ as your Savior. Don't delay, do it even right now.

Next we turn to the fascinating doctrine of angels. Are they real? What are they? Where did they come from? What do they do? Let's look at how the Bible answers these questions.

CHAPTER NINE CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION NINE: ANGELS



This ninth lesson teaches about angels. It seems as if everyone everywhere is interested in angels. Are they real? What are they like? What do they do? Are they connected with this world? Fascinating subject matter! In this lesson, I will examine four general areas: angel's characteristics, classification and ministry, Satan, and spiritual warfare. Hang on. It gets intense.

I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ANGELS.

They exist

First question: do angels actually exist? Both mankind and the Bible say yes. There is a universal belief among cultures of the spiritual world and beings that have influenced humanity and our history. They have been called various names such as aeons, demons, demi-gods or simply angels.

The ancient Tongan religion believed in lower gods called 'otua Pau'u (mischievous gods) that inflicted evil on the earth. Human souls, after separation from the body, were believed to exist in a shape like a body and dwelled in the happy regions of Pulotu.

They could return to Tonga to inspire priests, relatives or to appear in dreams. Sometimes they could appear in the form of a ghost. Every culture has their version of angels. But, what does the Bible say?

The Bible assumes the existence of angels. The name means "messenger". Sometimes the word refers to men as messengers (Matthew 11:10). Generally, the messenger is seen as one who serves. Other names include "men, God's host, the holy ones, sons of God, watchers, princes, principalities, powers, thrones, or dominion" (Genesis 32:2; Psalm 8:7; Genesis 6:1, 2; Job 1:6; 38:7; Psalm 103:20; Daniel 4:13; 10:13; Colossians 1:16; Ephesians 3:10). There are over 270 biblical references to angels. They are not strangers to its pages.

Created by God

Directly created by God, angels are a superhuman order of heavenly beings (Psalm 147:2, 5; Colossians 1:16). The time of their origin seems to be the beginning of the first day of creation (Job 38:4-7; Colossians 1:16; Exodus 20:11; cf. Psalm 33:6). Since angels do not reproduce (Matthew 22:30) the complete angelic host was created at once. They are countless in number, do not die, are spirit beings, without bodies - though they can assume bodily shape (Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 5:11; Luke 20:36; Hebrews 1:14; Luke 24:39; Genesis 18:1-19:1).

Angels are wise, powerful, have personalities, are moral beings, are superior to men but vastly inferior to God (2 Samuel 14:20; 2 Peter 2:11; Mark 8:38; 1 Peter 3:22; Hebrews 1:6).

Their rank

As to rank, angels are highly organized and subject to authority. There is at least one archangel (Michael), plus cherubim, seraphim, principalities and powers and thrones and dominions (Jude 9; Daniel 10:13; 8:16; Genesis 3:24; Isaiah 6:2; Ephesians 3:10; 6:12; Colossians 2:10; 1 Peter 3:22). There is also the Angel of the Lord mentioned in the Old Testament who is Jesus Christ in an appearance to this world prior to the New Testament (Genesis 16:7-14; 31:11-13). I next turn to the classification and ministry of good and evil angels.

II. THE CLASSIFICATION AND MINISTRY OF ANGELS.

Good angels

It may be of no surprise to you that the Bible teaches there to be both good and evil angels. I will first take up the description of good angels, and point out a seven fold ministry they exercise. Their ministry is very widespread, indeed.

1. Good angels are called holy and elect and their eternal dwelling place is in heaven (Matthew 25:31; 1 Timothy 5:21; Matthew 28:2; Luke 2:15). They have an intimate and unique relationship to God. They enter His presence to receive instruction and commands. They were joyful during creation, and one of their occupations is to exalt and praise God.

God used angels to give His divine revelation to humanity. God uses angels in many ways, but their most extensive usage is as His servants to carry out His orders. Angels are fascinated at watching God's unfolding drama of salvation, and actually rejoice when sinners accept Christ as Savior (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Psalm 29:1, 2; Genesis 13:19; Psalm 104:4; 1 Peter 1:12; Luke 15:10).

2. Second, angels had a special ministry to Christ. They announced Christ's birth, guided and warned Christ's parents, strengthened Him in His temptation and crisis, proclaimed and helped in His resurrection, predicted and will proclaim His second coming. Angels will praise and worship Christ when He brings judgment on the world during the Tribulation (Hebrews 2:7; Colossians 1:15, 16; Philippians 2:9, 11; Hebrews 1:6; 1 Peter 3:22; Luke 2:10-15; Matthew 2:13; 4:11; Luke 22:43; Matthew 28:2-6; Acts 1:10, 11; Matthew 25:31; Revelation 5:11, 12).

3. Third, angels minister to Christians in a wide and wonderful way. They watch over and protect us. Though the Bible does not make a clear statement, it points to the reality of guardian angels by telling of their many ministries toward believers. The Bible says: "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about those who fear him, and delivereth them" (Psalm 34:7; see Psalm 91:11).

For example, when Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac, he told him that God would send an angel ahead to find the right woman (Genesis 24:7; see Genesis 22:12, 15; 19:1-15; 28:12). God sent an angel to guide His people Israel, help Elijah, deliver His own from the fiery, hot furnace and Daniel from the sharp, tearing teeth of lions (Exodus 14:19; 1 Kings 19:5; Daniel 3:28; 7:22).

Christ speaks of guardian angels when He declared the angels of little children have access to God (Matthew 18:10). The New Testament says angels are ministering spirits sent to help the people of God (Hebrews 1:14). In a dramatic delivery, angels freed the apostles and Peter from prison, and encouraged Paul in his fears (Acts 5:19; 12:5-7; 27:23, 24).

The question arises: are there guardian angels for believers today? According to the Bible, yes (Hebrews 1:14). Many times believers have experienced unusual deliverances from fear and danger and received boldness and confidence in ways too difficult to explain on a natural basis. The Bible even says that many have entertained angels and were not aware of it (Hebrews 13:1). It is very comforting and assuring to know of the kinds of ministries that God's angels have toward believers.

4. Fourth, the Bible teaches there are angels present in churches. Unfortunately, we are taught that evil angels are also present to interfere, cause conflict or even doctrinal error (1 Timothy 5:21; Revelation 1:20; 1 Corinthians 11:10; 2 Corinthians 11:10-13). This fact should impress on our hearts the need to promote holiness and pure doctrine, and look to the demonic force behind church quarrels. God cares about and angels report our wrong attitudes within the church family and careless handling of the Bible from the pulpit.

5. Fifth, God uses angels as agents to punish those who oppose His will. For example, angels blinded the wicked men of Sodom (Genesis 19:1, 11). When Herod Agrippa was lifted up in pride and accepted the worship of people, an angel struck Herod dead by filling him with maggots (Acts 12:23). Christ declared that angels would be the reapers

in the final judgment (Matthew 12:39). Angels will pour out God's wrath during the Great Tribulation as well as bind and imprison Satan (Revelation 16:1; 19:17, 18; 20:1, 2).

Just to gain a glimpse of the massive power of angels, you might recall the Old Testament example of when King Sennacherib of Assyria sought to capture Jerusalem from King Hezekiah. God sent the angel to devastate the Assyrian military camp by destroying 185,000 armed soldiers in just one night (2 Kings 19:35)! Incredible power! That equals almost the entire population of Western and America Samoa combined! Wouldn't you like to have that kind of support in your struggles?

6. Sixth, angels shape history. The book of Daniel speaks of the guardianship of angels over nations (Daniel 4: 17, 23). Angels are the agents of God who work out God's dealings with the nations through the drama of world history. Regarding the nations of Greece and Medo-Persia, an angel told Daniel future history and about evil angelic rulers over each nation. Michael was appointed as an angelic protector of Israel (Daniel 10:12, 13, 21 through 11:3).

From the Bible teaching, the violent conflicts between good and evil angels determine the history of nations. The great wars of the centuries, with their bloodshed, heartache and tragedy, were already settled in the heavenlies before they were settled on the earth. Somehow the wars in heaven intermingle with the bloodshed on earth by human armies. During His earthly ministry, Jesus said He could call on 10,000 angels for His defense, and the armies of Heaven will follow Him to earth at His return (Matthew 25:53; Revelation 19:14).

Evil angels

You and I can look with courage, knowing of the intense care and support of good angels in our lives. However, I am sobered by the reality of evil angels lurking about, and causing great distress and havoc in this world in general, and our lives in particular. Let's see, from the Bible, who they are, and what they do.

1. Fallen angels do exist (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:7-9). Originally, God created these angels good because all His creation was good at its completion (Genesis 1:31). Sadly, they became corrupt following the creation week. These angels know Christ, are unclean and fierce - and believe the Bible literally (Matthew 8:29; 10:1; 8:28; James 2:19)! It is so unfortunate that even Satan and his evil, fallen angels believe the Bible to be true, but most of humanity rejects it! Amazing!

2. Some fallen angels are bound in prison and others are free. The former group are confined to a place called Tartarus, and kept for special judgment because of a specific sin they committed (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; 1 Corinthians 6:3; Revelation 20:10; Matthew 25:41). The members of the second group are free to roam under the ruler ship of Satan. The Bible refers to fallen angels as demons (Matthew 12:24-27; 25:41). I stress that these are Satan's angels and he is their prince and leader (Matthew 25:41; 12:22-26; Revelation 12:7-9).

3. Demons are spirits without bodies and evidently have a need to inhabit a body for maximum performance (Mark 5:1-13; Luke 11:24-26). Being great in number, they give Satan the appearance of being all powerful, knowing and present everywhere - which he is not (Luke 8:30; Ephesians 6:11, 12). Demons may cause physical and mental disease, personal injury, and lead people into immorality (Matthew 9:33; 12:22; Mark 5:4, 5; Luke 8:35; 2 Corinthians 12:7; Luke 9:38, 42; 1 Timothy 4:1-3). I want to quickly point out that demons do not cause all mental or physical illness.

These wicked creatures spread false doctrine and have power to work miracles and they encourage idolatry (1 Timothy 4:1; Revelation 13:12-15; 1 Corinthians 10:20). During the life of Christ there was increased demon activity, and evidently there will be at His return (Revelation 9:20; 13:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:9). Their ultimate end, much to our relief, is the lake of fire (Matthew 25:41).

4. Demons serve Satan in two basic ways: possession and influence. Possession refers to a demon occupying a human body, and is the counterpart of a Christian being filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). The effects of demon possession are varied (e.g. Mark 5:1-5; Acts 16:16-18; 2 Corinthians 11:12-15). Demons enter only willing victims who have opened themselves up to their influence. It appears that believers cannot be possessed by demons (1 John 4:4). It is inconceivable that the Holy Spirit and an evil spirit could inhabit the same body at the same time, and the Holy Spirit is a permanent occupant of believers.

Demonic influence, on the other hand, is outside the individual. Pressure, suggestion and temptation by many methods are the chief tactics demons use. Things such as pornography, anti-Christian propaganda and temptations that appeal to the flesh are the tools used by demons. Their intent is to hinder the purposes of God and extend the influence of Satan. They mislead and wage persistent war against Christians (2 Corinthians 11:13-15; Ephesians 6:12). They appeal to our weakness such as pride, the desire to get rich, famous, and powerful (cf. 1 John 2:15-17). They incite violence, wickedness, and deceit.

III. THE DOCTRINE OF SATAN

I must not approach the subject of Satan with careless levity. The Bible takes his existence very seriously and so do I. He is a personal, spirit being. There are over 40 titles and names for Satan which include: Lucifer, Satan, Devil, Serpent, Abaddon, Apollyon, Dragon, the evil one, Beelzebub, and Prince of this World (Isaiah 14:12; Zechariah 3:1; Matthew 4:1; Genesis 3:1; Revelation 9:11; Revelation 12; Matthew 13:19; Mark 3:22; John 16:11; Ephesians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 4:4). In Revelation chapter 13, Satan is referred to as a dragon, and his henchmen as a beast and false prophet. The names point to his vile, wicked character and ruthless, deceitful operations.

Satan savagely opposes God, and seeks at every turn to thwart God's purposes. Satan introduced evil into the universe and world and promotes it today. The best explanation

of his creation and fall are in Isaiah 14:1-20 and Ezekiel 28:11-19. Satan was originally created by God as a good angel. He rebelled and fell from grace into eternal judgment. He is seen in the Old Testament, every book of the New Testament mentions him and Christ taught his existence (Matthew 4:1-11; John 8:44). He appears over 52 times in the Bible. Let me be clear: Satan despises the human race, and seeks their destruction.

Satan originally had an exalted position with God, and was the protector of God's throne. He resided in the holy mountain of God, was powerful and perfect in wisdom, beauty, character and conduct (Ezekiel 28:11-19). But, while in heaven, Satan became filled with violence, pride and untruth, and sinned in rebellion against God Almighty. He yearned to share God's position, control the host of heaven, and God's chosen people. He envied and desired God's glory, power and authority (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ephesians 1:20, 21; 2 Corinthians 12:2). The core of Satan's sin was that he wanted to be like God, which still characterizes his work on earth.

He is a master counterfeiter of God's work. Satan exerts power within the realm of nature, politics, religion and the spiritual realm (Job 1:16-19; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Revelation 12:10). He has his preachers, a church, and doctrine (1 Corinthians 11:13-16; Revelation 2:9, 13; Revelation 2:24; Genesis 3:4, 5). In his corrupt and wicked nature, Satan deceives the world and accuses Christians of sin. He is a master faultfinder regarding Christians. We must remember, however, that Satan's power is limited to only what God permits (Job 1:12).

The good news is that Satan has a destiny and final destination. Concerning his destiny, Satan, at his rebellion he was cast out of the holy mountain of God with the angels who followed him. He now dwells in the heavenlies exercising influence over the world system. From there he and his fallen angels will be cast down to earth during the Tribulation. The next leg of his journey is that he will be bound and confined to the Abyss, or Hades.

Following the Millennium, he will be released for a short period to lead a final rebellion against God, then he will be cast into his final, eternal place, the searing lake of fire (Ezekiel 28:14-16; Luke 10:18; Ephesians 6:11,12; Revelation 12:9; 20:1-3; 20:7-9; 20:10).

IV. THE BELIEVER'S DEFENSE AGAINST SATAN

With such a powerful, cruel foe against us we can become very fearful. But, God has not left us defenseless, because we are His children, His people. We are to treat Satan very seriously, yet rely on our position in Christ and His indwelling presence. Satan is a defeated foe and we are to take up God's spiritual armor resisting and being alert for Satan and his brutal tactics (Jude 8-10; Ephesians 1:3; 6:10,12; 1 John 4:4; John 16:11; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8). We should not, however, become obsessed with Satan. That is his distraction to turn us away from service to God and His program.

From Ephesians 6:13-20 we learn how to put on God's spiritual armor to guard against the pitiless attacks of Satan, and to resist. We practice truth and righteousness in everyday life. We evangelize and trust God when worry hits. We rest in salvation through Christ, believe and trust the Bible, and finally, pray.

Two final notes are in order. The first is that some think that God and Satan are in a ferocious battle, and no one knows who will win the ultimate battle, or even present battles. This belief is not true. God is the victor, always has had the ultimate power, and is never in danger of losing ground to Satan.

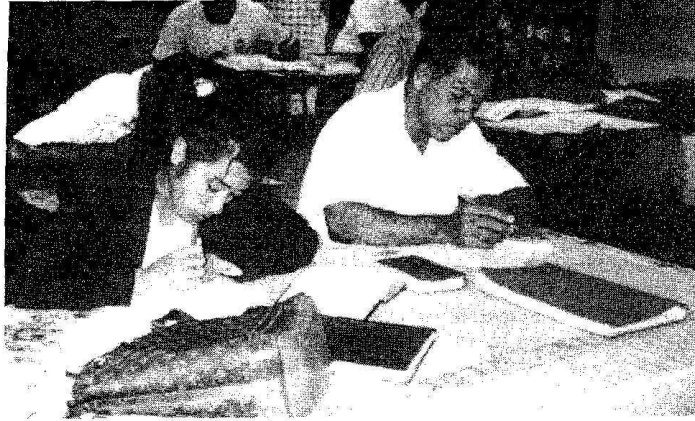
The second deals with question, "If God is a loving God, why does He permit Satan to do evil?" The ultimate accusation is that God is just as evil as Satan. Such a thought is horrible. The operative word is, "permit". God does not cause Satan to do evil; He merely permits, temporarily, Satan and his minions to raise havoc.

This has to do God's creating creatures with the freedom to choose. With that freedom comes the potential of choosing evil, which Satan (and humans) freely chooses. The choice and consequences of evil rests solely with Satan (and humans) – never with God.

I have just examined with you the fascinating yet sobering subject of angels, Satan and our defense against him. As we close, be encouraged against vicious Satan and the diabolical war he wages against God and Christians. One of our great defenses against Satan is knowing the Bible. In the next chapter I will show you how to study the Bible - the most amazing document ever to be in the possession of humanity.

CHAPTER TEN CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION TEN: BIBLE STUDY

“Study to show thyself approved into God” 2 Timothy 2:15



The Bible promises both enormous personal benefit, but also warns of the neglect of Bible study. In order to accurately understand what the Bible says to you and me, there are certain principles to follow. The greatest value is that we can begin to view and interpret the world through the eyes of God – which is the real way to see things. It gives us a mental grid by which to understand and interpret our purpose and niche here in this life, and how to successfully prepare ourselves for the next life. In this study, I introduce the more important principles under two headings: the preparation and principles of Bible study. Stay tuned. It gets good!

PREPARATION FOR BIBLE STUDY

Spiritual preparation

First, we must be spiritually prepared, because the Bible speaks of both earthly and spiritual realities. Several factors need to be considered.

1. We must have clear in our mind what is the reason and benefit for Bible study. This gives us motivation. Scripture clearly commands, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). As we mentally absorb biblical principles through Bible study we gain a framework to spot false teachers and religions (2 Timothy 3:1-9).

We also learn how to live in this life and to be prepared for the next life. We gain profound knowledge, personal faith, purification of life, preparation and power for

service and ministry (Romans 15:4; 2 Peter 3:15-18; 1 Peter 2:2; Romans 10:17; John 15:3; 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 5:11-14).

2. We must be spiritually born again to fully understand, appreciate, and apply the Bible. We are told that unbelievers cannot and do not want to understand the Bible (1 Corinthians 2:14). I recall that before I received Christ as my Savior, the Bible did not make sense. It seemed like a book full of contradictions, old myths and lies. After my conversion the Bible opened up to me. The supposed contradictions and lies disappeared like morning fog, and the truths became very real to me.

I even spent hours reading its pages. Granted, I do not fully understand everything in the Bible, but much has become clear. I am still learning and I want to know more. I have found that other believers have had the same experience. You can too. The Bible is about spiritual truth, thus, we must be spiritually alive to understand it. If you have questions, I refer you back to the lesson on salvation.

3. We must approach the Bible with a humble, teachable, and clean heart. If we entertain, nourish, and tolerate sin in our lives, then we will not want to approach the Bible and we will explain away those parts that speaks of our sin (1 Peter 2:1-3; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 4:12). Another response is that when it does speak of our sins, we may be overwhelmed in guilt. Christ desires our deep friendship and fellowship, but if we have offended Him with sin, the fellowship is cut off. We must confess the sin and come to Him in humility, repentance, and honesty – and realize that when we do display genuine contrition, He forgives us completely (1 John 1:1-9).

4. We must pray (Psalm 119:18). Communication is a two way street: we talk to God through prayer and He talks to us in our spirit through His Bible. When a student does not understand a problem at school they go and ask the teacher. In the same way, when we do not understand a part of Scripture we go and ask the author - God. And, we ask Him how to apply the Holy Scripture to our lives and perspective on life.

5. We must recognize the role of the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-15). It is His job to bring understanding and illumination to the Bible passages. He gives meaning and insight on how to apply the Bible to our lives, and the power to do so.

Mental preparation

Spiritual preparation is critical, but so is the work of hard, consistent, open minded study. Too many people simply do not want to put in the time and effort to find out what the Word of God actually says and means. Look at it this way. The Bible is the only perfect source of information given to humanity by God. Since He went to all the trouble to provide it to us, it seems to me that we ought to take the time to read and study what He has to say. Here are some principles on study.

1. Mentally we must be willing to believe the Bible (Matthew 13:10-15). We cannot doubt and refuse to believe the truthfulness and inspiration of the Bible. If we went to a

class and told the teacher we refuse to believe what he said, he would refuse to teach us. It is the same with God: why would He want to explain that which we refused to believe?

2. Mentally we must be willing to obey the Bible. We are to practice and proclaim the Bible truths that we learn (Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10; 2:1-12; James 1:22-25). It is like someone said, "Use it or lose it". As with belief, God will not teach us more if we will not obey what He has taught us.

3. Mentally we must be willing to study hard (2 Timothy 2:15). Yes, unfortunately, it takes time and effort. In your study you need to find a quiet place and set aside blocks of time to concentrate on study. Study when you are mentally fresh. Keep a pad and pencil handy to write down the thoughts and principles you learn, and begin to build a library of good books about the Bible. Take Bible courses as often as you can - if not from a local Bible college, then by correspondence or online. Take a serious interest in Sunday school and sermons. A warning: be careful with online courses. Some are better than others.

Bible study tools

The third part of our preparation involves having good Bible study tools. A good Bible translation is important. Three English translations are excellent: New International Version, New American Standard Translation and New King James Version. Two fine study Bibles are *The Ryrie Study Bible*, *The Thompson Chain Reference Bible*, and the *Nelson Study Bible*. There are others. Study Bibles have notes and explanations of Scripture passages.

In all your helps be sure to obtain books written by Evangelicals. A Bible concordance is helpful. These books list every verse in which a particular word is found. Make sure the concordance matches the translation you have. Study Bibles usually have a small concordance in them.

Bible commentaries are needed. There are many good one volume sets such as the *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, and the *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*. A superb multi-volume set is the *Expositors Bible Commentary* edited by Frank Gaebelein. Jamison, Fausset, and Brown is an older, but good, commentary that can be accessed online at <http://www.ccel.org/>.

Bible handbooks such as Unger's or *Halley's Bible Handbook*, or *Eerdmans' Handbook to the Bible* are excellent. A Bible dictionary is helpful along with a book on Bible doctrine. Many of these helps can be found online. One excellent place is the Christian Ethereal Library: <http://www.ccel.org/>. Another site is the Christian Internet Library: <http://www.iclnet.org/>.

Now that we have viewed the preparation for Bible study, let us turn to 10 principles you can use to help you accurately understand the Bible.

PRINCIPLES FOR BIBLE STUDY

Literal method

1. First, interpret the Bible in a plain, literal, straight forward manner. Let the interpretation be that which arises naturally out of the Bible as you study in the ordinary way you would any other piece of literature. Some try to find a deep, hidden, spiritual meaning in the text, and the result is just their own wild imagination. Read the Bible like you would the newspaper or any other book.

Look at what is on the surface, the direct intent of the author. God has communicated clear, plain, rational statements of fact to mankind concerning vital spiritual and earthly truth. The better we apply reason, logic and the rules of language to those statements the better we can understand and relate to those real, spiritual dynamics and realities of the universe.

Figurative language

2. Principle two: consider figurative language. The Bible uses metaphors, similes, symbols and other figures of speech, but even they have a plain, literal meaning behind the word picture. For example, Paul refers to Cephas and John as “pillars” of the church (Galatians 2:9). It is obvious they were not marble posts holding up the roof of a church building. The meaning of the word picture is that they were strong, supportive leaders in the church.

Grammatical structure

3. Principle three: note the grammatical structure. Know what the words mean and how they are used in the sentence. Look for the subject, verb, predicate, modifiers, conjunctions, and the like. The seven parts of speech are nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections. You can find their definitions in a good dictionary. It is always best to go to the original languages, but for most this is not possible. The next best choice is to obtain accurate English translations, and from there to the best native translation. Have a dictionary at hand.

The context

4. Principle four: interpret the section within its context. I consider two general categories.

First, every word is within the context of its sentence, and words are defined by their context. Sentences are in the context of a thought and paragraph. There is the context of the particular book and finally the Bible itself. An important key: what was the actual intent of the writer? What was he trying to communicate to his readers? What was his purpose? How would the readers have understood the writer?

Second, another context is the cultural and historical background of the writer and readers. The Bible was written over a period of 1600 years, the last book written almost 2000 years ago. Two major languages were used. Many cultures were involved. People in another culture think and live differently, and to understand them we must understand their culture.

For example, I do not understand Tongan culture: the funerals, weddings, kava circles and such. Tongans have the same problem when they go overseas. Consequently, to understand the Bible we need to understand at least some of the culture, lands and history of the people of the Bible. For example, Jesus used many illustrations from farming. If we know something about the farming practices of those people at that time, we can better understand what Jesus said and meant.

Progress of revelation

5. Principle five: note the progress of revelation. God did not give the Bible all at once, but little by little over many centuries. The practical result is that something that is very brief and hard to understand, say, in Genesis, may be explained more fully later. In fact, the Old Testament would be very difficult to understand without the aid of the New Testament. Like the filling in of the details of a big painting, God gradually over time filled in the details of His communication to humanity.

Major divisions and eras

6. Principle six: take into account the major divisions and eras of the Bible. Scriptures for example, that told Israel how to sacrifice animals do not apply to the church age. Carefully determine which dispensation the verses fit into.

Gather all information

7. Principle seven: gather all the pertinent verses when studying a specific doctrine. It is foolish to base a doctrine on a few selected verses. All the biblical information needs to be brought together, compared, contrasted and analyzed before a doctrine can be stated. Give attention to the details of the text. Many times the answers to seeming problems can be found right in the text, but were overlooked!

Authoritative

8. Principle eight: the Bible is authoritative and the final standard over all matters of life: history, science, and faith. This means that when a conflict arises between someone's view of history, science, religion - or whatever - and the view of the Bible, then the Bible is taken as the final authority. Simply put: man's opinion must bow to God's statements.

One author; many books

9. Principle nine: ultimately there is one perfect author of the Bible who cannot lead us

astray, and who has given us an error free Bible in the original autographs. From this foundation we may derive four principles.

First, the Bible does not contradict itself; therefore, we should view biblical data as complementary. Unfortunately, many people approach the Bible and try to manufacture as many contradictions as possible. But, under closer examination the so-called contradictions disappear and are found to actually complement each other with wonderful harmony.

Second, compare Scripture with Scripture. Obscure hard to understand verses must give way to clearer verses that deal with the same subject. Brief statements are better understood in light of fuller explanations.

Third, compare conclusions with the analogy of Faith. This means that a verse must agree with the other known clear fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith. Our findings must not contradict the total teachings of Scripture on a particular point.

Finally, if there seems to be problems with a particular text that we do not fully understand, then wait for more information to clear up the problem. Do not jump to the conclusion that God made a mistake!

Types of literature

10. Principle ten: understand the different kinds of literature that have special rules of interpretation. The Bible contains many kinds of material: history, letters, poetry, drama, prophecy, parables, types, legal, etc. Here I focus on only three special kinds that may be somewhat difficult in Bible interpretation: types, parables, and prophecy.

First, Bible types are historical people, institutions, events, actions, offices, and things in the Old Testament that symbolized, predicted or prefigured the person and work of Jesus Christ. Types are object lessons or pictures by which God taught His people about His grace and power.

For example, Adam was a type or prefiguring of Christ (Romans 5:14). The lifting up of the brazen serpent in the wilderness (Numbers 21:9) was a type of Christ's crucifixion (John 3:14-16). Since it is easy to invent types where there are none, the safest rule to follow is to determine from the New Testament whether the thing is plainly said to be a type. For example, in speaking of the time Moses struck the rock to provide water for Israel, Paul wrote, "They drank of that spiritual rock...and that rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4).

Second, parables as a teaching method are a commonly known earthly experience, event, or custom that contains a spiritual lesson. Examples are the parables of the sower, wheat and tares, mustard seed, leaven, and fig tree (Matthew 13:3, 24, 31, 33; 24:32). This was a method Jesus used to communicate spiritual truth to responsive disciples, yet hide the truth from unresponsive hearers (Matthew 13:11-17; Luke 8:8).

To understand the parable, recover the local, cultural background. Locate the one central truth in the illustration. Find out how much is explained by Christ Himself. Search for clues in the context. Compare the parable with the recording of the parable in the other Gospels. Finally, compare the doctrinal truth with other clear teachings and do not read doctrine into the parable.

Third, prophecy requires special guidelines. Take the plain, literal meaning of what is written unless the context indicates the section is a type, symbol or other figurative imagery. Note the historical background of the prophecy, and the political and social events. Note the context and flow of the discussion.

The prophets were not systematic in writing their information but gave pictures of events that could be present, soon or very far away. Descriptions of events vastly separated apart in time can be combined together in the prophetic sequence. Find parallel passages of prophecy to compare and contrast. Realize there can be multiple fulfillment of a prophecy. Christ is the heart of the Bible, so relate everything to Him.

This brings us to a close for this lesson. If it sounds like work, it is. However, it is well worth the time and effort. Really!

In this lesson, I have briefly explained a vital part of how we can live our life successfully: how to study the Bible. I have showed you how to prepare yourself, identified some critical Bible study tools, and also ten principles to use for accurate Bible study. Christian growth is the next and final lesson. That is where it gets very personal!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION ELEVEN: GROWTH

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” Acts 2:42



A farmer needs to plow, cultivate, and pull out weeds in his field to get the crops to grow. Likewise, Christians need to undertake certain activities to grow into spiritual maturity. In this lesson I will summarize six key steps for your continued Christian growth. They are Bible study, prayer, fellowship, outreach, worship and lordship.

I. PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY

In the last lesson you learned several principles to use In Bible study. Based on that important foundation, I show you one special kind of Bible study called the inductive method. There are three steps to follow: observation, interpretation, and application.

1. The first step is observation. Determine what the passage actually says. Read the section over a few times to get the overview, and then dig out the details: facts, people, figures, writer, readers, grammar, culture, history, and geography. Determine the context. Find the purpose of the writer. What is the thought progression? Use all the principles you learned in lesson ten.

2. The second step is interpretation. Find out what the passage actually means. Discover the major theme. Locate the spiritual truth the writer is communicating to the readers. Separate out what aspects relate only to that time and culture. Determine what the passage teaches us about God and how He relates to us. What doctrines are taught? How is the theme developed? What are the spiritual truths taught? What is the main lesson?

The key thing is to discover the eternal, abiding principles that remain the same in all cultures and times of history.

3. The third step is application. This requires prayer to have God show you the true needs in your life. Conduct an honest appraisal of your live. Don't sink into morbid

introspection, but conduct a fair examination of what areas need change (1 Corinthians 11:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5).

Then ask yourself, what does the result of the above steps mean to me personally? How do those eternal principles apply to me today? Do I have attitudes that need changing? Sins to confess and put away? Behavior to avoid or copy? Examples to follow? Promises to believe? Commands to obey? Prayers to pray? What dimensions of my life can be improved: my quality of life? Relationships to others? Personal character? Activities and priorities? Spiritual life? Look for the “main morsel,” or that truth which personally stands out to you and seems to impress your heart in a real, fresh, and special way.

Remember that the goal of all this study is that we might become conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29). Not only is Christ God, but He is a person who desires our close fellowship (1 John 1:1-7). To strengthen, develop and fully experience that special relationship we must learn about Christ - and the only source of knowledge is the Bible.

II. PERSONAL PRAYER LIFE

Prayer is simply reverent, sincere conversation with God in an attitude of humility and faith. The Bible commands us to pray and leaves us with over 350 examples of how to pray. Prayer is inspiring, empowering and plain hard work. It is both public and private. Prayer solves problems and changes people. It is universally recognized. Prayer is crucial to spiritual growth. Great revivals have started because of prolonged prayer by God’s people.

The purpose of prayer is threefold.

1. First, we pray for personal devotion, worship, and communion with God (Luke 18:1). If every Christian would pray one hour daily dramatic change would occur in our lives, families, churches, countries. This type of prayer renews, strengthens, and brings hope, and humility.
2. Prayer is for growth in Christian virtues (Matthew 26:41). Prayerlessness leads to sin, spiritual weakness and our character crumbles.
3. We pray to receive God’s benefits (Matthew 7:7).

God helps us in prayer. He has given us the Holy Spirit who teaches us how to pray in God’s will relative to various situations (Romans 8:26). One of the most staggering things about prayer is that God has given us personal access to Himself, and desires us to approach Him (John 14:6; 16:23, 24; Hebrews 4:16).

When we pray in Jesus’ name we acknowledge our submission to God and admit that our only means of access is through Christ. God has also given us many promises in

the Bible to instruct and give hope and assurance (1 John 5:14, 15). He has instructed on how to pray.

For example, the model prayer given by Jesus to the disciples tells us to adore and praise God, acknowledge our subjection to Him, confess our sins, protect us from temptation, sin, and Satan, and ask for our needs to be met (Matthew 6:9-13; see also 1 Chronicles 29:10-19; Psalm 32:2-5; 1 John 1:9; Proverbs 28:13; Philippians 1:3-5; Colossians 1:3). We are told to pray with persistence and faith (Matthew 7:7-11; Luke 18:1-8; Matthew 21:21, 22). We are to address God the Father in our prayers.

One way to remember a sequence of prayer is the acronym ACTS. A=adoration. C=confession. T=thanksgiving. S=supplication, or requests. Another pattern is to memorize the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13), and then pray through the prayer, but make it personal to you. For example, rather than saying, "Our Father," say, "My Father". Another way to learn how to pray is to go through the Psalms, and pray them back to God – only make them personal to you and your situation. The Psalms are David's prayers.

The physical position of prayer does not matter. You can kneel, stand, be on your face, raise your hands, pray in your car, in bed – it does not matter. Pray as often as you can. Some people pray and have devotions early in the morning, and some pray at noon, and some at night. Some pray all three times. The amount of time does not matter. However, the more you pray, the closer your fellowship with God.

Remember, it is a personal relationship between you and God. The more you have fellowship, the deeper and more meaningful the relationship. You might want to start with 15 minutes, and then increase the time gradually. Don't mechanically recite prayers, or just say some words over and over by repetition. You are talking to another person, God, so talk in your own respectful words just like you would to another person. You can pray written prayers, but make sure you know what you are saying, and genuinely mean them from your heart.

You can pray whatever comes to your mind, or be more systematic and make a prayer list. It is a good practice to keep a list, and then go back periodically to see how many prayers God has answered.

From prayer being vital to Christian growth, I now turn to fellowship.

III. PERSONAL FELLOWSHIP FOR GROWTH

1. Christian fellowship is mandatory for Christian growth. People are social beings, created in the image of God and designed to require the friendship, cooperation, support and community of others. Fellowship is woven into the fabric of human existence. People are bound together by an awareness of mutual belonging, shared interests, social and economic interdependence.

Christians have a unique fellowship: both with the living God of the universe and His children - our brothers and sisters in Christ. If we stop our fellowship from either of these, our spiritual lives will wither (cf. Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:24, 25).

2. Acts 2:41, 42 gives a good picture of fellowship. Verse 42 says, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." The word "fellowship" means community, association, sharing, friendship - that bond which binds Christians to each other and Christ. It means continuing commitment to one another, a regular ongoing relationship. Fellowship is having common interests, activities, feelings, comradeship - spending time and doing things with others who love Christ. The glue that holds us together is Jesus Christ and His interests.

3. One dimension of fellowship is with God. We Christians have a privilege not given to anyone else on earth: fellowship with God (1 John 1:3, 6). This is an unbelievable honor and even a duty. Our fellowship with the Father is based on our relationship with Him, our obedience and its experience is joy and happiness. Our fellowship with Christ is in sharing His sufferings, joys and His inheritance (1 Corinthians 1:9; Philippians 3:10; Romans 8:17, 18).

Our fellowship with the Holy Spirit is living in His presence, companionship, drawing on His help, guidance and empowerment. We have the unparalleled, truly amazing and humbling experience of being the temple and dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13; 3:16; 6:19). This experience is shared both by the lowest of commoners and the highest of nobility and royalty.

4. Our fellowship is also with other Christians. It is characterized by common friendship experienced in Christian service, church, small groups, meals, recreation, and Bible studies. It is based on a common Christian knowledge (1 John 1:3). Only true friends of Jesus can be true Christian friends. Our Christian fellowship is a practical, genuine, commitment, and sharing with one another (Acts 2:42; 2 Corinthians 6:14; Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:13; Philippians 1:5). It is a relationship of helping, encouraging, reclaiming backsliders, and being team members in the grand cause of Jesus Christ: getting out the gospel to the ends of the world.

From fellowship as a key to Christian growth, I move us next to examine the experience of worship.

IV. PERSONAL WORSHIP TO THE LIVING GOD OF THE UNIVERSE.

1. The Bible teaches that there is just one God and ruler over the entire universe. He is to be revered, loved, praised, obeyed, called upon, trusted in, called upon for mercy, and served with all our being (Luke 10:27). We are to worship only the God of the Bible - no others. To worship is to esteem, honor, serve, bow before, and hold in awe. It is the humble occupation of the soul with God. Humanity is made to worship God (Psalm 42:1,

2). God is to be worshipped in the manner He designed and on His terms - not ours. While it is true He is our father, friend and helper - He is also God.

2. The Bible says that true worshipers, “worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him” (John 4:23). This means worship is an inward experience not an outward ritual or ceremony. True worship is from genuine faith and a sincere heart as opposed to the false and hypocritical. It produces praise, prayer, purity, and obedience. Worship is genuine, plain, and simple.

Worship is also only through Christ (John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; Ephesians 2:18). Many religions in the world claim to worship God, but they do not worship the true God, because there is only one way of access to God: through Jesus Christ. Some say that all religions lead to God. That is wrong, according to Jesus who said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:7).

Worship can be private, family or public (Matthew 6:6; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; Jeremiah 10:25; 1 Peter 3:7; Acts 10:2; Hebrews 10:26).

3. There are several expressions of worship. Participating in the ordinances (or Sacraments) is worship (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34; Matthew 28:19). Worship includes the preaching, teaching, and reading of Scripture (Acts 11:26; 15:21, 35; 20:7; 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:2). Prayer with thanksgiving, singing with praise and adoration with enjoyment are worship (Acts 2:42; Revelation 5:8, 9, 14; Colossians 13:16). Christian service and financial giving are acts of worship (Revelation 5:9; 7:15; Psalm 96:8; Hebrews 13:15, 16; 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2; Philippians 4:18).

These acts must spring from a heart that genuinely worships in spirit and truth. Man made ceremony, pomp, protocol, and rituals with holy garments, instruments, altars and such do not impress God. The Bible says, “for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). God looks at the motivation, intent, love, and submission of our heart.

I do not mean that we cannot have elaborate ceremonies and vestures in worship, but those things are worthless if they do not come as a genuine expression of adoration, submission, and faith from the heart. Some things can be used as teaching instruments and symbols of our faith. For example, we can use a cross as a reminder and expression of our faith.

The fifth part of our personal Christian growth that I explain is evangelism, to which I now turn.

V. EVANGELISM TO THE UNSAVED

1. The central task of the church is world evangelism. In His Great Commission Jesus said, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15;

see also Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 14:23; 19:10; 24:45-48; John 4:34, 35; 15:16; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 10:42, 43; Romans 10:13-15; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

The direct command from Christ instruct a fivefold process: 1. get the gospel to every person now living; 2. lead people to salvation; 3. get converts baptized and into a local church; 4. teach converts all that Jesus commanded (the discipleship process); 5. keep the cycle of evangelism in progress until Christ returns. Our authority to evangelize is from Christ himself, along with the power to do so.

2. Our power for evangelism is from the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). The methods of evangelism vary. They include mass evangelism crusades, radio, TV, literature, small Bible studies, medical and educational works, church planting, internet, street preaching, missionary work, youth work, Sunday school, preaching - and many other methods. The entire church, using the abilities God has given us, work together as a team to evangelize. The goal always remains the same, but methods must change to fit the particular situation. Sometimes, evangelism must go underground.

3. Of most importance, however, is the personal soul-winning of individuals. Every individual is called to be a witness for Christ. We witness both by our steady Christian lives, and telling others how to be saved. We prayerfully witness with tact and gentleness, yet with faithful perseverance. We love people, build friendship bridges and explain the gospel to them when they permit. Most people will not accept Christ as Savior, but many will. Do not become discouraged. Evangelism is simply a conversation between people with the Christian explaining the gospel message and trusting God to bring results. Again, soul-winning must be mixed with caution in many parts of the world.

4. The content of the gospel message is four-fold: 1. mankind has sinned against God; 2. there is a severe penalty for sin - eternity in hell; 3. Jesus Christ was crucified on the cross, was buried and rose from the dead to pay sin's penalty and grant eternal life; 4. to receive this as individuals we must personally receive Christ as Savior. This means we believe the gospel in our heart and by a sincere prayer of faith ask Christ to forgive our sins and to be our Savior (1 John 5:11-13; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9-13; John 1:12; 3:16; Revelation 3:20). We now turn to the final phase of Christian growth, the lordship of Christ over our lives

VI. THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

1. Christ is not only our Savior, but also our Lord and Master. Paul said, "For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord" (1 Corinthians 4:5) - clear, strong language! From this verse and others it is clear that we are not our own to do as we please, but we belong as servants to Christ. Our full submission, obedience, and loyalty is to one master: Jesus Christ and His interests.

2. The Bible describes two groups of Christians in the world: carnal and spiritual (1 Corinthians 2:14-3:3). Carnal, or fleshly, Christians are saved but act like unsaved

people. Their lives, attitudes, priorities and activities are in friendship with the world, flesh and Satan. They are not filled with the Holy Spirit.

They may obey Christ in certain things, but reserve other areas of their life to live as they please. They may be faithful in church attendance and giving, yet commit adultery, lie, reject the Bible, steal, curse, hold grudges – and the list goes on (Galatians 19-21). They may even live respectable lives, yet in their hearts they hold Christ at a distance. In their hearts they are indifferent to Christ. Christ is not the Lord of every area of their life. Someone said, “Christ is either Lord of all, or not Lord at all”.

The remedy for this condition is to confess and put away our sins, surrender our total life to Christ, and by faith walk in the Holy Spirit (1 John 1:9; Galatians 5:16-26). Let me encourage you to surrender your lives fully to the lordship of Christ and be a spiritually mature Christian – fully surrendered to the lordship of Christ.

With this I finish this special series of eleven lessons on Christian Foundations. I pray that you will continue to study and faithfully live out these precious truths as you go on and grow in the grace and knowledge of our great Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.

Specifically, you and I have covered major doctrines of the Bible, God, Christ, mankind, the Holy Spirit, the church, future things, salvation, angels, Bible study, and Christian growth. All the best to you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

THE WAY TO SALVATION

To the reader: if you have come to the end of this little book, and realize you have never personally received Jesus Christ as your Savior, then I invite you to do so now. Remember the four steps:

1. Agree in your heart with God that you are a sinner in need of His salvation (Romans 3:23).
2. Know in your heart that there is a penalty to your sin that you cannot pay (Romans 6:23).
3. Believe in your heart that Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead to fully pay the penalty for your sins, and to give you the free gift of eternal life (Romans 5:8; John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8, 9).
4. By faith pray to God: tell Him you believe the above in your heart and ask Him to save you through Jesus Christ (John 1:12, 13; Revelation 3:20; Romans 10:9-13).

Remember that God is more concerned with the attitude of your heart rather than your exact words. The following is a suggested prayer:

“Heavenly Father, I admit to you that I am a sinner in need of your salvation. I believe that Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead to pay for my sins and to give me eternal life. I believe that only through Christ can I be saved. I ask for and accept your free gift of salvation. Please come into my heart and be my Savior and Lord. In Jesus’ name, amen.”

Signed: _____ Date: _____

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Christian Ethereal Library <http://www.ccel.org/>

Internet Christian Library <http://www.iclnet.org/>

Crosswalk.com - <http://biblestudy.crosswalk.com/>

IMPORTANT SCRIPTURES

GOD AND CREATION

Genesis 1:1

Deuteronomy 6:4

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6:9-13

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

THE GREAT COMMANDS

Matthew 22:37-40

Luke 10:27

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Deuteronomy 5:7-21

Exodus 20:3-17

1. You shall have no other gods before Me.
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Observe the sabbath day to keep it holy.
5. Honour your father and your mother.

6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field or his male servant or his female servant, his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

THE GOLDEN RULE
Matthew 7:12

Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

FAITH TOWARD GOD
Proverbs 3:5-7

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil.

PSALM 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me. Thou dost prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; Thou hast anointed my head with oil; My cup overflows. Surely goodness and loving kindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

SALVATION AND HOPE
John 3:16
John 14:1-3

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.
Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.

RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT
John 5:28, 29
John 11:25, 26
Matthew 25:41, 46

Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die."

Then He will also say to those on His left, "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels...And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

THE NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of the heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and become fully human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, and has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection for the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The end.

