



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



The CCP (Community Church Planting) Pastoral Training Course Books 1, 4, & 5

Reaching all the Nations for Jesus Christ

Bereik al die Nasies vir Jesus Christus

OMS INTERNATIONAL (South Africa) T/A OMS INTERNASIONAAL (Suid-Afrika) H/A
(Reg no/nr 1982/094-95/08)

*Formerly/Voorheen The Oriental Missionary Society
(Association incorporated under Section 21/Vereniging ingelyf kragtens Artikel 21)*

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Published in South Africa by OMS International South Africa
P.O Box 560 Florida Hills 1716 SOUTH AFRICA

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The CCP Pastoral Training Course



Doctrine of God

~ Dr Wally Marais



THE APOSTLES CREED

INTRODUCTION

This creed was not formulated by the Apostles themselves but is a summary of what the Apostles proclaimed.

The origin of the Apostles' Creed is unknown, but the main content of it has been accepted as a confession of faith since the second century AD.

The twelve articles of this creed underscore the basic beliefs of all Christians. The creed is not a lifeless formula which is to be recited. No, it is a confession of faith which makes an impact on one's whole being every time he says, "I believe in God." It is important that Christians know this creed by heart and confess it regularly with their hearts and souls.

The Apostles Creed

- Art. 1 I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,**
- Art. 2 and in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord;**
- Art. 3 who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,**
- Art. 4 suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried;**
He descended into hell;
- Art. 5 The third day He rose again from the dead;**
- Art. 6 He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the**
Father Almighty;
- Art. 7 From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.**
- Art. 8 I believe in the Holy Spirit,**
- Art. 9 the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints,**
- Art 10 the forgiveness of sins,**
- Art.11 the resurrection of the body,**
- Art.12 and the life everlasting.**



1

Doctrine of God

Lesson Purpose

- To introduce the student to God as the living and creator God.

Lesson Outcome

The student will:

- Find that he has always felt that there is some power greater than himself,
- Come to knowledge of the living God through faith.
- Realize that God has a plan to recreate him in Jesus Christ.

Table of Contents

- Introduction – Revelation
- God is self contained
- God reveals Himself through His mighty acts.
- God reveals Himself through His Word
- God reveals Himself through His son
- Trinity was revealed
- The existence of God – the arguments

Introduction

God reveals Himself to us so that we can know Him.

Genesis 1:1 says, "in the beginning God". This is where theology has to begin – with God. God is the source, subject, and end of all theology. Even more importantly, however, this is where our faith really begins. The Bible does not try to prove the existence of God but instead assumes a belief in God. This verse is asking for our faith, and if we do not start here, we cannot know God.

Christian theology is based upon the revelation of God in Christ as given in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. God reveals Himself through His Word. There is also a **general revelation** which God gives of Himself to all men. Men see Him in nature and in themselves. In their minds, they have thoughts of a creator of all things. In the progress of human history, man also senses that there is a "Directing Presence" moving us to an expressed goal in the fullness of time. There is also the revelation of God in conscience. This is a "knowing with oneself." It is the awareness of right and wrong within us, and it is accompanied by a compulsion to want to do right. Through general revelation, we are aware that someone is leading history, and that it does not "just happen." But none of these give us a personal revelation of God. That can only happen when we meet Him personally in Jesus Christ through special revelation.

Special Revelation is when God takes the initiative and, working from love, reaches out to make it possible for men to know Him and to be in fellowship with Him. This we see revealed in the saving work of His Son,

The CCP Pastoral Training Course
Doctrine of God

Jesus Christ. The Bible gives us God's Saving History. From Genesis to Revelation, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were always there, finding ways to reveal God's way of salvation. Right in the beginning, after man had fallen away from God and into disobedience, it was our Triune God who immediately drew near to man and promised to save him. God addressed the serpent (satan) in Genesis 3:15, saying "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will bruise his heel"

Acts 17: 24-25 says, "God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life and breath, and all things." God's revelation is a revelation of His essence, His acts and His virtues. His words and attributes, which we encounter in the revelatory event, disclose to us His character. He wants us to experience His love, for that is who He is, and all His dealings with us are initiated by Him so that we may experience His love for us. He is love to us, not condemnation.

John 3:16 says,

"for God so loved the world that He gave His One and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

God reveals His saving Truth in His Son Jesus Christ because He loves us. It is a revelation of who God is as much as it is a revelation of what He has done and wants to do for, and in, and through us. God desires to be reconciled to man, and He makes it possible for all men to respond to Him. This salvation is for whosoever will believe.

God is the source of revelation. It is not something we suddenly understand as a result of human calculation. It is God moving to touch us with love. Revelation is a grace encounter, and as God's Spirit draws us with love, we experience a sense of awe in His presence. But He wants more than just for us to be aware of the fact that there is a "higher power." God wants to enter our spirits by His Spirit and fellowship with us on a personal basis. Through this fellowship, we will cry out from the depths of our spirits to have this quality of love in us. He will fill us with His love and we will start operating on the basis of this love. God has a plan as to how this happens, and we find this love at the foot of the Cross of Jesus. It is there where we start to see who God really is - He is love. We fear and tremble before God because we know we are unclean and sinners deserving His judgment. We may try to change our lives to impress Him, only to realize that we are sinners to the core of our beings and cannot change ourselves. Then God speaks to us and says, "I live in a high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite" (Isaiah 57:17).

As we progress through this lesson, we must not think of God as the sum total of the attributes we know about Him; rather we must realize that we can never know all there is to know about Him. God is so much more than His attributes. By looking at these attributes, however, we learn a few things about Him that help us to meet God on a personal basis and to be reconciled to Him.

God is self-contained.

We call this “aseity” and it means self-subsistence, or the possession of life in Himself which is independent of all other existence. God is infinity, and by this we mean that there are no bounds or limits to the Divine Nature of God. The concept of immensity has to do with God’s mode of existence to the spacial world. Does the universe have boundaries? Or does it go on and on, never ending? This gives an indication of how immense God is. God came to incarnate Himself in Jesus Christ so that we can meet Him and know Him personally. Because of who He is, He chose to reveal Himself to us, in order that we might show forth His glory and His love for us, His highest creation.

God reveals Himself through His mighty acts.

Throughout history, God has given us glimpses of His power. He performed miracles like dividing the Red Sea and the Jordan River to save His people, according to Joshua 4 – 5 and 1 Corinthians 10: 1-6. But most of all, His power was revealed in raising Jesus from the dead, thereby revealing that it is a small thing to recreate us from sinners into disciples of Jesus.

God reveals Himself to us through His mighty Word

Not only has God revealed His love for us and His desire to reconcile us to Himself through His powerful acts, but He has also revealed this through His Word. Again and again, God has revealed His saving will for us through the Prophets. Even through the covenant God made with Abraham to raise up a people of God, we can see His plan. What the prophets foretold came true, proving that they were God’s chosen vessels.

The prophets foretold the coming of Christ. There were about 300 prophecies that Christ fulfilled just as they had foretold. Christ was the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1 : 20 – 23). The prophets said that He was to come from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10, Hebrews 7:14), that He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2, Matthew 2: 6), that He would be sold for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11: 12 – 13, Matthew 26:15), that He was to die by crucifixion (Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, Matthew 27), and that He was to rise from the dead and ascend to heaven (Psalm 16, Psalm 110, Matthew 22: 43 – 45). These are but a few of the prophecies that Jesus fulfilled. Hebrews 14 says that God has revealed Himself to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. When you open your life to Jesus, you meet the Living God and He recreates you by His Spirit, adopting you into His family.

God reveals Himself through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1:1-2 says, “in the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son whom He appointed heir of all things and through whom He made the universe.” As we walk with Jesus Christ through the prophecies in the Old Testament pointing to Him, and as we walk through the New Testament and learn and see Him in action in His humiliation and His exaltation, it is revealed to us by God’s Spirit that our Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is the second person of the Trinity and is of the same essence as the Father and the Holy Spirit, and we accept Him as our God.

The Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit), was revealed step by step to men of faith.

Jesus came and gave us the full revelation of the Triune God. God reveals Himself to man through His Word and His mighty acts. We meet Him in all the miracles, in the prophecies, in the unique personality of Christ, and in the witness of the Holy Spirit.

The Existence Of God

Older theologies still speak of Theism. By this, they mean that God is a personal God, Creator, and Preserver of all things. They stress that God is immanent in creation as well as transcendent, or above, and separate from it.

We know that God alone can reveal Himself to man. The term 'innate' is applied to our primary knowledge of God. Due to much misunderstanding, theologians now use the term **rational intuition**, referring to the power that the mind has of immediate insight into truth. It simply means that man has ability of the soul to receive knowledge independently of the five senses. The Bible does not try to prove the existence of God, for it appeals to the revealed knowledge about God in man.

The arguments used to prove the existence of God.

Let me hasten to say that even ability to think about God in these various arguments is given to man by the grace of God. It is really not man's invention but the image in which he was created that make him aware of the higher power. Man has attempted to explain the existence of God through the **Cosmological Argument**, which is the argument that creation arose from a "First Cause" But there still must be a Will, a Person, who thought it out and created it all. Common sense tells us that nothing happens without a cause. The whole structure of science rests upon the category of causality. Also the cause must be wise enough and powerful enough to make it happen. Imagine thinking up the atom structure with its protons and neutrons all spinning around at tremendous speeds but without the control of a higher power. Imagine thinking up gravity and the placing of the planets in the exact position for each to be under the principle of gravity, ensuring that they do not collide, and then doing this for thousands years without an accident you could not correct. Imagine, if you can, this happening by pure accident, or being brought about by some impersonal force. We have to respect that there is a higher knowledge and creator who has all power to make this happen and to keep it going. It could never have been created by blind eternal force, for someone would have had to create that force if there were such a thing. But there isn't. The worlds are all held together by the Word of HIS power.

The **Theological Argument** says that the presence of a design with a purpose proves the existence of a designer. First of all, there had to be someone with the will to make it happen. Then it had to be designed, and then there had to be a purpose for wanting the creation, for it is not a toy world. There had to be a purposeful creator. All of creation had to have life principle, it could not have life of itself. It had to be thought up and designed, and it had to have a purpose for its existence. Nothing just lives; rather it lives for something. There is an ecological balance as well. The food chain, the weather patterns, the seasons, the tides, and every thing else has a divine purpose, and prove that there is a fine balance in this universe. Today this is being taken seriously. Because of the result of pollution in the waters, land and sea, man is upsetting

the order of the ecological balance, and man will bear the consequences of this. None of this could have just happened. It all had to be designed. God has initiated and designed everything and has a special purpose for His highest creation, man.

The **Ontological Argument** says that since we can think of a Perfect Being, it shows that there must be such a Being. But we also think of this Creator Being as being able and perfect and good and beautiful because of the beauty and perfection in this creation. Beauty is a fact; mathematics is a fact; life principle is a fact; gravity is a fact; and because of these facts, we have a Creator who is more than an idea. If we can see these facts, then we also know that we have a purposeful Creator who is a fact. If this were not the case, from where would all these factual things come? God as Creator is a fact, and because we see these facts, we have these ideas about Him.

The **Moral Argument** says that a Creator exists because we have a conscience, and man has this innate knowledge of right and wrong. The fact that we are innately aware that there is Truth, and that there is perfection shows that there is a higher Creator Being. We have been created by Truth, and Jesus claimed to be this truth in John 14:6. The fact that we have been created "right," not "wrong" shows that God has a plan of "right" for us all. The fact that we understand that there is perfection, shows that morality had to come from more than our thinking. We believe God has placed this knowledge within every man. We also know that there is a goodness and a holiness which is what we should aspire to be. Where did this awareness come from if not from our Creator? We have a sense of morality, a moral ought in us. Because only personality is capable of morality, we can conclude that there must be a Supreme Personality who has imparted this to us. We know that we did not invent these ideas or knowledge; rather there has to be a cause, and that cause is God.

We must understand that these revelations were not simply things God wanted men to understand in the era in which He revealed them. Gods revelations are for all time. What was revealed then is also for today. That is the main reason why God inspired His Word to be written and passed on to all generations.

The Word of God is God's progressive revelation of His saving history which was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Hebrews 1:1 says, "in the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son." This is not mere history. It is history that is saving. The Spirit of God makes it real now because Jesus is alive. That is why we speak about the unity of Scripture, for it does not matter whether you are reading something that happened 6000 years ago or in New Testament times or even today. The message is the same. It is all about God's love for His highest creation, MAN, and the Promised Messiah.

The **Empirical Argument**

Throughout the Bible, we see that God's Message is given to a responding creature – man. God, in His love and mercy, has retained man as redeemable. Man cannot become so bad that he can no longer respond and be saved. God has already built His ability to respond into man, and nothing can remove this gift of grace from him. He can respond for he already has grace and faith to make his choice to be saved. Man can respond to God and choose by grace through faith, he can choose to have a real encounter, a spiritual experience, with His creator. He has the witness of the Spirit which is real. It is like a spiritual sixth sense. Man knows in his self-consciousness that something beyond his ability happened to

The CCP Pastoral Training Course
Doctrine of God

him when he was born again. When he is born again, or sanctified entirely, and it is a real experience for him. No one can take that sense of reality from him, for he experiences Jesus in his heart, mind, feelings, and choices. After salvation, he now has a bias towards the good he knows is God's will, a spiritual ought. We know that God, who is love, created His entire creation in this love. It is for this reason that we appreciate beauty. But man is special. He was created to respond to love, and man cannot live without responding to love. Love is more than a feeling or emotion. It is that something that has happened to us that makes us want to choose to do God's will and to please Him every day of our lives. Because He first loved us and has now put His love in us, and because He is in us, sharing His love with us, our love responds and wants to love Him and His purpose and will for us. The point is that someone loving had to be able to give us this love. It did not come from us, and it did not just come from some impersonal force. This love is person-to-person.

Class discussion

Why does the Bible not try to prove the existence of God?

Do you think we can know there is a God?



2

The Names And Attributes Of God

Lesson Purpose

- The student will be helped to understand the names of God and their meanings and also to know the attributes of God.

Lesson Outcome

- After this lesson the student will understand how God reveals Himself through His names and His attributes.

Table of Contents

- God has revealed Himself through the names He has given in His Word
- The divine attributes of God.

God has revealed Himself through the names He has given us in His Word.

Elohim means power. "El" is translated "God." Elohim means God carries all power.

This term "El" occurs in Genesis 1 over 32 times, and it is always connected to God as power. In Genesis, it refers to God as the one who has power to create all things. He has power to do what He wills. As we are going to discover, God reveals something every time He uses a different name. We are not reading about different gods here, like in Hinduism. All these names are the different names of the One God. Each name expresses a different aspect of His being and the different relationships He has with His creation.

The word "El" is translated "God" some 250 times and usually in reference to the God of power. For example, in Numbers 23:2, it was "El" who brought Israel up out of Egypt. It is written that "He hath as it were the strength of an unicorn."

Deuteronomy 10:17 says, "Jehovah your Elohim is God of gods, and Lord of lords, the God [or El] who is great, mighty and dreadful." It means "Almighty God."

It expresses greatness and glory. It carries creative and governing power of omnipotence and sovereignty in its meaning. A striking fact is that Elohim is the plural form of the word. If it were singular, God would have been speaking to Himself when He says in Genesis 1:26, "let us make man..." This is evidence of plurality in unity.

The Father God said the Word; the Word was God the Son who agreed and proceeded from the Father; and they breathed into man the breath of God the Holy Spirit and man became a living soul.

Yahweh, or Jehovah, is translated LORD in capitals to distinguish from Adonai, which is also translated Lord, but in the lower case.. It is God expressed as "I Am," or the ever-present One who enters into relationship with man. He is the one who enters into covenant with man and stays to honor the contract. We meet God in this way in Genesis 2:4 when He is called Jehovah – Elohim.

The name Jehovah is derived from the Hebrew verb “to be’ or “being.” It is exactly like the word chavah meaning “to live” or “life.” It shows us that Jehovah has always been a being and the source of life, for He has always been alive.

As Jehovah, He is the personal God who reveals Himself and enters into relationship with man. He desires to impart life and deals with life issues. You will notice that it is always written, “thus says the LORD,” not Elohim. Jesus claimed to be Jehovah incarnate, therefore He could say, “ I AM, I say unto you.”

The name Jehovah is always associated with God’s moral and spiritual attributes. Read the Sermon on the Mount where as King, Jehovah Jesus gives to us the principles of the Kingdom of God. Jehovah is the God who blesses us.

- **El Shaddai** means “God is almighty” or the shedder-forth of blessings. It carries the concepts of nourisher, strength-giver and satisfier.
 - In Genesis 17:1-2, it says, “and when Abram was ninety years old and nine, Jehovah appeared to Abram and said to him, I am God Almighty (El Shaddai) walk before me and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and I will multiply thee exceedingly.” Remember that El speaks of God’s power, and Shaddai means “the one who pours out sustenance and blessing.” The word has connections with the word “breast,” meaning nourisher. It also has connotations of being all-sufficient.
 - Too many of us who feel sufficient in our own strength need to get back to the one who is our all sufficiency, El Shaddai the all-sufficient One. Abraham had to learn that God’s sufficiency is always provided at exactly the right time.
- **Yahweh Sabaoth** – the Lord of Hosts. Isaiah 47:4 It is basically a military team, showing that God is the leader of the heavenly armies. It emphasizes God’s sovereign might and majesty. Some have seen the hosts to mean the stars and planets in the heavenly sphere and would also stress God’s control and majesty and power. Some see the host as all the angels which surround god’s throne, and again it points to everything being under God’s control as King.
- **Adonai** means “Lord” or “Master,” and it expresses possession and sovereign dominion. It is translated in the Greek as “KURIOS” and is a term applied to Christ.
 - It is applied hundreds of times to Jesus in the New Testament. The term “Lords,” can be applied to the trinity.
 - When Paul was in great danger, Luke says, “the Lord stood by him and said, be of good cheer,” In Acts 23:11.
 - 2 Corinthians 12:9 says, “the grace of the Lord is continuously with His servants
 - This what we mean when we say Jesus is Lord in our lives.
- **Jehovah-Jireh** means “see, He provides.”
 - In Genesis 22, we have the account of when Elohim asks Abraham to offer up Isaac. Being obedient to God, Abraham is about to plunge the knife into Isaac’s breast when Jehovah stops him and provides a ram In his place.
 - Abraham named the place Jehovah – Jireh, meaning “the Lord will provide.”

- The word for prophet is roeh and means “to see.” The prophets were called “seers,” and they were “the ones who see beforehand.” Did you notice the similarity between the Hebrew words, jireh and roeh? They both mean “to see,” but they have slightly different meanings based on the different contexts.
- Jehovah – Jireh here means “the Jehovah saw what needed to be provided long before the need arose; you need not have worried for He always provides.”
- **Jehovah – Rophe**
 - Jehovah-Rophe means “the God who heals.”
 - In Exodus 15: 22 – 26, the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea and spent three days in the wilderness, tired and thirsty, but they found no water. They murmured against the Lord. In verse 23, the Word says that “when they came to Marah they could not drink of the waters of Marah for they were bitter.” God showed Moses a certain tree that when cast into the waters made the water sweet. He had already seen the need and given to them His promise. In verse 26, the Word says, “if thou will diligently hearken to the voice of Jehovah the God and do what is right in His sight... I will put none of these diseases on thee that I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am Jehovah that healeth thee.” Rophe appears some seventy times in the Old Testament, always meaning “to restore, to heal, to cure,” or in reference to a physician, not only in a physical sense, but in a moral and spiritual sense as well.
 - The Son of God continues God’s healing ministry throughout the New Testament even until today. He is the same Jesus, the healing God that He always has been.
- **Jehovah Nissi**
 - Jehovah Nissi means “the Lord is my banner.”
 - As the children of Israel journeyed on their way to Canaan, they heard that the Amalekites, descendants of the grandson of Esau, were going to attack them
 - They met for battle and Moses stood on the hill with his rod. While he held up the rod, the Israelites prevailed and eventually Moses got tired and the enemy started to prevail. In his right hand was the rod God had used so often to clear the way for him. It was the rod of Elohim. We already know that this means God’s power was there. This rod was the banner of God under which God brought the victory. Romans 8:37 says, “in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”
 - We do not need a literal rod or banner, for we march under the blood-stained banner of the cross. Jesus is the Mighty Conqueror.
- **Jehovah – M’ Kaddesh**
 - This means that Jehovah alone is the One who sanctifies, and who makes holy.
 - The meaning of this word comes from the book of Leviticus and is a message to a people already redeemed by God. Leviticus is the book on holiness in the Old Testament.
 - The word “sanctify” is not mentioned until Exodus 13:1 – 2, which says, “sanctify unto Me all the first born...of the children of Israel.” This is in reference to the Israel of whom Jehovah had already said “Israel is My son, even My first born” in Exodus 4:22. God asked His people to live holy before Him, and when they obeyed, His presence and power kept them holy and cleansed.
 - God was asking them to separate themselves from all that was unholy and to consecrate themselves devotedly to Him and to continue doing so.

- God is the one alone who can make things and people holy. He sets apart a vessel for holiness, but when dealing with His spiritually alive children, He not only separates them but actually cleanses them morally and spiritually. A simple vessel cannot be cleansed morally and spiritually as it has no spirit or soul. In regard to people, God is asking us to turn from all known sin and to consecrate ourselves entirely to Him so that He can HEAL us from all sin. He expels the darkness in man by coming and filling us spiritually and morally with His light and power. According to 2 Thessalonians 5:23 – 24, “the very God of peace Himself sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful and He will do it.”
- Some want us to merely set ourselves apart as is done with vessels, but here it is clear that God wants to make a person’s body, his spirit, and his soul holy, and if we yield to Him, He will do it.
- What Jehovah was to His people in the Old Testament, the Holy One who sanctifies, the Lord Jesus Christ is to His people in the New Testament times and today.
- **Jehovah-Shalom**
 - The name Jehovah-Shalom is found in Judges 6:24, which says, “then Gideon built an altar unto Jehovah and called it Jehovah Shalom meaning Jehovah is peace.”
 - It is the peace of God that comes to the heart and mind when one is at peace with God. It has to do with having a clear conscience and a pure heart, and the peace that comes when things are right and there is no discord. The root of the expression means harmony. It has to do with being in a state of blessedness, knowing that God is blessing you and that you are blessed.
 - God is never out of harmony with His will, His desires, or His judgments. He is in perfect harmony and He wills the same for us, according to Isaiah 26:2-4. “Thou will keep Him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you.” “peace through the blood of His cross”. Colossians 1 :20.
- **Jehovah – Tsidkenu**
 - Jehovah-Tsidkenu means “Jehovah our righteousness.” There would be no righteousness if there was no Holy God. The fact that we are aware of right and wrong proves the fact that there is perfect righteousness. Someone started us thinking this way and we read that our God who is righteousness invites us into a right relationship with Him. He will put His Spirit in us which will cause us to hunger and to thirst for His righteousness. We have a longing in our hearts to be free to live right, and He is doing that in us, according to Matthew 5:6.
 - Some want us to believe that God casts the robe of Christ’s righteousness over sinners and hides our sins from God so that when God looks at us He really sees Jesus and His righteousness. Imagine trying to fool God, who knows the very imaginations of a man’s heart. That is a wrong interpretation coming from those who take literally the idea of covering sin on the Day of Atonement, when the blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat. This method of the covering of sin was an Old Testament arrangement with God. It was the way of acceptance in the Old Testament because the blood meant that a life had been given in the place of sinners. There was no magical power in the blood used to cover the stain of sin. So it is with the Blood of Jesus. We are accepted into God’s presence, reconciled to Him, justified, and adopted all in one divine moment by grace through faith in what Jesus did for us 2000 years ago. He made it all right with God and our righteous God did the right thing by making us right. He justified us and cleansed us and we stand before Him now clean and pure and holy, just as if we had never sinned. His Image has been restored in us, and we are forgiven and cleansed, because we are now in Christ and no

longer outside of Christ. We were once in darkness but now we are walking in the light. We are in step with the Holy Spirit, and we have the Son in us so we have life. We are not sinners anymore. We are Christians. WE ARE IN CHRIST. Therefore we are righteous because He has made us so. Where else can we go to be made righteous? We can go only to Him because He is Jehovah-Tsidkenu.

- Ephesians 4:24 says, “and being made free from sin we have become the servants of righteousness.”

- **Jehovah – Rohi**
 - Jehovah-Rohi means “Jehovah my Shepherd.” Psalm 23 says, “the Lord is MY Shepherd.” This means that God knows where the best of everything for us is, and He will lead us there. He is taking us somewhere with Him every day. We must trust Him to guide and sustain us, which He does, for He never fails us. In John 10 :11, Jesus said, “I AM [the] Good Shepherd.” There are many other I AM sayings of Jesus, but we know He was saying “ I am God and I am taking you to the place I have prepared for You, and I will come again and receive you unto myself” in John 14 :2-3 (paraphrased by the author).

- **Jehovah - Shammah**
 - Ezekiel 48:35 says, “and the name of the city from that day shall be Jehovah Shammah.”
 - Jehovah-Shammah means “Jehovah is there.”
 - Things could not have been worse when this message that “Jehovah is there” was spoken. It certainly did not look like it. The temple had been destroyed and the Jews had been taken captive by the Babylonians, and they had hung up their harps. Instead of singing they were weeping. After returning from Jerusalem to Babylon Ezekiel came with this message: God is there. Let us not despair; rather let us go back and make ourselves available to Him as His people again.
 - God has never deserted those who put their faith in Him and walk in obedience to His will. He has come in Jesus Christ and He made His abode in the new temple not made with hands. According to Colossians 1:19, “the fullness of God was pleased to dwell In Him.” And this concept is tied to Ephesians 2 :21-22 which says, “in Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit”.

- **El Eljon**
 - El Eljon means “the Most High.”
 - The heathen tribes built altars to the their gods on high places. They were trying to get higher than others to try and show their superiority over other gods. Sometimes they would make their altars bigger than others to show off their power. But the Psalmist laughs at them and says that their gods have ears, but they cannot hear, and they have eyes, but they cannot see. He wants them to know there is only one living God, and He lives and rules from heaven. He is the Most High God. This Most High God is the real living God who speaks to us through His Word and His mighty acts. He is the all powerful one, the Most High.

In these essential names of God which are revealed to us, we see something of God’s Being and His Nature.

There are some other names that reveal His essence to us as well.

- **God is Spirit**, indicates that God is self-moving and efficient. God is underived, and He is eternal life.
- **He is also Light**. God is Eternal Reason and He is also self-manifesting.
- **He IS LOVE**. God thinks, feels and acts Love. This is His Essence.

The Divine Attributes of God:

- **God is Life** – He has life in Himself and He alone gives life (John 1:4, 5-20, 5:26).
- **The Omnipotence of God** – He is all-powerful. He does all things (Luke 1:37).
 - He created the immeasurable universe by His Word. He created the entire universe through and from and for Jesus, and Jesus is to be the Eternal Bridegroom for all believers, who are His Body, the Church (Eph 1: 22 – 23). Remember that the Son was the creator, He was manifest in the flesh and called Jesus Christ, the Saviour. He laid down His life to redeem all mankind and has the power to restore everything that has been created. Being of the same essence as God, He is all-powerful. Raising Jesus from the dead and raising Him to sit at His right hand proves how powerful God is !
- **The Omniscience of God** - 1 John 3:20, Matthew 10:29
 - Just think about the millions of people living on this planet and add to that number the millions who have already died. God knows everything about every one of them, without ever making a mistake.
 - God knows every detail about everything all of the time.
 - He knows every time we pray and every time we slip and fall. Motivated by this powerful love, God comes to our aid every time. Just imagine listening to millions of prayers all at the same time and never making a mistake with one of them. That is how great God's knowledge is.
- **The Omnipresence of God** - Acts 17:24-28
 - God fills heaven and earth. He is everywhere and anywhere. He is not limited to time or space. He has always been there and will always be there. He is aware of the past, the present, and the future. All of these are ever-present with Him. If He chooses for His presence to be absent, then it will be so. We cannot imagine how His mind works.
- **The Glory of God** - Psalm 24:8-10
 - The consciousness of God's presence and power are everywhere.
 - But He is also always at the point of our need. He never deserts us. You are never alone. As we get involved with His great commission, He is ever present. This why and how miracles can happen. It is all about Him (Matthew 18: 19 – 20).
- **God is Eternal** - Psalm 90:2
 - He has always been there and will always be there.
 - We have already noted His eternity and that He never happened or began. He has always been God and will always be God. He is the great "I AM," the ever present one.
 - But eternity also refers to the quality of His life. He is an ever-present quality that will never change. He is eternal.

- The only time He limited Himself in time and space was when He was incarnated (John 1: 4).
- We have eternal life in Jesus Christ, and that is life that will never end in the sense of our understanding of time. It is also quality of ever-present life in Jesus.

The Moral Attributes of God:

- **The Holiness of God-** 1 Peter 1:15-16
 - In God there is no change, sin, or imperfection.
 - He hates and punishes sin, for He is holy.
 - The love and compassion of God are revealed in the Doctrine of the Son.
- **The Righteousness of God-** Rom. 1:17, 18
 - Because He is Righteous, God cannot tolerate evil, and He can do no evil.
 - God created man in His likeness, therefore, He has provided a way for man to be restored to His Image and to be free from all sin (1 John 1:7-9).
- **The Faithfulness of God-** 2 Tim. 2:19
 - God can be fully trusted. He never fails. He keeps all of His promises all of the time. Therefore faith is trusting in His faithfulness.
- **The Love of God-** John 3:16-17
 - Love is God's essence and His nature. He wills only the best all the time for us.
 - 1 John 4:7-11 teaches us that God wants to love His world through us.
 - "Dear friends, let us love one another for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed His love among us ; He sent His only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love ; not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends since God so loved us, we ought to love one another, No one has ever seen God , but if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us."
 - Love is not something God does to us or something He just gives us. Love is God living and imparting His love, His light, His purity and His power. This does not make us little gods, but we start becoming Godlike, because we partake of His nature.

We have spent most of our time concentrating on God as Creator and Giver of Life. Let us examine Him as follows;

- **God as Creator**
 - In Genesis 1:1, we read that "In the beginning God created."
 - This is a faith statement. We either believe it or we do not. We can try to prove that God created everything, but our arguments would seem to be our own opinions, for there are many thinkers who think otherwise. They do not accept the Bible as God's Word or as His revelation of Himself. It is like the Trinity, it is a faith statement, you either accept it or reject it.
 - We believe that in the beginning, our God, who has always been there, decided to create the heavens and the earth. He created these as we know them, with all the living creatures, and He

also created Man in His own image.

- This is His will, for He wanted this creation and created it. We have a revealed
- account through inspiration of how it all came about, and it is a beautiful expression to us of how perfect our God is. We see that He is beauty, and He thinks in colours. He gives everything design and precision, as evidenced by the order in this universe.
- But man had something more, for he was connected spiritually to God and communicated with God and understood God's will for Him. We know he failed and God, who is love, brought into operation a saving plan through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, which we will study in another lesson. This is a created world. It is not the result of evolution or chance, and it is not eternal, as God is, for there was a time when God created this world.
- The Bible assures us of another new creation to come, and of a new heavens and a new world. This world is not self-sustaining in that it will go on progressing better and better until it is perfect. It is perfect in the sense that it performs in the manner for which it was created. It was made to sustain life and keep revolving on an axis that keeps the right balance. God has promised a better world to come and He will create it. Revelation 21:1 says, "and I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away"
- **Governor:** God is the governor of all of His creation.
 - This role or office of God reveals to us that He is a responsible God, and He preserves and sustains all of His Creation. God binds Himself according to the invariable rules of both justice and mercy.
- **Providence:** Events do not happen by mere chance or even according to rigid determination.
 - Rather, God uses His own will and initiative to keep the harmony of His entire creation. Not only does He take care of stars and planets, but He also takes care of all seasons and the purposeful interaction of everything. In Christ, God is taking all believers somewhere to fulfill all that He has planned.

Remember, everything that God IS, Jesus IS.

- **Theodicy:** God never loses control of anything or any situation.
 - He is controlling all of history and it will come out just as He wills. Jesus founded Christian history and controls it until the day He hands it all back to the control of the Father.
- **The Sovereign Will of God**
 - If we overstress the doctrine of God's sovereign will, we will end up denying that God created man with real choice. If we understress the will of God, we will make man his own god. We have to hold to the balanced view that God created man as a free moral agent and pre-planned for him to live and act and move in Christ. Keep the balance of the first Adam and the second Adam, who is Christ. They both were free moral agents and human beings. The one made sin his master while Christ expelled sin from the human heart. God's sovereignty allowed man to make choices with their subsequent consequences. Nothing was forced upon either of them. They were not controlled by irresistible grace and coerced into some pre-programmed way of responding and living. Rather God's grace was an integral part of His will for man.

Class Discussion:

"Why I believe in God."

Why can God not overlook sin?

Why I believe that Jesus is God.



3

God Is Revealed As The Triune God

Lesson Purpose

- To understand that God has revealed Himself as the Triune God, and that He is One God in Three Persons: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Lesson Outcome

- After studying the Trinity the student:
- Will be strengthened in his faith in the Triune God.
- Will be fully convinced of the teaching of the Trinity in God's Word.
- Will be able to share this truth with others.

Table of Contents

- Beware of Dispensationalism
- The names of Jesus also prove that He is God
- Divine attributes that apply to Yahweh are applied to the Holy Spirit
- The Three-in-One God

Beware of Dispensationalism.

We have already been studying about God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. When we study about God in the Old Testament, we tend to think of Him as Father, and we think mostly about God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in the New Testament.

Many scholars speak of the dispensation of the Father, and then the dispensation of the Son, followed by the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. We must beware, though, that we do not believe that only the Father acted in the Old Testament dispensation, and that only the Son acted in the dispensation of the Gospels, and that the rest of the Bible was left to the acts of the Holy Spirit.

We must never forget that it is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit who are all omnipresent. All three persons are present all the time throughout all of history, and the Triune God is active in the world and in us all of the time.

God is Father, God is Jesus the Son of God, and God is the Holy Spirit at work, saving and sanctifying and healing and performing miracles and all the other works ascribed to our Triune God.

As we study, we will begin to see how their different roles work together in perfect harmony. We do not want to fall into the error of ascribing something to only one aspect of the Trinity when they are all to be

given glory for what they are doing. It is part of our worship to give glory to the Triune God. We are not only worshipping God the Spirit in our midst today, nor are we “Jesus only” people, and neither are we like the ancient Jews who worshipped only Jehovah. We do worship Jehovah, the only true God, the great three-in-one, who is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Remember when we speak of the “last days” that we are speaking about the time from the first day to the last day of the “last days.” The first day of the “last days” was the day of Pentecost, and the last day of the “last days” is the day of the return of Christ. Peter said in Acts 2:14 -21, “this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, ‘In the last days God says, I will pour out my Spirit . . .’” Yes, there is still time left until the last day, but the first day of the “last days” started some 2000 years ago. We must look to the future still expecting the coming of the “last days,” while we are also currently living in them.

The Trinity is revealed in the ongoing Divine Revelation. For example, we see the Trinity (Triune God) present in the creation record in Genesis. **Elohim** (God) speaks the **Davar** (Word) and the **Ruach** (Spirit) energizes the Word and creates everything, including man. Here we have three persons who are all one essence. God is One God with three personalities who communicate with each other. In Genesis 1:26, it says “then God (Elohim in the plural) said ‘Let US make man in OUR own image.’” Certainly this could never mean that God was talking to angels, for we are not created in their image, but in God’s image alone. God could not have been one person only for then He would have said “Let Me make man in MY own image.” The Bible definitely says “Let Us” and “in OUR image.” We believe the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were all present, in one essence, which was God, and they made the decision together.

There are other instances in the Old Testament where all three aspects of God are present (see Isaiah 42:1 and 63:7-10). The Old Testament is full of the teaching that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. We have already learned the names of Elohim and Yahweh, which is the name of God, the Father of Israel. Deuteronomy 32:6 says, “is He not your Father, your creator, who made you and formed you?” Isaiah 63:16 says, “You are our Father.”

In the New Testament, Jesus and the Father are one. Jesus is not a creation by the Father, as some want us to believe. Some even call Him a god who was created by Father God. Jesus as the Son of God is coequal with the Father and claimed to be the Great “I Am,” a term given in the Old Testament only to Jehovah.

Isaiah, prophesying the coming of the Messiah, writes, “for unto us a child is born and unto us a son is given and the government will be upon His shoulders. And He shall be called Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, of the increase of His government there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this” (Isaiah 9:6-7). The Messiah came and He was the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the prince of Peace. He reigns eternally. No one else could ever have fulfilled this prophecy. Jesus alone was born and is God Incarnate (see John 1:1 – 14 and Luke 1; 31- 33). Remember how the angel told the virgin Mary that she would become pregnant by the Holy Spirit and give birth to the Messiah? He said, “do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son and you are to give Him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, His kingdom will never end.”

The names of Jesus also prove that He is God.

Isaiah 7:14 says, "therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call Him Immanuel" **Immanuel** means "God with us," and we know exactly when this miracle birth took place, as we just read in Luke 1: 31 – 33.

Alpha and Omega,

the first and the last, means "only God," as seen in Revelation 1-8 and 22:13.

- Jesus Himself claimed to be God (see 1 John 5:20, 2 Peter 1:1, Romans 9:5, John 1:1 and 20:28, Colossians 2:9, Hebrews 1:7-9, Revelation 5:13, John 8:42, John 14:9 and 17:5, and Matthew 28:19).

The Deity of Christ

Is sustained in those scriptures that refer to His pre- existence, such as John 1:15, 8:58, 6:51,3:13, and 17:5.

- Divine names and titles are applied to Christ. We speak of the LORD JESUS CHRIST. LORD is a term only used of Jehovah in the Old Testament.

The Holy Spirit is also God.

The Holy Spirit is not just some force or power or an influence flowing from God.

- He is a person who is of the same essence as the Father and the Son.
- The doctrine of the Trinity envisions the same Divine Being in the God of Creation, the Jesus in history, and the Spirit within believers.

The Holy Spirit is called God in the Book of Acts.

In Acts 5:3-4, the Holy Spirit is called God, for it says that to lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God.

"Then Peter said, ' Ananias, how is it that satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit, and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God."

Divine attributes that apply only to Yahweh are applied to the Holy Spirit.

- Omniscience is ascribed to the Spirit, as we read in 1 Corinthians 2:10-12, which says, "but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit. The Spirit searches all things even the deep things of God. Who among men knows the thought of man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God."
- Omnipresence is also ascribed to the Holy Spirit. Psalm 139: 7 – 10 says, "where can I go from your Spirit, where can I flee from your presence? "
- Omnipotence is also one of His attributes. Acts 15:18-19 says, "I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the

Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit."

- Eternality is also applied to the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 9:14, which says, "how much more then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God."
- The Holy Spirit is one essence with God. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, "the Lord who is the Spirit." The Apostles' Creed speaks of the third person of the Trinity God as the Holy Spirit.
- Divine works are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. Matthew 12:28 shows that it is by the Spirit that demons were cast out by the Son. Sinners were born again through the Spirit in John 3:3. Sinners entered the Kingdom of God via the Spirit in John 3:5. The Son was raised from the dead by the power of the Spirit in Romans 8:11, which says "and if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through the Spirit who lives in you." Only God can impart life, so the Spirit must be God.

He is Holy in the sense of being eternally Holy as God is eternally Holy, therefore He must be one with God. He is the "Holy Spirit" in Romans 1:4, the Spirit of God In Genesis 1:2, the Spirit of Christ In Romans 8:9, the Spirit of the Lord In Luke 4:18, and the Spirit of our God in 1 Corinthians 6:11. These are but a few instances where the Bible shows that the Holy Spirit is one with the Father and one with the Son.
- Divine worship is offered to the Holy Spirit, Proving that He is God, for God has made it clear that we cannot worship other gods, but He allows us to worship His Holy Spirit. The Spirit's name is placed on equal terms with God in scripture. We read in 2 Corinthians 13:14, "may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."
- The many names ascribed to the Holy Spirit also confirm that He is one with God. Romans 8:15 talks about the spirit of sonship, saying, "but you received the Spirit of sonship." In John 14:16, He is the comforter. He is the Spirit of life in Romans 8:2. He is the Spirit who awakens faith in 2 Corinthians 4:13. He is the Spirit of grace in Hebrews 10:29. He is the Spirit of truth in John 14:17, the Spirit of wisdom in Ephesians 1:17, and the Spirit of holiness in Romans 1:14. He is the Spirit of Jehovah, the God of Hosts, and the God of Israel, in Numbers 11:29, Judges 3:10, Psalm 139:7, and Isaiah 61:1.
- The Holy Spirit is inseparable, distinguishable and co-eternal. The Spirit works, the Son fulfills His ministry, and the Father approves. They are always in harmony. The Spirit enables the access to the Father according to Ephesians 2:18. The Father, who is love, moves toward fallen humanity in their sin in order to send His Son. The Son assumed human nature, suffered and died and was resurrected to save and redeem humanity. The Holy Spirit provides the means by which sinners can appropriate

their full salvation in Christ by grace through faith. Together as One God, they thought out the whole plan. Together, they decided their various offices and means of working, but they did it together as one essence. They are three persons but one God.

The Three-in-One God

There are not three Gods. There is only ONE God, only ONE will of God, and only ONE council of God. God is the essence. The Father is a distinct person in that essence, the Son is a distinct person of the same essence, and the Holy Spirit is a third distinct person, who is also of that same essence.

Collectively, they are one God. That is why we use the term “God” when speaking of the Triune God. They are together. They are one council and share one will. They always agree and decide together how this one will is going to be carried out and by which aspect of the Godhead. They decide together who takes the lead, but they are always present in each other and one is not below the other. They are always ONE. Paul correlates “Spirit”, “Lord” and “God” in Ephesians 4:4-6. A similar correlation appears in the benediction of 2 Corinthians 13:14, and in the baptismal formula, “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” in Matthew 28:19.

They share the following attributes equally: Unity, Spirituality, Eternity, Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Omniscience, Immutability, Wisdom, Truth, Justice, Holiness, and Goodness.

Accepting the Trinity helps us to know God the Father as our Creator, God the Son as our Saviour, and God the Holy Spirit as our Sanctifier.

Class review

Explain the Trinity to someone who must act as if they have never heard of the Triune God before.



4

God The Father

Lesson Purpose

- The knowledge the student has gained has helped him to further understand that God is not part of His own creation. We want him to understand creation against the backdrop of other conceptions of creation. The Father God is the source and creator of everything. This does not mean that the Son and the Spirit were not present. The student must be taught to understand the offices and roles of each one in the trinity.

Lesson Outcome

The student will:

- Appreciate the greatness of God the Father in His creating role.
- And see why God is not part of His creation.
- understand the Father's involvement with His creations.
- discover that God never wills anything bad for His creations.

Table of Contents

- The Fatherhood of God
- Father in His Providence
- Cosmology
- He is Father – King

The Fatherhood of God

Acts 17:28 says that we are God's offspring; therefore He is our Father.

By receiving Christ as our saviour, we have been born into God's family according to John 1:12. He is our Father and we are His children. Malachi asked, "have not all we one Father? Hath not God created us?"

The Fatherhood of God is important in our understanding the different roles of each person within the Trinity.

God the Father is the creator and the governor of everything. Nothing happens by chance.

God the Son is the living Word who makes decisions along with the Father and the Spirit. He agrees to make their will, which is always in agreement, happen. He speaks the Truth and it happens. Through Him being and living the Truth, it comes about.

What He says, He does.

God the Spirit is the ever-present power of God that energizes it all and makes it all happen, according to what the Father determined and what the Son said would happen. The Holy Spirit is the third person in

the Trinity, not in rank, but in office. He is not just a force coming out from the Father. Rather, He is God energizing the will and word of God.

It is also important to understand God's involvement as Father in His Providence.

We need to examine in detail the revelation given to us about God's Providence. In discussing His Providence, we are looking at His goodness and His power at work in His creation. He preserves, accompanies and directs the universe and all other creations, including man.

We need to differentiate how God deals with the universe and His dealing with men, who are created in His own image.

To be a person with a personality means that man has a soul. He has a spiritual side as well as a physical side. God has a way of communicating with the whole man, and man knows when God is speaking to him. Man also knows that he is a being which thinks, feels, and chooses.

Some theologies treat man as if he were a "something" that God created, but man is a someone. As a result, he has self-consciousness and thinks physically and spiritually, even in his fallen state as a sinner. Naturally, he only has spiritual life when he is connected to God, but he has the capacity to be spiritual. This causes him to search for God, which has resulted in all the religions in the world.

So God treats man differently than He treats the rest of His creations. Man is unique and special to God and the object of His personal love.

Notice how, in the Creation Hymn in Genesis 1 and 2, God spoke and it was. In Genesis 1:3, God says, "let there be light" and there was light. He said, "let there be sky," (verse 9), "let there be land," (verse 11), and "let there be vegetation," (verse 14), and it was so. In verse 14, God said, "let there be a sun and a moon" on the fourth day, and it was so. In verses 20 – 24, God said, "let the water and the earth teem with living creatures and birds," and it was so.

But on the sixth day of creation, as seen in verse 26, God said, "let US make man in Our image, in Our likeness... so God created man in His own image..."

Man was not the result of a decree of God. He was singled out to be created by God's own hands. He was moulded into the shape of a physical body, and then God breathed the spirit of life into man and man became a living soul, according to Genesis 2:2 – 7.

God did not treat man as someone to be pushed around to fit into His plan. Man was given the ability to obey or disobey. He had the freedom to choose, and God, his creator, respected that and worked with him accordingly. God had a plan for man, of course, and He clearly shared it with Adam. But we know Satan deceived man into thinking that he could be like God and know more than God did. Man then decided to trust his own judgment and made the wrong choice and fell into sin.

Immediately, God introduced His saving plan for man and promised to send the redeemer to save him, according to Genesis 3:15.

The CCP Pastoral Training Course Doctrine of God

We now have God's revealed plan, which is for man to become reconciled to God through the revealed Word of God, which gives us the truth. The living Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, reveals to us clearly His way of salvation. It is now all in Christ. There is no salvation outside of God's revelation in Christ.

God had preplanned it all before the foundation of the world, and it has been in progress ever since. He never preprogrammed man in any way. Instead, He reaches out to man in love, according to John 3:16-17. Yes, God does preserve all of His creations, but He does it according to His knowledge about His creations. It takes all power and all intelligence to control everything each second, which God does.

But man is so different than the rest of creation that God became a man in order to create a new race of men for a new world. He has no such plan for any of His other creations. Even a new heaven and a new earth cannot replace the special love and grace and mercy that He shows to man.

Nothing operates apart from God's control, and man made a big mistake thinking that he could control things. Men today have gone so far as to say that they are their own gods and will one day control everything. But it will never happen, for the living, feeling, thinking, personal Almighty God is control. God does more than just sustain all of His creations.

God's providential activity includes His work of guiding and steering mankind and history toward a *telos* (an ultimate purpose) which God Himself wills and controls (control here must not be confused with coerce or manipulate). All of history will come out just as God has planned, but He has not preprogrammed man's history. God works within history, but He is taking us somewhere with Him into the future. God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, according to Colossians 1:16.

God invites man to be part of His plan as it is being realized in and through Jesus Christ. His will in our personal lives is being guided by His Spirit. His will is for each of us to arrive where He has planned for us to be. Christ has already cleared and paved the way for us to follow Him, and anyone can. He has already conquered the law of sin and death, and He is already glorified. He is preparing the new world for us, and the next event that God has revealed, which can happen anytime now, is the return of Christ to earth to fetch His own people.

Cosmology

The study of cosmology may embrace the entire universe in its scope, or as it is commonly treated, it may be divided into the following:

Cosmology, which applies to the kingdom of nature apart from man, and Anthropology, which deals with the science of man in his original state. By using the term "world," we are referring to everything that is extrinsic to God.

Ancient people had little conception of the world and generally regarded it as existing by chance or by necessity. They had no single term to express the universe. They spoke of "the heaven and the earth" and later added "the heaven, the earth and the sea." This was also the dominant Greek concept. The Hebrews, the Chaldeans, and the Syrians used the term "aion," which referred especially to the duration or age of the

world rather than its creative aspect. The Greeks later used the word "cosmos," because of the beauty and orderliness of the world.

But they did not understand creation, and they spoke about how "from nothing, nothing comes." They could not grasp that the world was created out of nothing.

They thought about God and about self-existent matter, but in their minds, neither was dependent on the other. They believed that when God came into contact with this matter the world was formed. There are other theories of creation as well.

The **mechanical theory** taught that the world was formed in a purely external and formal manner. It expresses the thought of transcendence (the exaltation of God above the universe and His distinctness from it) and wholly disregards His divine immanence (presence of God in the world).

The **physical or materialistic theory** of creation presupposes the eternity of matter. It portrays God only as the fashioner of the world. To those who believe this theory, God is only the universal life of nature.

The **emanation or pantheistic theory** says that the world is to be regarded as an extension of the divine substance.

The theory of **eternal creation** says that this world is not the first that God created. In this theory, there never was a first world and there will not be a last world. This theory tends toward pantheism.

The **theory of natural evolution** teaches that a spontaneous creation of simple life forms have evolved into the creation we now witness. For example, according to this theory, man evolved from the ape family.

The theory of **continuous creation** teaches that creation is a continuous process. People who subscribe to this theory do not believe that there was a creation event in which creation took place.

God has revealed Himself as the Creator and the Father of all.

He watches over His creation with love and He governs with power and wisdom.

The Scriptures teach that there was a creation event. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Genesis 1:1.

This declaration shows that the world began out of nothing, solely through the divine will of the Almighty and living God. It was the Spirit that moved upon the face of the waters, so in the creation, we see all three persons acting as one God.

Psalm 33:6 says, "by the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth."

1 Corinthians 8:6 says, "that to us there is but One God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom all things, and we by Him."

Perhaps the most outstanding feature of the scriptural record of creation is the orderly arrangement in stages and periods known as “creative days.”

Whether these “days” are seen as 24 hour days or whether the word “yom” is interpreted as periods of time, when placed alongside the order of science, there is agreement.

The Inorganic Era

1 Day – Cosmological light

2 Day – The firmament – water and atmosphere

3 Day – Dry land and vegetation

The Organic Era

4 Day – The luminaries

5 Day - The lower animals, fishes, and birds

6 Day - Land animals, creation of man

We conclude therefore from scripture that :

- **God is the Father of all life.** Psalm 36:9 says, “for with you is the fountain of life, in your light we see light.” John 5:26, “For as the Father hath life in Himself so He has granted for the Son to have life in Himself”. Psalm 148:5 says, “let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded and they were created,” and “the heavens declare His handiwork,” according to Psalm 19:1.
- God comes and tends for vegetation, according to Psalm 104:14, 16, which says, “He makes grass grow for the cattle [and] the trees of the Lord are well watered.”
- God cares for all nature. Matthew 6:26 and 10:29 say, “look at the birds of the air...your heavenly Father feeds them.” God controls the weather and the seasons. Psalm 135 :6-7 says, “ whatever the Lord pleased, that did He in the heavens and the earth, in the seas, and all deep places. He causes the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth, He maketh lightnings for the rain, He bringeth the wind out of His treasures.”
- Genesis 8:22 says, “while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” He tends and cares for the seasons.

He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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- God sent His Son. John 20:21 says, “as the Father hath sent Me so send I you.”
- John 6:57 says, “as the living Father that sent Me beareth witness of Me.”
- Galatians 4:4 says “but when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman.”
- God the Father gave His only Son to die for us, according to John 3:16.
- The Father sent the angels to worship the Son, according to Luke 2:13.
- In John 8:18, the Father bore witness to His Son.
- According to John 12:27-28, the Father glorified the Son.
- Matthew 3:17 says the Father was well pleased with His Son.

- Romans 8:32 says He spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all.
- 1 John 4:9-10 says that God showed His love among us by sending His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him.
- Philippians 2:9-11 says, "therefore God hath exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of the Father."
- Ephesians 1:17 says that Paul prayed that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Glorious Father would give you the wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better."

He is the Father of the family of believers.

- Acts 17:24-28 says, "we are His offspring..."
- Rom. 8:29 says, "that He might be the firstborn among many brothers..."
- Ephesians 1:11 says that He thought us up and created us "to the praise of His glory".
- The Father pre-designed our salvation in Christ according to Ephesians 1-4. This plan in Christ was to save all those who believe and to conform them to the image of Christ.
- Wesleyans teach predestination but cannot reconcile double predestination with Scripture. You must understand the difference.
- Wesleyans believe that God pre-designed for all men to be saved and conformed to Jesus Christ and that He offers eternal life to everybody who will accept His invitation by faith He will also make them holy and blameless and conform them into the image of Jesus Christ. You can accept this and be saved from all sin, or you can reject this offer and by so doing take part in the second death, according to Ephesians 1: 3 – 14.
- According to 1 Thessalonians 5:24, God sanctifies believers entirely.
- Matthew 6:1 says He rewards believers. 2 Timothy 4:8 and Romans 8:20 assert that He will glorify all believers.
- Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6: 9 – 13 and Luke 11: 2 – 4, saying, "our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy Name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done" The rest of the prayer is the child asking for food, protection, and sustainability from his parent. God is our Father.
- It is the Father who so cares for His creation, man, that He moves with a Father's heart to bring man back into fellowship with Him.
- Jesus used the parables of the lost son, the lost sheep, and the lost coin to teach about the Fatherheart of God's Fatherhood.

Luke 1: 15-32 is the parable of the lost son.

In the story of the lost son, the Father waits for his son to return and when the son does come back, the father stretches out his arms to welcome him home. Our Father God is waiting to welcome us back home, and He rejoices when we return. Nowhere does the Father decide to either give up on the son or force him to return. It is through the love and forgiveness of the father that the son knows he can return. He was not coerced in any way, the son "came to himself" and returned by his own decision, knowing that the father was a graceful person, and he humbled himself, asked for forgiveness, and was reinstated into the family again, with all the rights and privileges of a son. There is a sense in which we are all God's children by creation, but we are not part of His family because of our waywardness. If we do not return, we will die in the pigsty and not at home. That is why Jesus came to call us back home, to where the Father is waiting to receive and to welcome us.

In the parable of the lost sheep, after counting his flock, the shepherd found that one was missing so he went out to find the sheep. He continues until he finds it and brings it back into the fold. This is a picture of our Great Shepherd looking for those who are still lost. The lost coin refers to those who are lost in the home, where they are comfortable and think all is all right, but they need to be part of God's plan and will for them. Many today are lost in the churches they attend every Sunday, and in Christians homes where they were born, but do not know God personally as their heavenly Father. He is searching for them, and they will be found if they call on Him.

The Fatherhood of God teaches us that God foreknew all believers. Romans 8:29 says, "for whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first born among many brethren." Ephesians 1:11 says, "in whom we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Ephesians 1:4 says, "according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love."

God has predestined every single person to be part of His family, and He provided for that to happen in and through His Son Jesus Christ. He knows who will respond to Him and who will reject Him, but His foreknowledge has not changed His will and His plans. He still makes the offer to everyone. He even supplies every man with the ability to choose either to accept His will and plan in Christ or to reject His offer. He will not force one to decide against his free will. This is what we call free grace. Is it not wonderful to know that He loves everyone equally and has the same plan in mind for everybody? Therefore Jesus died for every sinner, not only for those "pre-programmed" to be saved. God always displays a Fatherheart toward every one of His created persons. On the Day of Judgment, He will show those who did not choose Him that Jesus died to save them as well, but they refused to come to Him. When Jesus died and shed His blood, He made salvation available to every single person in the world. The Father does not draw people with irresistible grace, but He draw them with His love, and they either respond to His offer or reject it. This is what grace is. God makes an offer to man that he does not deserve and cannot merit. It comes from God's love and mercy alone, because He loves. That is what He does. How can we say He loves souls if He deliberately chooses to withhold His mercy and grace for no reason at all? All sinners are alike. On what basis would God ever make such a decision? it goes against everything that God has revealed about Himself, especially when we stand at the foot of the cross. The Truth is that " God so loved the world that He gave... that whosoever believeth."The choice is offered to every man to either believe it or do not.

He is Father – King

- Not only is God the Redeemer – King, but He is also the Father – King.
- From earliest times, the Hebrews conceived of God as the King who was promised.
- God had been their King, and then they asked for their own King, and in a wonderful way God brought in His Reign and control through the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Even though they had earthly kings, God was the real King who was in control of their history. It had all been in His mind before the foundation of the world. That is why Jesus acknowledged His Father- King in the Lord's Prayer. It is the way the Trinity agreed to work. Matthew 4:23 says, " Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven"
- Jesus recognized that the Kingdom of God was being realized in a unique way in His time and through His Work. The Father was bringing in His rule through Jesus, His Son, and by His Holy

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Doctrine of God

Spirit's power. It came to us, and the Kingdom of God is here, now.

- Wherever God is, He is the reigning King of Kings, who governs everything, and
- controls all of history. It will all come out just as He has willed.

Class discussion

What is the difference between
predestination and double predestination?



5

God Is A Personal God

Lesson Purpose

- The purpose of this lesson is to help that student to know that God is a personal God, who speaks and loves and seeks reconciliation with man.

Lesson Outcome

Upon completion of this lesson the student will

- Be able to know God personally through His revealed plan of salvation in Christ.
- Be able to speak to God personally.
- Be in constant fellowship with God.

Table of Contents

- God is pure Spirit
- Steps into the Kingdom of God.

Our God is a conversational God. He wants to talk and communicate with you.

Imagine if you never spoke to the one that you say you love. They would not believe you when you say that you love them. There has to be communication and understanding for real fellowship to take place. All people have the ability to communicate their thoughts and feelings in different ways. Sometimes, your wife cooks you a meal to let you know her love for you. You respond because you love her as well. Likewise, God has given to each one of us the ability to respond to Him. We can talk to God with our mouths but we can also talk to Him from our hearts and minds without actually saying a word. We do not take the initiative to speak to Him. It is God who comes looking for us, and He speaks to us, and, by grace, we are able to respond to Him. We know that we are born as sinners out of fellowship with God, but through the saving work of Jesus on the Cross, we can approach Him and have fellowship with Him. Through the redemptive work of Jesus, we can be reconciled to God and speak to Him. God is one who thinks and feels and chooses, and He has enabled us to be like Him. We too can think and feel and choose. This does not make us little gods. Rather, we are created in the Image of God.

- God speaks in Genesis 1:3.
- God sees in Genesis 11:5.
- God hears in Psalm 94:9.
- God can be angry, as in Deuteronomy 1:37, He can be jealous, as in Exodus 20:5, and He can be compassionate, as in Psalm 111:4.
- Only personal beings can feel such emotions.

Whatever being can say "I" is a person with self-consciousness, intentionality, the will to communicate, and self-determination. Even if I live to an old age and my personality and character change with time, I am still "me." The self-consciousness does not change.

God speaks to ME and I hear Him. Sometimes it is from His Word. Sometimes it is His voice in my mind, and I am hearing Him with spiritual ears. Other times, it is truth flashing across the screen of my mind. Many times, He is just an awareness, and yet I seem to know what He wills without a word being spoken. He speaks through Christian books, movies, television, and even just in conversation. In these ways, and many others, an understanding comes to me. I have lived over 50 years as a Christian, and God talks to me through my past. In it, I see His faithfulness, His guidance, and His sustenance. There is a definite plan that has emerged, and with it is a growing assurance that I am going somewhere for a purpose, with Him, every day. This is not by chance or luck. Faith is simply obeying God's directions and trusting His faithfulness. And that is the way He has planned it all. We have already seen that God has a name. He is not a "something" but a Someone. When we talk of God, we mean God the Father, God the Son (Jesus), and God the Holy Spirit. These are distinct persons, not forces.

Pantheism says that God is the world and that there is no difference between the creator and the created.

Polytheism attributes God with human limitations and faults.

Agnostics deny that we can know God personally, but we do know God through Christ. Atheists deny His existence, but just because these people believe the way they do does not in any way alter God. He has always been there and will always be there. He is everywhere and anywhere.

God is pure Spirit and "the Father of our spirits" according to Hebrews 12:9. God creates other self-determining and responsible beings, and He has communion with them. He does not only communicate audibly, but He also communicates Spirit-to-spirit as well. As Spirit, He enters our spirits and imparts His life to us. We then come alive and we know it through His Spirit's witness in our consciousness. We became aware of His presence and speak to Him by faith and He hears and acts. He has a way of speaking to us that brings illumination, and we see and hear Him speaking in us. It is a real experience. He speaks to us in our hearts, our minds, our spirits, and our feelings, and we have a sense of awe in His presence.

It is no wonder that so many religions are aware of the something more at work in the world. To those who know Him, He is taking us somewhere simply because God is at work in His world all the time. Everything is being held together by the Word of His power. Many have mistaken His workings, thinking that He is only a force at work. They do not recognize that He is a personal God, ever-present, ever-powerful, and ever-controlling all things by His Word.

He allows His children to see His work and His beauty by His Grace, and step-by-step, He illumines the Truth. Because of their sinful condition, however, they are blind to His overtures, and in many cases, they reject His advances outright. But God keeps calling in many ways.

God is also known by His character. Because He is a good God and will never change, He desires good for all His creations all the time. That is why we can place our faith in Him, and in His Word, and in all that He has spoken through His Son, Jesus Christ. The triune God cannot go back on His word, for it is an expression of

His very character. He is not just “sometimes good.” His essence is Good.

Also, God’s character is shown in His love. Love is who He is. He does not just love us when we are good. He loves us where we are and as we are. While we were yet sinners, Jesus Christ died for the ungodly, according to Romans 5:8. He consists of love that always loves His creations. He has no preferences or favourites. God loves us all the same.

God’s character is also evident in His faithfulness. All history is going to come out just as He has revealed in His Living Word and His written- revealed Word. Faith is trusting God’s faithfulness. When we need to know that He is still in control, all we have to do is commit ourselves to Him, knowing that He will work out His will in our lives not only day-by-day, but even while we are asleep at night. He is always taking us somewhere in His will and plan and we must trust His faithfulness.

God does not only work when we believe. When we respond to Him, He is always already ahead of us, so we can never come up with something that will catch Him unaware. As free moral agents, we can either trust Him and fulfill His will or we can choose our own way and suffer the consequences. He is going to step in and illumine the way before us. Because we respond in love, we will obey Him.

If we sin willfully against God’s light, He will operate in love toward us by allowing us to get into a mess. When we become desperate, we will come to our senses and get back on track with Him. His chastening is always corrective. It is not done for the sake of punishment. See Hosea 3:1 and the Hebrew word used in this verse is *chesed*, which means “God’s unfailing holy love.”

Because God is Holy Love, He will impart this same quality to those with whom He fellowships. Not one of us can make ourselves more and more holy. Holiness is a quality of God Himself that He imparts to those in fellowship with Him.

Christ is the “once – for –all” manifestation of the holy love of God. This is the essence of the triune God, and He loves everyone with this love. He does not love the mass of people called “the world.” He loves every individual person in this world. It is only when we as individuals respond to God with the same love He imparts to us that we know we have been loved. We have more than forgiveness. We have cleansing from all that separated us from God, and we know He loves us. We know this because we love others. That is His love in us reaching out, as He does, to share His Love with someone else.

There are three metaphors that reveal God’s holy love for us.

Romans 16 – 18, and John 2:1 use the **courtroom metaphor**. In this courtroom, there is not the slightest relaxation of the full requirements of the law. The sinner is convicted and the penalty is death. But we see the advocate of sinners, the Son of God, taking the full penalty of the sinner upon Himself. He takes the sinner’s place. In this saving event, the sinner is accepted and received as if he had never sinned, and He is adopted as a son in the family of this Holy Loving God. See also Romans 3:21-31 and 5:18, 1 Corinthians 6:11, 1 John 2:1, 2:3-5, 3:5 .

In **the family metaphor**, God is the caring parent. In this example, the Father takes on the newly adopted child to care for and nurture him and even to discipline him, according to Luke 15:11 – 32.

In the **temple metaphor**, God is pictured as the Holy One who is in the holy place receiving the propitiatory sacrifices being made to satisfy the requirements of divine righteousness. Here He is the Son, the High Priest, who cleanses, purifies, and invites sinners who come to the altar to boldly enter into the presence of the Holy One, as seen in Hebrews 2:17, 3:1, and 7:1. Jesus removes all obstacles between man and God, and fellowship is restored. It is here where sinners are made pure, clean, and holy by God's presence in them. This is a real experience. It is more than just believing it. Rather it is Jesus now living and acting in and through us.

The Blessedness of God refers to the fact that it is God's nature to bless everything and everyone that He touches. People are blessed by King Jesus. They know it through their lives, and through the fact that they are being blessed all the time. Living a blessed life is part of being in fellowship with God. I have always said that Psalm 1 is expanded and defines the remaining 149 Psalms when it says, "blessed is the man," and the King picked up the same theme when He gave the laws of the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew 5: 1- 11. You are blessed when you walk and talk with the Lord. You are being blessed all the time by God Himself. To be blessed by God is much greater than just being happy. It is God sharing His life, His love, His light, His power, His love, and His holy quality of life with you. It is you connecting to what you were originally created to be, and it is blessed.

God is a personal God who blesses those who follow the King. These are the Kingdom laws of blessing. God, in His providence, has planned them so, but He does not force the laws upon anybody. If you walk through the blessed life promised by King Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, you will discover personally that He loves you and wants you to be part of His plan. This is His Kingdom, and there is only one way in. Jesus said, in John 3:5, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit" In John 3:3, He says, "no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again."

The Kingdom life is the BLESSED life, according to Matthew 5 :1ff. But you can never know that until you are part of the Kingdom of God, and there is only one way into the Kingdom of God. That way is via a miracle of spiritual re – birth.

As we have seen, because man unplugged himself from God, his source of spiritual life and power, he has been plunged into the darkness of sin. He is separated from God and is no longer part of God's Kingdom. Instead, he is part of the kingdom of darkness, and he cannot save himself out of this condition. God, as Creator, has to recreate him and change him from a sinner to a saint. Someone had to pay for his sin, however, because the wages of sin is death, according to Romans 6:23.

That is why God gave His Son Jesus to die in our place and pay with His life for our sin. He died and was buried and suffered in our place. By so doing, Jesus the God/Man was able to satisfy sin's demand for death. He was also able to satisfy the righteousness of God the Father, the Holy Governor of all things.

Jesus rose from the dead, having cleared the way to God for us by removing our debt and guilt of sin, and also by being willing to share His powerful resurrected life with us. Being God, He is able to recreate us if we come to Him and invite Him and the Holy Spirit into our lives. We can do this because, by grace, He gives us the ability to respond to Him, and with His power in us, we can follow and obey Him.

The CCP Pastoral Training Course Doctrine of God

We then become disciples of Jesus, and we start to learn and grow in grace that God has willed for us. We start the journey He has mapped out for us, and we also receive the witness of His Spirit that we are doing right, believing right, and living right. Even more than that, He assures us of our final destination, the new world where we will live with Him forever. That is what believing in God as creator is all about. Why believe in Him if you do not allow Him to perform His will, which is re-creation, in your life? That is His plan for you right now. The following principles of the Kingdom are revealed to us by God our King In Matthew 5: 3 – 10.

- Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.
- Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth.
- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness for they will be filled.
- Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy.
- Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.
- Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God.
- Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Matthew was a Jew and would therefore not write the name God, so he does not say “the Kingdom of God,” but “the Kingdom of Heaven.” It is also important to remember that the word “blessed” does not mean “happy.” It has a depth of meaning that far exceeds happiness. It is blessedness. It is a quality of life that only Kingdom people know anything about.

You can be blessed by God when you are suffering extreme persecution from the devil and his demons, and the same goes for when you are being persecuted by people. The blessed life is the kind of life Christians and sinners alike know we should be living, but it can only be found within the Kingdom of God. It is that life of perfect harmony that we sense when we are alone with God in nature, or when we are watching the heavens at night. It is that sense of awe at His creation. It is the same sense we get when we see a beautiful painting or hear real music, and when we are aware of His presence and His majesty. It is that sense of a higher person with us, comforting us. It is the sense of knowing spiritually that you are going somewhere safe with Him. It is the light that shines through every dark situation and removes our fear. He is the sense of love at its best. It is being aware of another Person. In Him, you find yourself praying and worshipping, and you are one with His presence. Your mind is alive with His promises, and His truth is so real to you. You are in communion with God. You speak to Him as Father and as Your friend Jesus, and you sense His Spirit in your spirit. You feel that you can almost reach out and touch Him. In that blessedness, He is so real to you.

The following are steps into the Kingdom of God and Kingdom attitudes that must remain with us.

Jesus tells us we attain the Kingdom of Heaven when we are poor in spirit, when we are willing to acknowledge our own spiritual bankruptcy without Him in our lives.

We enter the Kingdom when we are repentant for our sin. As we confess, we sense His forgiveness.

When we become meek, open and broken before Him, we become teachable, allowing His Spirit to enter us and to guide us.

The CCP Pastoral Training Course
Doctrine of God

We find ourselves hungering and thirsting after what He says is right, and when we listen to Him as He goes through His sermon, He writes every one of God's commandments upon our hearts. We then know His right ways to live, and we do, for we are filled all the time with His Spirit.

As we tarry in His presence, God scans our hearts and minds and motives and shows us what has to be put right and what attitudes have to be changed. He wants us to be clean from all sin, and we want to be clean. His mercy to us makes us merciful toward others and we know what has to be done and we do it. That is what it means to be walking in His light. There is no condemnation here and He fills us with His love and mercy, and we want to do the same to others.

How good it is to sense that one's heart is pure before God, not by anything we have done, but by what He has revealed, and what He has removed, and the love that is now filling us and motivating us. In all of this, we see Him. We know we have met and seen God, for a miracle has happened to us. We have been reconciled to Him and we are being filled with His love, and we want to live right lives for Him. It is not long before we see God and understand that He is taking us somewhere with Him. There we feel safe. Some call it feeling "saved." But knowing that you have been born again is assurance to you. Jesus is now real to you and you see that Jesus is God in you.

You become a peacemaker, and people know you are changed. You leave a trail of His peace wherever you go and with everyone you meet. You are discovering that the peace and power of His Kingdom are ever-present wherever He is being acknowledged as King. You are a son of God, you are part of His family because you invited God to be King in your heart and in your life.

You have discovered that God is in control of your life as much as He is in control of His entire creation. He is faithful in taking care of everything all the time. He keeps it under control and He sustains everything without failing even once. Suddenly you realize this same God is in your life and you are obeying the principles of blessing. You feel so secure and blessed because you are part of the blessed life.

Now when you are persecuted, you will turn those moments into moments of worship. You will give Him "worth-ship," by trusting Him to work it all out according to His plan so you can get on with living the blessed life.

Listen to the living God who created everything, including you. He has a plan for you to be part of His saving history as revealed in His Son Jesus Christ

Romans 8:28-31 says, "and we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him and who have been called according to His purpose. For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those He predestined He also called, those He called He also justified, and those He justified He also glorified. What shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?"

God is waiting to meet you person-to-person.



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Christology

~ Dr Wally Marais



1

Jesus is revealed as the God-Man

Lesson Purpose

- The purpose of this lesson is to enable the student to understand the importance of knowing the Lord Jesus as his/her personal Saviour, thereby realizing the full meaning of His coming to earth as the God-Man.

Lesson Outcome

- Once having completed this lesson, the student will understand the priestly, prophetic, and kingly roles of Jesus. He will understand the role of Jesus the God-Man. If he is already a believer, he will understand how to bring others to Christ.

Table of Contents

- Jesus the God-Man
- The state of His humiliation
- Jesus as our great Prophet
- Jesus as our great High Priest
- Jesus as our eternal King

Jesus the God-Man

We want to start by making it absolutely clear that Jesus is the God-Man and not merely God with skin on, or simply man divinized. No, as the creed says, everything that God is, Jesus is, and everything that man is, Jesus is. He is fully God and fully man, and we must keep these two sides of His nature absolutely clear. Jesus is God and Man at the same time.

Let us take a moment to say that although the God-Man became Jesus our Saviour, the God-Man, Jesus was not preexistent as the God-Man Jesus. John 3:16-17 says, "for God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through Him."

The Son of God was always with the Father and is eternal in the essence of the Godhead. He has existed eternally with the Father, and is known in the Old Testament as the Messiah, and in the New Testament as the Christos. He has always been the Anointed One in the Trinity to perform His saving role as the God-Man when He came to earth.

We need to see what the Bible teaches about this coming Messiah who would become the suffering servant of Jehovah, take on Himself the form of a man, and carry out the saving plan of God. The name "Jesus" means "Saviour" and that is why He was born, lived and died, rose again, and returned to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Matthew 1:21 emphasizes this purpose in declaring that "He shall save His people from their sin".

Acts 4:12 states that salvation comes through Jesus alone, and Jesus of Nazareth, in John 14:6, says "I am the way, the truth and the life, and no man cometh to the Father but by me." If God had not become flesh, there could not have been salvation for man. His official title is Jesus Christ. It means the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Deliverer. Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6-7 predicted His coming and John announced His coming "behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." John 1:29. Jesus had to become a man to fulfill the offices assigned to the Messiah. The first Adam was endowed to be prophet, priest, and king, but we know how he failed. Now the second Adam, Jesus, comes to restore these ministries to us as Christians. He does this by becoming our Prophet, Priest, and King. Naturally, it is Christ in us and through us who fulfills these ministries, not us in ourselves. Furthermore, we see that Jesus was not just God, but He was also man, and when He acts He acts as the God-Man.

These offices of Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King are not only to be applied to Him in His role as God, but also in His role as the God-Man. Neither can these acts just be the works of Jesus the man. Too many errors have resulted from presuming that either only Jesus as God or only Jesus as man is at work. The reality is that both aspects of Jesus are always present and are working together.

Before we move into discussing these offices, it would do us well to see what the Bible says about the manhood of Jesus. John 1:14 says that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," and according to Hebrews 2:14, "as children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." Jesus possessed a human body and a human soul, and as we will see, in His humiliation, Jesus was fully human.

He was also sinless, because He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and not of a sinful human father.

THE STATE OF HIS HUMILIATION

Philippians 2:5-8 states, "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." In these verses, we see the following:

1. A self-renunciation. Jesus never held onto His right to be God; rather, He chose to become a man.
2. A self-emptying, or kenosis. Jesus made Himself of no reputation; rather He emptied Himself of the Glory of God and limited Himself to God's will on earth. He never ceased to be God but chose to function as the God-Man.
3. Jesus took upon Himself the form of a servant. He was made in the likeness of man, and He carried His own cross to Calvary. Here we see a perfection of the humiliation of Jesus as He became the representative of sinners, even to the point of death on a cross.

The kenosis, or humiliation, of Jesus was not simply to become a man, but in becoming the God-Man.

It was always God's plan that the God-Man function as our Prophet, Priest, and King.

Jesus as our great Prophet is able to say "I say unto you." The Old Testament prophets could only say "thus says the Lord..." In John 10:1,7 Jesus said, "**I am** telling you the truth". This is why all truth must be measured by what Jesus taught. The Old Testament prophets pointed to the coming Christ, Jesus, in whom all prophecies were fulfilled.

What is a prophet?

- He is one who calls to men on behalf of God.
- He is one who is called by God.
- He is one who calls men to God.
- He is one who calls to God on behalf of men.
- Jesus faithfully fulfilled all of these roles as God's Great Prophet.

Our understanding of a prophet can be seen in the relationship between Moses and Aaron. Moses complained that he was not a speaker, so God appointed Aaron to be the spokesman. He took on the role of the prophet in delivering God's message to the Pharaoh.

Christ fulfilled the role of a prophet in revealing the saving message of God to us by His Word and His Spirit. Jesus never just spoke the message, but He also communicated it to us through His acting out of the will of God as recorded in the Gospels. In John 1: 1-3, Jesus the Logos, the Living Word of God, always announced or prophesied what He would do and then He personally did it.

Jesus the eternal Son has always functioned as the spokesman for the Godhead.

He was God's spokesman at creation, for we see that when God said, "let there be..." God the Son was the WORD being spoken, and all things came into being. What He says happens! When God spoke His word through the Old Testament prophets, that Word that they spoke was God's WORD. It was Jesus speaking and making things happen, and it always happened as it was prophesied. 1 Peter 1:10 -11 says "concerning this salvation, the prophets who spoke by the grace that was come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when He predicted the suffering of Christ and the glories that would follow." The prophets were not simply speaking what was in their minds. No, it was the Spirit of Christ present in them, and there at that moment, speaking through them.

The Incarnation (the fleshly embodiment of the WORD) was the greatest prophetic work of the Son of God. As was promised, Jesus came and made it possible to see what God was really like, and what He could do. Miracles happened, and a virgin brought forth the Son of God, which was one of the greatest miracles of all time.

When people looked on Jesus they were seeing God. Jesus had not become God; rather He was God who became man. In John 5: 17-20, Jesus made it plain that the works that He was doing were the Father's works. The work of the God-Man Jesus was what God Himself was doing through the Living Word. That which had been spoken about and promised was now being done by the Great I AM. Jesus was not a hired servant. He

was God stooping to wash our feet!!

Jesus spoke with God's authority because He was the WORD of God, and when He spoke, demons were cast out, people were healed, and sinners were born again. One of these days, He will speak again with power and authority and we will all be changed and taken to the new world He has prepared for us. (John 14.)

Wherever God's Word is preached today, His Presence and Power are present, according to Matthew 28: 18-20. It is HIM, the Living Word, who is speaking and acting, and when people respond and obey, miracles happen, just as they always did when Jesus was present in body. The book of Acts is a testimony to the continuing ministry of the living Jesus. The Living Word is acting out and continuing His ministry through His Church. The acts of the apostles are really the ACTS OF JESUS through His Holy Spirit. So then the Scriptures are Christ's WORDS. They are not just words on their own, but they are the Living Jesus Christ speaking to us today. He steps out of His Word and speaks and works every time we, as prophets, deliver His message.

So then Jesus Christ is Almighty God.

- He did things that only God could do, because He is GOD, the ONLY TRUE and LIVING GOD.
- Some Christians think of Jesus as being less than the Father and not as powerful as God's Spirit. No!
- He is God the Son, of the same essence as the Father and the Holy Spirit.
- In John 10: 30-33, Jesus, the Living Word, says He is God. He showed He was equal with God. Why did the Jews want to kill Him when He said this? It is because they understood Him to be saying that He is God.
- In John 8:58, Jesus shows He was more important than Abraham because He is the I AM, the Ever-Present One. Again, He was speaking to them as God.
- In John 5:23-24, Jesus says that He should be honoured just as the Father is honoured.
- In John 8:19, He said to know Him is to know the Father.
- In John 14:1, He tells us we must believe in Him.
- In John 14:9, He declares that to see Him was to see the Father.
- In Matthew 8:2, 14:33, and 28:17, they worshipped Him. This would have been blasphemy, yet because He is God, He received their worship.
- Paul taught that Jesus is God in Philippians 2:9-11 and Titus 2:13.
- John the Baptist declared the same in Luke 3:22.
- In Matthew 16:15-17, Peter used the title, "Son of the Living God," knowing its meaning, and that Jesus was one with God.
- Thomas confessed openly, "My Lord and my GOD," in John 20:26-29.
- Jesus, as God, forgave sins in Mark 2:5 and Luke 7:48.
- Jesus claimed to be "LIFE," meaning eternal life, in John 14:6.
- Only God can Judge His creations, and Jesus claimed to be the Great Judge spoken about in Joel 3:12 and John 5:27.
- God is the Great Shepherd of His sheep (Psalm 23), and Jesus claimed that same title in John 10:11 to reveal that He is the Great Shepherd, and always has been.
- Jesus is our Eternal Jehovah, our God. He is Emmanuel – which means GOD WITH US.
- As the Great Prophet, Jesus did not merely claim to be GOD. He proved Himself to be the Living

God. His coming, His death, His resurrection, and His ascension all prove that He is the One He claimed to be, and on His visible return, every eye shall see Him and confess this truth. A prophet is only a true prophet if his prophecies come true, and everything Jesus prophesied about His redemption proved true, from the time of Genesis 3:15, when He said, "and I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers, He will crush your head and you will strike His heel," right up to the time when He died and rose again. He spoke this prophesy through His Spirit predicting the Cross event, and He has proved to be a true prophet, for it has all come true.

In Matthew chapters 5-7 and chapter 24, Jesus spoke as the Royal Prophet.

As King, He gave us the principles of His Kingdom, and the Kingdom that He had prophesied had arrived in Him.

Jesus prophesied a Kingdom of God's blessings to His followers. He prophesied that they would be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, that they would love their enemies and give to the needy, and that they would live clean and holy lives. He then went on to show that the Power of His Kingdom was already here. He healed and forgave sins, He stilled the storm, and He even raised the dead.

In chapter 24, He shows that He is in control of all history, and that nothing was just happening by chance. He knew what He was going to do and He did it.

But not everyone acknowledged that He was The Prophet, for in His own hometown, He could not do many miracles because of the lack of their faith in His Words. (Matt. 13: 57-58) We do not have time in this lecture to document all the predictions Jesus has made about His second coming, but the one I love is in Revelation 1:7 where it says, "look He is coming with the clouds and every eye shall see Him." Every eye shall see Him doing what? Revelation 19:11-16 says "Worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice He judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire and on His head are many crowns. He has a name written on Him that no one knows but Himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood and His name is the Word of God on His robe and on His thigh He has this name written: KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS."

Jesus is also our great High Priest. It would not have been enough for Jesus to offer sacrifices as a holy man, but the sacrifice itself also had to be Holy. It had to be able to forgive and cleanse from all sin, and that is why our Great High Priest is the God-Man Jesus.

Just as we no longer need a prophet's message, for we have the very words of the greatest of all prophets, so we no longer need any other priest. Only Jesus can forgive, deliver, and cleanse from all sin. He gave His own precious blood to atone for our sins and for all sin. All the other priests and sacrifices only pointed to the coming of the Lamb of God and to Jesus the great High Priest. Hebrews 9 12,14 says, "He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves but He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood....How much more then will the blood of Christ who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our conscience from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God. For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance – now that He has died as a ransom to set them free from sins committed

under the first covenant." Verse 26 says "but now He hath appeared once for all, at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself".

John 17 is known as the High Priestly Prayer of Jesus. It breathes the air of the Priest about to take the sacrificial blood into the holiest of all. It is the picture of a High Priest consecrating Himself to perform the work of Atonement. It is Holy ground. Hebrews 10:20-22 tells us about this event: "By a new and living way opened for us through the curtain that is His body and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

In John 17:1-5, Jesus prays to the Father for Himself. He acknowledges the authority the Father has given Him to impart eternal life. He knew that His Glory and the Glory of the Father and of The Holy Spirit's Glory was going to break through. The sin problem would be solved once and for all. Jesus would be Resurrected and Glorified in His ascension and, taking control at the right hand of the Father, there must have been great excitement for the moment. After all, God had been waiting from the time of Gen 3:15 for it to become a reality. No wonder the Word speaks about the Joy that was set before Jesus in Hebrews 12:2. This section in John is a very intimate prayer with His Father, and what they agreed upon is now happening. All authority has been handed over to Jesus as the Great High Priest.

In verses 6-19, Jesus prays for His disciples.

When a High Priest was consecrated, His hands were filled with gifts as offerings of thanks which He was to carry and give to God on behalf of the people. The people consecrated the High Priest by filling His hands, so now God the Father is consecrating Jesus as High Priest by filling His hands with His disciples as offerings. Jesus makes it clear that they belong to both the Father and Himself, that both He and the Father were involved in this High Priestly work. Jesus prays that His disciples would be protected by the Father, for they both knew what these disciples were to face. Only Judas had chosen to go His own way; the others, despite all their failings, were staying with Him through to the end.

Now Jesus the Son asks God the Father "to sanctify them by the truth," saying, "Your Word is Truth...for them, I sanctify myself that that they too may be sanctified." The Greek verb *hagiazō*, an aorist imperative, means "consecrate, dedicate, sanctify, treat with holy reverence, purify." Its cognate adjective means "holy." The plural substantive form *hoi hagioi* is translated as "the saints". This indicates that Jesus was asking the Father to sanctify them in a moment of crisis. It is a definite act to be performed in them by the Father. In Acts 15: 8-9, Peter said that all the believer's hearts were purified in a moment by faith.

It was an experience that could only be wrought by the power of God. Man cannot sanctify himself. Sanctification was made possible by the Truth. Jesus is this Truth, so what He promised them happened. John also prophesied this about the coming of Jesus in Luke 3:16 when he says, "but one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." This was the Truth that had been prophesied. The disciples would be empowered, but also refined and cleansed from all sin, and they would be made Holy by the work of God. We do not grow out of sin and into sanctification, and that is the focus of this High Priestly Prayer.

By sanctifying Himself, Jesus was declaring Himself as the one who has always been holy. By dying in place of sinners, He made it possible for them to share in His Holiness, endowing them with His quality of eternal life. This needed to be done before they went out into the world, for although He had already commissioned them, He later told them to wait until they were endued with Power from on High. This prayer was answered on the day of Pentecost.

Jesus also prayed for all believers in John 17: 20-24. He prayed that all believers would be one, just as the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are One. God wants us to share everything that Jesus is to us - eternal life, eternal love, eternal light and power, and also eternal purity. Naturally we will share this not in the same measure as He is, for we will never be little gods, but we will share this in quality, in our hearts, for we will be clean and pure and walking in His light and continually cleansed by His blood. 1 Peter 1:15 says, "just as He who has called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written; 'Be ye holy for I am Holy. None of us can escape this command of our Holy God. It is no use trying to argue this away because He has sanctified Himself so that we may be sanctified. Jesus does not say grow into Holiness; He says be Holy, because it is by grace through faith that we can be Holy, and then when we are Holy we can grow in Holiness. Holy people grow in their consecration and in a Holy lifestyle. Those under the power of the sinful nature cannot be Holy, because the Bible says in Romans 8:7-8 that "the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God."

Jesus Christ is our Eternal King. John 18:37, Revelation 17:14, and Jesus' preaching in the Gospels announced the coming of the Kingdom of God to us through the coming of our King. In Matthew 5-7, Jesus gave us the laws of His Kingdom, and in John 3:3, He told us how to become Kingdom citizens through being born from above. Notice that the Kingdom is announced by Jesus as the God-Man, not just Jesus the man. And when Jesus was resurrected, He was resurrected as the eternal God-Man. Jesus comes to live and reign in our hearts and lives now. We become co-heirs with Him and share His holy quality of eternal life now. We announce His Kingdom and point to the final consummation of His Kingdom at His second return. Our role as disciples of Jesus is to prophetically announce His coming, to sacrifice ourselves in His service, and in the Name and Power of our King, to resist the enemy and to enter into war with the devil and win.

Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God who became man to pay the price for your sin?

This is your grace moment, your opportunity to believe in Jesus and to be born from above. According to 2 Corinthians 5:17 you will be recreated by Jesus from a sinner into a disciple. You will have the power of the Holy Spirit to live for Him and to follow Him. You will not only be forgiven, but the power of sin will be broken in your life and the Holy Spirit will fill your life, thereby expelling the darkness of the sinful nature. He will become Lord (Kurios) of your life, and you will become His servant and disciple. Read Philippians 2:9-11. We are now His Kuriake – His Church, and His Body, and He will continue to build His Church and thereby extend His rule and His Kingdom through us.

The Messiah

Christos was associated with Jesus as a proper name. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. This means that He is the Anointed one, the Mighty Deliverer.

The Son of Man

Jesus used this title for Himself, showing His humanity as well as the possibility of His having to suffer. Many want to say that Jesus had a sinful body because, like Augustine and some theologians who have followed him, they confuse the sinful nature with the human nature. The fact that Jesus was sinless and yet human shows that the problem does not lie with being human.

Jesus is Lord

This was the first confession by the early Christians. It was a term used only for Jehovah in the Old Testament, but it was now being used in association with Jesus Christ, showing His divinity. Because the early Christians felt free to worship Jesus, He became their LORD, and they thought of Him as being One with Jehovah. Later, they believed in and defended His Divinity.

The Son of God

This was a title given to Israel, but now it was given to Jesus to show that He had come as the head of a new Israel. It also meant that the Father and Son were one essence – God. Jesus had come to be the first sample of a new quality of God’s people. They were to be Holy people, so He sanctified every age level in order that men might live holy lives. Even more than that, He now imparts that same quality of new Holy life to His new People, Christians, who are the New Community of God.

I AM

Jesus used this title for Himself many times, showing that He is the eternal God.

This title was only applied to Jehovah and it would have been blasphemous to apply it to anyone else. By using the term “I AM,” Jesus was claiming that through the Logos (Gr) or Davar (Heb), He was always present “face to face” with God. Study John 1:1.

THE ALPHA and OMEGA

Read Isaiah 41:4 and Revelation 1:8

Alpha and Omega are the first and the last letters of the Greek Alphabet respectively, and they symbolize the beginning and the end. When Jesus applied these terms to Himself, He meant that He is the beginning without a beginning and the endless ending. All things are from Him and For Him. The Bible tells us that Jesus is the One who is, and who was, and who is to come, for He is the Eternal One with no beginning and no ending.

Discussion

Jesus is now my Saviour, my Lord, my Sanctifier, and my God.



2

The Nature of Jesus - His Humanity

Lesson Purpose

- The student will be taught about the humanity of Christ and follow His steps through His Humiliation.

Lesson Outcome

- The student will experience the love of God for him through study of the different phases which marked the life of Jesus Christ. He will respond by faith and find that his service and love for Jesus are growing.

Table of Contents

- The Humiliation of Jesus
- Jesus the Perfect Man
- The Christ – the Mighty deliverer
- The Servant of the eternal One
- The stages of His Humiliation

His Humiliation

The first phase that marked the Son of God was His Humiliation. This involved leaving heaven and the glory He shared with the Father and being born as a human being. It also includes His suffering and His death on the Cross as a substitute for our sin, even going so far as to descend into hell on our behalf.

Jesus the Perfect Man

Luke 1:26-35

We have already looked at the miraculous birth of Jesus, so we will move on from there.

We ask the question,

Why the Virgin Birth?

Read Isaiah 7:14.

The virgin birth was absolutely essential to our Christian belief and doctrine. Jesus had to be free from all sin to become our substitute. If He had been born of a human father He would have been born spiritually dead, and would have inherited the sinful nature from the evil one, and that was a role that He would only take upon Himself once He had sanctified every age level of human living by living out a victorious and holy life. We know He was tempted and could have failed, but the devil underestimated Him. The Father of Jesus was God the Spirit so Jesus was born with eternal and sinless life. He was therefore in a position to offer Himself as our substitute and suffer in our place, thereby reconciling us to God. Jesus had everything to offer and gave His sinless, holy life as the offering upon the altar of God as atonement for our sin. No one else had the ability to do that, because apart from Adam, no one else has been born sinless.

As 1 Timothy 3:16 says, in Jesus, God was manifest in the flesh.

According to 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, Jesus came to introduce a new creation and all those who believe in Him become new creations. Men do not just receive passports to heaven when they come to Christ; rather He changes them completely. He imparts His Life, His love, His power, and His purity and makes them supernaturally natural people. They are a new race of people. They are no longer sinners but are people connected to God, sharing in His nature. Their very bodies are going to be changed to be like His glorious body and they will go to live with Jesus forever in the new world that He is preparing for them. They are now Jesus' people, the people of God. He came to show us what the "New Man" is like and to make it possible for us to become like Him.

Remember, Jesus did not simply die; He was separated from the Father and the Holy Spirit. He died physically and spiritually and was prepared to spend eternity with the devil and his angels (demons) in hell, to save you.

When man sinned, he was disconnected from God and plunged himself into all the consequences of sin. Not only did his spirit die, but his body and his soul also died. Even more than that, however, he brought his life under the control of the spirit of Satan who entered him and controlled him at that moment. He died to all holiness and fellowship with God, but it never destroyed the grace of God which continued to operate in his life. It was this grace that put limitations on how bad he would become, and prevented man from becoming unredeemable. Man also could not prevent God's love from operating in his life which made it possible for him to still feel conviction and turn to Christ as his Saviour.

More than that he was still a human being while a sinner, naturally under the control of the sin nature, the Satan nature in him, but even though the devil tried he could not dehumanize man and make him an animal. God by His prevenient grace (the prevenient grace is that grace that goes before a man is saved also known as the preventing grace) preserved the image of Himself in man, and restores it when man is born again in Christ. God planned all of this for man before he fell, and this is what Christ did through His work on the cross and His resurrection from the dead.

Can you imagine what would have happened to man if Christ was not able to undo all that the devil has done to him? But **He is the Christ, the mighty deliverer**. It was the mighty power of our creating God that raised Jesus from the dead. The Son of God had to become human and suffer as a sinner for our sins. He came to die in our place. Coming in human flesh showed us that human nature is not sinful, for man was created holy but allowed the sinful nature to enter his spirit by yielding to the devil's plan. By coming as a baby and living through youth to manhood, Jesus sanctified every age level, and proved that man can live holy and obedient at every stage in life. Jesus had no sinful nature because He was not born of Adam's sin. He was not born in sin or shaped in iniquity as all men are, thereby proving to us that sin is foreign to man. In His suffering, Jesus had to show forth God's glory for mankind, and this He did. He also had to meet the demands of the Law, which requires death for sin, and he had to satisfy the requirements of God as Governor. You must understand that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Jesus was not acting on His own. The Triune God was in full agreement with the actions of Christ, and He was motivated by love, or, in other words, He was a living example of grace in action! Another purpose of Jesus' life on earth was to crush the power of the devil as promised in Genesis 3:15, to forgive man's guilt, to justify him before God, and then to make him holy and righteous before God.

This He accomplished by paying the price His own death, therefore satisfying God's requirements, and rising from the dead to take complete control of all saving history. It is important here to remember that a man, hanging and dying on a cross, was dying under the curse of God. Jesus was willing to die and be cursed so that we could be free from all sin. As a result, we are now blessed when we believe because the curse has

been removed and we are free! The Nicene Creed says that Jesus descended into hell. There is a reason they recorded this; because they believed it! I am one who believes that Jesus went to suffer to the full extent for us. As we have seen, Jesus is the Son of God and had to go through all of this humiliation that led to death, and He willingly did so.

The Servant of the Eternal One

Isaiah 49 :1-57:21

I will not write out these passages but they must be read in class and discussed if the student is to understand the prophetic description of the Messiah as the Suffering Servant of Jehovah, which was later fulfilled by Jesus.

In this passage, the Messiah is introduced by Isaiah as One who is the speaking servant of God. Isaiah speaks here as the missionary of the eternal God and he is addressing all nations. Israel was once the servant of God with the responsibility of reaching all people, both near and far, with the Word of God, but they had failed miserably in this task. Isaiah is prophesying so much more than he knows, for to him the portrait of Jesus is so clear. Isaiah speaks of Jesus as called from the womb. Verse 1 is prophesying the miraculous birth of the coming Son of God. Isaiah says in verse 2 that the Messiah's mouth is like a sharp sword with speech that both wounds and heals.

The Eternal's Promised Deliverance

Isaiah 51:1-23 - These passages depict for us the breaking forth of salvation and the removal of God's wrath.

Isaiah 52:7-10 - Here is what God thinks of all evangelists. They are beautiful people.

Moffatt translates Isaiah 52:11-12 as follows: "Nor need you hurry forth, flying like fugitives for the Eternal goes in front of you, and your rear guard is Israel's God."

These are some of the greatest passages of the Suffering Servant of Jehovah. This is the gospel in the Old Testament. This is who Jesus, the Son of God, was as revealed by His Spirit through Isaiah.

Here Jesus is pictured as Priest, vicariously suffering for the sins of others. He is both the One making the offering and the Sacrifice. He is announced as plainly as if the reporter is standing beneath the Cross of Jesus.

This portion should be acted out in class to get its full impact.

Let someone read the portions where God speaks "Behold my servant-----"

(52:13). Next have someone act as the people speaking and responding to God. "The awakened conscience cries out" who has believed our report----- (53:1-3) surely He has borne our sorrows, (sicknesses) -----"

(53:4-6). Next the prophet speaks out and enumerates the circumstances of His death (53 :7-10).

God again speaks (53:11-12)

Now read John 13 where Jesus washes His disciples' feet. He humbles Himself and takes on the role of a slave. Jesus puts the slave's apron around Himself and stoops to wash the filthy feet of His disciples. Just imagine this if you can: Here is the creator God kneeling before His creation, while they are busy seeking recognition and position, and Judas is getting ready to betray Him, and He kneels down to wash their feet. Don't be too quick to judge them for that is exactly what Jesus does for every sinner. He serves them with His cleansing power when they deserve His condemnation. Jesus always operates from love and mercy. He wanted His disciples to know that He was the God-Man, yet they still only thought of Him as the Messiah who would set up the national Jewish Kingdom and rule from Jerusalem.

How can Christians carry around in their hearts a rebellious nature that is not subject to God's will when Jesus is stooping to wash us clean from all sin through His precious blood? Jesus prayed for our sanctification and here He demonstrates how the sin problem will be removed from our lives. Then He went to Calvary and did it. For whom? Jesus not only did this in obedience to the Father but because the Triune God loves you. Can you respond to that?

The bottom line in all this is simply the question: Do we love Jesus enough to allow Him to wash us clean and then place the slave towel around us, so that we may be His servants and serve our sinful, needy and lost world? No one with a principle of sin in them can do that. First, the big "I am Number 1" principle must first be crucified once and for all.

Let us now follow Him through His Humiliation to become the God-Man.

1. From the Divine to the Human.
2. From the glory of created manhood to the ignominy of the cross - we have already spoken of His renunciation of self followed by a self emptying of the Glory of God.
3. Taking on the form of a servant - God came to carry a cross to save sinners!

Jesus demonstrated a choosing of God's will, when He said, "not My will but Thine be done." Who wants to choose a cross at age thirty? Jesus renounced all rights to himself and humbled Himself, to become a man who was going to save the world.

He chose self-subordination and became obedient even unto death.

Finally, His Humiliation was perfected when He hung as the representative of sinners on a cursed cross.

Even as the God-Man, Jesus chose to suffer as a man. He was not born in a house but in a stinking manger. He sanctified every form of employment at His birth, because shepherds, Kings, and inn keepers all came to Him.

He was circumcised on the eighth day in the Temple at Jerusalem, showing that He fulfilled all the requirements of the Law, even as a child.

Jesus' baptism showed that He willing to identify with sinners and by coming out of the water, He showed that He was going to come out of the grave and give newness of Life.

Jesus, having been filled with the Spirit, showed the way for us to live a victorious life, for He performed His miracles through the Power of the Holy Spirit.

His temptation showed that Jesus was sanctifying everything we might face in life. The life He lived was holy, and this is His plan for His new creations.

Jesus was hungry, thirsty, and weary on many occasions, but He never stooped to abuse any of His human desires. Instead, He controlled them, pointing out to us the need for self-control.

In His times of agony, Jesus always trusted the Father to see Him through and to lead and guide and empower Him. We are encouraged to do the same, to not question, but to accept in faith what is revealed as the will of God.

Jesus' human soul revealed that being troubled in our soul sometimes is part of being human and is not sinful. He Himself was troubled on many occasions, as seen in John 12 :27 and Matthew 26:38. Too many people see everything as sin, but Jesus understood our humanity better than we do. Then Jesus was betrayed by Judas. This too was part of His humiliation, for He had to know what a broken heart felt like. Jesus had to feel the agony of Peter's denial, and the pain of the desertion of His disciples in His hour of

need.

In addition to this, Jesus had to face false accusations at His trials, lying and scheming, scoffing and whipping, and condemnation, along with all the agony that accompanied crucifixion.

In His dying hours, Jesus was not thinking of Himself. It was during this time that the thief is given eternal life, and Jesus' mother is given into the care of John. It was then that He experienced the final feeling of total aloneness, for it had to be so if He was to die in our place. Imagine what went through His mind in those last moments. Against all odds, Jesus' life ends with the words, "Father into Thy hands I commend My spirit." That was a statement of faith, leaving us a pattern to follow when we are also at the end of our tether. Jesus died and His body was buried in a tomb. The soldiers were instructed to seal up the tomb, for the High Priest had heard something about Jesus being raised from the dead.

This was His Kenosis and He paid it to the full.

Class Participation.

Ask some of the students to share how they were filled with the Holy Spirit and how they knew that they were filled?



3

The Nature of Jesus - His Deity

Lesson Purpose

- To enable the student to understand the stages of exaltation and to convey a clearer understanding of the Atonement.

Lesson Outcome

- The student will realize the love of God in action and respond by faith.
- the life of Jesus Christ. He will respond by faith and find that his service and love for Jesus are growing.

Table of Contents

- The Risen Christ
- The exaltation of Jesus Christ
- The stages of His Exaltation
- The Atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ

The Risen Christ

The resurrection of Jesus is a fact. He was seen by over 500 witnesses at one time. Look at how changed His disciples were once they had seen Him in His resurrected state. They were ecstatic. It was a Sunday when He rose again and this is why Christians have made it a day of worship and celebration.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead proves that He is the source of life and that He can give eternal life to all believers (1 Corinthians 15:14-20).

As already noted, God the Father was fully satisfied with the atoning work of Jesus on the Cross and with His resurrection and ascension. It is truly finished!

Jesus ascended to heaven with His glorified human body and on His return, we will be changed and glorified like He is now. He now reigns as King over His Kingdom, sitting at God's right hand, the place of authority and power. Jesus He has now commissioned us to tell the world about His good news.

Jesus will come again to judge the living and the dead. At His return, there will be a separation between the holy and the unholy, and He will usher in the new world, where He will reign for eternity.

The Exaltation of Jesus Christ.

Remember we are talking here about Jesus the God-Man. We are not just talking about God in a person called Jesus, but we are talking about a unique God-Man named Jesus Christ.

This is our moment of grace. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. Jesus was not merely raised as the Son of God. He was raised as the truly glorified God-Man, the first sample of the new race of God's people who would share a new world with Him. We must realize that Jesus has recreated us, and that we are new creations. Old things have passed away; behold all things are new. You are now a child of God and no longer a child of the devil. You must answer this question once and for all: who are YOU? Don't resort to hiding behind a theology that tells you that you are still a sinner and will be a sinner until the day of Christ's return when He will change you into a Christian. That would simply mean that you have not accepted by grace what He has made available for you to experience now.

If God has said, "be Holy," who is to blame if you still say, "I am not holy. I am still a sinner, but I will be made holy by Him at His return?" Remember, if God says "BE," it is because you can BE. Do not listen to those who say you cannot BE, for God enables that which He commands. You will do and live what you believe, so if you are believing incorrectly, you are going to live a struggling and sinful life.

Listen to this passage of scripture written by Peter in 1 Peter 2:9-11.

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us."

When He ascended to heaven, Jesus went to take control of all history, as we see in the Book of Revelation. He will return as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

He will then bring His eternal Kingdom to earth, according to Revelation 21:1-4.

Let us look then at the stages of His Exaltation.

Here we follow Jesus the God-Man through the stages of His ascent to the position of King of Kings. The God-Man sits on the Throne of God.

1. The Descensus or descent into Hades.
2. The Resurrection
3. The Ascension.
4. The Session

1. The Descent into Hades.

The creeds of the early church say Jesus descended into Hell. You will have to draw your own conclusions here as to what you believe.

Did Jesus just go to Hades the place of the dead and intermediate state, or did He go to the place of torments?

Acts 2:27 quotes David in the Psalms, saying "Thou will not leave my soul in hell, neither will thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" Verse 31 goes on to say that David, "seeing this before spoke of the resurrection

of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption.”

1 Peter 3:19-20 says, “He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah”

Most scholars say Jesus did not suffer any torment. I honestly do not know. All I can say is that Jesus would not have shirked whatever was included in the price of suffering. He finished everything He needed to do and at that moment, His exaltation began.

2. His Resurrection.

This was the crowning event of the earthly ministry of Jesus, for soon after this He ascended to Heaven, according to Acts 1:9 –11.

We know that Jesus was seen by over 500 people at one time. He also appeared to Mary Magdalene, to His disciples, to Thomas, and to the two on their way to Emmaus. We are therefore not going to spend much time proving His resurrection for it is a known fact. The ascension is also a testimony that Jesus will come in like manner. Jesus presented Himself many times to verify His resurrection. He was alive and spoke and acted not as some spirit, but as a living and real person. His new Humanity proves that He was not the same as before, that He was changed. He was not limited by gravity or time or space. He could appear in a locked room, He could transport Himself from place to place as He desired, and He could ascend at will. Jesus was a clothed in a new Humanity and made of a new kind of substance. Although His flesh felt like ordinary flesh, it was indestructible, and it had been glorified. Jesus was also proving that matter is not evil, for He was sinless before He took on our sin, and after His resurrection, He was still Holy, even though He was made of new matter.

Jesus was now an eternal Priest, and an eternal King. We might also add that His prophecies are going to come true, and that he is returning as He promised in John 14: 1- 4. The promise He made about the coming of the Holy Spirit was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, just as He prophesied. Now He, as the eternal King, prophesies His physical return to earth, and promises to usher in a new people with a new Heaven and a new Earth. All of this is possible because He did what he promised; He rose from the dead.

The promise Jesus made regarding the new eternal people of God was made possible by His Glorification. “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature...and He is head of the Body, the church; He is the beginning, the firstborn of the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all the fullness dwell” (Colossians 1:15, 18-19).

Jesus the God-Man is going to remain the God-Man throughout eternity, and we shall be like Him. We will not be part of God, but rather fully glorified human beings. Through Jesus we will be connected to His Humanity, and through His Divinity, we will always be in fellowship and contact with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

3. His Ascension.

Jesus is already in Heaven, and He is associated with His eternal Highly Priestly Office ever interceding for us, and we are connected to Him by His Holy Spirit which is living in us. Remember, also, from when we studied the Trinity, that all three persons of God are always present.

4. The Session.

This speaks of the place occupied by the resurrected and glorified God-Man who is now sitting on the Throne of God and controlling all history. As the prophetic work of the God-Man on earth was merged with His priestly office through His death and resurrection, so now His Priestly Office as the Glorified God-Man is merged into His Kingship through the ascension and session. Jesus becoming the Glorified God-Man marked the beginning of His supreme authority which shall end only when He hath put all enemies under His feet. From this session, our Lord will return to earth a second time, without sin and unto salvation according to Hebrews 9:28. He will return in the same way He went. That is the world's next Great Event, and it could be today.

The Atoning Work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The word ATONEMENT is used frequently in the Old Testament. It means "to reconcile, to cover, to hide," and when used as a noun, it means "covering."

In theology, it is used to express the idea of "satisfaction or expiation."

In English, it covers a wide range of thought:

1. It denotes bringing estranged people to Atonement, or to being of the same mind.
2. It also means reconciliation.
3. It is sometimes used in the sense of an apology.
4. It is most commonly used in the sense of a substitute for a penalty.
5. In the Old Testament, it applies to anything that covers or veils man's sin from God.
6. In the New Testament, it is used to signify the propitiatory suffering of Christ as our substitute, making it possible for us to be reconciled to God.
7. It is bringing two parties "At-One-Ment."

What do we need to understand about the Atoning Work of Christ?

We need to see that Jesus provided a "better" Atonement than that the old agreement did.

The Day of Atonement.

Remember that on the Day of Atonement, two lambs were brought. One was named the scapegoat, and the other was the sacrificial Lamb.

The sins of all the people were confessed and were transferred to the scapegoat when the High Priest's hands were laid on the animal's head. The scapegoat was then driven to its death. This signified that the people's sins were removed until the next Day of Atonement, when the whole process would have to be repeated.

The sacrificial Lamb was then slaughtered, and its blood was taken by the High Priest into the Holiest of All and sprinkled on the Mercy Seat as an atonement for all the sins of the people. The people believed that all their guilt for past sins was removed through the scapegoat and that the blood of the slain animal covered their sin before God on the Mercy Seat. The lambs were given in the place of the sinners. The lambs died to pay for the sins of the people. It was acceptable to God, but temporary, for Jesus came and fulfilled the atoning role of the two lambs, as was prophesied. He was both the scapegoat which took away our sins, and the sacrificial lamb who substituted His life for ours. This was the New Covenant Jesus made with God and it was fully acceptable.

Jesus did what the blood of animals could never do.

He did not merely cover our sin as the blood of animals did, but He cleansed us from all sin with His Blood. The work of Jesus is an ever-present work which cleansed us from sin once and for all according to 1 John 1:7. Jesus did not merely cover our sin as the lambs did in the Old Testament; rather, He became the scapegoat who separated our sins from us once and for all. Then He went to the core of our sin problem and cleansed us from the sinful nature itself. This justifies and sanctifies us before God. Romans 6:6 says, "for we know that our old self was crucified with Him, SO THAT the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin..." According to Galatians 6:22, "now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life." Romans 8:2 says that "through Christ Jesus the Law of the Spirit of Life, set me free from the Law of Sin and Death."

Acquired Depravity, the defilement attached through actual sin, is removed by the Atoning Work of Christ. The defilement attached to us by **Inherited Depravity** is removed by the Blood of Christ and by ongoing grace and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

When He died in our place, Jesus removed all the consequences of sin and made the way plain and clear for us to approach God. This further cleanses us from our depraved, sinful nature, thereby restoring His Image in us. This was impossible under the old agreement. Unlike the Old Testament believers who had to act AS IF they had been forgiven and cleansed, we are actually forgiven and cleansed by the Atoning Blood of Jesus Christ.

They were depraved because they were deprived of the presence of God's Spirit, but we are no longer deprived, so we are no longer depraved. We now have The Spirit of Jesus living in us and imparting to us moment by moment the same quality of the life that He has.

Wesleyans believe that we are redeemed from the guilt of sin, delivered from the reigning power of sin, and cleansed from the inbeing of sin, because we are now IN CHRIST. Sin is man's big problem, and it is the reason Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil in us. We cannot educate sin, and we cannot suppress it. It just keeps popping up. We cannot ignore it, for it has a death principle attached to it that starts to spread its disease throughout our beings, and our condition just gets worse and worse. This is why a person who smokes finds himself under the control of the cigarette; he becomes the slave. The one who drinks alcohol believes that he will always be able to control his alcohol use, but slowly it is taking control of his thirst and eventually, he becomes addicted. So it is with those who take drugs; they become slaves. Even people

taking drugs under prescription have been known to become addicted. But the sin principle is far worse than all these addictions because it controls not only our human desires, but our very spirits. It warps us and makes us weak in character. We can try and try to get rid of the sin nature, but our efforts are to no avail. So we say, "I am a Christian, but I still have a sin nature that is too big to control on my own." So we must ask the Holy Spirit to give us power to counteract or suppress this evil nature. Because of His mercy, there is a measure of success in our lives, but the struggle goes on, and we know in our spirits that we are not free from that sin nature.

It is this sin nature that makes us believe that the sin nature itself is part of our nature and therefore a part of us from which we can only be freed through death. But we can be free from the sin nature through the Law of the Spirit in Christ Jesus. The triune God will set us free from the law of sin and the law of death. But as unsanctified Christians, we know that the law of sin is still holding us back and we are becoming enslaved to the law of sin in us. In Romans 7:25, Paul found that the way out from underneath this law of sin is "through Jesus Christ."

Even as Christians, if we do not allow God to expel this sin principle from our hearts, it is going to get stronger and stronger and we will become its slaves. Romans 6:13 says, "do not offer the parts of your body as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and offer the parts of your body as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not have dominion over you, because you are not under law but under grace." Romans 6:2 says, "but now that you have been set free from sin and become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness and the result is eternal life."

Class Discussion.

Discuss the difference between being saved and being entirely sanctified.



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



Man, Sin and Salvation

~ Dr Bill Cooper



SOTERIOLOGY – THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION

Lesson Purpose

- Explain why salvation was needed
- Show how and why God showed mercy
- Identify the recipients of salvation
- Show how salvation was and was not offered
- Reveal the steps in the plan of salvation
- Identify what are the changes in the saved person

Lesson Outcomes

- They will know why salvation was needed
- They will be clear about how and why God showed mercy.
- They will know for whom this salvation was offered
- They will understand how salvation was and was not offered
- They will know the steps involved in being saved
- They will know what change takes place in salvation

By “Soteriology” we mean the doctrine of salvation - redemption

The Source Of Need

The Existence Of Good

Before the creation recorded in Genesis chapter one, God created angelic beings. These beings were “good” because God created them. In the Genesis creation story, God created mankind in His own image and declared it was ‘very good.’ There are two testimonies to human goodness at creation: First, man was created in the image and likeness of God. This can only be good. Second, God viewed what He had created the sixth day and pronounced it “very good.”

The Existence Of Evil

Though Lucifer was created to be “good” the prophets appear to point out that he envied the power of God and sought to be like God. A large number of the angelic host who were created “good,” joined with Lucifer in this rebellion. This pinpoints the origin of evil. This however, does not account for the entrance of evil into the human experience.

Mankind was created holy, in the image and likeness of God. As Lucifer got the other angels to join with him in his attempt to take the place of God, he also sought, by temptation, to enlist the crowning individual of God's great creation to join him in this rebellion. This is what the author reported in Genesis chapter three.

And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. Genesis 3:6-8

Lucifer's Sin

Lucifer's error began with selfishness. He wanted the position and power that only God could have. This selfishness expressed itself in rebellion and disobedience.

After the creation recorded in Genesis, the sins of lying, deception, blasphemy and others became part of his lifestyle.

ADAM'S SIN

The scriptures make it clear that Adam was not deceived. Paul wrote,

And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. I Timothy 2:14

The word translated "deceived" is "apatae" and means to cheat, beguile or give a false impression. That did not happen to Adam. This makes it clear that Adam knew exactly what was happening and still bought into the rebellion and disobedience. That being the case, he was also guilty of dishonesty and deceit. It is interesting that sin seldom if ever occurs in isolation. One sin leads to another. A perfect example of this situation is found in Genesis 3:1.

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? Genesis 3:1

Observe that the author has highlighted the "crafty" nature of the serpent. The word translated "subtle" or "crafty" is "arum" and means to be shrewd; it is to be tricky and cunning; to focus on evil treachery.

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: Genesis 3:4

The serpent directly challenged the statement of God in this verse. This is more than a simple disagreement. It is an attempt to enlist the support of God's servant in order to subvert the divine plan .

Again in 3:5, you find these words:

For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. Genesis 3:5

This statement is false and misleading. Lucifer was seeking to discredit God with a false accusation. In this verse the serpent also offered Eve a false hope to be powerful like God. This is the kind of evil the serpent constantly circulates.

The story in chapter two of the book of Job gives you another view of the way Satan works.

And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face. Job 2:4, 5

It is not surprising that he is called the “accuser.”

And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. Revelation 12:10

In Job 2:7 you get another view.

So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. Job 2:7

It troubled him not at all to bring havoc and destruction into a person’s life if in so doing that person will curse God.

If you look at the temptation of Jesus, you see the same kinds of things.

And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. Luke 4:3

Lucifer’s slanderous ways are evident in this verse. He said, “IF you are the Son of God...” Lucifer knew that Jesus was God’s Son and able to turn stones into bread. Lucifer sought two things: First, He sought control over Jesus. Second, he confronted Jesus and challenged His deity.

In Luke 4:6, 7, he reported:

And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. Luke 4:6, 7

Lucifer made a promise that he could not keep. He did not control the kingdoms of the world and could not give them to Jesus as promised. The truth is that Jesus already controlled what Satan promised. This is at least rash deception.

We have belabored this issue because this is what Satan has done with every person in every generation since Adam,

The Results

The consequences of disobedience highlight the reason we need redemption. It results in alienation from God. The next thing mentioned after Adam and Eve disobeyed God was that they hid from God. No one has to explain guilt because we have all experienced it.

Jesus has passed through the heavens to intercede before the Father on our behalf. When alienation takes place, that benefit is lost.

God created mankind for a specific purpose. In alienation, that purpose is defeated and our purpose in life is lost.

In John chapter 15, Jesus described the intimate fellowship and support we share with Him. In rebellion, that relationship is destroyed. We stand on our own against forces greater than we are.

Sin always leads to greater sin. When alienated from God we have no power to resist evil. It becomes a downward spiral. The book of Judges is an excellent example. It begins with disobedience and ends in total anarchy.

The Need

One of our problems is that we fail to see how terrible sin really is. The author of the Hebrews epistle gives us an idea of just how terrible it is.

And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood there is no remission. Hebrews 9:22

Sin is so terrible that it requires the forfeiture of a life in order to bring about forgiveness.

If I am the one who sins, it seems reasonable that the sacrifice should be of my blood not someone else or some animal who did nothing wrong. The problem is that if my blood were shed, it would not bring about my forgiveness. It would simply be my paying the consequences for my sinful actions. It would not bring forgiveness.

By the same token, if someone loved me so much that they were willing to give their life for my sins, it would make no difference. They too are sinners and in giving up their lives, they would only be paying the consequences of their own choices and actions.

The CCP Pastoral Training Course Salvation

There is no sacrifice that atones for my sin unless its source is without sin. God, in His omniscience, knew this before He ever created a human being and gave them freedom of moral choice and action.

When man sinned, God took the life of certain animals in order to provide a covering for Adam and Eve in the midst of their guilt. Fallen human nature is as selfish as Lucifer was and our first parents as well. One of man's problems is that forgiveness requires mercy and grace and the selfish individual has no comprehension of either mercy or grace.

(we need to take a moment and define what we mean by both mercy and grace)

Mercy

Mercy is an expression of compassion by God upon needy sinners who could not possibly deserve it. It is an attitude toward those in deep distress. If we received what the Law required, we would be destroyed. In His MERCY God shows compassion and offers us a way of escape.

Grace

This is divine favor which God lovingly bestows. Where mercy emphasizes the fact that this marvelous bestowal is totally undeserved, grace stresses the fact that this marvelous bestowal is absolutely free. It stresses the wonderful nature of the gift, though it comes in contrast to the great debt we have before God. This is what the author of Hebrews meant when he wrote:

Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16

The Levitical System

At the time Israel came to Mount Sinai, during the Exodus, there was no record of a plan in place by which they could deal with their sins. This does not mean that no sacrifices were made or that they did not know how to find forgiveness for their sins. Certainly, Job made sacrifices for the sins of his children and he lived before the Exodus. Abraham knew how to make sacrifice to God. He demonstrated this by his preparation to sacrifice Isaac.

At Sinai, God recorded a plan whereby His people could make atonement for their sins. We can't be sure, but it may have been similar to what devout Jews had been doing across the centuries.

In Hebrews chapters five through ten, the author drew a serious contrast between the Levitical system and the sacrifice of Christ. In chapter ten he wrote:

For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. Hebrews 10:1

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Salvation

He began by making it clear that the Levitical system was a short term arrangement until God put the perfect system in place. It was a “shadow of good things to come.” In order to make this statement very emphatic, the author used a very strong contrast. The two contrasted elements are:

- A. “A shadow of good things to come”
- NOT
- B. “the very form of things.

He was talking about the Law in order to highlight both its benefits and its weakness.

Again, the author adds even more emphasis by his use of repetition., First he said that the sacrifices were made “:continually” He then said that they were made “year after year.” This is a tool which is intended to add very strong emphasis to the statement.

Speaking of the Law, the author said, “IT CAN NEVER by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year after year, MAKE PERFECT THOSE WHO DRAW NEAR.” The word translated “perfect” is “teleiosai” (**teleiw~sai**) which is a term from the market place. It means to fill full. It does not mean to make flawless, but rather to bring someone to completion.

In the next verse, the author continued:

Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? Hebrews 10:2

His contention is a logical one. IF a person must continue to make the same sacrifice for sin every year, THEN it is clear that the sacrifice is not accomplishing what is absolutely essential. If that were not true, then there would be no good reason to repeat the sacrifice.

As indicated earlier, chapters five through ten show the severe contrast between Levitical sacrifices and the sacrifice of Christ. In the next verse, the author pointed to one of the weaknesses of the Levitical sacrifice.

But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. Hebrews 10:3

The blotting out of sin is intended to remove it from memory both from man and from God. As the Psalmist wrote,

As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. Psalm 103:12

The constant repetition of the sin offering, however, reminds one year by year of just how sinful he is.

In the next verse, the author of Hebrews points out the basic weakness of the Levitical sacrifice for sin:

For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Hebrews 10:4

The word translated “take away” is “aphairein” which means to take away; to remove. In His mercy and grace, God was willing to cancel the past sins when the sin offering was made. The author carefully points out that the blood of bulls and goats is incapable of dealing with the sinful nature that every human being possesses. Without that change, the sinner was doomed to repeat the sacrifice for sin just as he had done every previous year. The human need has two parts: The past sins must be forgiven. There is an equally important need to change the person so that they stop sinning. We need both mercy and grace

THE PLACE OF THE LEVITICAL SYSTEM – The Levitical sacrificial system was never intended to be the ultimate divine plan to deal with sin. It accomplished everything God intended it to achieve. Paul described it this way.

**Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.
Galatians 3:24**

A “tutor” is literally a “boy leader;” a man would take a teacher and charge him with the educational and moral training of his son. This teacher would teach the boy everything he needed to know to prepare him to work in his father’s business and imitate his father’s lifestyle. Paul was saying that the Levitical sacrificial system prepared us to understand and accept the sacrifice of Christ in the same way that the “tutor” prepared a boy to be in charge of his father’s affairs. The ultimate divine plan of redemption from sin is in Jesus Christ.

JESUS WAS TOTALLY HUMAN – The Biblical presentation of Jesus is very pointed and precise. Jesus was completely human. Jesus called Himself a man.

But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do. John 8:40

Jesus saw Himself as a man and conducted himself as other men did. It is not coincidental that the Gospel records present Jesus as present in the temple in worship just as the other men worshipped. The apostle Paul spoke of Jesus as a man.

But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. Romans 5:15

As the apostle made his theological statement about redemption, a vital part of that presentation was that Jesus was as completely as human as Adam was.

The Gospel; of Matthew presents the genealogy of Jesus just as any other king would be presented. This is the genealogy of Joseph. On the other hand, Luke presents a carefully reported genealogy of Jesus’ mother, Mary in chapter three of his Gospel record.

Jesus is presented as sharing the experiences that are common with every other human being.

JESUS EXPERIENCED BIRTH – Mary experienced pregnancy with Jesus just as she did with each of her other children. It is not coincidental that there is Biblical reference to Jesus’ immediate family, but there is no

reference to Jesus' experience with either his mother's family or that of Joseph. This is not surprising since it was commonly thought that Jesus was Joseph's son born out of wedlock. Though it was not true, this would expose Jesus to the very common human experience of rejection.

JESUS EXPERIENCED GROWTH AND AGING. – At His birth, Jesus was small enough to fit into a feed trough where animals would normally eat. He was less than three feet tall. At the time of His death, he was more than twice that size.

Jesus matured just as other boys did.

And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all *these* things in her heart. And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. Luke 2:51, 52

Jesus dealt with Mary and Joseph the way any young boy would deal with his parents. In these verses, Luke stressed the fact that Jesus increased in three ways:

- In wisdom – He gained wisdom he did not express before.
- In stature – He continued to grow physically. The word Luke used means to increase in physical size and maturity.
- In favor with God and men – He learned how to deal with people..

Jesus also aged physically. He reached the age of adulthood where He was trained in the Scriptures and the teachers of the Law would engage in debate with him about the meaning of Scripture.

Jesus Grew Tired

There were times when he was physically tired as any other human being would be. At those times He withdrew from people in order to rest. He also withdrew to spend time in prayer.

Jesus Was Tempted

Matthew chapter four; Mark chapter one and Luke 4:1-13 tell the story of Jesus' temptation at the hands of Satan. Jesus' temptation was just as difficult and taxing as ours could ever be. The author of Hebrews summarizes it best when he wrote:

For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as *we are*, yet without sin. Hebrews 4:15

There are two features in this passage that we must not miss:

- There is no temptation that we ever experience that He did not experience just as we do.
- In all the temptations of His life, Jesus on no occasion gave in to that temptation and became guilty of sin. Because of this fact, He was perfectly prepared to be the sinless sacrifice for the sins of all mankind.

He Died A Human Death

Jesus told his disciples that He was going to die. The real proof here is two fold:

- The soldiers did not break His legs – the soldiers were going to break the legs of the three being crucified in order to hasten their dying. When they came to Jesus they discovered He was already dead and did not break His legs. John 19:33
- A person friendly to Jesus, Joseph of Aramethia, prepared the dead body for burial

There was absolutely no doubt that Jesus died a real, human death.

Jesus Expressed Human Emotions

Jesus Expressed Love

In John 11:35, 36, you will find these words:

Jesus wept. So the Jews were saying, "See how He loved him!" John 11:35, 36

The greatest expression of His love, however, was expressed when He gave His life for our sins.

Jesus Expressed Compassion

In Matthew 9:36, the apostle wrote as follows:

Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd Matthew 9:36.

Jesus expressed deep and active compassion for the crowd whom the apostle compared to sheep without a shepherd.

Jesus Expressed Anger

In Mark chapter eleven you find these words:

Then they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to drive out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves; and He would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple. And He *began* to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS'? But you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN." Mark 11:15-17

The CCP Pastoral Training Course Salvation

This is one of the only places where it is recorded that Jesus used physical violence. The word translated “cast out” literally means to drive out. It is a word used to describe the driving of animals.

Jesus said, “How long shall I put up with you?” The word translated “put up with” means to endure; it is to tolerate. Clearly, Jesus was upset and frustrated with His disciples.

None of these assertions taken alone prove that Jesus was totally human. Take all of them together and His total humanity would be impossible to deny.

JESUS IS TOTALLY DIVINE - The Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus was totally human and totally divine. There are a host of Biblical references which support this truth.

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth John 1:14.

On two separate occasions, the Scriptures point out that God the Father spoke of Jesus as “My Son.” Reporting about the baptism of Jesus, Mark wrote,

and a voice came out of the heavens: “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.” Mark 1:11

Again, at the transfiguration of Jesus, God the Father spoke of Jesus as “My Son:”

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!” Matthew 17:5

Both Paul and the writer to the Hebrews affirm the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth in the flesh. Notice how they refer to this fact:

For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, Romans 8:3

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, Hebrews 2:14

At the birth of Jesus, He was given a name:

“BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,” which translated means, “GOD WITH US.” Matthew 1:23

Among Jews, names have great significance. His name was called “Emmanuel” which in the Hebrew means “God with us.”

In John chapter 17, Jesus prayed to the Father.

“Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. John 17:5

Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. John 17:24

These two verses point out that Jesus is eternal; He predated creation. He shared the glory of the Father before there was creation and time.

The author of the Hebrews epistle made an interesting comment about the ministry of Jesus. He wrote:

in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, Hebrews 1:2, 3

In these verses, the author has identified several specific ministries performed by Jesus.

- He is one means whereby God the Father speaks to us.
- He is appointed “heir of all things.” This identifies His position of being in control of all that God created. You see Jesus being in the position where everything is subject to Him in Hebrews 2:8
- God, through Jesus Christ, created all things. He is the one who carried out every detail of creation.
- Jesus is the radiance of God’s glory. The life and ministry of Jesus enables us to understand something of the greatness of our God.
- Jesus is the exact representation of the Father’s nature. We cannot see the Father. When people see Jesus and what He says and does, they know what the Father is like.
- Jesus upholds and sustains everything that He created. It is one thing to create. It is quite another ministry to sustain all that is created.’
- Jesus sat down at the right hand of the Father. This is a royal picture which indicates that Jesus supports the rule of the Father over all things created.

There are a number of ways in which the Scriptures highlight the deity of Jesus.

He Claimed To Be God’s Son

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3:16-18

In these verses, Jesus made several claims which are unique with deity.

1. He claimed to be God’s only begotten Son.
2. He claimed to be the Savior.
3. He claimed to be the giver of eternal life.

Jesus Was Omniscient

This He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep." John 11:11

So Jesus then said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, John 11:14

In these two verses, Jesus presented information which no one had told Him. It turned out to be just the way Jesus announced. On several occasions, Jesus told people what they were thinking or reported what was on their mind without being told.

Jesus Was Omnipotent

"For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes. John 5:21

The Old Testament lists a number of things the Messiah must be able to do. For instance, He must be able to raise the dead and give sight to one born blind. The Scriptures tell of the raising of Lazarus, the raising of the Centurion's servant; the daughter of Jairus. There is also a report of Jesus giving sight to a man born blind.

In Mark 4:39, the author told of Jesus stilling the storm on the Sea of Galilee. This is omnipotence and no other human being has ever been able to duplicate this powerful activity.

Jesus Is Absolutely Holy

"Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? John 8:46

The book of Hebrews draws serious contrasts between the Levitical priesthood who had to make regular sacrifices for their own sins as well as for the sins of the people in contrast with Jesus who did not have to make a sacrifice for His own sins and made a once for all sacrifice for the sins of all mankind.

Jesus Is The Eternal High Priest

Throughout Hebrews chapters five through ten, the author belabors two contrasts over and over.:

- He contrasts the High priesthood of Jesus with the Levitical priesthood.
- He contrasts the results of the Levitical priests ministry with the results of Jesus' ministry.

The Levitical priests served at the altar from age 30-50. They would then have to be replaced. Jesus also began His priestly ministry at age 30, but He never ceases to intercede with the Father on behalf of the people of God. This is the primary ministry of the High Priest.

Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. Hebrews 7:25

Jesus Sent The Holy Spirit

“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, John 15:26*

The Holy Spirit is deity. We as human beings can not send the Holy Spirit anywhere. We can request that the Holy Spirit minister in a given person or situation, but we cannot send Him. The Scriptures make it clear that Deity can send Deity. The Father SENT the Son. That is the inter-relationship between members of the Trinity. This verse states clearly that Jesus sent the Spirit. No other human being is able to do this. (See also John 14:26. When Jesus said, “in My name...” it is a way of saying “in My authority.” We tend to conclude our prayers “in the name [authority] of Jesus.”)

As we learned in the study of hamartiology, sin is universal. It is not something we become. We are sinners when we are born. David made this very clear in his confession:

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. Psalm 51

Sin has become so common that many people just accept it as normal. God views it differently. In the Garden of Eden, God said,

The LORD God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.” Genesis 2:16, 17

Ezekiel understood this truth very well,

“The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father’s iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son’s iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself. Ezekiel 18:20

Unlike the current view of sin, the Scriptures deal with sin as a serious crime punishable by death. The teaching in Hebrews mirrors the same view.

And according to the Law, *one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness. Hebrews 9:22*

Just as the first sin brought about the death of animals to cover their nakedness, so now there is no forgiveness for sin without the shedding of blood.

I could not secure forgiveness for my own sins by dying. My death would simply be the consequence of my disobedience. Again, no other human being could offer himself on behalf of my sin since they too are sinners and would suffer as a consequence of their sin.

The only hope of forgiveness of our universal sinfulness is to find a sinless sacrifice. Earlier we dealt with the fact that Jesus as our High Priest did not need to make a sacrifice for His sins before He could then make a sacrifice for our sins.

The Levitical Sacrificial System

Mankind needed an established means of securing forgiveness for sins. Before the foundation of the world, God determined that Jesus, His Son, would be the ultimate sacrifice for sin. The Levitical system was not all that mankind needed, but it accomplished exactly what God intended it to do at the time. It was an interim arrangement intended to prepare mankind for the ultimate sacrifice in Jesus Christ. Human beings were basically selfish, as Lucifer was, and had no grasp of mercy and grace. The Levitical system opened the door so that mankind could begin to understand the undeserved mercy and grace of God in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

The Process Of Redemption

The redemption of sinful mankind is essential because sin is progressive. Sin always leads to greater sin and alienation from God. The word "redeem" literally means to buy back. If a man got into financial problems he could not solve, he would become the slave of his debtor. It would be the responsibility of his older brother to "redeem him;" to buy him back by paying the debt.

Mankind has become the slave of sin. We need to be redeemed; to be bought back. Jesus is the one who pays the price, His own blood, to redeem us from our slavery to sin. Nothing happens at all in this process as long as people are unconvinced that they are sinners. They must learn what Paul learned and reported in Romans:

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23

It is a frightening thing to discover that you are a sinner doomed to the punishment of death, but do not know that there is a way out. John brings relief to our panic when he quoted Jesus in these words:

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

God invites us to accept this marvelous gift of His love in order to restore us to His fellowship.

The sinner never thinks of himself as a sinner; a rebel against God. God speaks to them by His Spirit through the human conscience. The word "conscience" literally means "with total knowledge." It is that faculty by which a person is enabled to evaluate his own actions in the light of God's person and word.

Repentance

When a person comes to their senses, there is a definite sorrow for their sin. This is sorrow, but it is not really repentance. The word “repent” literally means to turn around. It is not just saying, “I am sorry.” It is the awareness, “the things I once loved, I hate.” It is to move from being an active sinner to turn around and pursue a life of righteousness. That is repentance. It is what we sometimes call regeneration or conversion.

Faith And Belief

Faith is absolutely essential. It is expecting God to be God and do the impossible. Hebrews chapter 11 contains a long list of people who literally expected God to do the impossible. Belief, however, comes in two different forms. One, there is a long list that we “believe;” things we know are true: God is our creator; God never changes, etc. The second form is the courage to act upon our faith. The one person whose cry echoes through our hearts is the cry of that father who cried out to Jesus,.

Immediately the boy’s father cried out and said, “I do believe; help my unbelief.” Mark 9:24

The Results

1. The identifying mark of one who is redeemed is that they are living a life of obedience to the commands of Jesus.

“If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. John 15:10

A growing obedience is the identifying mark of the redeemed.

2. In John 15, Jesus talked about abiding in His love.

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. “If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. John 15:4-6

The word “abide” means to take up residence;” to pitch your tent. In that culture, a traveler could stay with a family for three days, but only a member of the family could stay permanently. This is what David longed for when he said,

Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. Psalm 23:6

David had the most beautiful palace in that part of the world. He was not looking for a place to sleep. He was longing to be family with God. Jesus was describing an intimate family relationship for those who live a life of obedience.

3. For all those who obey the example and teachings of Jesus, the Holy Spirit is active in their lives.

“When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, *that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, John 15:26*

He teaches and guides us into a life of increasing obedience and usefulness in God’s kingdom.

4. Day by day, the redeemed person grows in righteousness, which is living a life that is increasingly “right;” increasingly lived like our Lord.
5. Jesus taught it and the epistles echo the teaching that the obedient soul will have a great need for perseverance because the enemy will view that person’s growing faith as his own personal defeat. Jesus meant it when He said, “Take up YOUR cross.”
6. Eternity – In your studies of Eschatology – end times – you will deal with this much more deeply. Here, we simply want to highlight the fact that the redeemed will spend eternity in the presence of our risen Lord. There is not a lot of information about what heaven will be like. It will not be a cottage by the lake. It will be worshipping and praising God beyond time in the presence of Jesus when time is no longer counted.

Questions for Revision

1. What reason does Scripture give for who redemption was necessary?
2. Why would a holy, but deeply offended God show mercy? How did He do that historically?
3. How does one determine the eligibility for this salvation?
4. Show how this salvation was offered.
5. Show how this salvation was not offered.
6. What do the Scriptures teach about the necessary steps in salvation?
7. What actual change takes place when a person is “saved”?



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



Pneumatology

~ Colleen Fitch



1

The Spirit and the Trinity

Lesson Purpose:

- to introduce the Holy Spirit and the Trinity

Lesson Outcome:

Students will learn and be able to briefly define all of the **terms to know**. *These terms are in bold throughout the lesson.*

- Students will know the biblical terms used most frequently for the Spirit.
- Students will have a basic understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity.
- Students will examine biblical evidence of the Spirit's presence.
- Students will honestly and thoughtfully interact with and apply the lessons to their ministry settings and to their personal lives.

Table of Contents

- The Meaning of the Spirit's Name
- The Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity
- The Presence of the Spirit
- Questions for Discussion

The Meaning of the Spirit's Name

(Speaking to Nicodemus) Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit"
(John 3:5-8, NLT).

We cannot see the wind, but we see evidence of its power as curtains flutter, leaves rustle, and particles fly through the air. We cannot see the wind, but we feel it on our faces. We cannot see the wind, but we hear its roar or the sounds that are made as gates and window shutters bang open and closed, moved by the wind. We cannot see the wind, but there is no denying its presence and power.

Jesus' use of the wind to describe the presence and work of the Spirit should have helped Nicodemus to make a powerful connection with his study of the Hebrew Scriptures. In Hebrew, the word for spirit is (*Rruach*). It means "breath, Spirit, or wind." Put your hand in front of your mouth and say *ruach* into the palm

of your hand. Pronouncing the word produces both “breath and wind.” Did you feel it in your hand? Jesus scolds Nicodemus for his lack of understanding of God’s ways and of the ways of God’s Spirit. As one of the chosen people of God with access to the Old Testament, Nicodemus should have been able to recognize the effects of the presence and work of the Spirit—*Ruach* in the life and ministry of Jesus.

In the passage quoted from John 3, and in the majority of other New Testament references, the Greek word *pneuma* (***pneuma***) is used for Spirit. At times the Greeks used this word, like the Hebrews, to refer to the wind or to breath. They also used *pneuma* when they were referring to the human soul—the non-physical, unique, and eternal component of each person’s life. Finally if they were speaking or writing about independent, personal beings that had no physical bodies such as the Holy Spirit or conversely evil spirits, they used *pneuma*. The context or qualifying descriptive words identified the type of spirit to which they were referring.¹ Jesus used other names for the Spirit, and these names will be discussed later

The Spirit, The Third Person Of The Trinity

The Trinity is the theological name given to represent the mysterious union and oneness of God in the three persons: God the Father; God the Son, Jesus; God the Holy Spirit. Common illustrations of this reality are:

1. The Egg: It is one egg, but it has three parts: shell, white, and yolk.
2. A Parent: He or She is one person, but may have three distinct roles at the same time: Brother, Father, and Son; or Sister, Mother, and Daughter.

These illustrations have their limitations. Of course the parts of an egg are not persons. If an egg is fertilized, the shell and the white become waste when the chick is born. A parent may have more than three roles, but if an individual person has multiple personalities, society often declares that person to be schizophrenic.

The concluding paragraphs on the discussion of the Holy Spirit in *The Framework of Our Faith*² give a brief, yet helpful explanation of the Trinity.

The Trinity is comprised of three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Underlying this teaching is the idea that God has made Himself known to us in a threefold way. God the Father is the creative and judging Person. Jesus Christ, God the Son, is the Word of God become man in order to bring salvation to us. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit and personal agent of the Father and the Son. Through the Spirit the Father and the Son work in the lives of men and women. These are the three “dimensions” by which God has chosen to reveal Himself to us, but it does not mean that God has fully revealed Himself in these three ways. God is still a great mystery to His creation.

The Church’s long-held creedal teaching on the Holy Trinity reads, “one divine substance, three divine persons.” This formula can be misleading if it is not properly understood because it can sound as if the Church worships three gods. “Substance” does not contain the common idea of a solid body having

¹ Bauer, Walter. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Second Edition Revised by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979, pages 674-678.

² Harold W. Burgess, ed. *The Framework of Our Faith: The Basics of Knowing Christ*. Wilmore: The Francis Asbury Society, 2005, pages 51-52. Used by permission.

weight and size. Instead, substance has to do with the essential nature of the object without any material connotations.

The doctrine of the Trinity seems impossible for the human mind to fully comprehend. John Wesley addressed this matter in a letter written in 1760 to "a Member of the Society," one of Wesley's established groups of believers. Here he writes of his understanding of the Trinity. The mystery, he says, does not lie in the fact of three Persons. The mystery lies in "how they are one." He brushes aside any effort to understand a divine Mystery. "I believe the fact. As to the manner, [sic] (wherein the whole mystery lies,) I believe nothing about it." It remains for believers to be careful not to confuse the Three Persons with each other. :It [sic] is a mysterious providence," Wesley concludes.

A brief discussion on the Trinity written by Dr. Dennis Kinlaw concludes the chapter on the Holy Spirit in *The Framework of Our Faith*.³

The early church] came to feel that in the oneness of God there was differentiation, differentiation that did not disturb the unity in the divine being. The key to this lies in the development of the concept of personhood. A person as the Church came to speak of the person of Christ did not mean an individual in separated identity. The term in the Christian creeds means 'one whose completeness is in another'. The term as used in the classical creeds of the Church for the Father, the Son, and the Spirit means one who finds his source and identity in another.

One cannot be a Father without a child, so in a sense God's Son is the one who makes the Father, the Father. One cannot be a child without having a Father, so the Father is the one who gives the Son his sonship. The same can be said of the Spirit, who is the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son. So the early church concluded that the Son is not all there is of God, but that all there is of God is in the Son. The same can be said of the Father and the Spirit.

The importance of this for our understanding of God and salvation cannot be overestimated. This means that God is not a single solitary will whose defining characteristic is omnipotence. Rather, God is a being whose inner essence is interpersonal love. Love is an interpersonal relationship. This means then that love is not just something God does. It is what he is! (I John 4:8,16). This is expressed in the fact that the life of the Son is a gift of the Father's life to the Son. He is the only 'begotten' Son. His life comes from the Father. And the life of the Spirit is the same. His life is drawn from the Father and the Son.

Little wonder that the natural expression of benediction in the New Testament is in the name of the triune God: "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (II Cor. 13:14, NIV).

In summary, John Wesley's explanation seems to be a most honest and reasonable one. It expresses the fact that we can somehow accept the truth of God in Three Persons and that each one of these persons has an essential nature and that each person is completed in relationship to one another. The explanation of

³ Harold W. Burgess, ed. *The Framework of Our Faith: The Basics of Knowing Christ*. Pages 53-54. Used by permission.

how God is Three in One remains a mystery for the theologians to ponder and discuss. Perhaps the closest human analogy would be marriage: the unity of a husband and wife as one flesh. They are two distinct people, yet within the sacred covenant of marriage, they become one, completed in one another in a way that is impossible outside of marriage.

There is an expression in the English language that conveys our desire to do what God's Spirit does in actuality. Suppose we are unable to physically attend an event, but we wish to express our sincere desire to be present. We might say, "I will be with you in spirit." Neither the speaker nor the receiver expect that this person's actual spirit will leave the body and be physically present, but this expression attempts to convey a dimension of personal support that goes beyond simple words of affirmation. From where could such an idea come? Perhaps it comes from God's ability to actually send His Spirit to be present, as present as the unseen wind.

The Presence of the Spirit

Universal Presence

The Bible testifies that the Holy Spirit has always been present in this world. When the earth, the heavens, the seas, and all life were formed, the Spirit was present as God created. God did not step away from His creation after it was completed. His Spirit remained to reveal the glory and personhood of God. God did not abandon the world. Through the presence of the Spirit, at all times and in all places, God Himself is present.

"Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit (Ruach) of God was hovering over the waters" (Genesis 1:2, NIV).

Witnessing or Contending Presence

The Spirit of God is not an impersonal force simply blowing about the world. The Spirit is a person who has always interacted with humanity, bearing witness to God's love and holiness. The Spirit's presence in the world consequently exposes that which is contrary to the holy character and design of God, the Father. Unfortunately, with the fall of Adam and Eve, the contrast between God's original intent and the willful rebellion of humanity intensified as the human heart became irreparably tainted with sin. Men and women turned away from God. They contended or disagreed with the Spirit. They hardened their hearts to the ever-present witness of the Spirit and went on their own way of violence. This grieves the heart of God. As in the days of Noah, today humanity cannot claim ignorance, abandonment, or lack of help as an excuse for its rebellion.

"Then the Lord said, 'My Spirit (Ruach) will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years'" (Genesis 6:3, NIV).

"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him. . ." (Romans 1:20-21, NIV).

When King David asked: *“Where can I go from your Spirit? (Ruach) Where can I flee from your presence?” (Psalm 139:7, NIV)*. He knew by experience the answer to these questions: Nowhere! The Spirit is not restricted by physical or geographic limitations. This is both a comfort and a call to accountability; no one can hide from God. The world is God’s creation. The Spirit of God is here. Men and women are either in agreement with the Spirit through belief and obedience to Jesus Christ, or they are contending with the Spirit through rebellion against God’s truth.

Empowering Presence

During the time period of the Old Testament, the Spirit was given to specific individuals: Moses; the craftsmen who built the temple; the judges and prophets were all enabled to give leadership to Israel, to communicate God’s Word to the people, and to fulfill God’s will and plan. The Israelites as a people depended on those who had been filled with the Spirit to lead them.

- Skills and Special Knowledge: The indwelling presence of the Spirit gave the men who designed and supervised the construction of the tabernacle extraordinary and instantaneous gifting in knowledge, wisdom, and skills.

“And I have filled him with the Spirit (Ruach) of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts” (Exodus 31:3, NIV: See also Exodus 28:3, 35:30-36:2)).

- Wisdom to judge: Moses needed assistance to preside over the people of Israel. The Spirit was distributed on 70 elders of the twelve tribes so that they could rightly discern and judge disputes among the people.

“Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took of the Spirit (Ruach) that was on him and put the Spirit on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not do so again” (Numbers 11:25, NIV: See all of Numbers 11).

- Extraordinary power and charisma to lead: During the period of the Judges, Israel suffered through repeated cycles of foreign invasion because of their infidelity to God. Yet, each time when the people came to a point of repentance and cried out for deliverance, God would pour out the Spirit into the life of an individual who would then rise up to lead the people and restore freedom.

“The Spirit of the Lord came upon [Othniel], so that he became Israel’s judge and went to war” (Judges 3:10, NIV).

- Prophetic Knowledge and a call to speak the Word of God: With the division of the two Kingdoms: Israel and Judah, God’s people entered into increasing and persistent rebellion. The written Word of God was ignored and even “lost” for a period of time. God poured out His Spirit on individuals who were then called to speak on behalf of God to the people.

“He said to me, ‘Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you.’ As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me” (Ezekiel 2:1-2, NIV).

Promise of Personal Presence

Even though the Israelites were the chosen people of God, the personal indwelling presence of the Spirit was only experienced by a small minority of the population. The majority of the people struggled unsuccessfully to fulfill the laws of God. Their hearts were divided and unfaithful. Yet, God had a plan to redeem His people that included the gift of His Spirit to all who would put their faith in Him.

“I will give you a new heart, and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit (Ruach) in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws” (Ezekiel 36:26-27, NIV).

On the Day of Pentecost when the disciples received the promised gift of the personal presence and filling of the Holy Spirit, Peter recited this promise recorded in the prophet Joel:

“And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit (Ruach) on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls” (Joel 2:28-32, NIV).

After hearing Peter’s message, the crowd was deeply convicted by the truth of the Gospel message and of their sin, they cried out in desperation, asking for help.

“Peter replied, ‘Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you, and to your children, and even to the Gentiles—all who have been called by the Lord our God.’” (Acts 2:38-39, NLT).

The personal indwelling presence of the Spirit is now promised to all who put their faith in Jesus Christ. This out-pouring of the Spirit does not happen by some type of spiritual osmosis—the Spirit does not permeate all living things.⁴

The Spirit is given to those who put their faith in Jesus Christ and who walk in obedience and love. The Spirit’s presence within a person’s life enables that person to serve God in a dynamic, empowered way. Following God is a journey of relationship, and the Spirit is the personal helper and intimate companion on each believers walk with the Lord.

⁴ The three persons of the Trinity are holy—present, yet transcendent. They are present in the world as Creator, not creature.

Questions for Discussion

1. What is The Trinity? How would you explain it to the people in your church? Is the Trinity something that is difficult for people to understand? If so, why? (For example: Judaism and Islam both believe in a exclusive monotheism. Animism and ancestor worship allow for many gods.) How could you teach and model the concept of personhood with its emphasis on the truth that there is completeness in one another in your church?
2. Give examples from Scripture and from your own experiences of the Spirit's
 - Universal Presence
 - Witnessing Presence
 - Empowering Presence
 - Personal Presence
3. Where are you experiencing the wind (ruach) of the Spirit in your church? In your community? Is there an area of need or concern where you desire to see the wind of the Spirit blow with fresh power and anointing? Share these concerns with one another and pray for one another.

Terms to Know	
Ruach Pnuema Trinity Concept of personhood	Universal presence Witnessing presence Empowering presence Personal presence



4

The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

Lesson Purpose:

- to introduce the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit as presented in two articles by Dr. Harold Burgess.

Lesson Outcome:

Students will learn and be able to briefly define all of the **terms to know**. *These terms are in bold throughout the lesson.*

- Students will have a basic understanding of the person of the Holy Spirit as it is revealed in the Old and New Testaments.
- Students will examine the work of the Spirit in the world, in the repentant sinner, in the believer, and in the church.
- Students will reflect on the church's essential dependence on the work of the Holy Spirit to enable evangelism, discipleship, worship, and fellowship.
- Students will honestly and thoughtfully interact with and apply the lessons to their ministry settings and to their personal lives.

Table of Contents

- The Person of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament
- The Person of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament
- The Holy Spirit's Work in Relation to the World
- The Holy Spirit's Work in Relation to the Repentant Sinner
- The Holy Spirit's Work in Relation to the Believer
- The Holy Spirit's Work in Relation to the Church
- Questions for Discussion

The Person of the Holy Spirit⁶

A renewed hunger for the presence and power of the Holy Spirit both in the lives of individual Christians and in the corporate life of the Church has been one of the most notable religious phenomena of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This same period of time has witnessed a revival of interest and activity in many kinds of supernatural phenomena, including the occult. The rising tide of interest in the supernatural dimensions of life has created a climate in which Christians are likely to be confronted with a variety of conflicting "messages" concerning the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Let us be forewarned that, as "all that glitters is not gold," so all that attempts to satisfy deep-seated hunger for the Holy Spirit is not of

⁶ Harold W. Burgess. *The Person of the Holy Spirit*. Published in *The High Calling*. Wilmore, KY: The Francis Asbury Society, Fall 2006. Used with permission.

God. For this reason, we surely must take our standard from the Bible.

A reverent approach to the totality of the Biblical revelation about the Holy Spirit demands recognition of both His personality and His deity. With Christians through the ages, we believe in the creedal statement that: "The Holy Spirit, the third person of the triune God, proceeding from the Father and sent by the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son."⁷

The Person of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

There are more than eighty references to the activity of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. He is present in every movement of God from creation to the final utterances of the prophets.

The first direct reference to the Spirit of God is made in the opening sentences of the Bible. Following the record of primal creation, when the earth was yet formless and void (Gen. 1:1), we read, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2). Here the Spirit of God (the third person of the Trinity) moved energetically upon the chaotic primal scene and brought form and meaning to the heavens and to the earth.

There seems to be at least a threefold revelation of the Holy Spirit in relation to His participation in creation. First, His personality and deity are suggested by the use of the Hebrew expression translated "Spirit of God." Second, His divine energy and power are indicated by His control over the chaotic elements out of which the cosmos was being formed. Third, His life-giving and formative function is implied in His moving upon, or "brooding over," the waters.

This threefold revelation of the Holy Spirit is certainly a foreshadowing of His subsequent work in the redemptive plan of God for man. For as the Spirit brought order to the chaos in the beginning, so He restores order to the confusion, chaos, and darkness that the sin and disobedience of men have caused (see Isaiah 32:14,15). From the beginning, the Spirit has always manifested the reality of a loving, personal God by applying His creative power to restore spiritual life and order to our otherwise hopeless human condition.

The Person of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament

The New Testament Scriptures clearly invest the Holy Spirit with such attributes of personality as intelligence, volition, emotion, and moral responsibility.

- Intelligence: Paul obviously presupposes the intelligence of the Holy Spirit when he states, "He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God" (Rom. 8:27).
- Volition: Both intelligence and volition (will) are indicated in Paul's suggestion that the Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts "to every man severally as He will" (I Cor. 12:11; see also Acts 13:4; 15:28).

⁷ Articles of Faith and Practice of the Missionary Church. <http://www.mcusa.org/AboutMC/PositionPapers/ArticlesofFaithand-Practice.aspx> 06/22/2010

The CCP Pastoral Training Course Pneumatology

- Emotion: The emotional nature of the Holy Spirit's personhood is revealed in Paul's admonition both to the Ephesians that they should not "grieve" the Holy Spirit of God (Eph. 4:30) and to the Thessalonians that they should not "quench the Spirit" (I Thess. 5:19).
- Moral responsibility: The attribute of moral responsibility may be observed in the apostolic letter which was sent out from the Jerusalem conference in which it is written, "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things" (Acts 15:28).

The personality of the Spirit is perhaps nowhere more evident than in Christ's solemn warning against the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:31-32; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10). More positively, Christ treats the Holy Spirit as a person in His farewell discourse in John 14-16 where He characterizes the Spirit as a **Paraclete** (a person called to the side of another), counselor, witness, and teacher. Most certainly the personality of the Holy Spirit is portrayed in Jesus' pronouncement that "when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). For the Christian, then, it is never proper to refer to, or think of, the Holy Spirit as "it." How much better that we should exercise care to use such personal pronouns as "He," "His," or "Him."

A clear sense of the personality of the Holy Spirit can contribute much to a vital Christian experience. When the Christian comprehends the Holy Spirit as a person, his concern will properly be, "How may He, the Holy Spirit, possess and use more of me?" Proper recognition of the personality of the Holy Spirit, then, is a critical factor in keeping God central in human life.

The Work of the Holy Spirit⁸

The Holy Spirit's Work in Relation to the World

In relation to the world, and more especially to unsaved individuals, the Holy Spirit's work is to awaken our human minds to a consciousness of our lost condition (see Acts 16:14) and to extend the offer of salvation to all by His witness to Jesus Christ (John 15:26, Acts 5:32).

Perhaps the most comprehensive statement concerning the Spirit's ministry to the world is that made by Jesus on the evening before His crucifixion: "And when He (the Holy Spirit) is come, He will reprove (convince) the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father...; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged" (John 16:8-11).

Whatever else may be learned from Jesus' statement in John 16, we must conclude that

- the Holy Spirit compels people to recognize that to disregard Jesus Christ by not believing in Him is to continue in sin
- He convinces men of the unique claims of Christ by attesting to Christ's resurrection and ascension (see also Rom. 1:4)
- He convinces men and women that they cannot do as they like and expect to escape the consequences of willfulness. At the final judgment everyone must stand before the throne.

The journey that results in a soul's surrender to Christ is a journey that is begun by the work of the Holy Spirit.

⁸ Harold W. Burgess. *The Work of the Holy Spirit*. Published in *The High Calling*. Wilmore, KY: The Francis Asbury Society, Winter 2007. Used with permission.

The Holy Spirit's Work in Relation to the Repentant Sinner

Another aspect of the Holy Spirit's work is to regenerate those who repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. **Regeneration** is a term normally employed to refer to the changing of a sinner's nature through the impartation of divine life; it is commonly called the "new birth." Jesus Christ chose the image of birth to illustrate the Spirit-wrought change in an individual when he or she is saved: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God... That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:5-7).

Paul, likewise, ascribes regeneration to the Holy Spirit: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).

The scriptures teach that no one can enter the kingdom of God until he or she is born anew of the Holy Spirit. This new life which is imparted to the repentant and believing person by the Holy Spirit is the very life of God. There is unquestionably an element of mystery in the new birth. "The wind bloweth where it wills... so is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). It is not for us to comprehend the method by which the Spirit of God brings about this miracle of a new creation. However we can and will know the effects of the new birth as the Holy Spirit witnesses to the reality of regeneration: "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8:16; see also Gal. 4:6 and I John 3:24).

The Holy Spirit's Work in Relation to the Believer

The Holy Spirit sustains a continuing ministry to born-again Christians as He sanctifies them and endues them with power for service. **Sanctification**, "the work of God in making men holy," begins in repentance and regeneration, but it is continued when the believer yields himself or herself to be filled with the Holy Spirit. This aspect of the Christian's walk with God, described by both Paul and Peter as "sanctification of the Spirit" (II Thess. 2:13; I Pet. 1:2), is at least three fold:

- It involves a separation from the world and to God (Col. 3:2,3)
- It involves a cleansing from sin (Acts 15:8, 9; Rom. 6:19; I John 1:5-2:1; see also Psalm 51)
- It involves a filling with, and a continuous abiding of, the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4; Eph. 5:18; John 14:16, 17). The absolute imperative for the Christian to be *endued with power* as a prerequisite for service is expressed in Jesus' final charge to His followers: "But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me" (Acts 1:8).

Again and again in the New Testament church it was as individual Christians were filled with and empowered by the Holy Spirit that the work of Christ went forward (Acts 2:1-47; 4:8—14; 4:31). The experience of the church throughout the ages has simply confirmed this imperative.

The Bible makes use of several additional expressions concerning the Spirit's ministry to the believer, such as: baptism, anointing, sealing, and earnest. Of these expressions, the *baptism with* (not of) the Spirit is the one most frequently used; it refers to the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the believer. Thus, the statement, "they were all

filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4), is a fulfillment of the promise, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence (Acts 1:5; see also Matt. 3:11; John 1:33; and Acts 11:16). The expression, anointing *with the Spirit*, serves to illuminate the concept of being divinely equipped for the service of Christ (I John 2:27). The term *sealing* with the Spirit signifies that the believer belongs to Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:13), and the *earnest* (*deposit, NIV*) of the Spirit suggests a guarantee of the completeness of our redemption at the return of our Lord (Eph. 1:14).

The Holy Spirit's Work in Relation to the Church

From the day of its inauguration at Pentecost, the Church has had its being in the work of the Holy Spirit. The life of the Church as the Spirit-begotten body of Christ is maintained by the Holy Spirit as He unites believers into it (I Cor. 12:13). He equips it with gifts and graces for service (I Cor. 12:4-11; Gal. 5:22, 23) as He enables it to remember and to understand all truth (John 14:26; 16:13; I John 2:20-27). He exercises His presidency over the church by guiding it into the will of God (Acts 13:2-4; 15:28). Particularly in the case of gifts it is to be remembered that the ministry of the Spirit in the Church is for the edification of the whole body and not for the personal pleasure, advantage, or profit of individuals.

In these beginning years of the twenty-first century, we dare not attempt to accomplish our mission without an intense commitment to the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit. For without the Holy Spirit there can be no accent of certainty, no message of consequence, no sustaining fellowship, and no real growth and development.

Questions for Discussion

1. Discuss the attributes of personality that Dr. Burgess lists for the Holy Spirit: intelligence, volition, emotion, and moral responsibility. How does this understanding help us to realize that the Holy Spirit is a person? What does this imply about the way we respond to the Spirit? About the way that we respond to the Spirit's work in the lives of others? About the way in which we talk about the Holy Spirit?

Discuss the following questions in reference to Dr. Burgess's second article. Formulate answers that you can share with the people in your church to these questions.

2. How does the Holy Spirit work with the world?
3. How does the Holy Spirit work in the life of a repentant sinner? What does it mean for one to be convicted of sin?
4. How does the Holy Spirit work in the believer's life?
5. How does the Holy Spirit work in the life of the church?
6. Discuss Dr. Burgess' concluding statement: "without the Holy Spirit there can be no accent of certainty, no message of consequence, no sustaining fellowship, and no real growth and development." This is a challenge to the church. How does the Holy Spirit help us to be certain of our faith? What happens to our preaching when we rely on our own abilities to persuade rather than the convicting witness of the Spirit? Is the Holy Spirit an acknowledged guest in all of our fellowship in the church? Are we willing to follow and trust the Spirit to lead us in how we should grow and develop our ministries and churches?

Terms to Know
Paraclete Regeneration Sanctification



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Ecclesiology

~ Eileen Reid



2

The Nature of the Church and Imagery Used to Describe it

The Nature of the Church and Imagery Used to Describe it

What does Jesus see as the marks of the church? That is what should characterize the believers who compose the church so that the world may know we are his disciples; that the world may believe the Father sent Jesus. Jesus makes the answers clear in John's Gospel.

The Mark of Love John 13:34-35

In context this is Jesus' celebration of His last meal with the disciples prior to his crucifixion. Before the meal He washed each of His disciples' feet including Judas'. He demonstrated both servant leadership and unconditional love. Even though Jesus knows He will be betrayed and crucified, He has assurance that God His Father will be glorified. Now he gives a new commandment.

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. (Jn. 13:34-35)

The fact that Jesus calls it a new commandment should catch our attention even without the dramatic context. Jesus knows that in the hours and days which will follow, it would be easy for the disciples to practice blame shifting, accusations, fault finding etc. with one another. How important then that they recognize that they are to love each other. When you consider who composed the group of disciples, a zealot, four Galilean fishermen, a tax collector, etc., Jesus' death and absence could make for a very difficult time. In verse 35, love is the mark by which all people will know that they are disciples of Jesus. This love is self sacrificing and serving. Jesus himself has modeled this for them and now models it for them as he goes to Gethsemane and eventually Golgotha. That servant love for each other is based firmly on Christ's love for us. The servant love of the church contains many aspects (see I Corinthians 13) but there are two which are most striking, thankfulness and forgiveness. Not only is the church composed of those who have been forgiven but it is God's chosen vessel for the sharing of the good news of God's forgiveness and reconciliation with the Father through Christ. This is the Good News, the gospel of Jesus Christ. As a church we must ask ourselves how we are doing in showing love for one another as believers in Christ. Why do we wonder at nonbelievers' lack of interest in the church when they see us treat each other with hostility and lack of forgiveness? Little wonder when people say they like Jesus but they do not like the church.

Thankfulness for each other is robbed when we fail to forgive each other. In fact our relationship with God is called into question as Jesus says directly in Matthew 6:14-15. Lack of forgiveness holds us captive. Believers in the early church practiced a ritual of sharing bread with a person whom they needed to forgive or whom they needed to seek forgiveness from. Here are some questions for us as church leaders to use to examine ourselves in light of our Lord's command in John 13:34-35.

1. How can God use me and bless me if I am holding offenses or carrying grudges which really translate into an unwillingness to forgive?
2. What does God want me to do? Read Matthew 5:23-24, 6:14-15, Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:13.
3. Is my past clear? If I cannot celebrate my past it may be because I have not forgiven or sought forgiveness.
4. Where am I right now concerning clearness? If I experience any uneasiness when I ask that question, I probably need to take care of some present situation.
5. Am I able to thank God for these hurts I have experienced? If not then perhaps I have anger and forgiveness issues with God for which I must care. See I Thessalonians 5:18.

The Mark of Unity

In the 17th Chapter of his gospel, John, alone of the other gospel writers, records Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane immediately prior to His arrest. This is often called the High Priestly Prayer because Jesus is not only praying on behalf of Himself and His disciples but also for future believers. (John 17:20) Then in the midst of His prayer, Jesus gives the second mark of the church.

I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me. And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world. (John 17:20-24)

Jesus twice, 21 and 23, states the importance of unity for the world believing that God sent Him and God loves the world. This is a unity based on believing in Jesus. This unity mirrors the Trinity which is one and yet with distinctive diversity as three persons, Father Son and Holy Spirit. In verse 22 Jesus links this with the glory of God the Father which He has given to His disciples. A glory which was not self-serving but freely given by the Father to His Son, Jesus even as the Father's love has been given to Jesus. This glory and love seek the welfare of others while affirming their worth and value (see Psalm 8). Paul, in Colossians 3:14, reminds us that love is the perfect bond of unity. This unity derives from God's love and is not based on sameness in appearance but rather on the transforming love of God which has been perfected in us and is perfecting us. (This reflects the perfect tense which John uses in 17: 23 and conveys the sense of both completed and continuing action.) The idea of perfect is another New Testament way of talking about the nature of Christ being formed in us. Often we refer to this as Holiness in the full sense which includes both a crisis (decision) and a process as we are transformed through the working of the Holy Spirit (Romans 6 and 8 describe this well). Jesus knows this unity is a process which only can be perfected as the believers are in

Christ and the Father is in Christ. So this is not uniformity or a losing of one's personality but conformity to Christ where individual personalities/ identities are focused on Jesus and controlled by His love. So the Triune God does their part and the church is called on to do their part.

So let us explore two questions:

1. Does the world perceive our servant love for each other? How? Have you experienced (know and feel) this love personally and corporately? How would you describe it?
2. Does the world see our unity with each other? How? Have you experienced (know and feel) this love personally and corporately? How would you describe it?

Unless the church demonstrates servant love for one another and exhibits the unity/harmony of being one in Christ, we will dishonor the name of Jesus by being disobedient. Jesus gave only these two marks as the ones by which the world would know that we are His disciples, that Jesus was sent by God and that God loves the world. Let us not fail to achieve the high marks for which Jesus has called His church!

The early church understood and practiced this servant love as we have seen in Acts 2:42 and following. They spread the good news of Jesus while caring for each other and their communities. In 2 Corinthians, we find predominantly Gentile believers taking an offering for a predominantly Jewish church in Jerusalem. In James 1:27, we read that "...pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress and to keep ourselves unstained by the world." This concern for widows was manifested early in the church's life as recorded in Acts 6. The care of widows is even discussed at length by Paul when he is writing to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4. James also reminds us not to play favorites especially to those who appear wealthy in James 2. The faithfulness to Christ and His command to love and be one in Him caused the early church to be known as Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:26) and as followers of the Way (Acts 9:2, 22:4). Like Jesus they laid hands on people for healing and for service. James describes the fellowship as being a place of prayer and of healing in James 5. They reached out beyond their cultural biases as Peter, a Jewish Christian, went to Cornelius' house, who was a Roman centurion and a Gentile (Acts 10). They understood Jesus' teaching in Luke 10 about the Good Samaritan. They were out to prove themselves to be good neighbors. They were to pray for those in authority over them (1 Timothy 2:1-2). Their lifestyle was to be one of submission to authority and to do what was right (Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17). Both Peter and Paul affirm that in doing so the church, which is composed of the followers of Christ, is fulfilling God's will.

Three major illustrations develop this theme as being under God's will or authority. The first is that of the building. 1 Peter 2:5 describes "... the believers as living stones being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." We can easily see the necessity of unity and submission to the Master Builder. The purpose is not to serve ourselves but we are to be a place in which we serve God and others. The spiritual sacrifices are the commitment to faithfully fulfill our Lord's will in thought, talk and walk. This also brings to mind the sacrifice of Jesus who gave Himself up for the church. The church was bought with His blood (Acts 20:28). Paralleling Peter, Paul says we are "... being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit."

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22)

In this passage, Paul reminds the church that they are now part of God's family not outsiders. This introduces the second major illustration which is that of the family. Here God is the father and we are his children, brothers and sisters. Recognizing the importance of citizenship in the Roman world, Paul reminds them that they are now "fellow citizens with the saints," not aliens. Hallelujah!! Then Paul quickly moves to the building metaphor and says the foundation is the apostles and prophets (connecting the Old and New Testaments together) with Christ as the cornerstone. (See also 1 Peter 2: 6-7.) What a foundation for the church!! Believers are being fitted together and it is growing into a holy temple in the Lord. The comparison with the actual temple in Jerusalem or even temples in Gentile lands is obvious. However this temple is alive and composed of individuals who are followers of Christ.

This image of life, "living stones" in Peter, and "growing" in Paul introduces the most developed metaphor for the church in the New Testament. The church is the body of Christ, with Christ being the head. The major target text for our study is I Corinthians 12:12-27.

For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you;" or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body, which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our unseemly members come to have more abundant seemliness, whereas our seemly members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, that there should be no division in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)

Doing our inductive study we note that the context immediately preceding our target text is stressing that the Spirit is involved in giving a variety of gifts but all from the same Spirit. In the midst of diversity there is unity because all have received from the same Spirit as the spirit desired. Hence no complaining about your gifts or jealousy or arrogantly comparing gifts but rather rejoicing that the Spirit is at work in all the gifts and in all the people. The context which follows lists the various gifts and the more excellent way/gift – LOVE. This reminds us that we do not all manifest the same gifts but we are part of one body, Christ's, and we should actively love each other. Once again it is unity in diversity.

This is the major theme of Paul in the target text. Regardless of our ethnicity or our social standing (v.13), we are all baptized into one body. As the body has many members and yet is one, so is Christ's body. How foolish for us to deny our part in the body or assume we are the whole body. We are not to squabble about our position in Christ's body but we are placed where we are by God's sovereignty, (v 18). We are to recognize how much we really need each other and care for one another (v 24). Note this is simply another way of stating Jesus' command to love one another. Sadly, the church has not done this well and division has often characterized the church not serving loving unity. Then in a true picture of loving unity, Paul reminds us that just as one part of our body aches and the whole body aches with it, so when one member suffers, we should suffer with them. In other words we should feel their pain. When one member is honored, we all rejoice. This is the church, a living organism, active and alive; serving and loving the triune God and each other as we reach out to the world for God's glory.

No study of the nature of the church is complete without at least a brief look at the book of Revelation. In this book we find the further portrayal of the church as the bride of Christ, and that great marriage feast in 19:6-10. "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready." Then in a description reminiscent of Ephesians 5:26-27, the church is presented "... as clothed in fine linen, bright and clean, for the linen is the righteous acts of the saints." Then a blessing is pronounced on all who are invited to the marriage supper. This part of the mission of the church to be discussed in the next lesson, which is making sure people have the invitation. The bride is also linked with the new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2; Heb. 12:22-24).

Within Revelation we also discover what Jesus actually thinks of some of the early churches.¹² In chapters 2 and 3, we see what Jesus, as the head of the church, has to say to seven of the early churches in Asia Minor. In the context immediately preceding chapter 2 we meet Jesus described in very dramatic language of power and splendor. As reigning Lord of the church, He is seen in the middle of His churches, portrayed as seven lamp stands and each church having its own angel portrayed as stars. In an oral or literary formula, each church is address by Christ, who is described in a manner which is appropriate for that particular church. Christ then states what he knows about that church, positively and negatively, with Jesus' prescription for correction. However with the churches in Smyrna and Philadelphia there are no negatives. If the churches refuse Christ's action plan, there is punishment promised. If the churches obey their Lord and follow His action plan they will overcome and receive a reward which is distinctively appropriate for each church. As noted, five of the seven churches have deficiencies. Ephesus has left their first love, Pergamum has allowed false teachings and immorality even as Thyatira has. Sardis has been deficient in completing their actions in service of God. Laodicea is apathetic, arrogant, deceived and undisciplined. In these five churches there is a lack of discernment and an allowance for false prophets, immorality and pride. Two of the churches, Thyatira and Sardis, have division. On the other hand the two churches positively commended, Smyrna and Philadelphia, are noteworthy for their lack of material wealth and their perseverance for their true Lord even though it results in suffering for a season. So what do we learn from this look at Revelation 2-3?

¹² John R. W. Stott, *What Christ Thinks of the Church: An Exposition of Revelation 1-3*. (IVP 2003).

1. The Lord of the church is Christ.
2. Churches are important to Christ.
3. Christ desires for churches to be overcomers.
4. Even the early church had to contend with sin and was tempted to compromise the true Way.
5. Overcoming churches keep their desire, first love for Christ. They persevere in suffering; they do not measure their riches in material things but in their relationship with their Lord and with each other. They reject false prophets and immorality. They recognize who the lord of the church is and they are humble before Him.
6. Every church has an angel.
7. Every church, the living body of Christ, can either receive a blessing or judgment based on how they handle sin and their love for their Lord and each other.

May the church, the living body of Christ, bring glory and honor to its Lord always.

As the early church grew and developed, it experienced changes of course. One of those was moving from worship on the Sabbath (Friday sundown to Saturday sundown) to worship on Sunday. As was to be expected, the early Christians since they were ethnically Jews, observed the Sabbath. However as persecution arose from the Jews, the believers in Christ were forced out of the synagogues. While preserving some of the organizational structure and worship of the synagogue (Lesson 4), the early church moved worship to Sunday. This was natural progression since Jesus arose on the first day of the week, Sunday, and Pentecost (the day after the seventh Sabbath Leviticus 23:16) occurred on the first day of the week, Sunday. (Author's note: Most calendars reflect this Christian heritage of beginning the week with Sunday.)

Further growth of the church resulted in numerous councils and additional marks of the church.

The Nicene Creed confesses "one holy catholic and apostolic church." The apostolicity of the church refers to its foundation on apostolic teaching. The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20), as recipients of revelation (Eph. 3:4, 5). Since the apostles were eye-witnesses of the resurrection (Acts 1:22) as well as communicators of the word of Christ (Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 16:13), their foundational office cannot be continued (1 Cor. 15:8), although their missionary task remains. The holiness of the church fulfills the OT symbolism of ceremonial cleanness by a moral purity wrought of the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:14-7:10). Separation from unbelief and sin, together with dedication to the service of God in all of life, must mark the corporate life of the church. Love in the Spirit binds the saints to God and each other.

The NT church is catholic or universal: it is not limited geographically as Israel was, and it joins in one fellowship people of every sort. The church cannot exclude from its membership any who credibly confess Christ. Sectarianism that limits church membership to any race, caste, or social class denies catholicity.

The church is the one family of God the Father (Eph. 4:6), it is one in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:14, 16; 1 Cor. 10:17; Gal. 3:27; Jn. 17:20-26), and is one fellowship in the Spirit (Eph. 4:3; Acts 4:32). When denominational division threatened the Corinthian church, Paul cried, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?" (1 Cor.

1:13). The one body of Christ's sacrifice provides salvation in one fellowship (Eph. 4:3). Saints are joined by the unifying graces of the Spirit (Eph. 4:15, 31, 32; Col. 3:14). When the church is divided, it is injured and weakened, but not necessarily destroyed. The task of recovering scriptural unity requires a return to the apostolic foundation with zealous love.¹³

Then the Reformers introduced their understanding of the crucial marks of the church: the preaching and teaching of the word of God, the celebration of the sacraments and the exercise of the spiritual disciplines to make sure the body of Christ was pure and holy. They of course omitted the outward unity with the papal see and its claim of apostolic succession as one of the marks of the church. The reformers returned to the close study of the scripture and the early church. They concluded that church should be a place where the word, the scriptures, are taught and proclaimed, not the dogma of the Roman Catholic Church or the Orthodox Church. They saw the early church as a community of faith, the gathering of the saints, that experienced unity of the Spirit as they enjoyed fellowship, celebrated the sacraments, and exercised power and authority under the Lordship of Christ.

Primarily the church is a society not of thinkers or workers or even of worshippers, but of believers. Hence, we find that "believers" or "they that believed" is constantly used as a synonym for the members of the Christian society (e.g. Acts 2:44; 4:32; 5:14; 1 Tim. 4:12). Hence, too, the rite of baptism, which from the first was the condition of entrance into the apostolic church and the seal of membership in it, was recognized as preeminently the sacrament of faith and of confession (Acts 2:41; 8:12, 36; Rom. 6:4; 1 Cor. 12:13). This church-founding and church-building faith, of which baptism was the seal, was much more than an act of intellectual assent. It was a personal laying hold of the personal Savior, the bond of a vital union between Christ and the believer which resulted in nothing less than a new creation (Rom 6:4; 8:1, 2; 2 Cor. 5:17). If faith in Christ is the fundamental note of the Christian society, the next is fellowship among the members. This follows from the very nature of faith as just described; for if each believer is vitally joined to Christ, all believers must stand in a living relation to one another. In Paul's favorite figure, Christians are members one of another because they are members in particular of the body of Christ (Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:27). That the Christian society was recognized from the first as a fellowship appears from the name "the brethren," which is so commonly applied to those who belong to it. In Acts the name is of very frequent occurrence (9:30, etc.), and it is employed by Paul in the epistles of every period of his career (1 Thess. 4:10, etc.). Similar testimony lies in the fact that "the koinonia" (English Versions "fellowship") takes its place in the earliest meetings of the church side by side with the apostles' teaching and the breaking of bread and prayers (Acts 2:42). The koinonia at first carried with it a community of goods (Acts 2:44; 4:32), but afterward found expression in the fellowship of ministration (2 Cor. 8:4) and in such acts of Christian charity as are inspired by Christian faith (Heb. 13:16). In the Lord's Supper, the other sacrament of the primitive church, the fellowship of Christians received its most striking and most sacred expression. For if baptism was especially the sacrament of faith, the Supper was distinctively the sacrament of love and fellowship—a communion or common participation in Christ's death and its fruits which carried with it a communion of hearts and spirits between the participants themselves. Another dominant note of the New Testament church lay in the consecration of its members. "Saints" is one of the most frequently recurring designations for them that we find. As thus employed, the word has in the first place an objective meaning; the sainthood of the Christian society consisted in its separation from the world by God's electing grace; in this respect it has succeeded to the prerogatives of Israel under the old covenant. The members of the church, as Peter said, are "an elect

¹³ Edward P. Clowney, "Church," *New Dictionary of Theology* (NDT), Electronic Version. ed. by Sinclair B. Ferguson and J. I. Packer, (Downers Grove, IVP, 2000).

race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession" (1 Pet. 2:9). But side by side with this sense of an outward and priestly consecration, the flame "saints" carried within it the thought of an ethical holiness—a holiness consisting, not merely in a status determined by relation to Christ, but in an actual and practical saintliness, a consecration to God that finds expression in character and conduct. No doubt the members of the church are called saints even when the living evidences of sainthood are sadly lacking. Writing to the Corinthian church in which he found so much to blame, Paul addresses its members by this title (1 Cor. 1:2; compare 6:11). But he does so for other than formal reasons—not only because consecration to God is their outward calling and status as believers; but also because he is assured that a work of real sanctification is going on, and must continue to go on, in their bodies and their spirits which are His. For those who are in Christ are a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), and those to whom has come the separating and consecrating call (2 Cor. 6:17) must cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7:1). Paul looks upon the members of the church, just as he looks upon the church itself, with a prophetic eye; he sees them not as they are, but as they are to be. And in his view it is "by the washing of water with the word," in other words, by the progressive sanctification of its members, that the church itself is to be sanctified and cleansed, until Christ can present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Eph. 5:26, 27).¹⁴

This lesson has presented the marks, nature of the church with a primary focus on the New Testament marks and metaphors of the church. In the next lesson we will turn our attention to the purpose of the church.

Discussion Questions

1. God has called you to be His own. What does that mean to You?
2. Which of the biblical illustrations for the church is most meaningful to you and why?
3. How does the Spirit function in your life and that of your local church?
4. How do you apply the insights from the study of the seven churches in Revelation?
5. Define each of these terms used by the Nicene Creed to describe the church in your own words.
 - a. One
 - b. Holy
 - c. Catholic
 - d. Apostolic
6. Define in your own words the concepts the reformers used of the preaching and teaching of the word of God, the celebration of the sacrament and the exercise of the spiritual disciplines to make sure the body of Christ was pure and holy for the marks of the church.
7. What do you understand by being called a saint?

¹⁴ J. C. Lambert, "Church," (ISBE), Electronic Version, 12684-12692; 2095.16-2095.24.



3

The Purpose/ Mission of the Church

Lesson Objectives

- To understand the major mission of the church
- To understand the major commandment for the church
- To discuss the ways the mission and commandment interface
- To identify the sacraments of the church and the ways they are practiced

Since the major image used to describe the church is that of the body with Christ as the head, we, as members of the body, look to the head, that is, Christ, to understand our mission or purpose. The mission is clearly presented in Matthew 28:18-20, commonly called the Great Commission.

And Jesus came up and spoke to them saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

In context, this is addressed specifically to the disciples. By inference and by the way the apostles and early church understood it, this commission/mandate is for all Christ's followers.

There are several key observations to make prior to understanding Christ's mission for the church. First, note the use of all or always: *all authority/power* (v. 18), *all the nations* (v. 19), *all things* (v. 20), and *always* (v. 20). The first *all* reminds us that Jesus has been given all authority on heaven and earth. Who has given Jesus this authority? By implication, He has received this from the Father (see John 5:19-30 and Phil. 2:9-12).

In addition His followers are reminded in the last part of vs. 20 that Jesus is with them always in this mission. He will not desert or abandon them. Thus empowered with Christ's authority and accompanied by His presence, the Jesus follower can go forward with boldness and confidence to make disciples. Surrounded by Christ *all-ness*, the follower is to be inclusive in reaching all nations and teaching them to observe all things which Jesus commanded. The follower is to be exclusive in the focus on making disciples. In fact, the main verb is *make disciples*, not *go*, even though it often is the lead verb. Thus, the sense of verse 19 could better be expressed as, "Make disciples of all nations, going, baptizing, and teaching." Now, we can see the other three verbs, *going*, *baptizing*, and *teaching*, are all present participles expressing how we make disciples of all nations. As present continuous action verbs they remind us that these activities are ongoing in achieving our purpose to make a disciple. Before we discuss each of these activities further, let us note that we are to make disciples of Jesus, not of ourselves. These disciples are to come from all the nations, literally the gentile or pagan nations. The Greek word gives us the word *ethnic*. This must have been difficult for the Jewish disciples to hear, but it is in keeping with Acts 1:8.

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.

The making of disciples according to Jesus first requires that we go – get outside our comfort zone. Jesus desires disciples from all nations and the early church understood this and practiced it. By the fourth century, if not before, the whole world was receiving the good news of Jesus. This is the glorious picture given of the church in Revelation 7:9

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands.

Go may be as simple as saying something to a family member or going across the street, or to the next village, or to the big city or to another country. Regardless of the destination of the going, one must be willing to move beyond themselves. This requires effort and may involve inconvenience, discomfort and even risk. However, this is why we are surrounded by Jesus' all-ness.

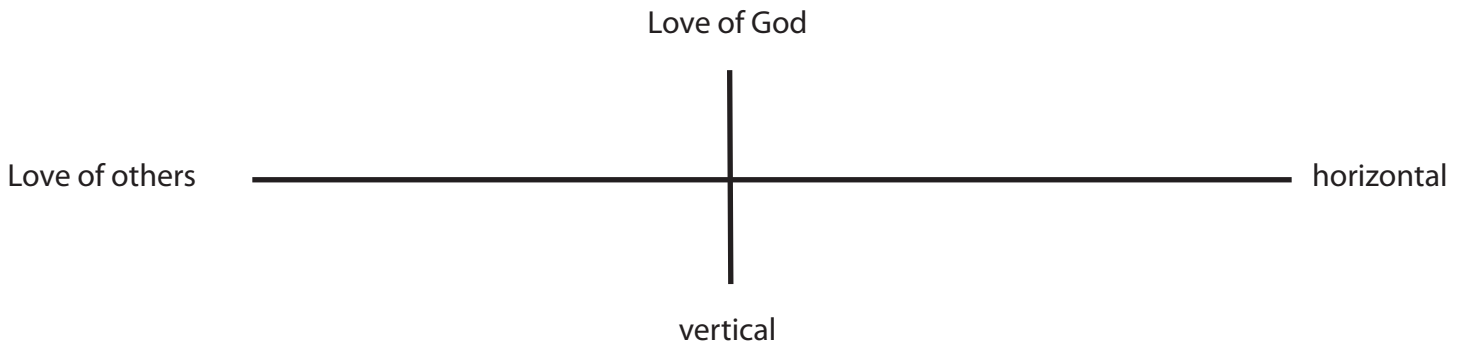
The second activity of disciple making that Jesus declares is baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Why baptism? From early on, even in Jesus' ministry, baptism was an outward sign, a public display, of a person's inward commitment or decision to follow God. This might involve repentance such as the way John the Baptist proclaimed of as in Jesus' case since He was sinless, was an act of obedience as He moved into His public ministry. Here in the great commission, baptism is used as the way for the disciple to indicate publically his willingness to be a Jesus follower and is part of his community, the church. Note the baptism is done using the names for the Triune God. The definite article *the* is used in front of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, affirming that these are exclusive, the one and only Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In addition the Greek makes it very clear that you are baptized into the names for God. In other words, you become part of God's family (John 1:12). The preposition *into* indicates movement from one condition or situation into another. Hallelujah, that is good news and is why baptism is so important for the follower of Jesus. More discussion will occur on baptism in the section in this lesson on the sacraments.

The third activity of discipleship making is teaching them to observe/keep/obey all things whatsoever I have commanded you. This means presenting all the teachings of Jesus. Since Jesus used and taught out of the Old Testament, that should also be taught. Since the apostles and other New Testament writers commented on Jesus' teaching, they also should be taught. So what should be taught? The whole Bible which is the word of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 1:1-2). Note that the verb *to keep, observe, obey* is continuous in nature. So this is not teaching for the sake of presenting information but teaching designed to be understood and followed. So the church has its marching orders from its Head.

Now, how do we fulfill this mandate? First is an overarching attitude which reflects the very nature of the triune God, love (1 Jn. 4:16). In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus Himself presents what has been called the great commandments. Jesus is answering a test question placed to him by a lawyer (scribe) who wanted to know which commandment of the law was the greatest.

And He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. And a second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."

Note, the ways we are to love the Lord our God. With all our heart – emotion/passion, with all our soul – energy/will, with all our mind – intellect. Mark added with all our strength, to include the physical sphere, Mk. 12:29-31.) Love to and for our God is to be our heartbeat, our motivation. However, this love is incomplete without the second command. Note the love of our neighbors (see Lk. 10:29-37 for Jesus' explanation of a neighbor) is not given the same descriptive phrases as love of God. Rather, it is modified by the way you love yourselves. So the way I love others should reflect the way I love myself. Moreover, Jesus has succinctly summarized the secret of relationships. Within the church my relationship with God, a vertical axis, affects/influences my relationship with myself and others, horizontal axis.



Note Jesus' summary statement in vs. 40 is that on these two commandments depend the whole Law and Prophets. This is a Jewish shorthand way of saying the whole Old Testament. In fact Jesus succinctly summarizes the two major groupings of the ten commandments, love of God (1-4) and love of the neighbor (5-10). The very foundation of God's message in the OT rests on love of God and others as yourself. I believe John 3:16 and 1 John 4:16 provide a continuation of this same foundation in the New Testament.

So now as the church, we have the heartbeat of how we fulfill our mandate – we make disciples out of love of God and others as ourselves. The church must maintain its focus on its mission and not get caught up in a defensive posture, or otherwise it will never be able to storm the gates of hell. How did this work out in the early church? Let us examine the response to Peter's message in Acts 2.

Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself." And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation!" So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. And day by day continuing with one mind in the

The CCP Pastoral Training Course Ecclesiology

temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:37-47)

Note Peter's answer in vs. 38 to the people's question whose hearts (Hebrew world view heart = mind, will, emotion) consciences had been pierced on what should they do. They are to repent, be baptized for Jesus' name for the forgiveness of sins and they will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter reminds them this is a promise for them and their children whom the Lord our Lord is calling to Himself. (While baptism is done in Jesus name, the other members of the trinity are mentioned. In no way should be construed to mean baptism only in Jesus' name takes precedence here. Mt. 28:19.) Following the tremendous response, 3,000 became believers. They practiced (vs. 42), in fact, put their hearts into, four disciplines as they became followers of Christ.

1. The apostles teaching which was the good news about Jesus and His teachings (Mt. 28:20)
2. Fellowship – *koinonia* – coming together for the purpose of encouraging and building each other up.
3. The breaking of bread – a common meal which probably included celebrating communion, or the Lord's Supper, or the Eucharist, together (see 1 Cor. 11:17-34)
4. Prayer – practicing talking with God and listening to God

These four disciplines are supplemented/expanded in the following verses (43-47).

1. The people were open to a sense of wonder and belief about who God was and how He worked through the apostles.
2. They were together in caring for each other and meeting each other's needs.
3. They spent time in public worship in a large setting (the Temple) and in smaller settings (the house).
4. Meeting together involved food which was a common element of Middle East culture. Food tends to relax people and in the Middle East provides the protection of the host.
5. They practiced all with abundant joy (see Jn. 15:11) and humility from their hearts, praising God (Ps. 34:1-3). Then in 47b they enjoyed favor with all the people and the Lord was adding to their number daily.

One can easily see that the early church understood Jesus' command and did so with love. They gave themselves wholeheartedly to His teaching, being baptized, loving on each other, prayer, and celebrating communion. The early church was not perfect and had to be challenged to go to all the nations (Acts 8:4; 10:1-48; 15:13-21). Wherever the early church went they practiced baptism and communion. These are crucial rites or ceremonies of the church which are known as sacraments or ordinances and are essential expressions of its purpose.

The Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and some other churches recognize seven sacraments: baptism, the Eucharist (Communion), confirmation, marriage, holy order, penance, and extreme unction. Most Protestants recognize only baptism and Communion, holding that these two alone were specifically instituted by Christ. Those who view these rites as *sacraments* see them as a "means of grace," that is, grace is

conveyed to the believer through participation. Those who use the term *ordinance* tend to see these rites as outward or visible symbols of an inward or spiritual reality.¹⁵

- Baptism is an essential part of the great commission and was routinely practiced in the early church as was already studied (Acts 2:41-10:48).
- Baptism is the Christian rite of initiation that symbolizes identification with and commitment to Christ, spiritual rebirth (or regeneration), and purification.
- In some churches (e.g., Roman Catholic, Orthodox), baptism is believed to have salvific benefits and is therefore administered to children as well as converts of any age.
- Some (e.g., Reformed/Presbyterian) believe baptism signifies the covenantal relationship between God and his people (as in the Old Testament rite of circumcision), and thus it is offered to children of believing parents as well as adult converts. In this view baptism is not considered salvific.
- Some, like Baptists and others, reserve baptism (sometimes called believer's baptism) for those having professed faith in Christ.
- Modes of baptism, which differ among churches, include immersion, effusion (pouring), and aspersion (sprinkling).¹⁶

Regardless of the mode, Christian Baptism is a step of obedience in the believer's continuing growth in his/her relationship with Christ. It is a public proclamation of one's faith in Christ alone for salvation. It serves as evidence that salvation is a reality in the believer's life. Thus has come the phrase "an outward sign or witness of an inward belief." Baptism is also a way to testify that life is new in Christ. This is clearly seen as Paul comments on baptism in Romans 6:3-7. He reminds us that baptism means we have died to sin and are raised to walk in newness of life. Comparing baptism with Christ's death and resurrection, Paul teaches that we have been buried with Him through baptism into death so that we might be raised from the dead to the glory of the Father, freed from sin. Paul sees baptism as symbol and act of sanctification. This parallels Peter's teaching in 1 Peter 3:18-22 where baptism is more than the removal of dirt from the flesh but an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ... (verse 21). This newness linked with light is reflected in what most believe to be an early baptismal hymn of the church?

Communion, the celebration of Fellowship with the Triune God, is also called the Lord's Supper or the Lord's Table. These other names serve as a good reminder that the Lord Himself instituted it, and commanded us to observe/keep it (Mt. 26:26-29; Mk. 14:22-25; Lk. 22:17-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25; 1 Cor. 10:16). It is His supper, not the church supper. This was instituted by Jesus as He celebrated his last meal with His disciples prior to His Crucifixion and hence what we often call the Last Supper. We find its story in each of the Gospels. Communion is also called the *Eucharist*, from the Greek word for being thankful or grateful, which is a believer's experience as He remembers Christ's death on his behalf. Communion became for the church what Passover was for the Israelites. Each time it was and is celebrated, the church remembered and we remember what Jesus did for us. Consequently...

Communion is a reenactment of the Last Supper of our Lord with his disciples before he was crucified. Bread and wine (or juice) represent the body and blood of Christ. There are four main views of Communion, though in practice each has variations.

¹⁵ Robert G. Clouse, "Doctrine of the Church," Portable Seminary, 187.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 188.

The Roman Catholic View

The Roman doctrine is known as transubstantiation, in which the “substance” of the bread and wine (when properly consecrated) is said to actually, *physically* change into Christ’s body and blood, even though the physical appearance remains unchanged.

The Lutheran View. Called consubstantiation, this approach holds that Christ’s body and blood are *substantially present* with the consecrated bread and wine, even though these elements do not physically change.

The Memorial/Commemorative View

Here the partaking of the bread and wine is a memorial – “in remembrance” of Christ’s atoning sacrifice. The elements are understood to be representative symbols of Christ’s body and blood; his presence is not believed to be physically or substantially present in them.

The Calvinist/Reformed View

This stresses the mystical, spiritual communion between the believer and Christ through the Holy Spirit. The body and blood of Christ are held to be truly (but only spiritually) present in the elements.¹⁷

In summary, while views may differ, the form may vary as long as it does not alter the designated reality. Believers may use unleavened or leavened bread and may drink grape juice or wine from one common vessel or from separate glasses. More important than such details of form is the purpose that believers eat and drink in remembrance of the One who died that they might live.

The Lord’s Table is repeated to signify the participant’s continued repentance from sin and faith in Christ. Repeatedly, Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of me” (1 Cor. 11:24-25). The bread and the wine or juice refresh our memories concerning the Messiah’s sinless life and atoning sacrifice in our stead. They vividly recall the unjust accusations and personal suffering he bore to deliver us from the power of evil. They recollect something of the agony of the Father’s wrath Jesus felt to effect our pardon. They recollect the precious blood he shed that we might be reconciled to God. For all who remember the greatest act of love in history, the Lord’s Table does not become an empty ritual. Those who doubt the truth of the Gospel may have little to remember, but those who believe the Bible are overwhelmed with memories of the greatest act of love ever offered.

Do believing participants in the Lord’s Table experience Christ’s “real presence”? Christians remain ever conscious of the Lord’s redemptive presence with them until the end of the age (Matt. 28:20). Also they are cognizant of his presence in the church whenever members gather in his name. In both these cases his presence is real. As participants examine themselves (1 Cor. 11:28) and intentionally partake (10:16), they become more consciously aware of their needs and of the presence of the Savior who sacrificed himself for them.

¹⁷ Ibid. 187-188.

The broken bread and poured-out wine/juice has a vast array of significant applications each time the event is celebrated. (1) the Holy Spirit faithfully strengthens the participant's capacities to know and serve the values of Christ's kingdom. (2) participation in the Table declares one's continuing assent to the Gospel's objective truth and its subjective application for one's life. (3) responsible participation in the Supper manifests a person's continued commitment to Christ as Lord in all relationships. (4) the bread and cup express one's renewed desire to love the Savior with one's whole heart. (5) partaking exhibits one's continual dismissal of other masters and the giving of ultimate allegiance to Christ above all else. (6) at the Lord's Table a person gives visible testimony to abiding fellowship with the crucified and exalted Christ and to the members of the institution he heads. So this observance may appropriately be called "communion." "Is not the cup of thanksgiving... a participation [*koinonia*] in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation [*koinonia*] in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16). At the Lord's Table people of faith experience relational communion (v. 17). Furthermore, believers together present a public *proclamation* of Christ's death until his return (1 Cor. 11:26).

The observance is administered responsibly by the church, but it is not the church's supper; it is the *Lord's* Supper. It was ordained by our Lord for all his followers, not for one particular church or denomination. Hence a church invites to participate all who owe their spiritual life to the crucified and risen Lord. And participants are to examine themselves, rather than be examined by the officers of the church (v. 28).¹⁸

So as the Church administers both baptism and communion, it fulfills its Lord's commands and His stated mission. As such it serves as a reminder that all ministries of the church from that time until now should ultimately focus on fulfilling the great commission (Mt. 28:18-20). To do this more effectively, the church experienced needs for organization and a form of governance. This is what we shall examine in Lesson 4.

LESSON 3 Discussion Questions

1. How are you actively engaged in fulfilling the great commission?
2. What is your attitude in filling the great commission?
3. What should be the end goal of all church programs and ministries?
4. When you read Acts 2:42-27, what are you practicing, putting your heart into it, to be a follower of Christ? How does your local church compare with the early church?
5. What form of communion do you enjoy most and why?
6. Have you been baptized? If so, how, why, and what did you experience? If not, why not?

18 Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology: Three Volumes in One* (Zondervan, 1996) 290-292.



The CCP Pastoral Training Course



Eschatology

~ Mike Theissen



1

Introduction to Eschatology

Eschatology is the study of last things. The meaning of the word derives from the Greek adjective *eschatos* which means “last.” This Biblical discipline seeks to answer the individual’s questions about death and life thereafter (*individual eschatology “last things”*). It also focuses on what will happen in the world between Christ’s first coming and his second coming (*general eschatology “last things”*).

The first major purpose in studying the last times is to understand more clearly the present journey of the believer on earth. Should believers anticipate being saved from the most difficult times or should we be prepared for persecution? Should believers expect the immorality of world to get better or worse? How will we battle evil? How does Jesus expect us to live during these times? Scripture teaches on these things in the passages on the last times. We will become more prepared as we understand what the scripture says.

The second major purpose in studying the last times is to better anticipate Christ’s second coming. What will happen to us? What will our future with Christ be like? How will Christ defeat Satan? Will we be with loved ones in the New Heavens and New Earth? What is the New Heavens and New Earth? Will people be made whole again without suffering? Scripture also teaches about our future hope. We will become steadfast through the turmoil of these present days when we rest in the hope of a truly better tomorrow.

Unfortunately, there have been many debates over the details of the future because of the difficult nature of prophetic literature - its symbols, images, and language. However, there are general areas of agreement about the future that evangelical Bible scholars agree upon. These are facts that are very clear in scripture. Despite the debates of interpretation on some other issues, which will continue for some time, the reader can clearly find wisdom for these days and hope for the next days in the facts about Christ’s victorious return.

Facts ----- Areas of Agreement

We agree there will be a Personal, Visible, Bodily Return of Christ

Jesus was clear that he would come again. In talking about being watchful for him, he said, “You also must be ready; the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matt. 24:44).

Jesus was also clear that his second coming would be visible to all. While he was teaching his disciples about the second coming, he made sure that they would not be lured out into the loneliness of the wilderness or into the secrecy of an inner room to look for Him by others pretending to have seen Him. His second coming will be like lightning in the sky that is seen from all directions (Matt. 24:27).

Luke records that immediately after Jesus ascended into heaven two angels said to the disciples, "this Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

Paul taught, "the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangels call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God" (1 Thess. 4:16). The author of Hebrews is even clearer about a second coming. He states, "and he will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" (Heb. 9:28). Peter said, "The day the Lord will come like a thief" (2 Peter 3:10). John wrote, "when he appears we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2). Finally, the book of Revelation has frequent references to Christ's return, ending with the witness, Jesus, saying, "Surely I am coming soon." In seeing this vision, John responded, "amen. come, Lord Jesus." (Rev. 22:20).

This anticipation is one of the predominant hopes of the Christian faith. The authors of the New Testament are crystal clear about this issue. Jesus will come again in the same way that he ascended to heaven after his resurrection. He will come physically. The entire world will see his return.

We agree that we should Prepare for Christ's Return

When Jesus encouraged us to be prepared and to be waiting for him John responded, "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20). All Christians should live in anticipation for Christ to come again. In his letter to Titus, Paul says, "live sober, upright, and carpet lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:12-13).

We Christians are to be like watchmen on a tower standing guard in anticipation of the time when the master returns so that we can open the gate. We protect the vineyard while the master is away. We must make sure that we are working in the house as diligent laborers to the task so that at the time when He returns we are to be found by Him doing good work and diligent work.

We agree that We should Prepare for Christ UNEXPECTED Return

Even though Jesus told his disciples that His second coming would be preceded by several events (the gospel being preached to all nations, the man of lawlessness appearing to stop sacrifice, the great tribulation, and the darkening of the sun), Jesus also taught that we would return expectedly.

But how is it possible to be surprised by something you can see coming? These passages that describe future events which must take place before Christ comes seem to be at odds with a the expectation of a sudden return. They seem to be set signals or signposts on a pathway that lead to the predicting of Jesus' return.

In the past, authors have resolved that Christ could not come back at any time because the signs have not been fulfilled. However, current evangelical scholarship seeks to uphold the imminence of Christ's return -- that he could return at any time -- and try to resolve the tension between the warning signs and the surprise of the end itself.

On this matter, Wayne Grudem's work, *Systematic Theology*, has been extremely helpful to relieve the tension. His point is that it was, is, and will be impossible to know when all of the signs will come to completion.¹

I would add here that there is good evidence that of the some of the signs have been fulfilled already and that others are near fulfillment. On the other hand, it has not been revealed to us the true time duration of these events and we have no concrete understanding of their completion except that they will precede Christ's return. The great tribulation, for example, that will continue to escalate with the increased presence of false prophets, could last days, years, or centuries. There is good evidence that we are already in it, but Jesus didn't give us these details of the event explicitly. The only thing we do know for certain is that Christ hasn't come yet and the sign will be completed before He comes. That could be tomorrow?

Each of the signs are meant to increase our anticipation of Christ's return, but they will not help us predict His coming. Christ's return is imminent. He could come back at anytime. However, although God has set a time, that time has not been revealed.

This unfulfilled anticipation frustrates people. It makes us tired. This could be said of the first generation of believers, who asked Jesus immediately after the resurrection if he would restore the kingdom of Israel right then. It can be said of every generation since. However, Jesus and the apostles warned us not to be "lulled into inattention," as Millard Erickson puts it.² One can see this in the parable of the foolish women in Matthew 25:1-13. One can feel this sentiment in 2 Peter 3:8-9 when Peter encourages his potentially tired and impatient brothers and sisters not to forget that God is long-suffering and patient, wanting to bring the end of all things but waiting so that many may not perish.

We are to be like Noah, who knew that he had a job to do, could the end coming, but did not know when the rains would fall. Would the rain come at the same moment that the construction of the Ark was complete and he had gathered enough food to survive the time on the ship? Would the rain come five days before he was fully prepared, so that his family would rush aboard without the adequate food and have to be miraculously fed by God? Would God find favor with anyone else who repented as they saw the creation of the Ark? Would God give them a little more time after construction was over to make up their minds?

Texts that talk about Christ's unexpected return

- Matthew 24:42; 36-39 - Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.
- Matthew 24:50 - The master of the servant will come, on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of...
- Matthew 25:13 - Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.
- Mark 13:32 - But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the son, but only the father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. Just like a man going away: he leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with an assigned

1 Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 1104.

2 Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1190.

task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back -- whether in the east thing, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you I say to everyone: watch!

- Luke 12:40 - You must also be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.
- Phil. 3:20
- 1 Thess. 5:2
- Titus 2:12-13
- Hebrews 10:25
- James 5:7-9 - Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.
- 1 Peter 4:7
- 2 Peter 3:10
- Rev. 1:3
- Rev. 22:7 - Look, I'm coming soon!
- Rev. 22:12
- Rev. 22:20 - Amen, come Lord Jesus!

These passages are clear that we will not know the time when Jesus will come back to this earth. Jesus spoke openly about the mystery of his return and anyone who claims to know specifically when Jesus is coming back should be automatically considered wrong.

Texts that talk about the signs that precede Christ's Return

- Mark 13:10 - "The Gospel must first be preached to all nations."
- Matt. 24:15-22 - "For then there will be a great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now -- and never to be equaled again."
- 1 John 2:18 - "Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. ¹⁹They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us."
- 2 Thessalonians 2:1 - "Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers and sisters, ²not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by the teaching allegedly from us—whether by a prophecy or by word of mouth or by letter—asserting that the day of the Lord has already come. ³Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. ⁴He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God."
- Romans 11:25 - "I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not think you are superior: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, ²⁶and in this way all Israel will be saved."

These passages clearly talk about events that will precede Christ's return. Do these verses imply that Jesus cannot return at any time? By no means. We can, as the early church did, reconcile these events with the expectation of the sudden return of Christ by humbly anticipating Him when we see things possibly happening without presumptuously predicting that we have reached the end.

We agree on the Final Results of Christ's Return

It should be emphatically noted that no matter what our differences are, Christians who take the Bible as the final authority, believe in Christ's return, in the judgment of unbelievers, in the final mercy of believers, that we will live with Christ as reigning King in a new heaven and new earth for all eternity.

Christ's Return will be Triumphant and Glorious

Various groups have maintained that Christ already returned in an invisible way. In recent history the Jehovah's Witnesses made this claim 1914.³ However Scripture is clear that Christ's second coming will be quite different than his initial humble incarnation. He will come in the clouds with great power and with great glory (Matthew 24:30, Mark 13:26, Luke 21:27). He will be accompanied by angels and announced by the Archangel (1 Thess. 4:16). He will sit triumphant on his glorious throne having authority over all of the nations to judge them (Matt. 25:31-36).

Christ Will Raise The Dead, both the saved and the lost.

The resurrection is the most significant reason why Christ's second coming gives so much hope to believers. Jesus said that those who believe in Him will live even though they die (John 11:14). This means that death will not be the end for believers. We will live again. John 5:28-29 records Jesus saying, "Do not be amazed at this, for time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out -- those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned." Jesus made it possible for us to have hope in a future resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:20-26 says, "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But in this order: Christ, the first fruits, then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come in the hands of the kingdom of God the father after he is destroyed all dominion authority and power."

Christ Will Judge All Who Have Ever Lived and Assign Their Eternal Destiny

Matthew 25:31-46 records Jesus teaching "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see

³ Millard Erickson, Christian Theology, pg. 1191.

you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, I you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

2 Timothy 4:1 says, "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead."

Christ will lift the Curse on Creation and Renew the Universe to Eliminate Evil

It is clear that this world is suffering because of the curse which came into this world because of sin. Romans 8:18-25 says, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. This tells of the present suffering, but looks to a future renewal. 2 Peter 3:10-13 also point to a future day of change as well: "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells."

"The Day of the Lord" is synonymous for the second coming of Christ. In the past, it has been used as a general reference concerning of momentous moments of God's working. However, in the context of Peter's letter, he is making reference to the coming of Christ. Christ will bring about the end of this corrupted world and create a new perfect world.

One of the most beautiful pictures of this is depicted in Revelation 21:1: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea..." "There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." Throughout prophetic literature the sea represents sin. There will be no more sin and no more decay because of sin. God will return this world back to perfection.



2

Different Views About the Details of Christ's Return (Eschatological Views)

Different Views about the details of Christ's Return (Eschatological Views)

In this section we are about to enter into areas of eschatological conversation that theologians disagree upon. There is a variety of different views and each view is driven by conclusions about different theological subjects. As a result there large collections of literature concerning the views and foundational issues that influence them. Many devoted Christian authors come to different conclusions. In the past, open dialogue has been impeded by inflammatory and threatening comments. It should be noted before we get started that the following discussions and evaluations should be done graciously and carefully because each view is with in orthodoxy. Each view seeks to represent the "what the Bible says." Prophetic literature is difficult because of its symbols, images, and language.

The following section requires and patience and critical thinking. Each view that will be evaluated is a complex building. Very often we try to tear down one position and build up another by starting on the top and from the outside, but, in reality, a view cannot be demolished and another one supported without starting from the foundations and working from the inside out. With that being said, the position of this course is most favorable to inaugurated-millennialism and least favorable to dispensational premillennialism.

As you work through the views and the details you will automatically be drawn to one based on who you are and your previous readings. Below are six key questions that should guide your process. All the views build on the answers they find to these questions. You should look at them and re-look at them. We will present each view, including positives and negatives, and then try resolve the issues by working the answers to each question below. For now, think about these questions. Write some of your preliminary answers. Be prepared to follow all the scriptures and think on them.

- What is the nature of the Church? Are the promises made to Abraham and the patriarchs fulfilled by the church?
- How will God fulfill the physical promises to Israel? Has this already happened in the past? Will the church receive this blessing now? Is God interested in National/Political Israel being restored to the land of Palestine?
- When did the end times begin? Have they begun yet? How do we know?
- Does the book of Revelation apply to the past, present, future, or all?

- Does Revelation 20 symbolically repeat the imagery of chs. 19-20 or is it literally speaking of a future millennium?
- Are there two stages of the second coming (rapture + return) or just one final return (rapture = return)?

The following eschatological views all use the word “millennialism” somewhere in their title. The word millennium means 1000 years. It comes from Revelation 20:4-5, which describes Christ reigning with the resurrected for a thousand years. These titles, which center around this passage, describe the heart of each view. Each view wants to clarify “what the millennium is” and “how it relates to the second coming” because they each hold this period to serve an important function. The function of the millennium differs with each view based on way they answer the above questions.

Dispensational Premillennialism

Beliefs

The church is a mystery unknown to the Old Testament. There is a separation between Israel and the church. The church exists during an interval in the midst of God’s program for Israel. This interval is called the “church age,” which is a different “dispensation” than the ones concerning Israel. God is not dealing with Israel presently, but He will return to dealing with them in the future, apart from the church. Christ will return for the church before the tribulation because the tribulation marks another dispensation which is for the nation of Israel, not the church.

Israel must be restored to the land so that God’s promises will not fail. This restoration includes the return of Israel to Palestine, the rebuilding of another Jewish temple, a system of animal sacrifices, and the supremacy of national Israel over the gentiles. Dispensationalists hold to a continuing unconditional covenant of God with national Israel, so that when God has completed his dealings with the church, he will return to his relations with National Israel. Jesus will literally sit on David’s throne and rule the world from Israel. All of the prophecies and promises regarding Israel will be fulfilled within the millennium, which will be markedly Jewish in character.

The end times will begin after the church age, when the church has been raptured. The tribulation is the wrath of God. Christians will not face the wrath of God. The tribulation period is a time for National Israel to be brought back to God. The Kingdom of God will come on the earth during millennium.

- The book of Revelation applies to the future.
- Revelation 20 is not a repeat of chs. 1-19. There is a future millennium and Christ will return before it. The prefix “pre” means “before.”
- There are two different returns of Jesus. One is a secret return to save Christians from the pending tribulation period. They call this the rapture. This makes the return of Christ imminent for Christians and concludes that the signs to precede his second coming will occur before his second, second coming.

Positive Arguments

- The OT predicts a universal reign of peace for a restored Israel under the personal rule of a descendant of David (2 Samuel 7:1-16; Jeremiah 31:31-36; Ezekiel 34-38; Daniel 9:24-27; Zechariah 14).

Problems

- The NT does not imply in any way that the church is just an interruption in God's plan with Israel. Romans makes it clear that "the children of the promise," the Abrahamic promise, are people of faith not just people of Jewish nationality. The church is a combination of believing Jews and gentiles. The gentiles come into the Kingdom along with believing Jewish disciples in order to fulfill God's promises to Abraham. Romans 11:25 does talk about a future repentance of the Jewish people. Also, Jesus said in Matthew 23, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" However, these passages imply that the Jewish people will be grafted back into the church rather than re-establish a political nation. God is very concerned with the salvation of the Jews but their hope is just the same as everyone in the church -- salvation through faith in Christ.
- The OT hope that the land will be restored to the people of God and their will be a universal reign of a Davidic King may just as well point to the eternal state (Revelation 21-22; Isaiah 65-66), not to a future millennium. The promise to Abraham was that his offspring would inherit the land "forever," not just 1000 years.
- The NT says nothing about a pre-tribulation stage of the second coming. There is simply no mention, or even allusions to, a church age or a rapture distinctive of the second coming. In both the OT and the NT God preserves his people through great tribulations, but not out of great hardships.
- A practical problem with this view is that it can disillusion God's people about suffering. Jesus calls believers to suffer as He did. Christ calls us to testify through suffering (Philippians 1-2) and He was honest with his disciples that the world would hate them and mistreat them (John 15:15-25).

Historic Premillennialism

Beliefs

- The church in many ways is the Spiritual Israel. When Christ came, gentiles and believing Jews were merged together into the church. God's promises to Israel are fulfilled in the church and any future promises apply to the church.
- God is no longer concerned with National Israel. Christ will fulfill the physical promises of Israel by physically reigning with the Christians (both Jews and Gentiles) in a future millennium. God still has a special interest in the Jewish people. There will be an influx of Jews into the church during the millennium.

- The end times began after the ascension of Christ. Christ's Kingdom has already come, but is not yet in its fullness. It will come in its fullness during the millennium.
- Because the book of Revelation applies to the church, individuals within this view differ on their views of chapters 5-19. They agree that these things will happen to the church, but disagree if it is happening right now. The millennium is unanimously understood to be in the future.
- Revelation 20 is not a repeat of chs. 1-19. There is a future millennium and Christ will return before it. Some premillennialists take this to be a literal one thousand years and others understand it to be a symbolic expression for a long period of time.
- There is just one return of Jesus. Jesus will return after the tribulation to establish the millennium. After the millennium there will be a rebellion.

Positive Arguments

- The OT predicts a universal reign of peace for a restored Israel under the personal rule of a descendant of David (2 Samuel 7:1-16; Jeremiah 31:31-36; Ezekiel 34-38; Daniel 9:24-27; Zechariah 14).
- The premillennial version of eschatological events overcomes many weaknesses of the dispensational position. For one, it better represents how the church fulfills the personal rule of the Messiah.
- If Revelation 20 is a literal scene, it indicates that the millennium is a time where Satan is bound and unable to deceive the nations. This is not true of this present age (2 Cor. 4:3-4).
- If Revelation 20 is a literal scene, those who "come to life" at the beginning of the millennium are persons who have physically died (Revelation 20:4). We know that the resurrection of the righteous occurs at the second coming (1 Thes. 4:13-18). This would imply that the second coming occurs at the beginning of the millennium.
- If Revelation 20 is not a repetition of chs. 6-19, the first resurrection within the millennium occurs after the Beast. The beast is a symbol for the future anti-Christ at the end of this age. Therefore, the millennium comes after this age.

Problems

- The OT hope that the land will be restored to the people of God may just as well point to the eternal state (Revelation 21-22; Isaiah 65-66), not to a future millennium. The promise to Abraham was that his offspring would inherit the land "forever," not just 1000 years.
- What possible purpose does the millennium serve in this view of the end? It seems to have no purpose at all. Christ can fulfill the physical promises of Israel by physically reigning with the Christians (both Jews and Gentiles) in the new heavens and new earth.
- Will resurrected saints really mingle with mortal sinners on earth? It seems grotesque to think resurrected believers will have to go through a final battle after already dying and coming back to life.
- Revelation 20 continues in the literary genre of the rest of the book. It doesn't make sense to move to a literal interpretation of this passage. This is really the only biblical reference to a 1000 year reign and clearer passages should be allowed to govern the interpretation of this difficult passage.

Postmillennialism

- The church is the Spiritual Israel. When Christ came, gentiles and believing Jews were merged together into the church. God's promises to Israel are fulfilled in the church and any future promises apply to the church. However, there will be an influx of Jews who come into the church by accepting Christ during the millennium.
- God is no longer interested in National Israel. Christ will fulfill the physical promises of Israel by reigning in the hearts of people universally in a future millennium. As the gospel spreads Christian influences on society will more and more function according to God's standards, and gradually a "millennial age" of peace and righteousness will occur on the earth. They believe Satan was bound at the time of the cross and will remain bound until the second coming (Mark 3:27). Thus, this view is very optimistic about the power of the gospel to transform society. The Great Commission is carried out in the authority of Christ. Therefore, it will be successful (Matthew 28:18-20; Isaiah 45:22-25; Hosea 2:23). Due to the reality of the twentieth century we are not as near to the second coming as we thought we were.
- The end times began after the ascension of Christ. Christ's Kingdom has already come, but is not yet in its fullness. It will come in its fullness during the millennium.
- Because the book of Revelation applies to the church, individuals within this view differ on their views of chapters 5-19. They agree that these things will happen to the church, but disagree if it is happening right now. The millennium is unanimously understood to be in the future.
- Revelation 20 is not a repeat of chs. 1-19. There is a future millennium and Christ will return after it. The millennium is understood to be an extended period of time during the end of this age.
- There is just one return of Jesus. After the tribulation, the millennium will come about through spread of the gospel. Christ will return after that time.

Positive Arguments

- The OT prophets predict a period of universal peace and righteousness under the rule of Christ (Psalm 2:7-9; Isaiah 2:1-4; Micah 4:1-4; Daniel 2:44).

Problems

- The NT never envisions a Christianized world before the 2nd coming; the opposite is true. Revelation envisions that the 2nd coming will follow the outward victory of evil and the persecution of the saints. The "golden age" of peace and righteousness need not be before the 2nd coming (Isaiah 65:17-25). Christ can fulfill the physical promises of reigning with glory by physically reigning with the Christians (both Jews and Gentiles) in the new heavens and new earth.

Inaugurated-Millennialism (Classically known as Amillennialism)

Beliefs

- The church is the Spiritual Israel. Jesus was the Messiah to the Jews; therefore, the gentiles and believing Jews who accept Him are merged together into the church. They are “the children of God.” God’s promises to Israel are fulfilled in the church and any future promises apply to the church. God still has a special interest in the Jewish people. There will be an influx of Jews into the church before the second coming.
- God is no longer concerned with National Israel. Christ will fulfill the physical promises of Israel by physically reigning with the Christians (both Jews and Gentiles, the Remnant of Israel) in the New Heavens and New Earth.
- The end times began after the ascension of Christ. Christ’s Kingdom has already come, but is not yet in its fullness. It will come in its fullness during the New Heavens and New Earth.
- Because the book of Revelation applies to the church. The prophecies are unfolding in this time. The millennium is unanimously understood to be presently unfolding.
- Revelation 20 is a repeat of chs. 1-19. There is no future millennium. Christ is reigning in the hearts of his people who are saved and battling satan and his forces until the end. The millennium is a symbolic expression of the end times that will last for a long period of time.
- There is just one return of Jesus. Jesus will return after the tribulation to judge the living and the dead. After the resurrection and judgement there will be a renewed universe.

Positive Arguments

- The NT teaches that the promises of Abraham’s seed is fulfilled in all believers through faith in Jesus. The NT never envisions a Christianized world prior to the 2nd coming. Revelation envisions that the 2nd coming will follow the outward victory of evil and the persecution of the saints. The “golden age” of peace and righteousness need not be before the 2nd coming (Isaiah 65:17-25). Christ can fulfill the physical promises of reigning with glory by physically reigning with the Christians (both Jews and Gentiles) in the new heavens and new earth.
- Revelation 20 continues in the literary genre of the rest of the book. It makes sense to interpret this passage figuratively -- translate the images literally as images.
- There is only one coming. There is only one judgement. The second coming will bring in the final eternal state of the universe. At the same time, all the dead, both righteous and unrighteous, will be resurrected. It makes sense that the climax of history would indeed be a “climax.” It is the final event before the end of this world. It makes sense that this all happens in short order.
- There is no salvation after the second coming. No age beyond that point in which one may turn to Christ.
- The Kingdom of God is already inaugurated, but is not yet fully come until the end of the end. Therefore, the forces of evil will remain strong and be concentrated against the church, yet the people of God will resist and be protected with the power of Christ. This refutes the optimism of postmillennialism and affirms the persecution within historic premillennialism. This also reflects the present condition of the world.

Problems

- To see Revelation 20 as a recapitulation of Revelation 6-18 might require a strained interpretation. Inaugurated-millennialists have interpreted the text in a number of ways and their lack of unanimity may indicate that their system does not explain the text well.



3

Resolving the Issues

Resolving the Issues

At this point it is important to return to the questions that drive each position. In order to resolve at least some of the disagreement, we will attempt to answer each of these questions. As mentioned above, this course favors inaugurated millennialism. However, we will try to let Scripture speak for itself so that you the student can formulate your own theological framework concerning these issues.

What is the Nature of the Church?

There have been volumes and volumes written about the nature of the church. What is the church? What is the relationship between the church and the kingdom of God? What is the relationship between the church and Jewish people -- specifically now, the nation of Israel?

These questions are so important for two reasons: First, the imagery of Revelation is Jewish in nature. The Jewish looking pictures are symbols of something else, but what are they symbols of? Are they symbols of the church or of a future nation of Israel. If one concludes that the church has somehow taken the place of the nation, then these prophetic images are easily understood to portray the church. If one concludes that the church is somehow different than the nation of Israel, then these prophetic images are difficult to understand because they were written to the church and include references to the church. Second, the promises to Israel included land and a King. If one concludes that the church has taken the place of the nation, then the news about Israel using Russian and American missiles to invade Palestine is not a matter of celebration. If one concludes that the church is somehow different than the nation of Israel, and that God is still for the nation of Israel, then the domination of Israel in the Middle East is something to be celebrated. The Bible has specific metaphors for the church to explain some of these things.

First, the church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:4). Through salvation people are brought together under Christ as the "head" into one universal unite. Anyone saved through faith is a member of the church and performs a certain function within it. The church is Christ's hands and feet and hears on the earth. We do the bidding of the head, which is Jesus.

Second, the church is also a gathering, similar to the gathering of the people in the Old Testament for ceremonial meetings (Numbers 14:1). It is called together by the Father (Ephesians 1:18; 1 Peter 5:10), saved by the sacrifice of the Son (John 3:16; Hebrews 10:10), and empowered by the Spirit, (Exodus 13:22; John 14:15 -- 31).

Third, the church is the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2-3). Just a pure and beautiful woman is presented to a groom on her wedding day because she will become one with her husband in spirit and flesh, so the church has been united with Christ through faith. Our faith is like the marriage bond. We were saved through faith and enter into a relationship with Jesus in the Spirit.

Fourth, it is also the temple of the Holy Spirit. The church is in-dwelt by the Holy Spirit, in both an individual and collective basis. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 3, "do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are." Paul also describes believers as "a holy temple in the Lord... a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:21-22). And in that same context, Paul portrays Jesus as the cornerstone of that temple. Finally, Peter speaks of believers also as "a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5).

In all the examples above, the church is pictured as a group of individuals who've come into a relationship with God through belief in his Son. This was the invitation that Jesus first extended to the Jewish people as their Messiah. Jesus invited the Jewish nation to identify Him as their Messiah and to follow His Kingship, but many of them rejected his offer (Matthew 21- 22:14). However, Jesus came out of the Israelite nation to fulfill God's promise to Abraham (Gen. 12) that his offspring would be a blessing to all nations. Therefore, all nationalities are invited to become the people of God through making Jesus their King. All people groups are represented. There is no place for favoritism within these images. As a body, the eyes are not more valuable than the hands. As a gathering, all people come through the same mediator, who is Jesus Christ. As a bride, each individual makes the same pledge and walks the same path way into unity. Finally, as the Temple, we all rest on the same cornerstone as our foundation.

Therefore, there is no salvation outside of the church. The church includes Jews and Gentiles who believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah spoken of by the prophets in the Old Testament. Within these metaphors there does not seem to be any indication that this institution, this organic, universal, gathering is somehow secondary or distinctive from another group of God's choosing. The invitation was to the Jews first and then to the whole world to join them. Some Jews believed and some gentiles believed. Together they became the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom

Very important to the discussion, is an understanding of the kingdom of God. Prior to the first coming of Jesus, the nation of Israel was referred to as the kingdom of God. Solomon was the King over the "the kingdom of the Lord" (1 Chron. 28:5). It is important, and not incidental, that the topic of Jesus' very early messages, and possibly all of his messages to some degree, was "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matt. 4:17). Jesus also announced that he would build his church and that the powers of death would not prevail against it. Immediately after saying that phrase he went on to say to Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 16:18-19). When Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, he told them to pray to the Father: "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Some authors have maintained that identifying the church as the kingdom of God is stretching a metaphor too far. However, Jesus consistently referred to the church as the kingdom of God and encouraged the church to pursue the kingdom of heaven. These authors' attempt to make a distinction between the

kingdom and the church because they see the kingdom as the reign of God.⁴ Just as Solomon physically reigned, these authors are generally still looking for Christ to fulfill a physical David reign within “the Kingdom.” However, Christ is currently reigning. He rules in the hearts of his followers and they affect change in the world on his behalf. Christ’s kingdom has already started on earth. There is a clash of the kingdoms going on between those in the church and those outside. But, the kingdom is not yet in its fullness. We all look forward to the day when Christ will reign physically with us, but this comes after his return. Jesus could talk plainly about the kingdom and invites people to enter it, even though He won’t physically immediately. Just as He rebuilt the temple, spiritually; he has also inaugurated His kingdom spiritually.

This is called inaugurated eschatology. This language was first used by the historic premillennialists and is now affirmed by many other views. It brings together many of the views. Even though they differ as to when the physical reign will occur (in a future millennium or in the future new heavens and new earth), three out of the four views agree that “the Kingdom” is synonymous with “the church.”

In Relation to Israel

One of the most divisive and dangerous issues in the church today is the promotion of the nation of Israel. On one hand, dispensationalists regard Israel and the Church as two entirely separate entities with which God deals with in different ways. Among these individuals are those who promote the political agendas of Israel within the land of Palestine. On the other hand, reformed theologians see the nation of Israel as an accursed people who have rejected their Messiah. God is of course interested in seeing them restored to Himself, but He is not concerned that people who are outside His people receive the promises to His people. They believe that the church swallowed up the Jewish people who were faithful to Jesus, those who showed themselves to be true Jews, true children of the Abrahamic promise (Romans 2:28), and added the gentiles to them in order to make the Kingdom. Within this view the church is often called the “new Israel” or “spiritual Israel.”

This issue is so divisive because it divides the Christian body into two opposing forces. The dispensational position, which promotes the political agendas of Israel, seeks to see Israel rule in the Middle East at, what seems to be, the expense of Palestinian human rights and the concerns of Palestinian Christians who live and ministry there. The covenantal position, which promotes the gospel and a form of neutrality between the Palestinians and the Israelis, seeks a resolution that, which seems to be, is insensitive and unfavorable to the Jewish nation. Even though each view tries to truly understand what the Bible says on this matter, it seems difficult to support the dispensational position.

First of all, Paul went to great lengths to correct a misconception among the Jewish people themselves. The misconception was that one was a child of the God because is of the Jewish blood that flowed through one’s veins. It is clear that this is the issue which Paul deals with specifically in Romans, “for he is not a real Jew who is one at a word league, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and the real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal” (2:28-29.) Therefore, there has always been a spiritual group within the nation of Israel who were actually listening to God and there was also a mass of individuals who were not part of his promises at all.

4 George E. Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), pg. 259-60.

Secondly, Paul also went to great lengths to include Gentile believers as children of God's promises. To the Galatians he wrote, "and if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise" (3:29). Other important passages that Paul uses to develop his theology of the church are Romans 4:11, 16, 18; and "Those who are not my people I will call "my people," and her who was not beloved, I will call "my beloved" (9:24-25).

N.T. Wright encourages us not to forget the Jewish nature of Jesus.⁵ Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. There is no other. And it is the Jewish Messiah who saves the rest of the world. "Salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). It will not come from Arabs, Americans, or Africans. Salvation is from the Jews. However, the Bible teaches that there is no difference between physical Jews and physical gentiles. Each must be changed spiritually in order to become a child of God. All Jews and Gentiles become "real" Jews through faith in Jesus in order to be saved! But what does that look like? How much of the traditional/national Judaism must we take with us into the Kingdom? This was the struggle of the early church, between Paul and Peter (Galatians). This was the issue of the first Christian council in Acts 15. This continues to be a topic of question in the church today, but it is a topic for the church. How Jewish should we, the church, be now that we are the descendants of Abraham?

There is, however, a future for the Jewish people. The God is concerned that they come to repentance and in Romans 11 Paul affirms that many Jewish people will be grafted back into the church (26). This is very different from saying that there is a future for the nation of Israel. The Scriptures clearly support the idea that many Jewish people will learn to recognize Jesus as their Messiah through the spread of the Gospel, but it does not support a propping up an Israeli government in Palestine in order for a Jewish nation to reclaim the land.

To sum it up, the church sprung out of the Jewish people and so God's promises are true and good because, even though some Jews disobeyed, others followed their Messiah (Romans 3:3) and continued to walk in covenant with him. The church is the new Israel. It does not replace the nation, it rather occupies the place in the new covenant which faithful within Israel occupied in the old. Whereas the kingdom of God was populated by a small remnant of Jews within the national Israel in the Old Testament; the kingdom of God is populated by the multinational people of the church in the New Testament. The people of promise continually walk a separate path to that of others in the nation of Israel. There is a special future for some Jewish people. However, it will be through a large scale conversion to Christ and entry into the church.

This conclusion allows interpreters to understand the Jewish images in the book of Revelation as applying to the people of God, both before the first coming and after the first coming. The symbols can refer to the historic tradition that the church was birthed out of. The symbols can refer to the nation of Israel and allude to the people of God at the same time. For example, the woman with 12 stars over her head who is pregnant can be identified as the Jewish people waiting for the birth of their Messiah. However, that same woman who leaves from Satan who is angry because he has been defeated already can be seen as the people of God in the new covenant. The same woman represents the same people group: the people of God of Jewish nature who were waiting for the Messiah who are included with the people of God who fight persecution since the Messiah (Revelation 12).

⁵ N. T. Wright. Jesus and the Victory of God. Augsburg Fortress Press, 1997.

This conclusion also promotes neutrality when it comes to the nation of Israel. Even though there are reasons for just war, Jesus spoke much about pacifism and the spread of the gospel in the midst of persecution. Even though there is a real interest in a tiny country in the middle east, Christians should be using this interest promote peace and the Gospel among the Arabs and Jews. If we promote peace and teach the salvation of the Messiah in both groups may come to reconciliation. Much of the Christian world has given up on the power of the Gospel to change the hearts of Muslims in particular. Others have given up on the power of the Gospel to change the hearts of Jews. However, our mandate is to promote justice and mercy. We should carry these things on the wings of the Gospel.

How will God fulfill the physical promises to Israel?

Because so much time has already been dedicated to understanding the nature of the church. This section will be significantly shorter. It is my hope to present a brief and concise answer to this question.

In the Old Testament it seems that God promised a restoration, a return to power, for the state of Israel with the coming of the Messiah. It is obvious that Jesus turned many of the anticipations of his physical reign on top of their heads. He did not calm and conquer the Romans. He did not force the Jews into submission. He did not vindicate his believers by giving them positions of political and monetary significance. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. He did this by shedding his blood so that as many who would receive him might be saved. However, it is clear that Jesus will return in a completely different way at his second coming. Jesus will return and physically rain with his people for eternity in the new heavens and a new earth. Jesus is the perfect example of the resurrection. He died. His soul was separated from his body. He came to life again with a new resurrection body. And He will return in the future to physically be present with his people. Therefore, a simple answer to the question is as follows: God will fulfill the physical promises to Israel in the future when Christ' Kingdom comes in its fullness.

Premillennialists believe that Christ's kingdom will come in its fullness during the millennium, which is after his return and before the new heavens and the new earth. Inaugurated-millennialist believe that Christ's kingdom will come in its fullness during the new heavens and the new earth. These views are very similar in that they are waiting for the fullness of God's kingdom to happen in the future. They only differ on the interpretation of Revelation 20. The inaugurated millennialist position is the simplest of the two and holds two a symbolic translation of Revelation 20. Where as it seems that this is the stronger position, you the student should note how close the positions are. God is working with the church. God will be faithful to his physical promises. The new heavens and a new earth will be a physical and perfect resurrected state. God will be faithful to his promises.