

# **THIS I BELIEVE**

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**1951**

**BY THE REVIEW AND HERALD PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**

**U. S. A.**

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## **1. I Believe in God**

AS I PASSED by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore you ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” Acts 17:23.

As in the days of Paul, so today there are thousands who worship an unknown God. They believe in some kind of God, but they have no conception of what He is like. They have never experienced in their hearts that He is a God of love and mercy, and that He is kind and long-suffering. Sad to say, in this enlightened, intelligent, scientific, and so-called religious age many do not believe that God exists.

The atheists, the agnostics, and the materialists are not all dead. Some have found their way into religious circles. The atheist says, "There is no God," but his statement is no proof that God does not exist. These boastful atheists often speak differently when they face death. The agnostic says, "I do not know whether there is a God or not." The materialist boasts by saying, "I do not need God; I can run the world without Him."

I have chosen to cast my lot with the Christian, because I believe in God and I need Him. The following reasons convince me that there is a God.

### **The Existence Of God**

Proof of the existence of God is not necessary, because it is not based on a knowledge of chemistry, geology, or biology. Before these sciences were taught, men had definite proof of the existence of God. We do not need to prove that two times two are four. That is an accepted fact. Someone has well said, "If once there had been nothing, there never could have been something; hence something must be eternal, and that something is God." A heathen philosopher once asked a Christian, "Where is God?" The Christian answered the heathen by asking him, "Where is He not?"

“There's not a tint that paints the rose, Or decks the lily fair,  
Or makes the humblest flower that grows But God has placed it there.

“There's not a star whose twinkling light Illumes the spreading earth;  
There's not a cloud so dark or bright But wisdom gave it birth.

“There's not a place on earth's vast round, In oceans deep, or air,  
Where love and beauty are not found, For God is everywhere.”

### **God Is Unsearchable**

If we could understand all about God, could analyze Him, then He would cease to be God. The more we study His character, His divinity, and His power, the more wonderful and far reaching we find Him. Job asked, "Can thou by searching find out God? Can thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Job 11:7. Job expected a negative answer. The apostle Paul expressed the same thought when he said, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Romans 11:33. How good it is to know that although God is unsearchable, yet we can know Him. We are invited to become acquainted with Him. We are to know Him as our personal Friend and that "in him we live, and move, and have our being." Acts 17:28.

### **Nature Reveals God**

If I say there is no God, then I must believe that the earth was not created by Him. I must choose one of two things: God as the Creator, or the evolution theory. I refuse to accept the evolution theory, because of the many weaknesses that are part and parcel of all the hundreds of theories, hypotheses, guesses, and imaginings that have been brought forward to support it. There is much evidence against evolution, and this has been furnished by the evolutionists themselves. They are constantly proving one another's theories wrong, and putting forth theories of their own. How much better it is to believe in God, the Creator of all. If there is no God, no revelation of Him, no future eternal life, then all this world in which we live, with all its sciences and glory, is nothing. The deep, earnest, honest, thinking man concludes

that far-reaching thoughts preceded the birth of nature.

The order and system of the planets, the glory of the flowers, the planets, and the stars-all reveal their Maker. Some of the most reliable scientists have believed in God, and have so expressed themselves. An atheist said to a Christian, "We shall destroy everything that will remind you of God." The Christian replied, "But you will leave us the sun, the moon, and the stars." Through inspiration the psalmist cried out, "The heavens declare the glory of God." His glory cannot be declared without declaring God Himself.

## **The Bible Reveals God**

As we open the pages of the Holy Book, called the Bible, we immediately see the words: "In the beginning God." Turning to the last words, we read, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." Yes, God is revealed in His Book. His works and His Word always agree. They are harmonious-in perfect unity. The Bible gives light. It is reliable. It stands in spite of the fact that it has been fought against through the centuries, and it will continue to reveal the true God. David said, "The entrance of thy words gives light; it gives understanding unto the simple." Psalm 119:130. "Thy word is true from the beginning." Verse 160. According to these statements, the very first words of the Bible should cast light on the pathway of the searcher for truth.

The first ten words in the Bible correct many errors. The words "In the beginning" refute the idea of the eternity of matter. The words "In the beginning God" refute atheism. The two words "God created" oppose the doctrine of evolution. The statement "created the heaven and the earth" separates God from creation, thus precluding pantheism. Matter is not God, and this denies materialism. The more we study the Bible, the more and the better we know God.

## **Longing Desire In The Heart After God**

Some years ago an infidel addressed a large crowd on one of the streets in London. He held the attention of his hearers as he presented his views on why he did not believe that there is a God. At the close of his lecture a young man who had listened to him said to the crowd, "Let us sing a song before we leave." This the infidel resented by saying, "Infidelity sings no songs." The young man, however, paid no attention to him and began to sing that old familiar hymn, "Nearer, My God, to Thee." The crowd picked up the strain and joined in singing heartily the words that, through the centuries, have expressed the convictions of those who believe that there is a God. What an answer to this infidel! This longing in the heart for God is the best proof that there is a God. The psalmist expressed this conviction when he said, "As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after thee, O God." Psalm 42:1.

There is a consciousness in man that there is a God. We were created in the image of God. Instinct tells us that He is our maker. This desire in the heart after God changes the life of the individual, not for worse but for better. Sad indeed is the condition of the one who has no desire after God, who does not believe in Him.

He who believes in God chooses to follow His way, which is outlined in the Bible; he has within his soul a bright hope of life eternal, which is given to those who accept Him and follow Him completely. Man is as nothing before God. "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visits him?" Psalm 8:4. We are so insignificant. We are counted as dust. "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance." Isaiah 40:15. Yet this great God, in whom we believe and whom we serve, loves us and has a tender care for us. He is kind, merciful, gracious, and long-suffering. He longs to reveal Himself to us. He desires that all shall be saved.

Is this wonderful God, before whom we are as nothing, still unknown to us? If so, shall we not become acquainted with Him now? May we demonstrate daily by the life we live that we believe that there is a God and that He will never leave or forsake us.

## **2. I Believe in Christ**

THE CONTROVERSY concerning the person of Christ is universal. Some believe that He was an intruder, a false prophet, an impostor. Others think that He was only a good moral man, a man of influence. The important question is the one Jesus asked His disciples, "What think you of Christ?" Matthew 22:42. It is not what we say, write, or preach that is important, but what we think, for "as ... [a man] thinks in his heart, so is he." The Christian believes that Christ is the Son of God, the true Messiah, and he has ample proof for his belief. Of the many reasons that might be given let us notice the following.

### **His Pre-Existence**

If Christ lived only after His birth in Bethlehem, then He is not the true Messiah. But the Bible pictures Him as the Creator of the world. "By him were all things created." Colossians 1: 16. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." John 1:1-3. These words refer to Christ, the Son of God. Since He is the Creator, we must believe in His pre-existence. Jesus further substantiated His pre-existence by saying, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." John 3:13.

Before completing His work on earth Christ offered a prayer to His Father in which He said, "O Father, glorify thou me with your own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." John 17:5. Notice, "the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Yes, Christ is the I am." That is why He said, "Before Abraham was, I am." John 8:58. Surely no one can intelligently deny His pre-existence. This is one of the fundamental pillars of the Christian church.

### **He Fulfilled All Prophecies Concerning The True Messiah**

many years before Christ was born, the prophet through inspiration said, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Isaiah 7:14. The fulfillment of this prophecy is found in Matthew 1: 2 3. Thus Christ fulfilled this prophecy concerning His name to the very letter. The prophet Micah, more than seven hundred years before the coming of the Messiah, gave the place where He was to be born: "Thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth." Micah 5:2. Did Christ fulfill this prophecy? Indeed He did! In Matthew's second chapter inspiration tells us that He was born in Bethlehem of Judea.

Later on in His ministry we find a wonderful fulfillment of His triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The story is recorded in Luke 19. You remember the story, how Jesus told His disciples to go to a certain village. There they would find a colt tied, upon which no man had ever sat. They were to loose him and bring him to the Master. When the colt was brought, the disciples cast their garments upon it, and Jesus sat upon it. As He rode into Jerusalem the disciples spread their clothes in the way and rejoiced greatly, saying, "Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord." Some of the Pharisees who stood by and watched the scene were much displeased with the noise that was made; so they said, "Master, rebuke thy disciples." But He answered them and said, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." Why this statement? Because more than five hundred years before the Lord was born, the prophet Zechariah had a vision of the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, and said, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King comes unto thee. He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." Zechariah 9:9. How then could the disciples be stopped from rejoicing? They were fulfilling the prophecy. If they had been silent, then the very stones would have cried out and thus fulfilled the prophecy.

Have you ever wondered why Christ was sold for thirty pieces of silver? Why not for thirty-one or twenty-nine or any other sum? Why just thirty? The question is answered again by referring to the prophecy concerning the selling of Christ. Zechariah prophesied: "So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver." Zechariah 11:12. We know how Judas, the one who betrayed Him with a kiss, sold his Master. The scripture says, "They covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver." Matthew 26:15.

We are told that when Christ was led to the mount of crucifixion "they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots." Matthew 27:35. Why should one take notice of this? Because it was a fulfillment of prophecy. The Lord through the psalmist hundreds of years before He was born said, "They

part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.” Psalm 22: 18. We follow the Savior to the scene of crucifixion. He was beaten, smitten, treated cruelly. As the cruel nails were driven through His hands and feet, He was silent. Not a word did He utter; no complaint came from His lips. He fulfilled the prophecy made by Isaiah: “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opens not his mouth.” Isaiah 53:7. Prophecy was fulfilled to the very letter.

After His death upon the cross He was laid to rest in a tomb. But the grave could not hold Him. He did not see corruption. On the day of Pentecost, Peter referred to the prophecy of David when he said, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer your Holy One to see corruption.” Acts 2:27. How wonderfully He fulfilled the prophecy concerning His death, His burial, and His resurrection. He Himself declared that He had fulfilled all the prophecies concerning the true Messiah. (Luke 24:44.) There are many other prophecies concerning the Messiah ship of Christ. Not one failed to be fulfilled. He is the only one who has ever lived who has fulfilled all the prophecies concerning the Son of God. Hence we must believe that He is the true Messiah.

## **His Divinity**

His divinity is questioned today by many, even by those who call themselves Christians. His very name reveals His divinity: “They shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” Matthew 1:23. If Jesus were not divine, why did He allow Thomas to call Him “my Lord and my God” (John 20:28), without rebuking him? His son ship was proclaimed before the cross. You remember when the disciples were in the boat, and a great storm arose, that Jesus calmed the storm. And those in the ship came and worshiped Him, saying, “Of a truth thou art the Son of God.” Matthew 14:33. His son ship was proclaimed while He was hanging on the cross. When He expired on the cross, the centurion said, “Truly this man was the Son of God.” Mark 15:39. His son ship was proclaimed after the cross by His disciples. After Saul was converted he preached that Jesus was the Son of God. (Acts 9:20.)

We believe the divinity of Christ because of His claim to son ship, His resurrection, His power to forgive sins, His promise to give eternal life, His claim to be the Savior of the world, and because of His own words which make Him one with the Father. He said, I and my Father are one.” His Father gave His testimony as to the son ship of Jesus when He said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Matthew 3:17. With the apostle Paul we can truly say, In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” Colossians 2:9. By His pre-existence, by His divinity, and because He is the only one who has fulfilled all the prophecies concerning the Messiah, Christ is shown to be the Son of God.

Christ will eventually be acknowledged by all as the true Son of God, but then it will be too late for many. He is the only hope of the world the only hope of the sinner, and the only hope of the church and of the child of God.

What do we personally think of Christ? We answer this question every day by the life that we live.

### **3. I Believe in the Inspiration of the Bible**

THE WISE MAN says, "Of making of many books there is no end." Ecclesiastes 12:12. The Bible is one of the many thousands of books that are in print. It is different from other books in existence. None is like it, because it is divine. It is rightly called "God's Book, the miracle Book of the ages, the Book of books."

Those who do not believe in the Bible as the inspired word of God generally know very little about it. They have never studied it for themselves. They only read what others have written about the Bible. One needs but to study the Bible for himself to be convinced that it contains the voice of God speaking to man. We seem to improve on everything in this world but the Bible. Why do we not improve on it? The answer is plain: Because it is the inspired word of the living God and therefore it is unchangeable. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Matthew 24:35. We either accept the Bible as God's word or we reject it. We cannot be neutral in this respect.

There are many reasons that have led me to accept the Bible as the inspired Word of the Lord. The following are but a few of the many that might be given.

#### **Because Of Its Origin And Contents**

No book ever came into being by luck or chance. Every book printed today owes its existence to some being or beings. This is true of the Bible. God is its author, for "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." 2 Timothy 3:16. Again we read, "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1:21. As one studies the Word he is convinced that it springs from the depths of divine love and wisdom and mercy, that it is but a hint of the power that lies back of it.

In the Bible we have sixty-six books. These have been written at different times, covering a period of fifteen hundred years. They have been written by different authors, who differ widely in education, culture, personal qualities, and intellectual capacities. Yet through the whole Bible one increasing purpose runs. The contents of the Bible are beyond human invention. A converted Hindu said, "This book has not been brought about by human thought but by divine inspiration." The beauty, the truth, and the way of salvation that are found in the Bible are of divine origin. Those who wrote the Bible proclaimed that the Word was given by inspiration. Therefore it must be God's Book. Thomas Dick said, "The religion of the Bible requires only to be examined with care and studied with humility and love in order to produce a full conviction of its celestial origin."

Yes, the Bible is divinely inspired because of its origin and contents.

#### **Because Of Its Depth**

Books written by men are usually shallow. The Bible is different. It plays with wisdom; it talks to the child. Its language can be understood. It has been well stated that "the Bible is shallow enough so that the most timid swimmer may enjoy its water without fear; and it is deep enough for the most expert swimmer to enjoy without touching the bottom." Also, the Bible is like a mine. The deeper we dig, the more we find. The perusal of the Word of God reveals the fact that the gold and diamonds are underneath. This mine of truth will never be exhausted. If we could understand everything in it, then it would not be divine. We believe that it is inspired, not because we can understand everything that is written in it, but because God has spoken the words. The Lord has revealed all the truths that are vital to our salvation. These can be understood.

#### **Because It Is Always Up To Date**

Books produced by men may be up to date at the time they are written, but as the years go by they become out of date. They have but a short life. How different it is with God's Book! It is more popular from year to year. And the very fact that it is here and intact is in itself a miracle. Everything grows old and goes out of date, but not the Bible. It is the eternal word of the living God. He says, "I change not"; hence His word does not change. Someone has said, "When God grows old and weak and perishes, then and not until then will the Bible grow old and die." Do you desire up to date information on world conditions? Then read

the Bible. Do you want to be ignorant concerning what is coming upon the world? Then ignore the Bible. We cannot imitate prophetic writings. Prophecies are given by God, who knows the end from the beginning. (See Isaiah 46:9,10; 42:9.) Do you want to know why in our day have come all modern knowledge and the wonderful inventions in which we rejoice? Then read Daniel 12:4. Do you want to know why a state of fear and anxiety exists among the nations? Read Luke 21. Do you want to know why there is so much trouble between capital and labor? Then study James 5. Do you desire to know why there is so much crime and lawlessness? Then read 2 Timothy 3 and Isaiah 24. Do you want to know why a program has been launched to evangelize the whole world with the gospel for our time? Then read Matthew 24:14 and Revelation 14:6-12.

The Bible is the only book that gives up-to-date information. We need but study it to be convinced. God's book has a message for all times, for all people, and for all circumstances. When the days are dark we need the light of the Bible to guide us. when the times are troublous we need the comfort it gives; when the outlook is discouraging we need that confidence which is taught in it; when despair is all about us we need the hope that only the Bible can give. Since the Bible contains up-to-date messages for all times, all people, and all circumstances, we can only say that the Creator of man must also be the Author of the book called the Bible. It must be inspired.

### **Because It Is The Key That Unlocks All Human Mystery**

The four greatest questions that we can ask concerning ourselves are: Who am I? Where am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? Science has failed to answer these questions, for the scientists fail to tell us the origin of human life. They offer only theories, and these are based on guesswork. They are not agreed among themselves as to the origin of life. The Bible is the only book that gives the world an intelligent origin. It says, "In the beginning." That settles it. Yes, "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." This is the most intelligent origin the world has ever heard about. There is no guesswork about it. The statement is definite. "In the beginning God". What did He do? The answer is, "Created the heaven and the earth."

Not only does the Bible tell us that God is our Creator but it also tells us of the glorious future that awaits those who accept Him as their Creator and Redeemer. This wonderful book called the Bible is the key to all human mystery. If we follow its dictates we shall find order, beauty, and eternal life. We shall be led out of the wilderness of confusion into the glorious Promised Land to be inherited by the saints. The Bible is God's guide to man. In it he finds the way that will lead him to a better land.

### **Because It Satisfies The Human Heart**

The Bible satisfies the human heart as nothing else will in all the world. Carlyle said truly, "It is the one book where in thousands of years the spirit of man has found light and nourishment and a response to all, whatever was deepest in his heart." The Bible satisfies because it is a pillow on which we may lay our heads in time of trouble, of need, and of sadness. It satisfies because it comforts us when we face death. The great Gladstone uttered these words: I have spent seventy years of my life in reading that Book to satisfy my heart. It is the word of God. I will bank my life on the statement that I believe this Book to be the solid rock of Holy Scriptures."

God's book satisfies because of its wholesome influence. Jesus said, "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." John 6:63. There is something about the Bible that causes one to listen attentively when he reads it. The voice of God speaks to his heart. The Bible has produced the most noble characters. It has taken the lowest fallen beings and made saints out of them. The great men of the ages have been on the side of the Bible. The Bible satisfies the human heart; and because it does, we can tell the infidel, the skeptic, the atheist, that until they have something better to offer or something that can really take its place, it is criminal for them to go to those who love the Bible, the greatest of all books, the Book of all time, and steal it from them.

### **The Only Sensible Conclusion**

Considering the proofs that have been given, and many more that might be given, we are convinced that the Bible is God's inspired book. He has not placed us here in this world without giving us

an inspired guidebook. If we were left alone, we would stumble and fall. His guidebook for us is the Bible. The doctrines it teaches are fundamental to our salvation. Its precepts are binding. He who reads it becomes wise. He who believes it builds on a sure foundation. He who lives in harmony with its teachings is sure of life eternal.

Shall we not accept it as God's inspired Book for man? Doing that, we shall be able to say:

“Holy Bible, Book divine;  
Precious treasure! Thou art mine!”

## **4. I Believe in the Holy Spirit**

THE HOLY SPIRIT is Heaven's ambassador. He is God's gift to man. Through His work and influence we are assured of God's presence. It is by His Spirit that God is omnipresent. Those who listen to the Spirit's voice will be taught the way of salvation. The Holy Spirit always guides us toward light, truth, and perfection. Without these no one finds the way to salvation. "The Spirit of God, received into the soul, quickens all its faculties. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the mind that is devoted unreservedly to God, develops harmoniously, and is strengthened to comprehend and fulfil the requirements of God. The weak, vacillating character becomes changed to one of strength and steadfastness."

The Holy Spirit is the divine' agency through whom God by Christ created all things. When the Lord created the heavens and the earth, we read that "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Genesis 1:2. Job must have thought of the part the Spirit had in Creation when he wrote, "By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens." Job 26:13. David spoke of the same event. He said, "Thou sends forth thy spirit, they are created." Psalm 104:30.

### **The Holy Spirit Promised**

Christ, who is the gift of God to save lost humanity, could not always remain in person with His children on the earth. When His work was finished He died upon the cross and was buried and rose again the third day, then ascended to His Father. But He did not leave us alone. He promised to send the Holy Spirit. He told the disciples that this would be far better for them, for had He remained He could have been with them in only one place at a time. The Holy Spirit, however, when He came could be everywhere at the same time. That is why Jesus said to them, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." John 16:7.

God made good His promise. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came as "a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.... And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." Acts 2:2-4. It is most interesting to notice what took place before the Holy Spirit came upon them. We read, "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." Verse 1. This accord was brought about through prayer and confession of sin, for "these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." Acts 1:14.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost constituted the former rain. Through the work and influence of the heavenly Comforter thousands accepted Christ, were baptized and added to the churches. The gospel was preached to the then-known world, as Paul says, "you continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which you have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven. Whereof I Paul am made a minister." Colossians 1:23.

The promise of the Father to send the Holy Spirit was not only for the disciples back yonder but also for the church today, the church that is to see the harvest of the earth. The fulfillment of that promise which brings the Spirit in its fullness constitutes the latter rain. Joel speaks of this great event. We read, "It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit." Joel 2:28,29. This prophecy was partially fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. But the promise is equally applicable to the church today, for the following verses make it plain that the Spirit of God would be poured out without measure before the great day of the Lord. The prophet continues, "I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come." Verses 30,31. Under the latter rain John sees that "the earth was lightened with his glory." Revelation 18:1. God's work will be finished, "not by might, nor by power; but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts." Zechariah 4:6.

### **Spirit Given Upon The Fulfillment Of Conditions**

To experience the fulfillment of the Spirit's power today the church must fulfill the same conditions the disciples did before the day of Pentecost. There must be searching of heart, confessing and

forsaking of sin, prevailing prayer, and unity of purpose. The prophet says, "Ask you of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain." Zechariah 10:1.

Too often we generalize when we speak of the reception of the Holy Spirit. God desires that we shall be very specific in naming the things that must be done in order to be recipients of His Spirit. The receiving of the Holy Spirit is an individual matter, a personal experience.

Let us notice briefly four conditions upon which the Holy Spirit is given and retained.

**1. Repentance.** When Peter preached his sermon on the day of Pentecost, those who heard him said, "What shall we do?" He said, "Repent." This was but the first step in turning to God. Merely to repent, to sorrow over our past lives, is not enough. Conversion must follow. Repentance without conversion means nothing. The step that is taken after one is converted is that of baptism for the remission of sins. Then comes the promise, "And you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts 2:37,38. The Holy Spirit does not dwell in a defiled body, a sin-polluted life. "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." 1 Corinthians 3:16,17.

**2. Faith.** "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Galatians 3:14. Faith is the background of all doctrine. Faith is the spiritual hand that touches infinity. Faith is an absolute necessity in the Christian life, for "without faith it is impossible to please him." Hebrews 11:6 "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17. All these statements show the unity between Christ, His Word, and the Holy Spirit. They constitute a united front. They are inseparable. To enjoy the presence of the Holy Spirit, we must have a faith that not only accepts the promises of God but lays hold on all that would rightfully belong to the surrendered life. The power of the Spirit belongs to the one who can truly say- "My faith looks up to Thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary."

**3. Prayer.** Jesus said, "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Luke 11:13. When we ask, the promise is, "It shall be given unto you." Prayer is the key that opens heaven. No one ever receives the Holy Spirit without the use of this key that unlocks heaven. Our prayers must be backed by faith, by a clean life, a pure heart. The more we pray, the more powerful will be our lives. Men of prayer are men of power. We need to pray more for the fullness of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

**4. Keep the Commandments.** Many pray, but few obey. Many claim the Spirit's power but refuse to keep the commandments of God. "Faith without works is dead." God calls for heart religion, a life that is obedient to His law. He cannot send His Spirit into the heart of one who rebels, who willfully transgresses His commandments. Jesus said, "When he [the Spirit] is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." John 16:8. "Sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:4. To have the Spirit of God in the life, we must obey His commandments. The apostles could say, "We are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." Acts 5:32. This fact is brought forth by John when he said, "He that keeps his commandments dwells in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." 1 John 3:24.

The world today is divided into two camps: Those who reject the Spirit's voice and those who obey that voice. While the Spirit is being gradually but surely withdrawn from the earth, we should pray individually, "Take not Thy Spirit from me." Our relation to God and to our fellow men can be such that we may know day by day that the Spirit of God by faith dwells in us, for "hereby we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."

## 5. I Believe in the Coming of Christ

THE DEFINITENESS of Christ's coming is expressed emphatically in the words of the Lord Himself, "I will come again." John 14:3.

The Bible deals with facts. Its fundamental truths are clear and plain. They can be understood. The Lord does not want us to be left in a fog regarding the vital truth of the Second Advent of Christ; neither does He want us to be filled with doubt concerning it. He wants us to see it in the light of His Word. To say that we believe in the coming of the Lord is good, but it is not enough. We must not only know what we believe but be able to give reasons for believing it.

Often very peculiar reasons are given for rejecting the doctrine of the Second Advent. Some say, "My parents did not believe in Christ's return; therefore, I do not." But this does not alter the words "I will come again." Others state that the church to which they belong does not teach this doctrine; hence, they do not believe in the coming of Christ. Still others say that their minister is educated, he studies the Bible, but he does not believe in the return of Christ. All these reasons fail to change the promise, I will come again."

### A Fundamental Age Old Doctrine

The doctrine of Christ's Second Coming is not a new one; it dates back to the fall of man. (Genesis 3:15.) Patriarchs and prophets alike believed in it. God-fearing men down through the centuries not only believed in it but taught it. Luther, Calvin, Knox, Wesley, Baxter, Moody, and scores of others were advocates of this vital truth. Indeed, Christ's Second Coming has been the hope of the church through the ages. From the day our first parents turned their sorrowing steps from Eden, the children of faith have awaited the coming of the Promised One to break the destroyer's power and to bring them again to their lost Paradise. This doctrine has been, is, and ever will be one of the fundamental doctrines of the true church. This truth is embodied in its hymns of hope, it forms the climax of its creeds, and it is its sublime motive for evangelism and missionary activity. The apostle Paul, speaking of the coming of Christ, says, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." Titus 2:13. The faithful church gladly accepts the words, "I will come again," and heartily sings:

"Lift up the trumpet, and loud let it ring: Jesus is coming again!

Cheer up, you pilgrims, be joyful and sing; Jesus is coming again!"

There are some very definite reasons why I believe in the return of the Savior.

1. Christ will come again because the Bible says so. That should settle it as far as we are concerned. Men may fight this doctrine, make light of it, scoff at those who believe it, but all that may be done or said does not alter the promise in the Bible, "I will come again." This doctrine of the Second Advent is the very keynote of the Sacred Scriptures. It has been well said that "you cannot unthread the doctrine of the second coming of Christ out of the Bible and have a living word left any more than you can unthread the nerves out of your body and have a living organism left."

### Testimony Of Bible Writers

Let us interview some of the Bible writers concerning the Second Advent.

"Enoch, you walked with God more than three hundred years, and then you were translated without seeing death. You surely are a type of the people of God who will never go down into the grave. Do you believe in the coming of the Lord?" Enoch answers, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints." Jude 14.

"Job, most patient of all saints, you went through the fiery furnace and came out purified; you lost everything that you possessed. In spite of all your hardships and trials, you did not sin against God. Tell us, do you believe in the Second Advent?" And Job gladly responds with the words, I know that my redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Job 19:25, 26.

"David, you were called a man after God's own heart. You lived close to the Lord. You committed sins, but you confessed them with contrition. Are you sure that the Lord is coming the second time?" David answers, "Our God shall come and shall not keep silence." Psalm 50:3.

"Paul, before you were converted you hated Christ and persecuted the Christians. When you met Him on the way to Damascus you were converted. God separated you for a special work among the

Gentiles. Through His grace you did a marvelous work. Is this work going to be in vain? Are you sure that you will receive a rich reward? Tell us of your faith and hope in the Second Coming of Christ.” Through inspiration this mighty apostle answers: “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” 1 Thessalonians 4:16. And again he answers: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.” 2 Timothy 4:7,8.

“John, you say you are a brother and a companion in tribulation. You were banished to the Isle of Patmos, and there had a revelation of God and of the closing scenes of the earth's history. Tell us, Do you believe in the second coming of Christ? Tell us, is He coming again?” John answers: “Behold, he comes with clouds; and every eye shall see him.” Revelation 1:7.

Surely these writers and many more that might be interviewed are all agreed that the Second Coming of Christ is very definite. If it were possible for us to call the angels from glory down to this world, and to ask them whether they believe in the coming of Christ, they would all echo the words of the two who spoke comfort to the disciples at Christ's ascension: “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven.” Acts 1:11.

## **Christ's Own Promise**

Then, last of all, may we be so bold as to ask Christ Himself, the one who inspired the writing of the Bible, what He thinks of His Second Coming. He gives us the same promise He made before He ascended: “Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” John 14:1-3.

2. Christ's first advent is a definite proof of His second. We have the same authority for the Second Coming of Christ that we have for His birth, His death, and His resurrection. We might as well try to push over Gibraltar with our little finger as to try to prove with our feeble brain that the first advent of Christ is a myth. If you do not believe in His Second Coming, you must be able to prove that He did not come the first time. You cannot erase facts. His first advent is an irrefutable historical fact. In Hebrews 9:28 we read, “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” Notice how beautifully the apostle brings to our attention both the first and the Second Advent of our Lord, showing that one is as definite as the other. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many” this is a historical fact. Once He was here; He was the Lamb of God; He was the offering that was made in our behalf for our sins - “and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time.” This statement makes His coming definite. He will appear the second time. There can be no second time without a first time. Thus we must conclude that the first advent of Christ is a definite proof of His second.

3. Death is in the land, and this, too, is proof of the Second Coming of Christ. The undertakers, the cemeteries, the tombstones, prove that death exists. Paul states, “As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Romans 5:12. Ask the millions of earth if this statement is true. They will answer in the affirmative, for this enemy called death has taken their loved ones-yes, it has taken ours too. In Hebrews 9:27,28 the apostle very definitely states that the Second Coming of Christ is as certain as death and as His first advent. The Lord came to destroy death. (See Hebrews 2:14.) If there is no such thing as death, how terrible it would be for Christ to have come to this world to suffer and die to destroy something that in reality does not exist! Surely death is in the land, and this is positive proof of Christ's Second Coming.

4. Prevailing conditions demand the return of Christ. Many today are waiting for the unusual, the unexpected, the out of the ordinary, to happen; but they do not know what that will be. The student of the Bible knows that it will be the Second Coming of Christ. Honest, sincere, conscientious thinkers feel that the condition of things is utterly hopeless, that society cannot reform itself, that philosophy and so-called religion have nothing to offer, that all these things have been tried and found wanting. All around us are despair, conscious need, and unconscious longing. We are told that “the earnest expectation of the creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. . . . For we know that the whole creation groans and travaills in pain together until now.” Romans 8:19-22. This present world cannot continue to exist forever, because

it is growing old. (Isaiah 51:6.) The curse resting upon it, brought about through sin, will destroy it. Sin is a destroyer—"the wages of sin is death." Romans 6:23. Payday is coming. Present conditions cannot always endure without a reckoning day; that day is the coming of the Lord.

As we study the conditions in the world at the present time, we must look to someone higher than ourselves to bring about a better condition, a change in the order of things. That one is none other than Christ. His coming will bring an end to confusion, perplexity, trouble, war, bloodshed, sorrow, misery, and death. It will bring eternal joy and peace. Therefore, in response to the words of the Lord, "Surely I come quickly," let us say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Revelation 22:20.

## 6. I Believe in the Plan of Salvation

MAN WAS CREATED in the image of God, and when he came forth from the hands of his Maker he was a perfect being. He was made upright. His character was holy, his mind was in tune with God. The Lord's purpose for him was that he should live eternally in the Eden home He prepared for him. Man was warned not to eat of the forbidden fruit. God told him that in the day he ate thereof he would surely die. When the temptation came to him he yielded. He disobeyed. He ate of the forbidden fruit.

Because of his transgression he was driven out of his paradise home. Sin marred his character. Sin brought thorns and thistles out of the ground. Man learned through bitter experience what the words of God meant when He said, "In the sweat of thy face shall thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground." Genesis 3:19.

Sad as this experience was, yet there was something that gave him a greater feeling of remorse. That was the consciousness of being separated from his Maker and the heavenly angels. Before man sinned he talked to the Lord face to face. But now sin separated him from God. In this condition man was a lost being. There was only one who could save him, and that one was his Creator. Before the creation of our world the Father and the Son laid a plan whereby sinners might be redeemed, brought back to the image of God. This plan is known as the plan of redemption, or salvation. Speaking of the Savior, Peter says, "Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world." 1 Peter 1:20. Again we read, "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Revelation 13:8.

Man in his lost condition cannot save himself. His condition is described in the following words:

"They are corrupt,

"They have done abominable works,

"There is none that does good." Psalm 14:1.

"We are all as an unclean thing,

"And all our righteousness are as filthy rags." Isaiah 64:6.

"There is none righteous, no, not one." Romans 3:10.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Verse 23.

In this deplorable, lost, helpless condition man cries out, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Romans 7:24. Is there an answer to this sincere question? Thank God, there is. The answer comes through the lips of the apostle Paul, who said, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Verse 25. Yea, salvation comes through Christ, who became the Redeemer of the world. This was made known when His birth was revealed: "She shall bring forth a son, and thou shall call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21. He is the one of whom John spoke when he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world." John 1:29.

To seek salvation elsewhere or in anyone else means disappointment. He is the only one who can save. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Acts 4:12. Christ became man's substitute. He took upon Himself our flesh and blood. He was tempted in all points like as we are, but without sin. He was the spotless Lamb of God. It was His great heart of love for lost humanity that prompted Him to give Himself that we through Him might be redeemed. We have been purchased with an infinite price. Peter says, "You know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Peter 1:18,19. As wonderful as the plan of salvation is, it means little to us unless we by faith accept all the provisions made in the plan for us.

The purpose of the plan of redemption is not only to save from sin but to vindicate the character of God and to destroy the one who is the cause of sin, Satan himself. When Jesus died upon the cross the whole universe was satisfied that God was just and that the purpose of His plan to save was being fulfilled.

Since the plan of redemption vindicates the character of God, it also upholds the perpetuity of His law, which is a revelation of His character. Without the law there is no sin. The plan of redemption frees from sin. We must therefore conclude that if there is no law, then there is no need of salvation. Satan, the enemy of all souls, the originator of sin, will someday be destroyed. And the destruction will be a complete one. "For, behold, the day comes, that shall bum as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall he stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." Malachi 4:1.

## **Christ A Personal Savior**

No one is redeemed because someone else is. We are redeemed because we have accepted Christ as our personal Savior, because we have forgiveness of sin and are living a life of obedience. "Whosoever will, let him come." It must be a voluntary act on our part. It is sad to think that many will be lost eternally because they depended upon others. They failed to see the need of a personal experience in the things of God. The Lord through the prophet Isaiah said, "Now thus says the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." Isaiah 43:1.

The all-important question is, What is my personal relation to the plan of redemption? Am I able to say with job, "I know that my Redeemer lives"? He must live not only in heaven but by faith in my heart. Otherwise the plan to save means nothing. The only way to get back to God is through the expulsion of sin from the life. Sin separates us from God. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Isaiah 59:2. Sin cannot remain in the presence of God. Neither can the sinner. Either we leave God or we leave sin. Through the plan of salvation we are assured that we can be saved eternally. The decision rests with us. What will it be?

## **7. I Believe in Salvation Through Christ**

LOOK UNTO ME, and be you saved” is the invitation that has come from Heaven to man since the fall. Isaiah 45:22. Every normal being sometime in his life longs for salvation. God has placed that desire in the heart. But wishing to be saved will not save anyone. It takes something else. God is more interested in our salvation than we can possibly be. “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” 1 Timothy 2:3,4. If we should ever be lost we cannot blame Heaven, for all has been done that could be done to save us. Salvation is the greatest thing in the world.

Although God has placed a desire in the heart for salvation, how sad to think that so few avail themselves of the provisions made in behalf of their salvation! Too few are willing to pay the price. They want salvation in their own way. They hope heaven may be reached the easy way. They are unwilling to deny themselves. They refuse to part with those who hold them back, and they will not separate from those things that must be surrendered in order to enjoy salvation.

### **Salvation Is A Personal Matter**

When Paul and Silas were in prison, with their feet in the stocks and their backs bleeding because of the stripes they had received, they showed faith and courage in God by singing a song at midnight. As a result of this experience the earth shook and the prison door was thrown open. The jailer ran to Paul and Silas, threw himself down at their feet, and cried out, “What must I do to be saved?” It is not, What must someone else do? or, What must we do? but, What must I do? Salvation is a personal matter. The gospel “is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes.” Romans 1:16. Yes, “whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Revelation 22:17. We should always remember that salvation comes only to the one who accepts Christ as his personal Savior. Salvation comes to us through the Lord who said, “Look unto me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” Isaiah 45:22.

The fact that salvation is to come through Christ was revealed in the name He received before He was born. The angel said, “Thou shall call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.” Matthew 1:21. There is nothing within us that is able to save us from the ruin of sin. We must look to some outer source, and that source is found in Christ. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Acts 4:12.

Someone has rightly said: “The names of the past proud statesmen of Greece and Rome have come and gone; the names of the past scientists, philosophers, and theologians have come and gone; but the name of Christ abounds more and more. Herod could not kill Him; Satan could not seduce Him; death could not destroy Him; and the grave could not hold Him. Yes, Christ today stands forth on the highest pinnacle of heavenly glory, proclaimed of God, acknowledged by angels, adored by saints, and feared by devils, as the living, personal Savior.”

### **Forgiveness Of Sin**

Salvation through Christ means the forgiveness of sin, “for he shall save his people from their sins.” As long as sin is in the life salvation has no meaning. When Christ is accepted as our personal Savior, and when He is enthroned in the heart, through faith, then sin no longer is found in the life. It is either salvation or sin. The two do not dwell in the same place. When salvation moves in sin moves out. God's blessings rest upon those whose sins are forgiven, whose lives are pure and clean, for “blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” Matthew 5:8. The word “blessed” in this text is translated saved” by Luther.

Salvation means purity of life and heart. David speaks of this when he says, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” Psalm 32:1,2. We must remember that the blessedness of forgiveness works two ways, as shown in the prayer Christ taught us to pray: “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” To say we forgive is one thing, but to forget that the wrong was ever inflicted upon us is another.

God's love is expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy. The groundwork of all forgiveness is truly found in the unmerited love and mercy of our Lord. By our attitude toward others we

reveal how completely we have made that love our own. When we are unkind, unmerciful, and unforgiving toward others we show that we are not partakers of God's great love and of His pardoning grace.

The rabbis were hardhearted when they limited the exercise of forgiveness to three offenses. Peter extended forgiveness to a more complete number than three. He came to the Master and said, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?" Notice the reply that came from the lips of the Savior. He said, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." Matthew 18:21, 22. We should always deal with our fellow men as God deals with us. He says, If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9. And how does He forgive? Let Him answer: I, even I, am he that blots out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Isaiah 43:25.

A little girl showed her father a copybook that she had completed in school. In turning the pages she came to one with blots on it, and quickly she put her hand over those blots and said, "Daddy, don't see those blots." Is it not wonderful to know that Christ puts His pierced hands over the blots we have made in our life, and does not see them? That is what He does when our sins are forgiven. He says that He will remove them as far as the east is from the west. (Psalm 103:12.) The two never meet. East will always be east, and west will be west.

The way to salvation is still open. Christ is still our salvation. We can hear Him say, "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden," and, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Revelation 3:20. The door of mercy will soon close. Then the invitation, "Turn unto me," will be heard no more. God's mercy will be withdrawn. In that day many will want to turn to God, but it will be too late. In anguish of soul they will cry, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Jeremiah 8:20.

Seeing that the way of salvation is still open but that it will soon close, why not accept Him as your personal Savior now, and receive forgiveness of sin?

## **8. I Believe in Immortality Through Christ**

I ALMOST SPENT Christmas in heaven.” These words were uttered by a man who was barely missed by a truck just before Christmas. No doubt he was very sincere in what he said. He was taught from youth that as soon as one dies he goes to heaven, hell, or purgatory. He believed that he would have gone to heaven had the truck hit him.

Sincerity is a virtue, but no proof for sound doctrine. Our faith must be based upon the teaching of God's Word regarding this important truth known as immortality.

What are the facts concerning this vital and fundamental doctrine known as immortality? Is man mortal or immortal? What happens to him after he dies? Is there an answer to these questions? Thank God, there is, for He does not want us to be left in the dark concerning this vital truth. He has made it plain in His book, which is the foundation upon which we are to build our faith. What the Bible teaches we are to accept. Whatever is taught that is contrary to the teaching of the Bible is to be rejected. In order to approach this subject intelligently, let us approach it from the following angles: First, Is man mortal or immortal? Second, Where alone is immortality found? And third, When is immortality given?

### **Is Man Mortal Or Immortal?**

The apostle Paul says, speaking of God, “Who only hath immortality.” 1 Timothy 6:16. If He “only hath immortality,” then we must conclude that man is mortal. Eternal life, or immortality, is not inherited. Man was formed “of the dust of the ground,” and God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” Genesis 2:7. Some would read into that, “immortal soul.” Such an expression is not found anywhere in the Bible. When the breath of life is taken from man he returns to dust. If man had never sinned, he would have lived eternally. When he transgressed, disobeyed God's command, he was driven out of the Garden of Eden, and God said to him, “In the sweat of thy face shall thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it was thou taken. For dust thou art, and unto dust shall thou return.” Genesis 3:19.

In Eden was the tree of life. As long as man partook of that tree he lived. God did not want him to partake of the tree of life and live forever after he had sinned (verse 22), for “the wages of sin is death.” In death man knows no more than he did before God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Death is not a modification of life, but it is the very opposite of life. To die means to stop living, for death is a complete cessation of life. The teaching that death means misery to some (those lost) and a life of happiness to others (those saved) is not based upon Bible facts. Death is not life at all in any condition, whether good or bad.

When one has been taught from childhood that as soon as a man dies he goes to heaven or hell or purgatory, it is hard for him to give up such an idea. His imagination places him in one of these places. The fact remains, however, that death ends life. Therefore a man does not go anywhere. There is a future life, but it does not begin at the time of death. Consciousness depends upon the union of the breath with the body. That is why we read, “God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” When breath and body are separated, at death, by the breath's leaving the body, man's thoughts are gone, they perish. The psalmist taught that very clearly when he said, “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.” Psalm 146:3,4. Again he says, “In death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?” Psalm 6:5. We do well to analyze very carefully all that is taught in Ecclesiastes 9:5,6. These verses teach the following facts: That “The living know that they shall die”; (2) “the dead know not any thing”; (3) “the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished”; (4) “neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.” All these expressions indicate that man in death is completely unconscious. It is clear that man is mortal.

### **Immortality Alone In Christ**

Since man is mortal he must seek for immortality. This the apostle Paul makes very plain when he says, “To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life.” Romans 2:7. No one seeks that which he already possesses. If man were immortal or had an immortal soul, he would not seek for it.

Since eternal life is found only in Christ, we must conclude that only those who accept Him will receive immortality at the appointed time. In the Epistle of John we read, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." 1 John 5:12. The apostle does not speak of the physical life. All have that, whether they have accepted Christ or not.

He speaks of eternal life that will be given those who are true to Him. Those who reject Him will die the second death after they have received their just reward. To receive eternal life we must accept Christ as our personal Savior. Without Him we are lost. He died that we might live. Through death He conquered death. When He came forth in the resurrection He said, I am he that lived, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." Revelation 1:18.

Eternal life is a gift that comes to us through Christ, but in order to receive that gift we must accept Him by faith, "for God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16. Eternal life will be given those who are obedient to God and His eternal truths. "If you be willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land: but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." Isaiah 1:19,20.

### **When Will Immortality Be Given?**

Today we are living in the land of the enemy. Death claims its victims. Death brings sorrow and sadness; it breaks hearts. It separates loved ones. It is no respecter of persons. Thank God, this cruel foe will not always exist, for "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." 1 Corinthians 15:26. Christ in whom we have, eternal life has power to destroy death. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Hebrews 2:14.

Immortality will be given the child of God at the time of the resurrection, which takes place when Jesus comes. Those who have been sleeping in their dusty graves will hear His voice, and will come forth clothed in immortality. Those who will be living when He comes will be changed "in the twinkling of an eye." Death will be swallowed up and immortality put on. Read 1 Corinthians 15:51-55. The words of John the revelator will be fulfilled, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Revelation 21:4.

What a wonderful reward awaits those who accept Christ as their Savior, who by faith claim all His promises, who have been forgiven all sin. Where do we stand in our relationship to God today? Let us remember that each of us has a choice to make. We can choose to obey Christ and live forever, happy in that new and better world, or we can ignore His invitation, reject Him as our Savior, and perish forever with the sinful world. Which shall we choose? We must take one course or the other. There is no third road.

## **9. I Believe in the New Birth**

THE NEW BIRTH cannot be explained; it must be experienced. It is a personal experience in God, and only the individual knows how sincere his experience is. By nature we are all sinners. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23. The traits of the old man who is unconverted are given by the apostle Paul. He gives a whole list of things that will be in the life of the one who knows nothing about conversion. Describing the nature, the desires, and the longing of the natural man, he says:

"There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understands. There is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way. They are together become unprofitable. There is none that does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre. With their tongues they have used deceit. The poison of asps is under their lips. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways. And the way of peace have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." Romans 3:10-18.

Man in this condition is not a fit subject for the kingdom of God. He must be born again. He must experience a new creation. Out of the depth of his soul he must cry as did the apostle Paul, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Romans 7:24. When one sees his true condition, realizes that there is no hope within himself, and by faith reaches out for help, for deliverance, then God steps in and converts and changes his life.

A man was asked one time how many it took to convert him, and he answered, "Two." Then he was asked again, "Didn't God do it all?" And he said, "I did all I could against it, and God did all He could for it, and He was victorious."

Conversion takes place when we let God conquer in our lives. Only as we yield can He convert. When Wendell Phillips was asked how he found God, he said, "When I was a lad I heard a sermon by Lyman Beecher on the subject, You Belong to God." Then he continued by saying, I went home after that sermon was preached and threw myself on the floor of my room and prayed, 'O God, I belong to Thee. Take what is your own.'" He was willing for his life to be placed in God's hands for molding and changing, to be made all over. This is the first step in conversion.

### **Conversion Vital In Our Salvation**

Without conversion no one will ever be saved. Jesus made this plain to Nicodemus when He said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"; and again, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:3,5. This being true, we must believe that the new birth, or conversion, is most essential to our salvation. God cannot take into His kingdom an individual in whom there is sin, who has not through Christ overcome those things that would mar heaven. Yes, we must be made all over. God takes us from the human trash pile and makes us over. He brings forth out of the soiled circumstances a life of beauty. Those converted are as gold that has come from the hand of the refiner. Without this change in life, heaven will be closed to us. Only the truly converted will see the kingdom of God.

### **Earmarks Of Conversion**

A converted life is a life that is separated from the sins of the world. We think of the picture Diana or Christ. We stand between two attractive forces—heaven pulling one way, the world the other. Go back and watch the scene in the stadium at Ephesus. The early Christians who confessed Christ faced a most cruel death because they refused to choose the goddess Diana. The spirit found in the lives of God's people back yonder was the spirit that conquered the world. Only a life fully yielded to Him, converted by His Spirit, can face death with a smile. To meet Christ and to surrender to His will is an experience by which we pass from death into a new life. It means to cut loose from the world, its sins, or whatever is alien to the spirit of Christ, and to adjust the life to the new standards and to conform to the Spirit of the Lord.

That is what Paul meant when he said, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17. We are in the world, but we need not be of the world. If we touch the sins of the world, we must not expect to remain unspotted. No one can serve Christ and the world at the same time. Separation from the world is made possible only through Christ. He came to save us from sin, to change these lives of ours, to convert them, to separate

them from all that is sinful.

Another earmark of the converted life is obedience. If true obedience to God and His word is not manifested, then one is not converted, regardless of what he may profess with his mouth. Obedience is something more than lip service or praise. Obedience is the fruit of a life born of the Spirit of God. Obedience produces in us a feeling of confidence in Christ that all the religious fervor in the world cannot produce alone. Someone has well said, "Obedience is the key that unlocks the door into the dwelling of the indwelling Christ."

Obedience is one of the characteristics of the people of God. They will be obedient to His law. We read, "If the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die." Ezekiel 18:21. Notice the steps to be taken: First, to turn from sin; second, to keep all My statutes; third, to do that which is lawful and right. The reward for such a life is, "He shall surely live, he shall not die." The life held out to the obedient is the eternal life. The disobedient person's lot is death, the second death. May our lives ever be obedient to God and the eternal truth, that we may belong to those of whom it will be said, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Revelation 22:14.

Another earmark of the converted life is the fruit of the Spirit, which is "love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Galatians 5:22. These attributes reveal the inner life of the man, those that make a life sweet and happy. When God converts He does a thorough work. The new birth means to have Christ within. Paul experienced this, and that is why he could say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Galatians 2:20. God longs to convert your heart and mine. He wants us saved in His eternal kingdom. Conversion is a daily experience. It means to keep the life surrendered to Him day by day. To keep our life converted, we must ever look to Him. "Look unto me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth" is God's formula for salvation from sin. Keeping our eyes fixed upon Him will drive away the glamour of sin. It will create new likes, new motives, new impulses. This change of heart spells conversion. It is the miracle of miracles.

Let us make sure that we are born again. Then only shall we share in the beauties of the eternal world, for "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

## 10. I Believe in Bible Sanctification

BACK IN THE days of Job, the question was asked, "How then can man be justified with God?" Job 25:4.

Man lost his robe of innocence through sin. Before he sinned, he was pure, clean, holy, righteous, and perfect before God. After he had sinned he was compelled to say, "I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." Genesis 3:10. His righteousness was gone. From that very moment wickedness increased until, at the time of the Flood, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Genesis 6:5.

In the days of the psalmist the condition had not changed. "They are all gone aside," he said, "they are all together become filthy: there is none that does good, no, not one." Psalm 14:3. In New Testament times Paul, looking over the human race, said, "There is none righteous, no, not one." Romans 3:10. Of our day Christ foretold, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Matthew 24:12.

Well then may we ask, "How then can man be justified with God?" The answer to this question is very imperative, because justification precedes sanctification. It is clear that we cannot be justified through our strength or works. No one can save himself, for there is nothing within man that is good. There must be some other source to which we must go to become justified in the sight of God. There is.

We are justified through faith in Christ. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." Galatians 2:16. What kind of faith is this that justifies man with God? It is a faith that accepts Christ, for Christ is our righteousness. "Who of God is made unto us ... righteousness." 1 Corinthians 1:30. Luther said: "Learn to know Christ and Him crucified. Learn to sing a new song, to despair of your own works, and to cry unto Him, Lord, Thou art my righteousness, and I am Thy sin. Thou has taken upon Thee what was mine and given me what was Yours. What Thou was not, Thou became, that I might become what I was not." The faith that justifies us with God is not only a faith that will accept Christ, but a faith that will reveal good works, for "faith without works is dead." (James 2:26.) Satan is always pleased to have us swing to one extreme or the other. In the days of Christ men wanted to be saved by their works or the works of the law. Today most people hope to be saved by merely believing the story of Christ. This is not sufficient. True faith in Christ will justify us only when it leads to obedience to all the truths God has revealed in His Word.

The law does not justify, but it demands justification. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." Romans 8:4. The faith that justifies a man establishes the law. A false faith will always try to destroy, or to do away with, the law. True faith—faith in Christ, faith that produces good works supports the law and lives in harmony with its teachings. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." Romans 3:31.

When one has been justified with God, then the old life of sin is covered with the righteousness of Christ. The individual will live a new life—the life of Christ.

This new life is the converted life. As soon as one accepts Christ and receives forgiveness of sin, he stands justified before God. From this very moment the work of sanctification begins in the life.

Many confuse sanctification with justification. They think both are the same, but they are not. Sanctification is the work of the Spirit on the characters of those who have been justified. We are justified in order that we may be sanctified, and we are sanctified in order that we may be glorified. "Whom he justified, them he also glorified." Romans 8:30.

Justification comes instantly. Sanctification is a growth that begins after we have been justified. Justification comes with the new birth; from there on we grow as newborn children.

The work of sanctification is progressive. When, at conversion, the sinner finds peace with God through the blood of the atonement, the Christian life has begun. From this experience he is to go on to perfection, to grow up "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Ephesians 4:13. The apostle Peter tells us that we are to "grow in grace." (2 Peter 3:18.) This growth is a daily experience. Both sanctification and justification are the result of the working of the Holy Spirit, and without the Spirit of God no one is sanctified or justified.

True Bible sanctification has always been a target for Satan's darts, for he hates anything and everything that is holy.

Because of the un-Biblical and extreme views on sanctification extant, many do not understand what holiness means. Sanctification does not make one fanatical or extreme, but Godlike, for holiness is an

outstanding characteristic of God. Christ has been made unto us sanctification, and the importance of this is expressed in Hebrews 12:14: "Follow . . . holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." We are always on safe ground when we follow the instruction of the Lord. To follow Him means to go where He may lead, to go at His command, and to follow Him regardless of consequences. Without holiness, it is stated, "no man shall see the Lord." Sanctification, therefore, is one of the fundamental truths that are essential to life eternal.

Sanctification is included in the will of God. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." 1 Thessalonians 4:3. Sanctification causes one to surrender his will to the Lord; without this surrender no life can be sanctified. God's will concerning us can be realized in our own experience only if our wills are in harmony with His.

Since sanctification is so important that without it we shall not be able to see God, we should know what precedes the work of sanctification in the life. First of all, a full and willing surrender to Jesus Christ. Paul says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Romans 12:1. Surely the sanctification of which the Bible speaks embraces the entire being—spirit, soul, and body. Hence we are told in 1 Thessalonians 5:23: "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

If we wish to gain the blessings God has for us, which come through the sanctified life, we must first be willing to learn what it means to sacrifice self. Christ says, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Matthew 16:24.

Another requisite for sanctification is obedience. Obedience is but the outgrowth of surrender, reconciliation, and holiness. We must be obedient to all the fundamental doctrines of the Bible. A holy life does not live in willful sin. It keeps that holy which God has made holy. He who has the light of God's truth can never hope to become holy by willfully transgressing any one of the Ten Commandments.

There are those who believe that sanctification is an instantaneous work, by which, through faith alone, they attain to perfect holiness. This sort of theory brings with it a spirit of self exaltation and a disregard for the law of God. It does not teach obedience, but disobedience. We cannot become holy while willfully violating one of God's requirements. Let us remember that the commission of known sin silences the witnessing voice of the Spirit and separates us from God.

It has been said that true sanctification means perfect love, perfect obedience, perfect conformity to the will of God. Christ, who is our sanctification, is anxious to see us in His kingdom; hence He says through the apostle, "Follow . . . holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Hebrews 12:14.

Surely the aim is high, but by His grace we can attain to it. God never asks us to do that which is impossible. When He returns the second time He will find a church that has been sanctified, a church that will stand faultless before the throne of God, a church that will be ready for translation, that will gladly look up into the face of Christ and say, "Lo, this is our God. We have waited for him, and he will save us." Isaiah 25:9.

The prophet sees this church glorified, standing on the sea of glass. Describing this company, he says, "In their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." Revelation 14:5. When the kingdom of Christ has been restored, and His people are with Him in the earth made new, then will the prophecy be fulfilled which says, "An highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it." Isaiah 35:8.

The choice is in our hands. We can either accept Christ now as our Redeemer and sanctifier, and thus have our lives transformed by His grace; or we may reject Him, and find ourselves at last among those who will be lost eternally. May the words in this chapter help us to make the right decision.

## 11. I Believe in Christ as Our Only True Example

HEREUNTO WERE you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps." 1 Peter 2:21.

Example is more convincing, more powerful, than words. For actions speak louder than words. Some years ago eleven men, women, and children were imprisoned by an ice gorge, and they were starving. A man offered fifty dollars to anyone who would be willing to cross the ice and rescue them. When no one responded to the call he got a rope, tied it to his waist and as he started across the ice four men sprang to their feet and offered to go with him. Example had a greater appeal than the fifty dollars he offered.

We were all imprisoned by sin. Christ offered to rescue us. To do this He was willing to give up the glories of heaven. Through His sacrifice He became our only true example, and we are invited to follow in His footsteps. In Jesus, God gave us the right pattern for our lives. As we look upon His life and character we see what God is. Jesus tried to impress Philip with this truth when He said to him, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet has thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how says thou then, Show us the Father?" John 14:9.

Only as we follow in His footsteps can we live and reflect His life. Of Christ we read, "Leaving us an example." We can leave only that which we possess. Christ lived what He preached. That is why He became our only true and perfect example. And He could say-

"Look unto me."

"Follow thou me."

"Come unto me.... and learn of me."

We are told very definitely in what it was He left us an example. Peter names the following:

1. "Who did no sin." What a wonderful example to follow. He was the only one who could say, "Which of you convinces me of sin?" John 8:46. He was subject to all the temptations that we are, and He took upon Himself our flesh and blood, yet He was without sin. Through His sinless life He made it possible for us to stand before Him without spot or wrinkle. This can be achieved only by accepting Him as our pattern, our example, our personal Savior, and by following implicitly in His footsteps. By beholding we become changed, is a law of nature. Unless we constantly keep our eyes fixed upon Him and follow Him, we shall falter, go astray, and not be like Him when He appears. The world looks at us six days in the week to see what we mean on the seventh.

That example is more powerful than words was illustrated years ago when an American was teaching in a school in Japan. He was told not to say a word about Christianity during the school hours. He followed instructions. But he lived the Christ life before those students daily. His life, his example, was so blameless before them that forty students met in a grove where they secretly covenanted to abandon idolatry. More than twenty of the forty entered a Christian training school, and some of them became workers for God.

0 that we might follow the example of the sinless Christ! The character that reflects the life of Christ is the mightiest force for good in the world.

2. "Neither was guile found in his mouth." He was always open and aboveboard. He never covered up anything. He was not deceitful. The people knew what He meant. They were convinced of what He taught and believed. We need to follow His example in these things. Of those who will stand upon the sea of glass it will be said, "In their mouth was found no guile." Revelation 14:5. This worthy testimony is made possible because they followed the example of Christ, because they were willing to walk in His footsteps. The perfection of such a character is the work of God's grace upon the life. It is the work of a lifetime. Only as we yield can our lives be changed and brought into conformity with His life.

3. "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judges righteously." 1 Peter 2:22, 23. The human heart is revengeful. It retaliates easily. Its feeling is expressed in the words, "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth." Christ set us a different example. He had reasons for revenge, but He chose to leave all in the hands of His Father. One sin in His life would have marred His character. It would have disqualified Him as the world's only perfect example in living.

### Our Example In Doctrine And Obedience

No one walks in the steps of Christ who is not obedient to His teachings. He is the life, the center, the heart of every doctrine that is fundamental to our salvation. It is not so much what we believe as it is what God wants us to believe. His Word must be our creed, our guide in life. Only as we are obedient to His Word do we follow Him, for He and the Word are one. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" John 1:1. Every doctrine that we accept must be backed by a "Thus says the Lord" or "It is written." Obedience is the passport to the kingdom of God. When the heart is in tune with the Lord, then one can say, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." Psalm 40:8. We must learn that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." 1 Samuel 15:22. Christ gave us a noble example in obedience. We read: "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Philippians 2:8.

The great need of the world today is to follow Him whom Heaven gave as our only true, perfect example. If all accepted Him as their personal Savior and lived a life that is in harmony with His divine will, then we would have paradise on earth. Someday soon Christ will return to this world to gather to Himself those who have followed in His footsteps. Regardless of conditions or circumstances they have been true and loyal to Him. In the world to come they will be privileged to be among those who shall "follow the Lamb whither so ever he goes." Revelation 14:4.

## 12. I Believe in Divine Leadership

HE LED THEM on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies.” Psalm 78:53.

The church has always stood in need of divine leadership, and she stands in need of that leadership now more than at any other time in the history of the world. God does not leave His people to drift hither and yon, to let them choose their own course of sailing. He desires to be their leader, their captain. Otherwise they would be shipwrecked, and not reach safely the haven of eternal rest.

The promise written by the prophet of old belongs to us today: “Thus says the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teaches thee to profit, which leads thee by the way that thou should go.” Isaiah 48:17. Two words in this promise are very significant. They are “teaches” and “leads.” The teaching precedes the leading. Many want to be led by God, but refuse to be taught the way of truth and righteousness. The Lord never leads those whom He cannot teach. The more one is willing to be taught by Him, the more he may claim divine leadership.

His leadership must become a reality not only in the service we render to Him but also in our personal experiences. To enjoy God's leadership, we must be willing at all times and under all circumstances to submit to His guidance. That God is the leader of His people must never be questioned. He guards the church as the apple of His eye. He leads them regardless of world conditions. The future may seem dark, but His promise is, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Matthew 28:20. The church may face her Red Sea as the children of Israel did of old, but in the crisis divine leadership will be manifested. God will divide the waters of difficulty and will lead His people over on dry land. When the nations of earth are battling for supremacy, when confusion is seen on every hand, when peace efforts are hopeless and most discouraging, and when darkness seems to gather all about us, and we begin to wonder whether anyone is in control of the serious situation, we may be sure that above the distractions of earth God sits enthroned. “all things are open to His divine survey. And from His great and calm eternity He orders that which His providence sees best.”

What a wonderful Leader we have! Nothing is hidden from His eyes. He sees the end from the beginning. He knows best how to lead His people.

God is the leader of His church despite the many faults and mistakes that may be seen in the lives of the members. Did you ever go through an experience that made you wonder whether God really was leading you? You could not understand why such an experience should come into your life. When we are fully surrendered to Him, and know without a shadow of a doubt that every sin is forgiven, then we must conclude that He is leading us whether we understand it or not. For “God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him.”

As hard as it may seem, the child of God must believe. Placing his hand by faith into the hand of God, he must know that he is safe anywhere. It is only when we begin to trust self that we feel competent and go our own way. It is then that we do not feel the need of divine leadership.

O how much we need to be led by Him! We need Him to guide us through the many uneven paths of life. We need Him to teach us how to walk in the way that leads to life eternal. We need His leadership because of the nearness of the end of time and because of the great unfinished task before us. The greatness of the task diminishes when we accept fully His divine guidance and believe the promise that He has given to the church, “He will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.” Romans 9:28.

God leads through His eternal Word. The Bible is our guidebook. It will never lead us astray. The Lord does not lead us one way and His Spirit-filled Word another. David knew the value of being led through this God-given agency. “O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.” Psalm 43:3.

God leads us through human beings, through His servants, through the church. He led His people through Moses and Joshua from Egypt to the Land of Promise. He is the leader of His people today. He leads them not only through His Holy Spirit and His Word but through the leaders of His church. How grateful we should be that He has so ordained that each one can be used by Him to lead others into His eternal truth and into service for Him.

If we are willing to be led by Him through this life, then He in His own time will lead us into that better land, where we shall have the privilege and the unspeakable joy of seeing face to face Him who has been our leader through life.

## 13. I Believe in Baptism by Immersion

“THERE IS ONE body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.” Ephesians 4:4-6.

Bible baptism is one of the fundamental teachings of the church. This vital truth should not be ignored. Its full meaning is worthy of thorough study, for it was Christ's first public act, and His last command was “Go . . . teach . . . baptize.” The importance of baptism is made plain in the example Christ left for us. He Himself was baptized, and we are admonished to follow in His footsteps. (1 Peter 2:2 1.) When He came to John to be baptized by him, John said, “I have need to be baptized of thee, and came thou to me?” Matthew 3:14. But Jesus said to him, “Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness. Verse 15. John then baptized Him.

The importance of baptism is further emphasized by Jesus in His farewell message to His disciples before He went back to His Father. He said, “Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” Matthew 28:19,20. The doctrine of baptism is included in the words, “Teaching them to observe all things.” In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus said, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Mark 16:16. He combines faith and baptism as one of the essentials in salvation.

Baptism was taught and practiced by the apostles. When Peter gave his sermon on the day of Pentecost the Spirit of God pressed the message upon the hearts of those who heard him. They were convinced of sin. “They were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Acts 2:37, 38. When the jailer said to Paul and Silas, “What must I do to be saved?” without any hesitation they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved, and thy house.” Acts 16:30,31. They instructed the jailer and those in his house in the Word of the Lord, and then he was baptized. (Verses 32,33.)

To believe in the doctrine of baptism and to practice it means to obey the counsel of God. We read: “All the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.” Luke 7:29,30. It pays to believe in the counsel of God and to obey His commandments. They have been given for our own good, for the building up of the spiritual man, that he may be prepared for the kingdom of God. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” John 3:5.

Baptism as a gospel ordinance commemorates the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The Bible makes this very plain. In Romans 6:3,4 we read: “Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Again, the apostle Paul says: “Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” Colossians 2:12. In baptism one gives public testimony to the fact that he has been crucified with Christ, that he is dead unto sin, and that he has been buried with Him and is raised with Him to walk in newness of life.

### Mode Of Bible Baptism

The Christian world is divided over the mode, or form, of baptism. The two generally accepted are immersion and sprinkling. If the Bible and the Bible only is accepted as authority, then one and only one mode of baptism can be accepted. “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” Ephesians 4:5. If there is but one baptism, then there can be but one mode, or form, of baptism. Since baptism symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, it must be an immersion, or a burial; and that is what the Greek word for baptism means, “to bury, to dip under, immerse.” Paul makes this very plain in his writings when he says, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death.” Romans 6:4.

It is interesting to note the differences between the Bible baptism by immersion and that of sprinkling. Both require water. Bible baptism by immersion requires much water. (John 3:23.) Sprinkling requires little water, only a few drops. The Bible teaches that to be baptized one must go not only to the water but down into the water. (Acts 8:38,39.) When Jesus was baptized the record says that “he ... went up

straightway out of the water.” Matthew 3:16. More He could go up straightway out of the water He had first to go down into the water. When one is sprinkled the water is brought to him and the candidate stays out of it. Bible baptism is a burial, an immersion, a rising out of the water. Sprinkling cannot symbolize this.

Following the mode of immersion in baptism we “put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:27.) With Him we have everything to gain and nothing to lose. Without Him we have everything to lose and nothing to gain.

## **That Which Precedes Baptism**

Before one takes the important step of following his Lord in baptism he must be old enough to meet the requirements that have been made so clear in the Word of God. They are:

1. To be taught. “Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Matthew 28:19. Before Philip baptized the eunuch he “opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.” Acts 8:35. Before the jailer was baptized Paul and Silas “spoke unto him the word of the Lord.” Acts 16:32. A knowledge of the Word of God, of its fundamental doctrines, must be taught and understood before one is ready for baptism.

2. Faith in Christ. Jesus said, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” Mark 16:16. When the jailer asked what he must do to be saved, the apostle said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved.” Acts 16:31. When the eunuch said to Philip, “See, here is water; what does hinder me to be baptized?” Philip answered, “If thou believes with all your heart, thou may.” And the eunuch replied, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Acts 8:36,37. The eunuch then was baptized. We read further of the preaching of Philip and the faith that it brought to the hearts of those who heard him. As a result of this faith baptisms followed. “When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” Verse 12.

3. Repentance, conversion, and confession of sin. The natural results of being taught the Word of God and believing on the Lord Jesus are repentance and confession of sin. To repent means to have sorrow for sins committed. To be converted means to turn about, to forsake sin, and to follow the Lord. When Nicodemus had an interview with Christ during the hours of the night, Jesus said to him, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” John 3:5.

These essentials-to be taught, to believe, to be converted and confess sins-are most vital to our salvation. They must be experienced by the individual before he takes the step to be baptized. These three essentials leave no place for infant baptism.

## **What Follows Baptism**

Baptism is the entrance to church membership. Having accepted Christ, or, as Paul says, “put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27) through baptism, one becomes a member of His body, or the church. Through baptism he has witnessed to the world that he desires to be a member of the household of God, that by faith he desires to walk “in newness of life,” that henceforth he seeks and follows the things of eternal value. If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” Colossians 3:1,2.

After a person's baptism Satan tempts him more than he did before. He tries in every way to cause the child of God to fall, to give up his faith in Christ, who alone can save. It was after the baptism of Jesus that Satan tempted Him in the wilderness. The weapon used by Christ to defeat him is to be our weapon-“It is written.” To those who follow their Lord in baptism and are obedient to His eternal truth comes the wonderful promise: “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory.” Verse 4.

## 14. I Believe in the Resurrection

IF A MAN DIE, shall he live again?" Job 14:14. This question raised by Job has perplexed men and women through the centuries. Their perplexity has come because they went to the wrong source to find the answer. God's Word gives a divine answer to the question. It leaves no doubt in the mind. Job answers the question in the latter part of the text when he says, "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." Later on in this chapter we shall learn what time job referred to when he said, "Till my change come."

The doctrine of the resurrection is one of the fundamental truths of the Bible. The Old Testament teaches the resurrection. Let us hear the testimony of three of the many witnesses that might be given. Job says: "I know that my redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Job 19:25,26. The prophet Isaiah agrees with job. Listen to his words: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, you that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." Isaiah 26:19. Ezekiel joins in teaching the resurrection. Proclaiming the word of God, he says, "Thus says the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel." Ezekiel 37:12.

Turning to the New Testament, we find that the doctrine of the resurrection has lost none of its effect. It is taught by the various writers. Paul speaks often of the resurrection. Through inspiration he wrote, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Corinthians 15:22. When he stood before Agrippa he was "judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers." Acts 26:6. What was this hope? The answer is found in verse 8: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?"

Jesus left no doubt in the minds of those with whom He spoke regarding the resurrection. He said: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28,29.

### Resurrection Made Possible Through Christ

The resurrection of Christ seals forever the fact that the dead will rise again. "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." 1 Corinthians 15:12-14. His resurrection was prophesied in the Old Testament. Speaking through David, the Lord said, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer your Holy One to see corruption." Psalm 16:10. The Holy One is none other than Christ. He was not to see corruption. He was to rise again. Thank God, He rose again, and He now lives forevermore. Jesus often spoke of His resurrection to His disciples. He repeatedly said that He would suffer, that He would be slain, but that He would rise the third day.

His resurrection is a historical fact. Many saw Him after the resurrection, for "he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Acts 1:3. Further proof that Christ was resurrected from the dead is expressed in the words written by the apostle Paul. I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures. And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once. Of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." 1 Corinthians 15:3-8.

The resurrection of Christ is one of the significant facts in history. It is the foundation and hope of the church. Every fundamental doctrine is involved in His resurrection. The resurrection of Christ is the pledge of our resurrection and future life. With the two men in shining garments who appeared at the grave on the resurrection morning we can truly say, "He is not here, but is risen." Luke 24:6. In our cemeteries we see often the words "Here lies." Then follows the name, the birth date, and the date of death. How different with Christ! Over His grave the words could well be written: "He is not here; He is risen."

We are to proclaim His resurrection to the world. He is the living Christ. He could say, "I am he

that lived, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.” Revelation 1:18. The fact that He lives is the best proof that there will be a resurrection of the dead.

### **Time Of The Resurrection**

The time of the resurrection of the dead is taught as definitely as the resurrection of Christ. It will take place at the coming of Jesus. “The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” 1 Thessalonians 4:16. Again we read: “Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” 1 Corinthians 15:51,52. It takes place at the last trump. The time of the change that is to take place, of which Paul speaks, is the same time job spoke of when he said, “Till my change come.” Job 14:14. David makes it plain that the entering into immortal life would be at the time of the resurrection. He looked forward with God's saints to that glorious event. He said, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.” Psalm 17:15. The hope of the resurrection from the dead to a life immortal is the great hope proclaimed in the gospel. The resurrection means the reunion of loved ones. Coming forth from their dusty graves, they will be united, never to part again. What a wonderful thought and what a wonderful event to look forward to a time when the words written by John will be fulfilled: “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” Revelation 21:4.

## **15. I Believe in the Perpetuity of the Law**

SOME YEARS AGO I heard a young man preach on a street corner in one of the towns in Western Canada. His subject was "The Righteousness of Christ." At the conclusion of his talk I met him, and asked him a few questions. He gave me to understand that he preached only the righteousness of Christ.

I then asked him if a standard that teaches what is right and wrong is not necessary in order for one to preach the righteousness of Christ. He said that his conscience told him what is right and what is wrong. I informed him that the Bible definitely speaks of two kinds of conscience, and asked him if the law of God is not the standard.

To this he immediately replied, "I believe in the spirit of the law but not in the letter of the law."

In answer to this statement I said, "I agree that it is possible to keep the letter of the law and yet not have the spirit of the law; but when one believes in the spirit of the law, he will also keep the letter of the law."

He then answered, "I do not believe in the predestination of the Presbyterians, the conversion of the Methodists, the baptism of the Baptists, or the law of the Seventh-day Adventists."

Strange though it is, the very mention of the word "law" always seems to disturb some people. They strongly resent any suggestion that the law of God might apply to them. Perhaps they know that they are transgressors. The true Christian, however, loves to hear the word law, for his attitude toward it is the same as is Christ's. Of the Savior we read in prophecy, "He will magnify the law, and make it honorable." Isaiah 42:21. Again: I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." Psalm 40:8. Christ did not come to do away with the law, but to obey it and to live it. (Matthew 5:17.) Jesus was without sin. "Sin is the transgression of the law"; since He did no sin, He must have been obedient to the law.

### **The Law Existed Before Sinai**

Many Christians do not believe that the law of God existed before it was given on Mount Sinai, but this is not Biblical. Of Abraham we read long before Sinai: "Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws." Genesis 26:5. How could Abraham keep the law if it did not exist? You will remember that when Joseph was down in Egypt, and was tempted to transgress the seventh commandment, he said, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Genesis 39:9. How did he know that this would be sin against God? For the simple reason that the law said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Exodus 20:14. Therefore the law existed before it was spoken on Mount Sinai. This fact is further substantiated by the following syllogisms:

"Where no law is, there is no transgression." Romans 4:15. Eve "being deceived was in the transgression." 1 Timothy 2:14. Therefore Eve transgressed the law. "Sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:4. "Death reigned from Adam to Moses" as the result of sin. Romans 5:14. Therefore the law prevailed from Adam to Moses.

The Bible is very plain and definite concerning the existence of the law before Sinai. Sin existed before Sinai; therefore the law must have been in force; otherwise those who lived before Sinai would never have known what sin was. That the law existed from Sinai to the time of Christ is an undisputed fact.

The New Testament teaches definitely that the law existed not only before but after the cross. This is as clear as the fact that it existed in the Old Testament. A young man came to Jesus, and said, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Jesus answered, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Matthew 19:16,17. Christ Himself said, "If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." John 15:10.

### **The Law In The New Testament**

There seems to be quite a dispute over the question whether the law existed after the crucifixion of Christ-whether Christians today are under obligation to keep the law. To find a correct answer to these questions, we naturally must turn to the Word of God, for the Bible and the Bible only must be the foundation of our faith. Did the law exist after the cross? Let us ask John. He answers: "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." 1 John 5:2. Ask the apostle Paul; he gives the following answer: "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but

the keeping of the commandments of God.” 1 Corinthians 7:19. “I delight in the law of God after the inward man.” Romans 7:22. Ask James. “So speak you, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.” James 2: 12.

Surely these three witnesses bring us sufficient proof of the existence of the law of God after the crucifixion of Christ.

Furthermore, the New Testament teaches that obedience to God's law is the fruit of conversion. If you be led of the Spirit, you are not under the law.... But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” Galatians 5:18-23.

All apostolic messages uphold the sacred character and the binding claims of the law of God. The Ten Commandments reveal our duty to God and to our fellow men, and this duty is unchanged. Standards may change, but God's standard remains the same-right is always right, and wrong is always wrong. In His sight sin will always be sin in whatever form it may appear, for “sin is the transgression of the law.”

Since God's standard remains the same, we must conclude that His law is unchangeable and eternal. The unchangeableness of the law is taught through the gospel, for the gospel is the means of the firm establishment and vindication of the law. There is no need of the gospel where there is no sin, for the gospel is the power of God unto salvation-salvation from sin, which is the transgression of the law.

It is most dangerous to teach that God's law has been changed, for to take away the perpetuity of the law is to take away its power to convince of sin. Paul said, “I had not known sin, but by the law.” Romans 7:7. The law does not justify the sinner; it only reveals sin. The sinner must go to Christ, who alone can forgive and justify. To do away with the law of God means to kill the living essence of the law, which is love, for love is the fulfilling of the law.” Romans 13:10. Jesus said, “If you love me, keep my commandments.” John 14:15.

How thankful we ought to be that God has left us a standard that teaches us what is right and what is wrong! This standard is the unchangeable, eternal law of God. It applies now, to us, to all men. By the grace of God let us bring our lives into harmony with its holy precepts.

## 16. I Believe in the judgment and the Law as Its Standard

ONE OF THE words that were written on the wall in Babylon at the time of the feast of Belshazzar was tekel. Daniel gave the interpretation as “Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.” Daniel 5:27.

These words were spoken direct to Belshazzar, the king of Babylon. They came to him at a time when he felt safe and secure, for he was in a city which was surrounded by immense walls. He felt nothing could break through these walls; hence the feeling of security. They were spoken also at a time when the king was very careless. He knew about God's dealing with Nebuchadnezzar, his grandfather, for the record says, “Thou his son, O Belshazzar, has not humbled your heart, though thou knew all this.” Verse 22. Furthermore, this word tekel came to him at a time when he was wholly unprepared. Before he knew it the Medes and the Persians came marching right under the walls of the very palace where he was feasting. In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain.” Verse 30.

Although the word tekel was spoken more than two thousand years ago, it brings to us today the thought of a judgment, for truly it was a judgment for Belshazzar and his kingdom. The handwriting spelled the doom not only for the king but for the kingdom.

That there will be a judgment for all people is taught very definitely in the Bible. There is no way of escape for anyone. Wealth, poverty, education, ignorance, sickness, or health will not excuse us, for all must appear before God. The apostle Paul informs us that “it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” Hebrews 9:27. Again he states, “We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.” Romans 14:10. Delving into this subject of the judgment still deeper, he writes, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” 2 Corinthians 5:10.

As in the case of Belshazzar, the word tekel-“Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting”-may come to us when we feel safe and secure, at a time when we are careless and indifferent, or at a time when we are not expecting it, and consequently it will find us wholly unprepared.

The Bible not only teaches that there will be a judgment but also gives the time of the judgment. We read that “God . . . hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world.” Acts 17:30,31. The judgment was still in the future in the days of Paul. When he stood before Felix “he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.” Acts 24:25. John, while on the Isle of Patmos, saw the opening of the judgment. It was to come at a time when a special message was due the world. This message is found in Revelation 14. The seventh verse says, “Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” Notice “the hour of his judgment is come.” It is the same judgment of which Daniel spoke in Daniel 7:9,10. There are three phases of the judgment: the investigative judgment, which precedes the Second Coming of Christ. The judgment of the lost, which takes place during the one thousand years that begins at the time of the first resurrection; and the executive judgment, or the punishment of the wicked, which comes at the close of the one thousand years. It is the investigative judgment that is proclaimed to the world in Revelation 14. This judgment began at the close of the twenty-three hundred prophetic days, or in 1844. (Daniel 8:14.) It determines the fate of all those whose names are found in the Lamb's book of life. (1 Peter 4:17.)

### Standard In The Judgment

God does have a standard, or rule, that will be used in the judgment, and this must be the same for all people and for all times. It must be a righteous standard, for a righteous God will always judge in righteousness. The psalmist exclaims, “O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously.” Psalm 67:4. The apostle Paul corroborates the statement by saying, “Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness.” Acts 17:31.

But you ask, What is this rule that God will use in the judgment, or what will be the standard by which everyone is measured? There is but one answer: It must be the law of God, the Ten Commandments, for we read, “All thy commandments are righteousness.” Psalm 119:172.

If God judges in righteousness, and all His commandments are righteousness, then they must constitute the standard by which man is judged. This is a teaching not only of the Old Testament but also of the New. We read in James 2, beginning with the eighth verse, the following, “If you fulfil the royal law

according to the scripture, Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself, you do well: but if you have respect to persons, you commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.

For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak you, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.”

The question naturally arises, Why must the ten-commandment law be the rule by which everyone will be measured? Let us notice briefly three reasons why God must choose the law as His standard in the judgment.

First, it reveals our duty to God and man. To know whether we have fulfilled our duty to our Creator and to our fellow men, we must be measured by that standard which reveals our duty. This is taught very definitely in the following language: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” Ecclesiastes 12:13,14. The same thought is expressed in the language of Christ when He said, “Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.... And ... Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself.” Matthew 22:37-39.

Second, it requires the righteousness of Christ. The law that requires this righteousness must be a righteous law, and by that law we must be judged. The law does not and cannot make us righteous; it only reveals sin. It requires the righteousness of Christ, and this we obtain from Christ, who is our righteousness. “That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Romans 8:4.

Third, because it reveals the character of God. When the Lord comes the second time His people, who will be saved, will be like Him; in other words, they will have developed a character like His. Since the law reveals the character of God, it is only reasonable to believe that that law will be the standard by which mankind will be measured.

Notice the following attributes of God's character which are also revealed in the law:

**TRUTH:** “Thy law is the truth.” Psalm 119:142. “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” John 14:6.

**RIGHTEOUSNESS:** “All thy commandments are righteousness.” Psalm 119:172. “We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” 1 John 2: 1.

**HOLINESS:** “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy.” Romans 7:12. “You shall be holy; for I am holy.” Leviticus 11: 44.

**PERFECTION:** “The law of the Lord is perfect.” Psalm 19:7. “Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Matthew 5:48.

## 17. I Believe in the Sabbath as God's Rest Day

HOW OFTEN WE hear someone say, "It makes no difference what we believe as long as we are sincere in what we believe." This kind of reasoning is not only false but most dangerous. It is not so much what we believe but what God wants us to believe that really counts. The Bible alone must be the source of our faith. The church that does not have a "Thus says the Lord" or "It is written" for its foundation cannot have the approbation of Heaven.

There are three motives that usually lead people to do what they do; namely, convenience, financial gain, and popularity. Those who keep the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, do not keep it because of any one of these reasons. There are other reasons that lead them to obey God and keep holy His day of rest.

The Sabbath is of divine origin. It comes to us from Eden. Therefore it was instituted before sin entered the world. After the creation of the world in six days, according to the record "God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all his work which God created and made." Genesis 2:3. Since the Sabbath was instituted during the Creation week, it could not be a type. Types were given after the Fall, to foreshadow redemption. The Sabbath cannot be a Jewish Sabbath, because it was given twenty-three hundred years before such a distinction existed. The Jew is a descendant of Judah, one of the twelve tribes. Judah was born nearly twenty-three hundred years after the Creation. The Sabbath is not called "Jewish" anywhere in the Bible. Jesus said that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Mark 2:27. The words man and Jew are not spelled alike. The word man includes both Jews and Gentiles. Since the Sabbath was made for all, therefore the word man is used. It is an established fact that a noun unlimited by an adjective is to be taken in its broadest sense—"man is mortal" means all men, or the human race. So it is in this case. The Lord does not limit the Sabbath to one class of men, but says it was "made for man." That includes all races. This teaching is in harmony with the words of Isaiah who said, "Blessed is the man that does this, and the son of man that lays hold on it; that keeps the Sabbath from polluting it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil." Isaiah 56:2.

The Sabbath is God's rest day because it is a memorial of Creation. The psalmist said, "He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered." Psalm 111:4. The Sabbath commandment reminds us that God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. It says, "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." Exodus 20:11.

The Sabbath commandment is God's best weapon against the teaching of evolution. The commandment gives the Creator: "The Lord made." It gives the time in which Creation was completed: "in six days." And it gives that which was created: "heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is."

The Sabbath is God's rest day because it is "the Lord's day," the seventh day of the week. To call any other day the Lord's day does not make it His day. In the commandment God saw fit to call it His day: "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." Verse 10. That is why Jesus said while here on earth, "Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath." The Sabbath is not one day in seven, but "the seventh day." The Sabbath commandment belongs to the law that all are obliged to keep. It is easy to convince one that nine commandments in the law are binding. But when it comes to the fourth the thought seems to prevail that it has been done away with. If one of the commandments, regardless of which one it is, can be ignored, then the rest of the commandments can be. The fact remains, however, that all the commandments are to be kept. "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." James 2:10.

The fourth commandment makes it clear that the Sabbath is not only the Lord's day but also the seventh day, and therefore the Sabbath is God's rest day. God desires that we shall remember His day and keep it holy. The very first word in the commandment says "Remember," thus signifying the danger of forgetting. Since the institution of God's holy day He has said, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Exodus 20:8. The world has forgotten God's holy Sabbath. And it is indeed most unfortunate that many who profess to be commandment keepers too often forget what the words "to keep it holy" mean. There is a sharp distinction between the keeping holy of the Sabbath and the mere keeping of a day like Sunday. No one can keep holy a day that has not been made holy by God. Sunday is used as a day of worship. Thousands of sincere people attend church in the morning, but in the afternoon many of these same people do secular work, buy groceries, transact business, go hunting or fishing, et cetera. To them the day cannot and does not mean much if they keep the day in their own way and according to their own

thinking.

God's Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, which has been blessed and made holy by the Creator, is to be kept holy in the true sense of the word. The twenty-four hours from sunset to sunset are all holy. He says, "From even unto even, shall you celebrate your Sabbath." Leviticus 23:32. Each moment of its sacred time must be guarded. To receive the blessing the Lord has placed upon His holy day, we must keep it holy. When the sun sets Friday evening we must not be found among the class of people who seem to be sorry that the sun is setting, sorry that they can work no longer. The prophet Amos speaks of another class of people whose eyes are turned westward, who are happy to know that the sun will soon set on Sabbath evening, so that they can go about their business. The prophet says, "Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? And the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit?" Amos 8: 5. This is not and cannot be true Sabbath keeping. It is far from heeding the commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

Only a converted, sanctified life can keep holy the day God has made holy. The Sabbath is the sign of sanctification, for we read, "Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." Ezekiel 20:12. The keeping holy of the Sabbath calls not simply for complete abstinence from all secular labor or sports but for a certain attitude of mind. We cannot keep holy the Sabbath day unless we are in an attitude of worship. We must approach the Sabbath with a fervent determination to be free of all sin, have all things made right before the Sabbath begins, and then keep our minds and hearts from all things worldly.

The Sabbath is to be a day of blessing, a day to bring to our hearts renewed and deep experiences in the things of God. It is to be a day of spiritual reflection. All these experiences can be realized only when we enter upon the holy rest of God's day with the assurance in our hearts that all is right between ourselves and God, and between us and our fellow men. Every Sabbath service, regardless of what that service might be, sets before us a table spread with all manner of spiritual food. To obtain this food or to profit by it we must gather around that spiritual table. Therefore we are admonished by the apostle Paul: "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching." Hebrews 10:24,25.

We do well to spend a portion of the Sabbath in studying God's nature. By beholding on the Sabbath the things He has created, our thoughts are turned heavenward. We are reminded in the Sabbath commandment that He is the Creator, that He made the world in six days. Therefore our minds on the Sabbath should be drawn toward eternal values.

The Sabbath, God's rest day, will be kept in the earth made new. It was instituted and kept in Eden. When Eden is restored the Sabbath will be kept. Therefore it must be kept from Eden to Eden. The prophet speaks of this when he says, "It shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, says the Lord." Isaiah 66:23. The true child of God looks forward to the time when in the kingdom of God he shall worship before Him each Sabbath day. To share in the blessed privilege of keeping the Sabbath then, we must keep it now.

## **18. I Believe in God's Message for His Church Today**

THE BIBLE MAKES it plain that God has had a church, or a people, from the very beginning. In the Old Testament we read of the church in the wilderness. In the New Testament God speaks often of His church. He has had not only a church through the centuries but a definite message for His church to proclaim during the various periods or generations in the history of the world. Each special message that was proclaimed could well be called "present truth" for the period in which the message was given. Speaking of present truth, the apostle Peter says, "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and be established in the present truth." 2 Peter 1:12.

Four facts are given concerning present truth: (1) "I will not be negligent"; (2) "I will ... put you always in remembrance"; (3) "though you know them"; and (4) "be established in the present truth."

We can know what present truth is. God wills that we shall know. And we can know, for how could we "be established in present truth" unless we know what it is?

Some truths are present truth in every age or generation. These are the truths that might be called faith, conversion, and obedience. Some truths, as mentioned before, are special truths. They are truths for a special time, a definite period, a definite generation, and therefore present truth only during the generation in which they are given. It is important to notice that the acceptance of these special truths by those who lived at the time they were given, meant salvation. Rejection meant the loss of eternal life.

The purpose of every special truth, regardless of when it was given or is given, is to develop in the life the three truths that are present truth in every generation or age; namely, the truths called faith, conversion, and obedience. The proclamation of any truth or message is useless unless faith, conversion, and obedience are revealed in the lives of those who receive the message. Let us notice some of the special messages that were given to the world during special periods.

### **Present Truth In Noah's Time**

The special truth for Noah's time was, "Yet one hundred and twenty years and the Flood will come." As the message that God gave to Noah was preached it had for its purpose the development of faith, conversion, and obedience. This is made plain by the following words: "By faith Noah." Hebrews 11:7. It was a message of faith. Before Noah could preach that message he had to believe it himself. Through his preaching he tried to persuade the people of his time to believe the message God had given him. Lack of faith led to their destruction. Noah's message was a saving message. In the same verse we read that he responded to God's commands "to the saving of his house." His message was given for the purpose of saving those who lived in that generation. Any truth that develops faith, conversion, and obedience is a saving truth. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." Hebrews 11:7. And Peter says, "While the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." 1 Peter 3:20.

Conversion of the heart precedes the saving of the life, or soul. Faith leads to conversion, and conversion brings about obedience. Of Noah we read, "Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him." Genesis 7:5. That is obedience. It is doing what God commands. Those who were saved in the ark were saved because of their faith, their conversion, and their obedience. These were couched in the truth that Noah gave in his special message, which was present truth only during his age.

### **Present Truth In John's Time**

The special truth for John's time, or his generation, was the proclamation of the first advent of Jesus. A study of John's message reveals that it taught faith, conversion, and obedience. He preached faith in the coming Messiah, faith in the establishment of the principles of God's government in the heart. His message called people to conversion. His plea was, "Repent you: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 3:2. We read that as a result of the preaching of his message "many of the children of Israel shall be turned to the Lord their God." Luke 1:16. Turning to the Lord means true conversion. John's message brought about not only faith and conversion but also obedience, which is the natural fruit of faith and conversion. Of the people in his day we read, "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." Matthew 3:5,6. So

again we find clearly that God had a special message for John to preach in his day for those who lived in his generation. His message was present truth for his time. And it, as Noah's message, brought about faith, conversion, and obedience in the life.

## **What Is Present Truth For Today?**

God must have a special truth, or message, for this time as He had for other times. Present truth now is not, "Yet one hundred twenty years, then the earth shall be destroyed by water"; it is not, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown"; and it is not the first advent of Christ. The present truth for today must be a special truth that develops what all other truths have developed; namely, faith, conversion, and obedience. Is there anywhere in the Bible a message that has for its objective the development of these three? Indeed there is. It is found in Revelation 14:6-12. The messages given here develop faith in the life, for we read in the twelfth verse that the people of God will have "the faith of Jesus." Notice, not "in," but "of." His faith is the background of all the fundamental doctrines in the Bible.

In this same twelfth verse of Revelation 14 we read another feature of the message for this time, and that is conversion. "Here is the patience of the saints." There can be no saints without conversion. And only truly converted people have the faith of Jesus and possess the patience of the saints.

How about obedience? It is truly found in God's message for this time. For in the same verse of Revelation 14 we read, "that keep the commandments of God." The people who hear the Lord's message and accept it for this time follow their Lord's example in obedience. True obedience means not only to accept the life of Christ as our example and follow Him but to be obedient to all the teachings in His Word. We are living in a time when the natural heart is prone to find the easy way, but God is sending a special message to the world today through His church.

Present truth for today teaches one to accept all the light God has revealed in His Word for this time. It teaches the Second Advent of Christ, the judgment hour, the perpetuity of the law, the keeping of the Sabbath, which is the seal of the living God, and the worship of the true God. It reveals the fall of Babylon. It warns against the worship of the beast and his image. It teaches the service of Christ our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. Yes, present truth for today includes all that has been mentioned and all other kindred doctrines that the Lord has for His church today. His message calls for a definite decision either to accept or to reject it. The rejection of God's threefold message for today means the loss of eternal life. Only those who develop the characteristics found in Revelation 14:12 will stand victorious on the sea of glass.

Present truth has always had those who proclaimed it, and it has accomplished its God-given purpose. Present truth has always been accepted by many but rejected by the majority. God's eternal truth that is due the world today in this last generation, cannot be stopped. Through the centuries He has held His hand over His truth. He has blessed the people who have proclaimed it. His messages have always triumphed. The message that He has given the last-day church to preach to the world will triumph gloriously when it has been preached to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people.

"Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne,  
Yet that scaffold sways the future, And, behind the dim unknown,  
Stands God within the shadow, Keeping watch above His own."

## 19. I Believe in Prayer

BEFORE THE FALL man talked face to face with his Maker. Although sin separated him from God, yet he was not cut off completely from heaven. Through the avenue of prayer man was to commune with God. Prayer became the act by which he approached God; it became the link between earth and heaven.

From the earliest days we read that man called upon the name of the Lord; he was instructed to bring an offering to Him. Of Abel we read that he brought the firstlings of his flock and offered them to God and that "the Lord had respect unto . . . his offering." Genesis 4:4. As soon as Noah and his family left the ark, he built "an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar." Genesis 8:20. The Lord was pleased with his offering, for we read, "And the Lord smelled a sweet savor." Verse 21. Later, in the sanctuary service we find the altar of incense, which was before the veil in the first apartment. Morning and evening the fragrant smoke ascended heavenward.

John the revelator saw the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of God's people, ascend upward before the Lord. As the priest was brought into the presence of God through the offering of incense, so are we brought very close to the Savior through the pouring out of our souls in earnest prayer.

We are admonished to "pray without ceasing." 1 Thessalonians 5:17. That means that our minds are to be constantly in an attitude of prayer. Wherever we may be or whatever our work may be, we can turn our thoughts heavenward, asking for divine guidance, for power to overcome the temptation the evil one brings to us. Besides this prayerful attitude of mind, the Lord desires that we shall have our regular time when we seek Him in earnest prayer. David prayed three times a day. He said, "As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice." Psalm 55:16,17.

Daniel sought his God three times a day-"he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." Daniel 6:10. Because of his consistent prayer life God delivered him from the lions. He knew what it meant to commune with God. His contact with Heaven through the avenue of prayer strengthened his faith in the crisis hour; it caused him to put his trust in God so completely that he knew he would be delivered.

### Need Of Prayer

We stand in need of prayer more today than at any time in the history of the church. The unusual times to which we have come demand much praying of God's people. How often circumstances seem to make praying difficult. This is the time of all times when we should lay hold on God most. Through persevering prayer we can overcome all circumstances that seem to be against us. In the darkest hour God must be the nearest. He must be our light, our salvation, and our deliverer.

Any one of the scores of definitions of prayer that might be given should cause us to see the need of prayer. Without prayer we fall into temptation. No one has ever sinned while seeking God in earnest, sincere prayer; prayer unites us with heaven. We need to put on the whole armor of God, for we wrestle with the prince of darkness. The ministry of intercession is truly a great privilege. Victories are won on the knees.

To appreciate the need of prayer and what it means to us, let us make a list of only a few of the many definitions of prayer that we have heard:

"Prayer is communion with God."

"Prayer is the voice of faith."

"Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend."

"Prayer is an offering of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His will, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies."

"Prayer is hidden fire."

"Prayer is a sigh, a tear."

"Prayer is the upward glance to God."

"Prayer is not conquering God's reluctance, but taking hold of God's willingness."

"Prayer is the cry of the prodigal, the breath of the soul, the watchword at death, the key to heaven, and the pathway to salvation."

"Prayer is the key in the hand of faith that unlocks heaven's storehouse!"

“Prayer is the incense that gives the devil a headache.”

With Luther we can truly say, prayer is a powerful thing, for God hath bound Himself thereunto.” Prayer works when all else fails. No wonder Jesus said, “Watch unto prayer.” The more we pray, the stronger we are in the Lord. The Bible has a wealth of testimony to the power of prayer. The patriarchs, the prophets, and the apostles found power in prayer. Every spiritual leader for God knows from experience that earnest, sincere praying brings dynamic results, for when we lay hold on God He will lay hold on us.

How often we feel, after we have prayed, that the Lord has not heard us. We become discouraged. We say, “Why should we pray? “ This is what the enemy of our souls wants us to do. He knows that prayer is the place not only of conflict but of victory, and therefore he uses all his strategy to bring discouragement to us. When we know that all is right between us and our God and between us and our fellow men, and that we are walking in all the light God has given us, then we must believe that He hears our prayers, regardless of how we feel, and that He will answer them in His own time and in the way that is for our best good.

Studying this important subject, we do well to think not only of the blessed privilege of prayer, the sweet communion with our God and the assurance of fellowship with Him through prayer, but also of the many things that cause the Lord to turn a deaf ear to our prayers. The Bible speaks very definitely and plainly regarding this. The hindrances are many; some of them are:

1. Unbelief. Those who come to the Lord in prayer not only must have faith in God but must believe that He will answer their prayers in harmony with His divine will. Unbelief is one of the great hindrances to private prayer. We cannot pray fervently in an attitude of unbelief. “He that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Hebrews 11:6. Unbelief is caused not by want of knowledge or intelligence, but by want of confidence. Unbelief manifests itself by refusing to hear; it originates in a hardened heart. The warning is “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.” Hebrews 3:12. One of the first steps that leads us away from God is to neglect prayer, and too often prayer is neglected because of lack of faith in a prayer hearing and a prayer answering God. We must never doubt that God answers our prayers when we pray in harmony with His will. Jesus said, “Therefore I say unto you, What things so ever you desire, when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them.” Mark 11:24. Let us hold on in prayer until unbelief gives way to faith.

2. Pride and selfishness. The Pharisee in the Temple prayed to himself. (Luke 18:11.) Pride hindered his prayer from being heard. The first sincere approach to our God is humility of heart. God dwells in a contrite heart by His Spirit. He hears the cry of the one who puts self aside. To think of others and not of self is a good practice in God’s school of prayer. When we approach the Lord in prayer we must make sure that pride and selfishness are absent from the heart; otherwise our prayers cannot be heard.

3. Unforgiving spirit. The Lord hears and forgives only as we are willing to forgive. We are taught to pray, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” Matthew 6:12. As long as we hold a grudge against our brother, so long will our prayer remain unanswered. How can anyone expect a blessing at the prayer altar when he is not reconciled to his fellow man? Someone has well said, “To amend our prayers we need first to amend our ways.”

4. Sin or willful transgression of God's law. The first chapter in Isaiah makes it plain that the Lord abhors the unreality and mere formalism in worship of those who are perverse in spirit, who sin against Him. We read, “When you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.” Isaiah 1:15-17.

Again we are told, “The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.” Isaiah 59:1. No wonder the Lord said through the wise man, “He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.” Proverbs 28:9.

If our hearts are ever in tune with heaven, then we shall know that God will turn His ear to listen to our prayers and answer them in the way that is best for us. Multitudes today, as in all ages, can arise and say, “It pays to live a life of prayer.” Prayer has meant everything to them. They would not give up their communion with God for anything in this world. We need to pray daily: “Lord, teach us to pray.”

## 20. I Believe in Soul Liberty

THE SPIRIT OF the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” Isaiah 61:1. This prophecy refers to the work Christ was to do while upon the earth. When He preached on a certain Sabbath day He referred to the word spoken by Isaiah and He could say, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” Luke 4:21. He preached not only freedom from sin but soul liberty, the right to worship according to the dictates of the conscience.

That which the human heart craves most is liberty. The very thought of liberty thrills the soul. There can be no happiness without it.

Millions of people today have lost their soul liberties. The knowledge of this should cause us to be more grateful than ever for the privilege of living in a land where there is freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of peaceable assembly, the right of petition, safety of person, and above all, freedom to worship God according to the dictates of one's own conscience. Someone has said, and rightly, “The essence of democracy is not the spirit of tyranny, but the breath of personal liberty.” Surely the greatest of all earthly blessings is liberty, and the most precious of liberties—the fountain and basis of them all —is religious liberty.

True liberty is the freedom to advocate the truth as we see it, and to permit our opponents to advocate it as they see it. It is something that the other individual is to enjoy as much as we personally desire to enjoy it. Liberty is one thing we cannot have unless we are willing to give it to others.

It is, therefore, important that we study this subject from the viewpoint of the greatest of all books, the Bible. Soul liberty is something that is more precious than life itself. This was demonstrated by thousands in the terrible conflict of World War II. The Allied nations were willing to sacrifice the lives of their manpower in order to preserve this precious heritage. One of the freedoms for which we fought is the freedom of worship.

It is evident that soul liberty is based upon the teachings revealed in God's Book. Because of this Satan will leave no stone unturned to try to destroy these fundamental principles. He works through human agencies. All through the centuries he has been successful in his undertaking, and we must confess that he is most successful in our day, for millions are bound in chains. They are slaves, they have been robbed of their freedom, they dare not speak their own minds, they are forced to yield the greatest of all liberties—religious liberty.

When man was created he was given the power of choice. God has never changed this. Man's freedom of conscience is sacred. The Lord says, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” God forces no one; neither does He commission anyone to force others to worship Him. God has power to bring about outward obedience through force, but He chooses to work through the free will of man. Although He never forces acts of obedience, man must recognize what the results of choice will be. When our first parents were placed in Eden they were told not to eat of a certain tree. They were not forced to refrain from eating, but God told them what the fateful consequences would be if they partook of the fruit. They chose to eat; today we see the terrible results.

Soul liberty is based upon at least two fundamental Bible principles: the principle of love and the principle of faith. The eternal principle and power by which God moves is love, not force. This love eternally underlies the law and the gospel. Christ never appealed to civil government to compel people to follow Him by force. Love extends the same principle to others that we wish to secure for ourselves. The statement, “My neighbor's liberty is as sacred as mine, and I dare not encroach upon it,” is basic. Let us not take the glad tidings out of the Bible by preaching or teaching hatred and intolerance. Love is the greatest thing in the world. When that fails all else will fail. God wants us to worship Him, not because we are forced, but because we love.

Soul liberty is based on the principle of faith. It was Martin Luther who said, “Liberty is the very essence of faith.” Faith is the background of all fundamental truths. Faith is a personal matter. “Has thou faith? have it to thyself before God.... for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” Romans 14:22,23. To compel anyone to act as though he believes that which he in his heart does not believe makes him a hypocrite. Napoleon at one time received a delegation of Protestants, and among other things he said to them, “My dominion ends where that of the conscience begins.” In this statement lies a fundamental truth upon which religious liberty is based. Faith has led martyrs to face lions in the arena and to go cheerfully to the execution block. Hundreds of thousands have been willing to die for their faith.

Force never changes inward convictions, for “a man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.” Men of a firm will and strong conviction have often endured terrible tests for the sake of their beliefs. Great patriots who have given their fortunes and their lives for their countries are such. But some men, inspired only by selfishness, have braved great hardship to enhance their own fame and power.

The liberty taught by the Holy Scriptures clearly recognizes that no one may claim for himself as a right anything that would limit or deny equal rights for others. “God is no respecter of persons.” He has “made of one blood all nations of men”; He has given equal rights to all men in matters of conscience.

The Christian who gives his all for the preservation of the inherent rights of conscience never thinks only of himself. He must be as anxious and zealous for his fellow man—all his fellow men, whatever their creed may be—as he is for himself. Thus and thus only can the Christian fulfill the gospel command, “Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself.”

Soul liberty is offered in Christ: If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.” John 8:36. The freedom that comes to the heart of the surrendered life is not to be quenched by any civil or secular power. God never did, and never will, sanction anything that tries to suppress the soul's basic rights. He has ordained that man shall be free to worship his Creator according to the dictates of his conscience. He definitely pronounces His disapproval and condemnation upon those who subdue or suppress the soul freedom of the individual. It would do everyone good to study anew the Word of God to become better acquainted with the fundamental principles revealed in it which mean so much to the happiness and welfare of mankind.

## **21. I Believe in the Church and Its Organization**

GOD HAS A CHURCH upon the earth which is His property. He guards her as the apple of His eye. There is nothing so dear to His heart as His people, for “the Lord's portion is his people.” Deuteronomy 32:9.

The church has always been a target for her enemies and a haven of refuge for the believers. Either we believe in the church or we do not. Those who believe in the church have definite reasons for their belief. The following are but a few.

### **Because Christ Is The Builder Of The Church**

He who created the world, who became the Redeemer of man, is also the one who is the builder of His church. To Peter He said, “Upon this rock I will build my church.” Matthew 16:18. Again we read, “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.” Psalm 127:1. As builder of the church He is vitally interested in all her functions and in her welfare. He desires to lead her in the way of truth and righteousness. The members of the church are to be living stones. Through the Holy Spirit He fits and builds them into His spiritual structure. This is what the apostle referred to when he said, In whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy temple in the Lord.” Ephesians 2:21. One's faith is strengthened when he knows and believes that Christ is her builder.

### **Because Christ Is The Foundation Of The Church**

Since Christ is the builder of His church, we may feel assured that He has built her upon a sure, firm, and an enduring foundation, a foundation that cannot be questioned. We ask, Who is the foundation of the church? There can be but one answer.

The foundation of the church is not a man or a group of men, however godly they may have been. When Jesus said to Peter, “Upon this rock I will build my church,” He did not refer to Peter, but to the testimony that he gave when asked, “Whom say you that I am?” He answered, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Matthew 16:15,16. Jesus said, “Upon this rock” - not upon you, Peter “I will build my church.” That Christ was to be the foundation of the church was prophesied before His birth. Isaiah said, “Therefore thus says the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believes shall not make haste.” Isaiah 28:16. Referring to this prophecy, Peter makes it plain that the tried stone, the cornerstone, was Christ. (1 Peter 2:4-8.) Paul leaves no question as to who the foundation is. He says, “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 3:11. There is no substitute for Christ as foundation of the church.

“How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord,  
Is laid for your faith in His excellent word!”

### **Because Of Her Divine Organization**

Organization is one of the fundamental teachings of the Bible. Where there is no organization, there we find chaos. Satan knows only too well that success can attend only order and unity of action, that everything connected with heaven is in perfect order. It was Milton who said, “Order is Heaven's first law.” “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” 1 Corinthians 14:33. Since God is a God of order, we must conclude that the universe, which He created, runs in harmony with the laws of order, that its organization is perfect. This is made clear in the Word of God. We read, “Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that brings out their host by number: he calls them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one fails.” Isaiah 40:26. The psalmist says, “He tells the number of the stars; he calls them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.” Psalm 147:4,5.

The organization of the church is of divine origin. It is likened to the functions of the body. “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.” 1 Corinthians 12:12. All the members in the body function in the proper relation to

one another. Their organization is perfect.

Anciently God's people were well organized. The simplicity and completeness of the organization of Israel was most wonderful. Israel was not permitted to go forth out of Egypt as an unorganized, undirected people. Companies were formed and leaders were chosen. When the hour struck at midnight Israel moved out of Egypt in an orderly fashion. We read, "Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt." Exodus 13:18. The margin says "five in rank." Then there "were rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens." Exodus 18:21.

The organization of the church today is to be on an equal basis with the organization of God's people anciently. Since it is the body of Christ, therefore the same unity and harmony that exists between the members of the body should also exist between the members of the church. The purpose of church organization is to bring about unity, and that relationships may be understood, recognized, and appreciated, and that leadership may be properly constituted, properly directed, and readily accepted. "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Ephesians 4:12,13. Within the organization of the church we are told to have elders, deacons, and other officers of the various departments within the church. Because of the divine organization of the church, Satan hurls his attacks against her. He is the author of confusion. His desire to destroy the church will utterly fail.

## **Because Of The Triumph Of The Church**

It stands to reason that since Christ is the builder, the foundation, and the head of the church, He will lead her to victory. "He went forth conquering and to conquer." All the attacks of Satan upon the church from the very beginning have failed. She has been fought by skeptics, abused by infidels. The enemies of the church have always been very unreasonable, because they have not had the experience of a life of peace and satisfaction that comes with church membership. They base their conclusions on what they see from the outside and what they hear from the critics of the church. Victory has been assured, not only to the church but to those who are members of the church, who have accepted Christ, the Head of the church, as their personal Savior, and who follow Him.

When we speak of victory we naturally ask, In what will the church be victorious, or triumphant? The answer is twofold: first, over sin, and second, in her God-given purpose. The supreme purpose for which the church has been established is the salvation of souls. The church is the channel between God and man. The saving of souls is made possible through the preaching of the everlasting gospel, which is "the power of God unto salvation." Romans 1:16. The church has been commissioned to preach the gospel to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. (Matthew 24:14.) The Lord has chosen to work through His people. His church will fulfill her God-given purpose in the earth, and come forth eventually as the prophecy says: "A crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God." Isaiah 62:3.

## 22. I Believe in Tithing

HE THAT SPARED not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Romans 8:32. .

Through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, God has freely given us all things. Before one can give he must possess that which he gives. Christ is the Creator and the supreme owner of all things, for "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." Psalm 24:1. Again we read, "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine." Psalm 50:10,11. But more than that God says, "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine." Haggai 2:8.

As much as we appreciate all the things that He has given us for our temporal needs, we know that they do not compare with the gift of His life, which He gave that we might inherit eternal life. Because of these gifts to us we should be most faithful stewards of His. Our obligation is expressed by Paul when he says, "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards., that a man he found faithful." 1 Corinthians 4:1,2.

God has given us in His Word a definite plan for the support of the gospel message that is to be proclaimed to every nation kindred, tongue, and people. That plan is found in the tithing system.

The paying of tithe is not a Jewish institution. Before the days of the church in the wilderness it was known and practiced. The patriarchs recognized the paying of tithe as a moral obligation. Abraham paid tithe four hundred twenty-two years before Sinai (Genesis 14:18-20); Jacob paid tithe two hundred sixty-nine years before Sinai (Genesis 28:22). After the children of Israel were delivered from Egypt, during their training in the wilderness they were taught lessons concerning their responsibilities to God and the support of His service. The tithing plan and the giving of offerings recognized by their forefathers were taught. God said to them, "All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord." Leviticus 27:30.

God made it plain that the tithe was to be used to support the Levites and the priests who served in the sanctuary service. To Aaron He said, "Thou shall have no inheritance in their land, neither shall thou have any part among them: I am thy part and your inheritance among the children of Israel." Numbers 18:20. And again we read: "Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation. . . . But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the Lord, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance." Verses 21, 24.

God has not changed. His plan for the support of ministers and those who serve in His cause today is the same as it was anciently. They are to be supported from His own revenue of holy things. This is made plain by the apostle Paul, who wrote, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." 1 Corinthians 9:14. Christ Himself taught the binding obligation of the tithing system, for we read: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Matthew 23:23. The class of people to whom Jesus spoke were exact in the paying of tithe. They were commended for that. But they forgot judgment, mercy, and faith. Without these, the Savior tried to impress upon them, all the paying of tithe was of no avail. He did not say that judgment, mercy, and faith had taken the place of paying tithe, but that "these ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

A study of Hebrews 7:1-16 convinces one that under Christ's Melchizedek priesthood, which coexists with the Christian dispensation, all are admonished to pay tithe. The paying of tithe is not making a gift to God. It is returning to Him a portion of that which He has entrusted to our care, through that portion which He has reserved for Himself, the tenth of our income. By paying tithe we acknowledge that God is owner of the property over which we have been made stewards.

Each one of us has been given an orchard with ten trees in it. To us God says, "One of the ten trees is Mine. It is holy. It belongs to Me. Do not use the income of it for your living. It is to be used to support those who are servants in My vineyard. The nine trees are for your use. The income from these is to be used to buy food, clothing, and to provide for a place to live. But of these nine trees I want you to bring Me an offering according to the blessing received." Although the paying of tithe and the bringing of an offering are required, yet there is a decided difference between the two. The tithe is a definite part of our income,

but the offering is voluntary. It is made up from the nine tenths that belong to the individual. The tithe is to be used for a specific purpose-the support of the ministers of the gospel. The offerings are used for various enterprises, projects, et cetera, which serve in the building up of God's cause.

The words "Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse" (Malachi 3:10) were given in connection with the coming of the Lord, at the time when He is to make up His jewels, at a time when He is to make a difference between those who serve Him and those who do not serve Him (verses 17,18). Thus we must conclude that the paying of tithe is an obligation that ends only when the gospel message has done its work in the world.

### **Love The Basis Of Tithe Paying**

Love must be the basis of all that we do for God or give to Him. We are told that we are to love God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind. (Matthew 22:37.) When we fulfill this obligation, then tithe paying and the keeping of His commandments become a pleasure and not a drudgery. When the heart is right it is filled with love. It never asks, How little can I do for Him who gave His all for me? But how much?

### **Tithe Paying Brings Blessings**

The tithe payer is promised a rich blessing. When we bring all the tithes into His storehouse we may claim the promise that God will "open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Malachi 3:10. We never grow poor by giving to God that which belongs to Him. Thousands can give their testimony to prove the truthfulness of this statement. To withhold the tithe because we feel that it is not used properly will not excuse us in the judgment. When we give the tithe our obligation ends. If it is misused, God will hold those responsible who have been placed in charge to administer it properly. God does not ask us to pay a tithe of our income because He is poor. He can get along without us and our money. He asks a tithe because we cannot get along without Him and His blessings. He wants us to recognize His creative power, that He is owner of all. Giving that which belongs to Him helps us to understand this fundamental truth. He longs to bless us, but His blessing is given upon the fulfillment of definite obligations, and one of them is "Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse." He wants us to pay tithe because He desires to take us into partnership with Him in the proclamation of the gospel. He wants us to share in the joy of seeing souls saved in the kingdom of God. It pays to be honest in the paying of tithe. The reward will be great.

## 23. I Believe in the Coming Kingdom

IN THE LORD'S PRAYER we find the words: "Thy kingdom come." Matthew 6: 10. There are many peculiar ideas about heaven. Few know where it is or where it is going to be. They know that it is a good place and hope someday to get there. Heaven is a real place. The coming kingdom is to be the future home of all the redeemed. God's people through the centuries have looked forward to the establishment of His kingdom. It is the hope of His people today. The establishment of the kingdom of glory is still in the future. Today we pray, "Thy kingdom come," and we sing-

"There's a land that is fairer than day, And by faith we can see it afar."

The kingdom of God will be established after the destruction of the kingdoms of this world. When Daniel interpreted the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar he told him that "in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed. And the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." Daniel 2:44. John the revelator tells us when the kingdoms of this world will give way to the kingdom of God. "The seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." Revelation 11:15. The time of this event is clear. There can be no mistake about it. It will be at the Second Coming of Christ.

### The Territory Of The Kingdom

If the kingdom of Christ is to be established after the destruction of the kingdoms of this world, then we must believe that the territory of the kingdoms in existence today will become the territory of the kingdom of glory. This the Bible teaches very definitely. To Abraham the Lord said, I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger." Genesis 17:8. Speaking of the future inheritance of God's people, David said, "The meek shall inherit the earth." Psalm 37:11. Jesus taught this in His Beatitudes, when He said, "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." Matthew 5:5. Today the meek possess very little of the earth. They look forward to the fulfillment of these prophecies. Although the general belief is that the saints will spend eternity in heaven, yet the Bible teaches clearly that this earth will be the future home of God's people.

It is good to know that the territory of the kingdom will not be the earth in its present state, with its scars caused by sin. Before the meek inherit the earth it will have been made new. It will be in its glorious Edenic beauty. Through the prophet Isaiah the Lord said, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." Isaiah 65:17. Peter through inspiration wrote, "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness." 2 Peter 3:13.

John was given the privilege of seeing the fulfillment of these promises in vision. The glory of the new earth was shown him. He wrote, I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." Revelation 21:1. As one reads these words he naturally asks, How and when will the earth be made new? The answer to this important question has already been given in part. It will be at the time of Christ's coming when "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ."

The writers of the Bible speak freely of the time when the earth will be made new. Isaiah says: "It is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion. And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch." Isaiah 34:8, 9. Peter saw this event, and he tells us that the earth will be cleansed through the fire at the time of the day of the Lord that will come as a thief in the night. At that time, he says, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. In which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein." 2 Peter 3: 10.

The same fire that will purify the earth will be the fire that will destroy not only the sinners but Satan, the instigator of sin, and his evil angels. "Behold, the day comes, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that comes shall burn them up, says

the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.” Malachi 4:1. This takes place at the close of the thousand years, or the millennium. The wicked come forth in the second resurrection. Satan deceives them by making them believe that they can capture the city, the New Jerusalem. “The devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” Revelation 20:10.

Through this fearful ordeal of fire that destroys the wicked, this old world will be fully cleansed from every stain of sin. The earth will be made new. Eden will be restored.

## **The New Jerusalem, The Capital Of The Kingdom**

The New Jerusalem, the city of God, will be the capital of the kingdom of glory. John, seeing the earth in its new condition, writes, I . . . saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Revelation 21:2. The foundation of this city is “garnished with-all manner of precious stones.” The walls, we are told, will be of jasper, and the city will be “pure gold, like unto clear glass.” The twelve gates will be twelve pearls, and the streets of the city will be “pure gold, as it were transparent glass.” (Revelation 21.) Through the midst of the city will flow the river of life, and the tree of life on either side of the river. (Revelation 22:1,2.) God’s throne will be inside the city. His glory will be seen.

Abraham looked forward to the time when he might see this beautiful city. “For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Hebrews 11:10. It will be worth everything to be a citizen of this heavenly kingdom. No sacrifice made here will be too great; no suffering we may pass through will be too severe. The reward of the saints will be worth it all.

Just think what it will mean to be a partaker of all that the earth made new holds out to those who shall inherit it! There will be no more temptations to do evil, for the great tempter will be gone forever. The cause of sin is removed. Sin will be a thing of the past. There will be no more hatred, jealousy, anger, cursing; no more backbiting; there will be no hunger, sorrow, or pain; no more heartaches or sickness; no need for hospitals. There will be no thieves, prisons, asylums. The crepe will not be seen fluttering from the doorknob. The hearse will not be seen heading the sad journey to the cemetery. The brightest intelligence will not be able to define sickness, sorrow, or death, for “there shall be no more death.” (Revelation 21:4)

Each citizen of the kingdom of glory will have his own property. There will be no poverty, no poorhouses, no relief roll, for “they shall hunger no more.” (Revelation 7:16.) We shall each own our own home, for we are told that in the earth made new “they shall build houses, and inhabit them.” (Isaiah 65:2 l.) No mortgages, no foreclosures, no repair bills. No insurance is needed. We shall have our own vineyards. There will be no crop failures, no thistles or thorns, no frost, no hail.

The climate of that land will be perfect. The sun will never get too hot; there will be no blizzards, no zero weather. Storms, floods, earthquakes, the rolling of thunder and the flashing of lightning, will be things of the past. Then labor will be sweet and joyous. No one will tire of his work. But more than that, the redeemed of all ages will make intellectual progress throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. Christ will be their master teacher. All the treasures of the universe will be open to their study. There we shall study the wonders of God, the unsolved mysteries, the inception of sin. With unspeakable delight we shall enter into the joy and the wisdom of the unfallen beings of the other worlds. An inspired writer says: “With undimmed vision we shall gaze upon the glory of creation, suns, stars, and systems all in their appointed order, circling the throne of Deity. The veil that interposes between the visible and the invisible will be drawn aside. Wonderful things will be revealed. What a field will be open to our study. In all created things we shall trace one handwriting, “God’s name writ large.”

In this world, too often our friends turn their backs upon us. Hatred is seen everywhere. There, all will be lovely. We shall know each other, for Paul says, “Then shall I know even as also I am known.” 1 Corinthians 13:12. We shall associate with all the redeemed of earth, yes, with the unfallen angels. What a privilege to visit our guardian angel, the one who guarded us from the earliest moment, watched our steps, and protected us in times of peril! But best of all, we shall see our Savior, the One who gave His life that we might inherit eternal life. Face to face we shall talk with Him. When we behold that beautiful face and then place our hands in His that were pierced for us, we shall fall down at His feet and say, “Heaven is cheap enough.”

O what must it be to be there! Today the door of mercy is still open. We are invited to come to Him, accept Him as our personal Savior. He longs to wash away our sins, to make us fit subjects for His everlasting kingdom. May the thoughts in this chapter help us to so live day by day that we can truly pray,

“Thy kingdom come.”

## 24. I Believe It Pays to Serve God

THE QUESTION “Does it pay to serve God?” is not a dead one. Neither is it a modern question. In the days of Malachi the same question was discussed, for we read: “Your words have been stout against me, says the Lord. Yet you say, What have we spoken so much against thee? You have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?” Malachi 3:13,14. The people back yonder reasoned as many do today. Their reasoning was based on what they saw about them. Their eyes were fixed upon that which was earthly, on the things that are but temporary. They said, “Now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.” Verse 15.

In order to find the correct answer to the question, “Does it pay to serve God?” we must look ahead, pierce the future, think of the eternal reward of those who serve God and those who do not. God had an answer to their question back there, and He has an answer to the same question today. The Lord does not always make a difference in this life between those who serve Him and those who do not. “He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” Matthew 5:45.

For example, there are two farmers. Each has a section of land, with the same kind of soil. One is a Christian; the other is not. When harvest time comes the Christian's land yields sixty bushels to the acre. The non-Christian gets but ten bushels to the acre. He goes to his Christian neighbor and says, “Our land joins. The soil is the same. I sowed the same seed you did. And you got sixty bushels to the acre and I only ten. Tell me, why the difference?” The Christian replies, It is because I serve God, and you don't.” “Oh,” says the non-Christian, “if that is the reason, then I will become a Christian too, for I want to harvest sixty bushels to the acre.”

To whom does the non-Christian become converted? To God, or to the sixty bushels of grain? The answer is plain.

God wants us to serve Him regardless of what may come to us in this life. It is the end that counts. The day is coming when an eternal reward is given. That reward determines whether it paid to serve Him or not. He gave the answer to the people in Malachi's day when He said:

“Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him. Then shall you return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves God and him that serves him not.” Malachi 3:16-18.

David was perplexed by the same question when he said, I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.” Psalm 73:3. “But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.” Verse 2. What seemed to trouble him? He “saw the prosperity of the wicked.” They seemed to be plagued less than the people of God. This caused him to say, “Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.” Verse 13. When David took another look, when his thoughts pierced the future, when he beheld the eternal reward, then and only then was he satisfied that it pays to serve God. Listen to his words: “When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.” Verses 16,17.

The Christian knows from experience that it pays to serve the Lord. He knows the difference between the life he lived before he was converted and the one he lives serving God. He comes to the conclusion that it pays to serve Him in this life even if there were no future eternal life, for there is nothing in this world that satisfies the longing of the heart.

### Serving God Unites Us With Christ

The most wonderful privilege that can come to an individual is the privilege of being united with the Creator of the universe and the Redeemer of lost humanity. To be united with Him means fellowship with Him. This alone makes it worth while to serve God. (1 John 1:6,7) Fellowship with Him means overcoming power when tempted. It means hope in the hour of distress and trouble, comfort in the time of bereavement. It means to be able to smile with satisfaction when we are called old-fashioned, when we are ridiculed and mocked. It means to rejoice when persecuted. (Luke 6:22,23.) In the end, to be united with Christ means life eternal, and that is found only in Him. This thought alone causes one to say, It pays to serve God.”

## **Serving God Brings Peace And Joy To The Heart**

How often we hear the remark, When you serve God you cannot do this, or that, or the other. That depends on what those things are. Those who serve Him have no desire to do those things that are sinful, that fill the heart with remorse. The sinful pleasures of the world do not satisfy the longing desires of the heart, because they are not based upon sound, solid, satisfying, uplifting principles. The sinner, or the one who does not serve God, may boastfully say that he never felt better and that he is satisfied with the life he is living. But if his heart could be opened and made bare, we would find that the words in God's Book are true. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked." Isaiah 57:20,21.

The pleasures of the world are of short duration. Moses realized this when he said that he would rather suffer with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. (Hebrews 11:25.) It pays to serve God because it brings joy, peace, and satisfaction to the soul. Such joy and peace cannot be purchased with money. It comes with the acceptance of the Prince of Peace, who said, "You now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you." John 16:22.

## **Serving God Pays Financially**

The Christian lives cheaper in this world than the one who does not serve God. Because of the change in his life he turns away from those things which are so costly, which a man of the world feels he cannot do without. History and experience teach us that God has held His hand over those for good who serve Him. His promises have been fulfilled in their behalf. Some of these promises are:

"O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusts in him. O fear the Lord, you his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Psalm 34:8-10.

"The Lord knows the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied." Psalm 37:18,19.

Count the cost, study the results, and we shall be convinced that it pays to serve God financially.

## **Serving God Satisfies In The End**

The end will come to each one, for death passed upon all men. (Romans 5:12.) And it is "appointed unto men once to die." Hebrews 9:27. Recognizing this fact, we should earnestly heed the admonition of the psalmist when he said, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." Psalm 90:12. Today we are in love with life and the world. Someday-and it will not be long-the old loves will be dead, and we shall wonder how we ever held them. Someday we shall stand at our window and look out upon the world, the world that has mingled in our lives such strange mixtures of joy and sorrow. Then we shall take a long look and pull the curtain down to look no more. Sad, tragic thought indeed! When we come to that time it will have paid us to serve God. When David came to the end of the road he could say-and only because he served God: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." Psalm 17:15. When we read the testimonies of those who came to the end of their life's journey, the testimonies of those who served God, and then compare them with the testimonies of those who knew that they were lost, were unprepared, we can come to but one conclusion: It pays to serve God.

This thought Christ impressed upon the heart of Peter when he asked the Savior, "We have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" The Lord answered: "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life." Matthew 19:27, 29.