

# PROVE ALL THINGS

By M. Leslie Rice.

*Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. (Abstain from all appearance of evil. And 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. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24*

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## CHAPTER 1

# PROVE ALL THINGS

**T**HERE are two things every person is admonished to do. “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” 1 Thessalonians 5:21. First, “prove all things;” second, “hold,” or keep, “that which is good.” We find it comparatively easy to do one or the other — “prove” or “hold fast” — but more difficult to do both.

Everything in the world seems to be in the process of change. We are living in a bewildered and bewildering age. People are confused. Something seems to have gone wrong with their thinking. Where right and wrong were once clear-cut, and black was the opposite of white, a neutral shading has developed between the two that leaves man in a state of great uncertainty. The result is that many no longer believe anything. They frankly say, “I don’t know.”

The map of the world is changing, the standards of life are being altered, and the very foundations of truth are being assailed. This is a time when every Christian must be careful not to be swept off his feet. We must hold to that which is good.

There is great value in investigation. The genuine can stand investigation. The more truth is exposed to light, the greater its brilliancy. Close study only serves to bring out the details, to reveal the hidden things unseen by the casual observer.

It was no doubt to this very hour and to these very conditions that Paul directed his wise counsel, “Prove all things.” It was never more sorely needed than now. There are some people who are always ready to accept anything because it is new. They are eager to be the first to espouse a new cause or a new idea — yes, a new truth.

We should have no fear for the new, provided it has passed under the X-ray and has been proved true. However, it should have something more than mere newness to win our allegiance. In a short time that which now appears new will be old. It may lose its lustre. Its

bright coating may disappear. How will it look then? We should be just as quick to part with the old if it is not true as we are to accept the new if it is true. Some are determined to hold on to the old — they know why, only that it has been with them for a long time. They say, "It was good enough for me." But God may have something better for you than your mother enjoyed. There is a possibility that some of the things your mother believed were not true.

Do not discard the old because it is old, nor accept the new simply because it is new. "Prove all things." Keep only that which is good, whether old or new.

It is more dangerous to be deceived regarding a religious doctrine than concerning some article or a material thing. To discover that we were deceived on the quality of the merchandise we purchased may cause disappointment. Our purchase may not stand the test of wear and hard use. This is always a disappointment. But disappointments can be endured, for they seldom prove fatal. However, to accept a belief that will mark our way of life, both now and in the hereafter, is infinitely more important.

Generally speaking, it is dangerous to follow the crowd. Clear thinking is not found with the masses. The majority refuse to investigate; they go blindly on like sheep that follow a leader. But it is a mark of wisdom to investigate.

Because their teachings sounded different, the apostles of the early church were charged with setting forth strange doctrines. They were different, for they had a new message. No doubt it did sound strange to ears not in tune with heaven. Their message met with favour from some and opposition from others. Some accepted, but others rejected it. This is always the destiny of truth. It cuts a clear, distinct line and leaves its hearers either for or against it. Truth calls men to decision.

Anything that we have not heard before may sound strange. Especially is it true if it is something contrary to our regular way of thinking. Many great discoveries have met with this same reception. This was true in the early church. The Athenians said to Paul: "Thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean." Acts 17:20.

The special message of the apostles was a risen Christ. "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." Acts 2:32. It seemed impossible to some that Christ had been raised from the dead, for resurrection of the dead was contrary to everything they had ever known. It was not the regular way of life. It was indeed a strange doctrine that the One who was nailed to the cross, then buried in the heart of a rock which was closed with a great stone, sealed with the Roman seal, and guarded by a company of armed soldiers, could possibly have been raised from the dead. It sounded so unreasonable — a strange doctrine indeed to the unbelieving men! But strange as it may have sounded, it was the truth. Indeed, truth often sounds strange when first heard.

How was this new doctrine received? Just as truth has always been received. It was no different then from what it is now. Some believed and some did not. The fact that some rejected the message of a risen Christ did not in any way alter the truth. Said the angel: "He is risen; He is not here: behold the place where they laid Him." Mark 16:6.

Some were willing to investigate, and those that did were greatly rewarded. As is often the case, the message which at first sounded so strange they found to be the truth. They discovered one of the greatest truths ever brought to men — *arisen Christ*. Many of all classes accepted this new message. "The Word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." Acts 6:7. Those who will study and investigate are always rewarded.

What is the attitude we should take toward any new light or doctrine that may come to us? Should we brush it aside without giving it any consideration? That is the easiest thing to do, but is it the wisest? The new doctrine may sound strange. It may be completely out of harmony with our way of thinking. It may even sound like foolishness. To take the position that we will have nothing to do with anything that is not an echo of our own thoughts will close the way to fuller knowledge. It may mean the withholding of great spiritual blessings. Such a position means arrested development. This course implies that we feel we have

arrived at a full knowledge of God's revealed will. It means there is nothing more for us to learn.

The Bible teaches that we should investigate every doctrine before accepting it. It is positively dangerous to be deceived regarding a religious truth. In what we believe, eternal destinies are involved. We have this inspired admonition: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself, and them that hear thee." 1 Timothy 4:16. What we believe and practise determines where we shall spend eternity. Our very salvation depends on right doctrine.

If we would have our lives please God, what we believe must be in harmony with His Word. We must make sure that the doctrines we believe are based on Scripture. What we believe moulds us into what we are. As a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he." Prov. 23:7.

Some may ask, "What difference does it make after all what a man believes?" It makes a great deal of difference — just the difference between heaven and hell, life and death. What we believe determines our characters. Our characters are what we are. By making sure that the doctrines we hold are of God, we make sure of eternal life. A correct understanding of the doctrines of the Bible is a correct understanding of the plan of redemption.

An honest man cannot believe just anything. He abhors a counterfeit. He wants to know the truth. The doctrine he believes must be based on positive Scripture, and he cannot rest satisfied with theories and practices not found in the Bible. Said Christ, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Nothing but the truth can free man from sin. The Bible is the divine X-ray under which every doctrine must be studied. By this Book everything is to be proved. This is what the people of the early church did. Of the Bereans the Bible tells us: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so." Acts 17:11. With too many today the Bible is a lost book. It is no longer read. Not so with the people of that ancient city of Berea. They searched the Scriptures "daily." They wanted to know the truth. As is always the case, they found what they were looking for. "Ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13.

The glitter of the new did not attract them, unless it stood the scrutiny of Scripture. Neither were they afraid to investigate new doctrine because it sounded strange. They were open for conviction. With open hearts and open Bible they sought God for light. That is the only honest approach to any religious question. Like a polished gem, the more truth is studied, the greater does its beauty become.

Now, as in the days of the early Christian church, there are some who are unwilling to investigate. They have eyes, but they refuse to see; ears, but they refuse to hear. They settle the question without a hearing. This is not the broadminded thing to do. No one can ever arrive at the truth in this way. This course closes and bolts the door to spiritual advancement.

Some in Peter's day were ready to reject the message he proclaimed, and their opposition developed into persecution. A doctor of the law, the learned Gamaliel, was called upon to advise in the difficulties that arose. He passed on a bit of counsel that was not only timely but *timeless*. It was good for those men then; it is equally good for us now, and is good advice for all people at all times. Here it is: "Now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." Acts 5:38, 39. Some who have thought they were defending the faith by holding on to some doctrine or belief, have found after investigation that they were fighting against God's truth. God had new light for them, and they were rejecting it.

## CHAPTER 2

### HOLD THAT WHICH IS GOOD

THESE is a degree of satisfaction in proving the truthfulness or falsity of any claim. To arrive at a correct answer to any question is worth while, but it will do us or our fellow men little good if we stop there. Our investigation will be of little value unless we act upon the knowledge we have gained. We should benefit from our study, and our fellow men should have the findings of our investigation. How can this be done? "Hold fast that which is good." Unless we hold, or keep, it ourselves we cannot expect others to accept it.

Not everything that is investigated will prove worth holding. There are many things that are not worth keeping. All will not be found good, but that which is good, we are to hold to tenaciously.

There never was a time when half-truths were so popular as now. Many ideas peddled off for truth are mere rubble, and will not stand the acid test of Scripture. In the light of God's Word they are found to be base metal. They are man-made. The X-ray under which every doctrine must be tested is "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20

All light that comes from God will be in harmony with His law, the Ten Commandments. Every ray of truth that has come to the world, every bit of light that will ever be given, will be in harmony with the law of God. It will speak "according to this Word." If you find that a doctrine which at first sounds strange is in harmony with God's law, accept it. If it is not, reject it.

People are often at a loss to explain why they have certain opinions or religious beliefs. They really don't know just why. They may have grown up in an environment that moulded their way of thinking. Various influences may have played upon them. Perhaps the opinions or beliefs of a father or mother have influenced them.

People do not inherit the truth. It is something that is personally acquired. Parents may have it, but they cannot transmit it to their children. They may use their influence and knowledge to teach it. They may recommend it. But it must be personally accepted. "Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness." Ezekiel 14:20.

In some sections of our country nearly everyone belongs to the Labour Party. In other sections some other political party has the allegiance of the majority. Some in those various sections may know why they belong to their respective political parties, but a great many do not know why. Many have never tried to find out. They have just accepted these ideas as a matter of course — a sort of hand-me-down political affiliation.

A person may be able to accept his political beliefs this way without too much injury to himself. Many think one political party is about as good or as bad as the other. But we cannot with safety accept our religious beliefs this way. We must have personal convictions for the doctrines we hold. We must know what we believe and why we believe it, and this can be done only by investigation.

Not everything that is good is easy to hold. One may need to sacrifice position, friends, or even loved ones to be true to one's convictions. Vision is always costly, and those who see must be willing to pay the price that vision costs. Many have paid with their lives for their religious convictions. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Timothy 3:12.

In order to have certain things we must forfeit others. This is the price one always pays. The prodigal in Christ's parable could not have father, food, and all the blessings of a home, and at the same time indulge in riotous living. He must give up one if he would have

the other. We cannot hold spurious ideas and true ideas of a doctrine at the same time. Christ demands an undivided heart.

Where truth is preached you will always find division, because we live in a world where truth is unpopular. It is never a fad or a fashion. Wherever it is proclaimed, truth calls for a decision, and decision creates division. This is true because it leaves no neutral ground. There is no such thing as a neutral Christian. Christ said "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Matthew 12:30.

The prophet Elijah called upon the people of his day for a definite decision regarding faith in God. He left no middle ground. "How long had ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." 1 Kings 18:21. Here the issue is clearly defined. It is a question of whom men should worship. Is the Lord the God that should be worshipped, or should men worship the idol Baal? As a result of this challenge to that ancient people, we see a stir in the camp. It is a time of decision. Some move over on the Lord's side; some follow Baal. The preaching of the truth caused this separation, which divided the true from the false.

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." It pays to know what we are holding, and why we hold it. We are to have an intelligent faith. "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15. Those who will be "approved unto God" will be the ones who study. They will not be afraid of investigation. If what they investigate proves to be error, they will cast it aside. If it is truth, they will accept it gladly and walk in all the light God permits to shine upon their pathway.

We should know *what* we believe and *why* we believe it, and should be able to give an intelligent reason for our convictions. "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." 1 Peter 3:15.

## CHAPTER 3

### COME AND SEE

IN spite of what we say or think, we all have certain prejudices. Here is common ground on which all humanity meets, more or less. Our prejudices may be either favourable or unfavourable. We are often at a loss to know why we have them, but that they really exist we cannot deny. Some prejudices may have very ugly characteristics. When they do they should be put aside.

It is human to believe that our particular prejudices are not as bad as those of other people. In fact, ours are usually so small that we can scarcely see them, but they are there just the same.

"O wad some power the giftie gie us  
To see oursel's as ithers see us!"

Prejudice is a preconceived judgment, an opinion without just grounds for the same. Prejudice is formed without sufficient knowledge, and is seen at its worst in political, racial, and religious fields. In these fields human beings feel its hurt most keenly and are here touched by it in a tangible way.

Prejudice may mean arrested development, since it blinds people to seeing. A preconceived opinion closes the mind to reason. What might prove a great forward step in experience is blocked because of a certain prejudice, which is like a closed door barring the entrance of truth and light.

A prejudiced man is not sincere in his thinking. He cannot reason clearly, for he refuses to consider all sides of the question. It is not easy for a person to be honest in

weighing facts, especially if those facts run counter to formed opinions. He has an opinion and he is determined to stand by that, whether he is right or wrong. He may not even know why he believes as he does. A prejudice sometimes comes from reaching hasty conclusions. When an opinion is once expressed, a man often feels as if it would be cowardly to renounce it; consequently, he may hold this snap judgment until it develops into a deep-seated prejudice.

Prejudices in favour of or against certain things may be inherited — something passed down from father to son. This is especially true in the field of religion. Ask many people why they believe as they do, and they are at a loss to tell why. They are honest in saying that they do not know. Some will say, "It was good enough for father, and it is good enough for me." Now the facts are that many notions passed down from father to son are without foundation. Many ideas that our forefathers believed we now know were not true. Our grandfathers believed that tomatoes — they called them love apples — were poisonous, but today everyone knows they are one of the best foods we have. A few generations back, people believed the world was flat. No informed person believes that today. So inherited opinions are not always correct. Religious people are often surprised upon investigation to see how many beliefs they cling to without knowing the reason why. Having always believed that way, they just take it for granted that they are right. This is not a safe position to take. We should know why we believe as we do.

The man with a prejudice is cheating himself; he is missing something he might have that would do him great good. He may even make his own lot harder by refusing to change from a preconceived idea. Even in the face of overwhelming evidence that certain preconceived ideas are wrong, some still refuse to change.

Some people are easily prejudiced. A certain man was very fond of the historical little city of Lexington, Massachusetts, until one day a traffic officer in that place severely reprimanded him for a minor infraction of the traffic rules. Immediately he became prejudiced against the place. It was not the fine city it once was. He no longer saw anything pleasing about it. The whole city was like this overbearing and uncouth officer. He permitted this little incident so to prejudice him that he lost much. After this experience this man always avoided passing through Lexington if possible. You say, How foolish to take a position like that! True, but we do it more or less in regard to people, things we eat and wear, yes, even matters of religion. Many a person has become prejudiced against the church and will have nothing to do with it because some church member failed in some way to come up to his expectations. Perhaps it was in some business deal that a church member appeared unfair or grasping. The whole church is shut out because of a prejudice against one of its members. There is nothing that so completely blinds a person as does a religious prejudice.

It sounds a bit strange, but one man was so prejudiced against the place where Christ was born that he almost failed to accept Him as the Messiah. This narrowness in Nathanael's life was a glaring defect. Philip came to Nathanael in great earnestness and said, "We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." John 1:45. Nathanael drew himself up and with a rather cynical air said, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" The greatest truth ever brought to any man was about to be passed by because Nathanael did not like the city of Nazareth. What caused this prejudice we do not know. But regardless of the circumstances that brought it about, it almost caused him to miss the greatest privilege ever given to man. Regardless of what causes our prejudices, the results have the same damaging effects. All who hold religious prejudices do so at the peril of their souls, for it is in the field of religion that things of eternity are settled.

God fittingly described people who are prejudiced when He said through Ezekiel, They "have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not." Ezekiel 12:2. This is just another way of saying that some will not listen to facts or see light when it is shown to them. They have a set opinion and are determined to stay by that, regardless. This is a most dangerous course to follow. In fact, this sort of reasoning is dishonest. We should have our

hearts and minds open to receive every ray of light that God in His loving-kindness may send to us.

Philip was a very tactful teacher, taking the only course that can meet a prejudiced mind. He did not discuss Nazareth. He refused to argue, but simply said, "Come and see." Find out for yourself whether this is the Messiah. Nothing is ever lost by honest, sincere investigation. Nathanael was broad-minded enough to take Philip's counsel. Since he was honest, he investigated for himself. He wanted to know the facts, and he found them. Here is what this man, who did not believe any good thing could come out of Nazareth, found: "Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel." John 1:49.

Prejudices are often so deep-seated that a person will almost surrender his life rather than "come and see." We have the story in the Bible, in the fifth chapter of second Kings, of a mighty Syrian warrior, a great general in the army, who was afflicted with leprosy. He almost refused healing from this loathsome disease because he was prejudiced against the water in the Jordan River.

Naaman, this "captain of the host of Syria," learned through a little servant girl, of a prophet of God, one who could cure lepers. Realizing there was no hope for his life unless in some way he was miraculously healed, he journeyed to where Elisha the prophet lived. "So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha." 2 Kings 5:9. He took the maid's advice to "come and see."

"And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean." 2 Kings 5:10. The cure seems so simple that we would naturally expect Naaman to go at once to the Jordan and wash away his leprosy. But he did not. This man was evidently very fond of his own country. Especially was he proud of its rivers. In fact, there were no other rivers quite like those of his own country. He was prejudiced against the methods of healing which the prophet had prescribed, also against the waters of the Jordan. So he left in a rage.

"Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage." 2 Kings 5:11, 12.

This story would have ended right there, except for one thing. Some of the servants entreated Naaman to lay aside his prejudices and "come and see" whether the words of the prophet would come true.

"And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean." 2 Kings 5:13, 14.

Paul ran into trouble with the Jews in Jerusalem. They charged him with bringing certain Greeks into the temple. To them this was a great offence. Paul's act had "polluted this holy place," according to their understanding and belief. They were prejudiced against the Greeks. So a great company of people quickly gathered and were about to do away with Paul, when he was rescued by a band of soldiers. Paul asked the officer in charge of the soldiers for the privilege of speaking to the people. This request was granted.

"But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people. And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue." Acts 21:39, 40.

As Paul began to speak, a silence came over the mob. They were surprised to hear him speak Hebrew. These Jews became intensely interested because he talked their own language. Paul then openly declared: "I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the

perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day." Acts 22:3.

These Jews had understood Paul to be a Greek. Their prejudice against the Greeks was at a white heat. If he were a Greek, that settled the question. They would have nothing to do with him. Paul spoke their own language and declared himself a Jew. Their prejudices seemed to be delayed. Paul proceeded to tell how he had persecuted the church. They drank in every word. This was just to their liking. Then, too, his perfect Hebrew captivated them.

When he reached the point in his discourse at which he told them God had said, "I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles," their prejudices broke loose with a fury that bordered on murder. "And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live." Acts 22:22.

Here we see a demonstration of religious prejudice. If Paul was going to preach to Gentiles, he could not talk to them. They would not listen to him. They were not open to reason. In their turmoil and bickerings they broke up the meeting. They refused to hear. They were not willing to "come and see."

Perhaps false reports regarding individuals and churches are the basis for more prejudice than any other one thing. People form opinions on what they hear. If the report is unfavourable, an ugly prejudice is formed. When once a position is taken, it takes the grace of God ever to change the mind. So we should not be too hasty in forming opinions.

Although the Apostle Paul had been miraculously converted, yet not all were ready to believe that one who persecuted the church with such vengeance could ever change. Many church members were slow to accept him as a disciple of Christ. Even when favourable reports came to them regarding the change in his life, they were still skeptical. They were prejudiced against him. "And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple." Acts 9:26.

There was one man who believed that God could change a persecutor into a preacher, a sinner into a saint. At least he was willing to investigate the case. Barnabas refused to allow past experiences to stop him from an honest investigation. Regardless of past impressions he was willing to "come and see."

He found what people frequently find, that the man he thought all wrong, was all right. He discovered that Paul's conversion was genuine. What should he do with this knowledge he had gained? To be true to himself and his convictions, he must defend what he had found. This is the very thing he did, and this is what every honest person should do. "But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus." Acts 9:27.

Barnabas began to espouse a cause he had found to be true. It was not popular to champion Paul's case in those days, because it placed him definitely with the minority. But he was honest, and he did it. He triumphed over his prejudices. What rewards it paid, both to him and to the church!

He discovered upon investigation not only one of the greatest characters the world has ever produced, but one who proved to be a true and sincere friend and fellow worker. How much he and the church would have missed had he allowed his prejudices to rule him! This man that the church at first refused to receive has moulded the religious thought of the world for the last two thousand years.

God's invitation to all is, "Come now, and let us reason together." He bids us lay aside our preconceived ideas and approach every religious question with an open mind. We should look facts squarely in the face, and with open, honest hearts approach every question in the spirit of sincere investigation. Before you take a position against the message which this book brings to you, please read it. After you have read it, ask God, "What wilt Thou have me to do?"

## THE ANVIL OF GOD'S WORD

*Last eve I stood before a blacksmith's door,  
And heard the anvil ring its vesper chime;  
Then, looking in, I saw upon the floor  
Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.*

*"How many anvils have you had," said I,  
"To wear and batter all these hammers so?"  
"Just one," he answered; then, with twinkling eye,  
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."*

*And so the Bible, anvil of God's Word,  
For ages sceptic blows have beat upon;  
And though the noise of Paine, Voltaire, was heard,  
The anvil is unworn — the hammers gone.*

*Apprentice blows of ignorance, forsooth,  
May awe with sound, and blinding sparks,  
death-whirled;  
The Master holds and turns the iron, His truth,  
And shapes it as He wills, to bless the world.  
— L. B. Cake.*

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## CHAPTER 4.

### PAUL ---- a Heretic?

THE apostle Paul, perhaps the most beloved and outstanding man of the New Testament record next to Jesus, was considered by the majority in his day as a religious heretic. In his defence before Felix, Paul said "But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:" Acts 24:14. The Apostle Paul's belief and practice were not in full keeping with those of the masses of professed believers about him. He was unusual. He differed in doctrine from the established church of his day. So marked was his difference that it separated him from the great majority of church members of that century. A Christian must be different from the masses about him.

There is no virtue in being different from those about you unless to be like them is to be wrong. God says, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." To follow the majority when they are wrong is just as foolish as to stand alone when the majority are right.

In many matters people may differ without any loss or hurt to themselves. They may choose one item above another according to their personal desires. One person may prefer certain colours. His desire for certain things may be satisfied. He may select the climate of his choice. He may even choose those with whom he will live. But when we come to the question of religion, what is truth is not a question of choice. Truth is founded upon something more substantial and enduring than simply the likes or choices of men. It is based upon the Bible, God's written Word. While God gives to every man the right to choose his own religious belief, it does not necessarily follow that what man may choose is right. Man may be mistaken in this as in other matters.

That men have been mistaken in their religious beliefs can be proved over and over by a glance at historical and Biblical records. The Apostle Paul once belonged to the established church of his day. He was not a nominal believer, but was a serious-minded, hard-hitting,

zealous worker. "My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee." Acts 26:4, 5.

Regardless of his zeal and earnestness, he was wrong. He willingly acknowledges this. He found that he could not follow God's teachings and at the same time be in harmony with the religious leaders of his day. The church had drifted far away from the truth of God, and it no longer followed the plain teachings of God's Word, having substituted man-made theories in place of God's direct commands. Religious leaders had heaped man-made traditions upon the teachings of God until the simple truths of the gospel were almost entirely lost. Religion, which should give wings to men, had become a great weight, grievous to be borne. Christ came to this earth to liberate people from man-made religion and give a personal demonstration of true Christianity in the flesh.

The Bible teaches that God has a church on this earth. In one of the shortest verses in the Bible — six words — is this profound statement: "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." Ephesians 4:5. You may hear of different lords, but there is only one Lord. You may know of different faiths, but there is only one faith. Several modes of baptism are practised, but there is only one baptism. Our responsibility is to find the one Lord and accept Him; to discover that one faith and embrace it; and follow our Lord's example in the one mode of baptism.

After Paul's conversion the factor that separated him from those about him was his belief. This is what made him different. He found he could no longer do as the masses did. A man's religion may be gauged by the degree of his rejection by the world. It was this that branded Him as a heretic in the minds of the nominal church members. It is easy for men to criticize those who differ with them, and Paul came in for severe criticism. Time has not changed the attitude of the masses toward those who disagree with them in religious beliefs. How easy it seems for professed Christians to criticize those who differ with them in religious doctrine and practice! While professing to believe the Four Freedoms we are often critical of those who exercise their freedom if it differs from our own.

In what way was Paul's belief different from that of those around him? What was it that he found in God's Word that caused him to be separated and marked as a heretic?

In the first place, anyone who differs from the majority is usually considered wrong. Especially is this true in matters of religion. So the very fact that he was in the minority was against him. However, the right or wrong of a thing must be determined by something more than numbers. In religious practice, the majority have usually been wrong. This was true in Christ's day and in Paul's day. No one can read the story of the twelve spies without a great deal of respect for the humble minority. In the days of Sodom, God would have saved that city from destruction if only ten true Christian people could have been found. All a Christian has to do to fail is to be like those about him. He does not have to be worse than they are — simply like them.

There are good people in all churches, and there are good people who do not belong to any church. We cannot judge whether or not a church is true because it may have some good or bad people enrolled as members. If this were true, by the same token we could conclude that church affiliation is not necessary because there are good people outside of the church. The true church is established upon something more lasting than the example of its members. It is to be judged by what it believes and teaches. Of course, its teachings should be reflected in the lives of its members, but where this is not done the fault lies with the individual and not with the church.

"There are only two roads upon which humanity moves. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Matthew 7:13, 14. Every human being is travelling one of these roads. You cannot walk both of them at the same time. At the end of the "narrow" way is life. At the end of the "broad" road, death.

The road Paul was travelling was at right angles to the broad way upon which the masses moved. His belief made him different, and their beliefs are what make men different now.

The great issue in Paul's day was over the law and the prophets. Paul believed all that was written in the law of God and all that had been spoken by the prophets. He frankly confessed that if to do this is considered heresy, then he must plead guilty to the charge.

What Paul said was just another way of saying that those who accused him did not believe what he did. There was a conflict of doctrine between them, and the issue was clearly defined. His accusers did not accept all that was written in the law; Paul did. They made certain reservations in accepting what was written by the prophets; Paul did not. They, like many, were willing to accept some things, but not all.

Those who challenged Paul's course were classed by Christ as those "who say and do not." Paul did not hesitate to stand, if need be, alone. He was ready to take his stand on God's Word. As is often the case, those who pointed the finger of scorn at him and accused him of heresy were themselves the ones that were wrong.

Then, as now, no religious group could hope to endure that would reject all God's commandments and completely ignore all the prophets. There must be some semblance of truth even in a false religion, for without this there would be no following. But to accept only a part of what God says, to do only part of what He requires, is to fail to meet God's mind. To be only partly right is to be wrong. We do not have to be all wrong to fail in God's sight. In working out any simple problem, we all know that to miss in one figure is to miss the correct answer.

"The law and the prophets" have been the issues that have divided churches and separated men and women down through the ages. The questions that Paul met have been encountered time and again down through the years. Wherever the gospel has been preached in its purity, false charges have been hurled at those who dared to espouse its cause. A belief in "the law and the prophets" that calls men out of churches and separates men when rejected, serves only to unite churches and join men in closer fellowship when accepted. Truth always binds hearts together more firmly.

Paul believed in the law of God. He accepted the Ten Commandments as his rule of life — not in theory, but in actual practice. He believed in keeping the Ten Commandments. In doing this he came into direct conflict with certain religious leaders. Strange as it may seem, many religious leaders today question the binding claims of God's law. But only those who keep God's law are justified. "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." Romans 2:13. All the promises of heaven are promised to commandment keepers. "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.

While most religious leaders profess a belief in the law of God, in practice many accept only that part which pleases them. They either disregard or change the remainder to suit their own convenience. For instance, some disregard the second commandment, which forbids the worship of images. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments." Exodus 20:4-6.

Others changed the fourth commandment and substituted the first day of the week for the seventh-day Sabbath. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. (9) Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: (10) But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: (11) For 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 20:8-11.

The world is in great confusion, and men are not thinking clearly. Finding themselves without anything solid to which to anchor, they are bewildered. Because men have let go their convictions in the law of God, they find themselves tossed about in a sea of unbelief which threatens to engulf them. This always follows when men forget God's law; and when they forget God's law they soon forget God. That is why God put right into the heart of His law the word "remember." If men would remember to keep God's law, they could never forget God. To forget God is to lose the sense of sin. Unless men have an appreciation of what sin is and what it has cost, they have no desire for salvation. Only in the light of what salvation has cost can it be properly evaluated. Redemption is at such a low ebb in the thinking of most people because they have lost the sense of sin through a disregard for God's law. To many sin no longer seems wrong. "Where no law is, there is no transgression." Romans 4:15.

The trouble that engulfs the world today comes from no other cause than a disregard for the law of God. Of course, there are many who do not believe this and even question those who do. But the evidence is all about us that nothing but disaster can come to those who reject the law of God.

There is in the world today a general disregard for law. Anything that seems to cramp the way of man is pushed aside. The masses scorn even the semblance of restriction, and everyone wants to be a law unto himself. Anciently when the people forgot God's law and "every man did that which was right in his own eyes," destruction came. Today the same course brings similar results.

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## CHAPTER 5

### THE LAW of GOD

**ALL** but fifteen verses of the Bible were penned by men who wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1:21.

Only fifteen verses out of the 31,175 verses in the Bible were written by God. For a very special reason God did not commit the writing of these fifteen verses to man. This small part of the Bible was so important that God Himself came down to this earth, spoke these words in tones of thunder, and then with His own divine finger wrote them on tables of stone. These words are the Ten Commandments.

They came to us direct from God. "And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them." Exodus 24:12. "And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." Exodus 31:18.

There have been many great codes and laws written since the dawn of creation, some of which have served their time or generation and passed away, and others still exist. To the British, the Magna Charta is the greatest. To the people of the United States, the Constitution stands without a peer. These great documents, which guarantee freedom to every citizen, are indeed worthy of our deepest loyalty. But towering above all codes and laws made by man stands God's Ten Commandment law. This is His great constitution. This law is the basis for all that is good in the great charters and constitutions that men have made, and should receive the adoration and obedience of every man.

The Ten Commandments are all inclusive. They form a perfect law — short (only fifteen verses of Scripture), clear, and comprehensive. No other documents ever written have

so influenced society as have the Ten Commandments. This law has outlived the centuries. Empires have come and gone, but it endures. It has withstood more attacks than any other piece of literature ever written. In this law critics have failed to discover one flaw, and it still speaks with the same authority as when first given to man.

The Ten Commandments embody three great principles, which are attributes of God — holiness, justice, and goodness. In no other law will all these three great principles be found. The Apostle Paul, that great exponent of New Testament faith, says: "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." Romans 7:12. Here are bound up in one great law holiness, justice, and goodness. Another Bible writer speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit says: "The law of the Lord is perfect." Psalms 19:7. Here is perfection. Perhaps the only perfect thing in this world is the law of God, the Ten Commandments. It is a perfect law given by a perfect God; for God, who is perfection, could give no other. When its precepts are practised it develops perfection.

Man's greatest enemy is sin, and to meet this foe God's law plays an important part, pointing out sin. It reveals imperfections in character and shows man to himself as he is. When God's law is obeyed by men it makes them better. When sincerely practised it does something for the hearts and lives of men. No one can read and practise this law without becoming a better Christian. "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple." Psalms 19:7.

The law of God differs from all other laws in that it is both timely and *timeless*. It never goes out of date, but applies to all men in all places at all times. The principles which are enunciated therein are eternal, and its claims are binding upon all men everywhere. The law of God will never cease to speak to the hearts of those who desire to know the way of life. It will always be God's standard of conduct and worship.

The law of God is timeless. In this it differs from other great codes or laws that have been written. Changing conditions make necessary the changing of most laws. In the constitution of the United States provision was made whereby even this great document might be changed. This was done because the framers of the Constitution recognized that changing conditions might make necessary the alteration of this great document. Time has proved the wisdom of this provision. Certain amendments have been made to the Constitution. But in the law of God, the Ten Commandments, no provision is made for the making of amendments. The reason is obvious: it is a perfect law. Perfection needs no improvements or alterations. To change a thing that is perfect would make it imperfect.

There are some who have a false impression regarding the binding claims of the Ten Commandments in the Christian era. They have been taught to believe that the Ten Commandments are not binding upon men now — that Christ did away with the law, and that men are no longer obliged to keep it. Nothing could be further from the truth than this.

Regardless of what men say, the Bible, and the Bible only, must be our authority. What is the testimony of Christ and Bible writers regarding the binding claims of the law of God? Did they teach that it was not binding in the Christian dispensation? Here is what Christ said: "I think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:17-19.

Knowing that some would say that the law of God had been done away, Christ said: "I think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets." Not for one minute are we to think that the great constitution of God, His Ten Commandments, has been abolished. Over and over again in His teachings He spoke of the binding claims of the law.

We may be sure that Christ referred to the Ten Commandments when He spoke of the law. In the sermon on the mount He said, "Thou shalt not kill." Matthew 5:21. And

again, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Verse 27. Where are these commands found? In the law of God. They are part of God's constitution.

"I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." Matthew 5:17. The word "fulfil" means to bring to pass, to manifest completely. Instead of destroying the law, as some have thought, Christ kept it. He demonstrated how this law should be observed. Christ had prophesied that when He came to walk among men on this earth, He would "magnify the law, and make it honourable." Isaiah 42:21. This He did. But there is a great deal of difference between magnifying a thing and abolishing it. To magnify a thing does not abolish or change it. When a magnifying lens is placed upon an object it in no way changes that object. It simply reveals some of the things hidden from the natural eye and makes the object stand out in bold relief. Christ magnified the law by living out the principles of this divine law.

To further emphasize the unchangeableness of God's law, Christ says: "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Matthew 5:18. A *jot* is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. A *tittle* is a point, or period. Not so much as the dotting of an "i" or the crossing of a "t" is ever to be changed in the law of God. By this we see how particular God is to keep those fifteen verses of Scripture written by His own divine finger free from all attempts of man to change, or alter, them.

Christ not only kept the law but taught others to do so. How dearly this is illustrated in His instruction to a certain young ruler: "And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" Matthew 19:16. This young man was not the first nor the last who desired to know the way to eternal life. Every normal person at some time in his life has a desire to be saved, for the desire to live eternally is inherent in the heart of man. "God hath planted eternity in their hearts." We may well ask the question today, "What good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"

Christ answered this young man's question. He never turns away empty-hearted a seeker after truth. His answer cannot be misunderstood. "If thou would enter into life, keep the commandments." Surely this does not sound as if Christ had any intention of doing away with the law. How clear and pointed His reply, "Keep the commandments!"

On another occasion a lawyer questioned Christ on this same subject of eternal life. "And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Luke 10:25. While the motive that prompted this question from the lawyer was not sincere, yet in answering a question of such importance, Christ would speak the truth in all sincerity. Eternal life is no trifling matter. "He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?" Verse 26. Here we find Christ referring this inquirer to the law. This does not sound as if Christ intended to do away with the law at the time of His approaching crucifixion.

The law of God has two parts. The first four commandments refer to man's love and duty to God. The last six refer to man's love and duty to his fellow men. This lawyer recognized these two great principles. "And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." Luke 10:27.

Jesus said: "Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live." One thing can be said of this lawyer — he could read correctly. To read God's Word aright is the first step in arriving at the truth. "This do." How dearly Christ emphasized the keeping of the law! There can be no question as to what He taught regarding the keeping of the Ten Commandments.

The test of love is obedience. We show our love to God by our willingness to obey what He commands. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. . . . If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." John 14:21-23. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." John 15:14. We show our love to God by

our willingness to obey Him. To what extent we keep His law, just to that extent we love Him. In the sermon on the mount Christ said "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:" Matthew 7:24. Although Christ said many great things, yet in a very special sense the Ten Commandments are "these sayings of Mine." He wrote this law with His own divine finger. He says that those who hear His sayings, which surely would include the Ten Commandments, and do them will be like a wise man. It is not enough simply to hear the Ten Commandments read, or even memorize them. This is a law that calls for definite action on the part of the individual. Those who observe the Ten Commandments will be like the wise man who built his house upon a rock, a solid foundation. A life built upon the Ten Commandments will not fall, but will stand unmoved when the storms of test come.

Those who truly love God will love His law. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." 1 John 5:3. "(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified)" Romans 2:13.

Respect for law and order was never at a lower ebb. People chafe under anything that sounds like restraint. In their efforts to free themselves many have thrown away old convictions and standards that were the guiding star of past generations. Even the Ten Commandments have only a small part in the lives of many people. But it is just as impossible for a man to order his life aright without reckoning with the law of God, as it is impossible for a mariner to chart his course without the aid of the stars. Those who endeavour to live without taking the Ten Commandments into consideration will only find in the end that they have made shipwreck of their experience.

"If ye love me, keep my commandments." John 14:15.

"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.

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## CHAPTER 6

# THE SABBATH

**M**AN is prone to forget. The history of the world with its tragedies and sorrows can be largely accounted for in one word, "forgetfulness." Men forget God. They forget their vows and obligations, and they forget one another. Because of this weakness to forget, God placed in the very heart of His law the word "remember." Even with this reminder the law of God has largely been forgotten by most people.

While we are to remember all of the Ten Commandments, yet in a very special sense one of these ten precepts is especially designated as one that we are ever to keep in mind. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." Exodus 20:8. Any commandment that is important enough for God to instruct us to "remember," is surely important enough to obey. Furthermore, anything that God asks us to remember must be for our good.

The giving of the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week of creation was God's grand climax to a work well done. God Himself observed the first Sabbath this earth ever enjoyed. God rested, not because He was tired or weary, but because He wanted to set an example for man. There is physical and spiritual refreshment in Sabbath observance. "On the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed." Exodus 31:17.

There were three things that God did to make the seventh day the Sabbath. This cannot be said of any other day in the week. First, "He rested on the seventh day." Second, "God blessed the seventh day." Third, God "sanctified it." By resting on the seventh day, we understand, God ceased from His labour. The work of creation was finished on the sixth day, and on the Sabbath day God rested. By blessing the seventh day, we understand, God placed in it a special spiritual refreshment for those who keep this day holy. He sanctified it, or set it

apart as a holy day. At creation the seventh day of the week was set aside by God to be the Sabbath, and it has been the Sabbath throughout all generations. The seventh day will always be the Sabbath. It stands as a memorial of God's creation.

There is great physical blessing in keeping the Sabbath — a relief to weary, work-worn bodies. But not done for physical rest was this day given. God worked six days in creating the world and rested on the seventh day, though He could not have been tired. Adam could not have been tired or weary, for he had lived only one day; yet he kept the Sabbath. So there is more than physical rest in observing the Sabbath. God Himself, who could not tire, "was refreshed" by resting on the Sabbath, and a great spiritual blessing comes to those who join in its observance.

About 2,500 years after creation we find God's people on the march out of Egypt, where they had been in bondage, en route to the land of Canaan. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, was reluctant to let God's people go. As a result of his obstinacy, a series of severe plagues was poured out upon Egypt. Because of the severity of these judgments, Pharaoh at last decreed that the people of Israel might go. Soon after their departure from the land of their bondage, God made them this beautiful promise: "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee." Exodus 15:26. Here we find God making certain promises to the children of Israel, provided they would give ear "to His commandments" and "all His statutes."

God led the children of Israel forth in a miraculous manner. He led them by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. He took them across the Red Sea on dry land. In the barren desert He gave them water to drink. During all their years of wandering in the wilderness, their shoes never wore out. When their scanty supply of provisions which they carried with them from Egypt was exhausted, God gave them manna from heaven.

In connection with the feeding of the children of Israel with manna, we have a beautiful lesson on Sabbath-keeping. "Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no." Exodus 16:4. There was a double miracle performed in the giving of manna. It was, indeed, a miracle for God to rain this heavenly food for them. A fresh supply was given every day for six days each week. On the sixth day a double portion fell upon the camp. God gave this extra supply because on the Sabbath no manna would fall from heaven. God's instruction to the children of Israel for providing food for the Sabbath was: "To morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning." Exodus 16:23. On the sixth day of the week preparations were to be made for the Sabbath, for no manna was to fall on that day. All the cooking and baking was to be done on the preparation day.

The second miracle in connection with the giving of the manna was that the extra manna which fell on the sixth day would keep fresh and sweet for use on the Sabbath. On all other days it could not be kept overnight. "And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, Eat that to day; for to day is a Sabbath unto the LORD: to day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none." Exodus 16:24-26. By this miracle God in a special way reminded them of His regard for the Sabbath.

Some in the group were not faithful in Sabbath observance, for we read: "And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none." Exodus 16:27. Because of the violation of the Sabbath in this way, the Lord said to Moses, their leader: "How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the LORD hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his

place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day," Exodus 16:28-30. This experience teaches us that God's people observed the Sabbath before the Ten Commandments were given on Mount Sinai. The seventh day has been the Sabbath since creation.

God had worked in a most miraculous way in bringing the children of Israel thus far on their journey. In His plan something special was to occur at Mount Sinai; hence God instructed Moses to get the people ready for the occasion. "And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount." Exodus 19:10-13.

For three days intensive preparations were made by the people for the most important gathering ever held by men. The greatest speaker that ever talked with men was to address them. At last the appointed hour came. "And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. (17) And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount." Exodus 19:16-17. Never before nor since has there been such a meeting. "And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice." Exodus 19:18, 19.

In tones of thunder and under the greatest demonstrations ever seen among men, God spoke the Ten Commandments. After giving the law to the people audibly, He called Moses up into the mount and delivered it to him in written form. "And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them." Exodus 24:12.

In the very heart of this law God put the Sabbath commandment. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For 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 20:8-11.

When on this earth, Christ observed the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath. "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read." Luke 4:16. It was His custom to keep the Sabbath. It was His custom to go into the synagogue and worship on the Sabbath day.

In Christ's day Sabbath-keeping had lost much of its true significance. To the Jews of that time it was simply refraining from labour. Upon the Sabbath commandment they had heaped tradition after tradition until Sabbath-keeping had become a great weight. Christ brushed aside all these man-made theories. By His teachings and example He gave the world a picture of true Sabbath observance. He demonstrated that the Sabbath was a blessing to man. "And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath." Mark 2: 27, 28.

Instead of the Sabbath's being a weight, something standing in the way of joy and happiness, it brings freedom and blessings. It brings a spiritual refreshment found in no other day. God knew what was good for man, so He gave him the Sabbath, one of heaven's choicest gifts.

Those who were intimately associated with Christ while on earth were observers of the seventh-day Sabbath. His followers all observed the Sabbath. Christ was crucified on Friday. This was the sixth day of the week. "And that day was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew on." Luke 23:54. Before the sun set and the Sabbath began on that fateful Friday afternoon on which Christ was crucified, His body was taken down from the cross.

Among those who had followed Christ to Calvary's hill, where He was crucified, were some faithful women. They had watched His body as it was taken down from the cross and placed in Joseph's new tomb. It was customary in those days to anoint the body for burial. These women who loved Him wanted to perform this last service; therefore they returned from the tomb to their homes and prepared the spices and ointments that were used in the anointing service. Just as they had finished their preparations, the sun disappeared behind the western hills and the Sabbath began. "And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment." Luke 23:55-56.

It will be observed that these women were Sabbath-keepers. They "rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment." The commandment that says we are to observe the Sabbath is the fourth one of the Decalogue as given by the Lord on Mount Sinai.

All the New Testament writers were Sabbath-keepers. They all observed the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath. "Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures." Acts 17:1, 2. It was Paul's "manner," just as it was Christ's "custom," to observe the Sabbath. "And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. . . . And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them." Acts 18:4-11. Every Sabbath day for a year and six months Paul reasoned with the Greeks and the Jews in Corinth. Here is a record of seventy eight Sabbaths which Paul observed in this one city.

Paul was a tentmaker by trade, and supported himself while in Corinth by making tents. The Sabbath was spent in worship and in preaching the Word of God. The day that Paul observed as the Sabbath was Saturday, the seventh day of the week. Twenty years after Christ's resurrection we find that Paul kept seventy-eight consecutive Sabbaths in one city. Had the Sabbath been changed from the seventh to the first day of the week at the time of Christ's resurrection, as some claim, Paul would not have been observing the seventh day.

In the last book of the Bible, Revelation, much is written about the events and conditions that shall exist in the world just before the second coming of Christ. Among them is that of a great Sabbath reformation.

This Sabbath reform movement is to be world-wide. Those who preach this particular message are called "the remnant." "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 12:17. It is to be especially noted that the church spoken of as "the remnant of her seed," which term "remnant" might fitly represent the last church, "keep the commandments of God."

The people who compose the remnant church are further described in these words: "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12. Here again one of the great outstanding marks of God's approval is that they "keep the commandments." The keeping of the commandments includes keeping the seventh day as the Sabbath. In the new earth, that place where God's people hope someday to cast anchor, all will keep the Sabbath. "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And 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, saith the LORD." Isaiah 66:22-23.

God's original plan as given to man in Eden set the seventh day apart as the Sabbath. When Eden is again restored to man, with all its blessings and privileges, the seventh day of the week will be recognized as the Sabbath.

Since it was God's original plan for man to keep the seventh-day Sabbath, and since it is His plan for all to keep it in the new earth, and since the Bible teaches that all should keep the seventh-day Sabbath *now*, and in the absence of any Biblical authority for substituting another day for the seventh-day Sabbath, does it not sound reasonable that Christians should observe the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath?

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## CHAPTER 7

### **THE SABBATH - SATURDAY OR SUNDAY, WHICH?**

**T**HERE is both spiritual and physical refreshment in Sabbath observance. Only those who have never kept the Sabbath would deny this. There is, however, a division among Christian people regarding which day of the week is the Sabbath. Some are confused about which day should be kept as the Sabbath. As we look about, we see most Christian people observing the first day of the week. Yet the Bible says, "But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God." Exodus 20:10. The questions naturally arise: Why the change from the seventh day of the week to the first day of the week? Who made the change? When was the day of worship changed, and by what authority? Did Christ authorize the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week?

The Bible and history give us our answers. Christ observed the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath. It was His life-long custom to keep the seventh-day Sabbath. "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read." Luke 4:16. It was His "custom," His regular way of life, to keep the Sabbath. Not only did He keep it Himself, but He taught others to do so.

All Christian people are agreed that Christ knows the future. They believe that when He was here upon this earth He could foretell with complete accuracy when future events would occur. On this point there is no division of opinion.

That Christ intended future generations to observe the seventh day as the Sabbath, is clearly taught in the Scriptures. This is brought out most forcefully in the prophecy Christ made regarding the destruction of Jerusalem. He foresaw and foretold this event with minute accuracy.

As Christ with His disciples was passing through the temple at Jerusalem, and all eyes were admiring this beautiful structure which the Jews looked upon with great pride, Christ said to them, "And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Matthew 24:2. The temple was so substantially built that it seemed as if nothing could ever destroy it. With almost hushed breath they said, "Tell us, when shall these things be?" Matthew 24:3. Christ then proceeded to give them a sign by which they might know when the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple was near: "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh." Luke 21:20. From that day forward the followers of Christ pondered this prophecy. They watched the movement of armies. They recognized that when Jerusalem should be surrounded by hostile foes, its destruction was near. In connection with His prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, Christ foretold something else. What was it? "Then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house. Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with

child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, *neither on the Sabbath day.*" Matthew 24:16-20.

The surrounding of Jerusalem by the armies was to be a signal for the believers in Christ to flee to the mountains. Their safety would depend on getting out of the city. In order that this great exodus of God's people from Jerusalem might come when it would cause the least hardship and suffering, He asked His followers to pray that their flight might not come in the wintertime. To flee in the midst of winter would only increase the suffering and hardship that must be endured.

But there was another thing that they were to pray for, "Pray ye that your flight be not . . . on the Sabbath day." Matthew 24:20. This prophecy was given by Christ in the year AD. 31. The actual destruction of Jerusalem came in the spring and summer of AD. 70. There was a lapse of forty years between the time when Christ made the prophecy regarding the destruction of Jerusalem and the time it actually occurred. During those forty years Christ's followers prayed that the time of their flight might not be on the Sabbath. Why did God want them to pray that they might not have to flee on the Sabbath day? God expected them to be observing this day as the Sabbath when Jerusalem was destroyed. This makes it clear that in AD. 70, almost forty years after Christ's resurrection, the Sabbath was to be observed.

Surely Christ would not have asked the disciples to pray that they might observe the Sabbath nearly forty years after His resurrection if He intended that the Sabbath should be changed from the seventh day of the week to the first day of the week before that time. Such inconsistency is not found in the plan of God. He would not mock men by telling them to pray for something that had already passed away.

In no place in the Bible is the first day of the week ever called the Sabbath. The first day of the week is mentioned only eight times in the New Testament. In none of these places is this day called the Sabbath. On the other hand, we find the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, referred to more than fifty times in the New Testament.

If there is any authority for observing Sunday as the Sabbath, it must be found outside the Bible. Is there any such authority? If so, is this authority for the keeping of Sunday as the Sabbath, of God or man? There must be some reason for Sunday-keeping, since so many observe this day as the Sabbath.

That there are many sincere, devout Christian people who observe the first day of the week as the Sabbath, we do not deny. Our question is not concerning the sincerity of the people who observe the first day of the week, but the authority for the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week. People can be sincere and yet be mistaken.

The authority for keeping Sunday as the Sabbath comes from the Roman Catholic Church. Only those who have never investigated the question will deny this. The Catholics themselves not only admit that they changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday, but boast of the fact. Not only do the Catholics claim to have made the change, but many prominent Protestant divines testify that this is true. That the Catholic Church changed the day is a historical fact. The Catholic Church boasts of her authority for doing so.

"*Question* — Which is the Sabbath day?"

"*Answer* — Saturday is the Sabbath day." — *"The Converts Catechism of Catholic Doctrine,"* Rev. Peter Geiermann, C. SS. R., 2nd edition, 1910.

"*Question* — But has the (Catholic) Church a power to make any alterations in the commandments of God?"

"*Answer* — . . . Instead of the seventh day, and other festivals appointed by the old law, the church has prescribed the Sundays and holydays to be set apart for God's worship; and these we are now obliged to keep in consequence of God's commandment, instead of the ancient Sabbath." — *"Catholic Christian Instructed,"* Most Rev. Dr. Challoner, page 211.

"*Question* — Have you any other way of proving that the church has power to institute festivals of precept?"

"Answer — Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her — she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority." — *"A Doctrinal Catechism," Rev. Stephen Keenan, page 174. New York: Edward Dunigan and Brother, 1851.*

"Question — How prove you that the church hath power to command feasts and holy days?"

"Answer — By the very act of changing the Sabbath into Sunday, which Protestants allow of; and therefore they fondly contradict themselves, by keeping Sunday strictly, and breaking most other feasts commanded by the same church." — *"An Abridgment of the Christian Doctrine" (R.C.), Rev. Henry Tuberville, D.D., page 58. New York: Edward Dunigan and Brothers, approved 1833.*

"It was the Catholic Church which, by the authority of Jesus Christ, has transferred this rest to the Sunday in remembrance of the resurrection of our Lord. Thus the observance of Sunday by the Protestants is an homage they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the (Catholic) church." — *"Plain Talk About the Protestantism of Today," by Mgr. Segur, page 213. Boston: Thomas B. Noonan & Co., 1868.*

The above quotations set forth the only authority found in this world for Sunday observance as the Sabbath. The Catholic Church points with pride to the fact that it made the change, and rather chides Protestants for being so inconsistent as to follow her in observing the first day of the week, since Protestants profess to accept the Bible, and the Bible only, as their authority for belief and practice.

The admission of the Roman Catholic Church settles beyond a doubt the question regarding the authority for Sunday observance. One thing is certain: this change is not based on Scriptural authority.

This brings sincere, honest Christian people face to face with the question of whether they should follow the teachings of the Bible, observe the seventh day as the Sabbath as God commanded, or keep Sunday, the first day of the week, which has come to the religious world from the Roman Catholic Church. The seventh-day Sabbath is of divine origin, but the first-day, or Sunday, sabbath is of man.

On the subject of our allegiance to God or man, there should be no question. It was answered by the apostles in this way: "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men." Acts 5:29.

In a certain village there was an old department store. This store had been in the hands of one family for three generations, and had been handed down from father to son. It was a landmark in the community.

The story is told that one day a woman, whom we shall call Mrs. Smith, came to see the store and purchased some cloth for a new dress. The pattern which she had chosen called for four yards of material. After she had selected the cloth she wanted, Mr. Jones, the proprietor, unrolled the bolt of cloth and between two tacks driven into the counter systematically measured out four yards. Mrs. Smith took her purchase home and proceeded to plan her dress. Before starting to cut out the dress, she wanted to make sure that she had sufficient material. She spread the cloth on the table and tried to fit the pattern on it. She discovered, after several attempts, that she did not have enough cloth. After trying in every way she could to lay out her dress on the four yards, she finally had to give up the attempt. In her desperation she said: "Could it be possible that Mr. Jones made a mistake and did not give me enough cloth? But," she said, "I saw him measure it, and I am sure he gave me four yards." To satisfy her mind she took a tape measure and proceeded to measure the material. To her great astonishment she found that it was several inches short of four yards. Mr. Jones had made a mistake.

Wrapping up her purchase, she went back to the store. Mr. Jones greeted her cordially. Mrs. Smith proceeded: "I am sorry, Mr. Jones, but you made a mistake in

measuring this material I bought for a dress. I wanted four yards but you have not given me that much."

Mr. Jones was surprised. "Can it be possible that I made a mistake?" Taking the package from Mrs. Smith's hands, he walked back to the counter. Very methodically he began to measure the cloth between the tacks that had been his measuring standard for many years. Very deliberately he measured — one, two, three, four. "You see, Mrs. Smith, I have given you four full yards, and an inch to spare."

Mrs. Smith was indeed bewildered and somewhat embarrassed. "I just can't understand it." Glancing again at her pattern, she said: "It calls for four yards, and I cannot under any circumstances seem to get a dress out of the amount of goods you sold me." After a few moments of thought, Mrs. Smith finally said: "Mr. Jones, are you sure those tacks are right?"

Mr. Jones felt almost indignant at the thought that anyone would question the tacks on the counter. "Why, my dear lady," he responded, "I have been selling cloth over those tacks for thirty years. My father before me sold cloth from these tacks, and his father, my grandfather, started this store. For fifty years we have sold cloth by these tacks." With this statement Mr. Jones felt inclined to dismiss the matter.

Mrs. Smith broke the silence by saying, "Do you have a three-foot rule?"

"Yes," was his reply.

"For my satisfaction, would you mind measuring the distance between the tacks?"

Anxious to uphold the fine reputation his store had in the community, Mr. Jones quickly took from a shelf a three-foot rule and laid it beside the tacks. A look of horror came over his face. "Can it be possible?" he said. "I can't understand it." The tacks were nearly two inches short of a yard.

Mr. Jones stepped back from the counter and looked down at the tacks in deep study and amazement. As he stood there looking at the tacks, he said: "And to think I have been selling cloth over those tacks for thirty years!"

Mr. Jones was now face to face with a problem. For thirty years he had been selling goods over those tacks. He believed he was giving good measure. He believed he was doing right, but it was now pointed out to him that he was wrong. In fact, it was shown that he had been wrong for many years. But he had been ignorant of his wrong. He had not been under condemnation, because he thought he was doing right. God does not charge sin against us while we are in ignorance. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at" Acts 17:30.

How about the future? What must he do about the tacks? Even though Mr. Jones might have sold five thousand yards of goods from those tacks without condemnation, yet if he now sold one more yard, since he knew the tacks did not give honest measure, he would be doing wrong. His heart would condemn him.

What did Mr. Jones do? He did just what every honest person would do. Reaching into his pocket, Mr. Jones took out his knife, opened it, and began to pry up one of the tacks. It took considerable effort to get the tack out of its place. Things that have been long established are not easily removed. This is true of traditions and customs as well as tacks. But at last the tack was removed. Mr. Jones then carefully laid the three-foot rule on the tack that was still firmly anchored in the counter, and at the other end proceeded to place the other tack. As he pressed down on the tack with his thumb, to his great surprise it went into the board easily. He found that it went right into a hole that had been filled with putty. He had discovered the very hole from which the tack had once been removed. Someone had moved the tack.

In the study of the Sabbath question we find that at the end of the first week of creation God placed the Sabbath. "The seventh day is the Sabbath." But someone has taken the weekly rest from the seventh day and placed it on the first day. Mr. Jones did not know who moved the tack on his counter, nor when it was done. But we do know when the observance of the Sabbath was moved and who did it.

The Roman Catholic Church changed the day of rest from Saturday to Sunday. This act she freely admits. The change was made after the death of the apostles.

Although an attempt was made to change the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week, God has always had those through the centuries who observed His law and kept His Sabbath. There are hundreds of thousands of them in the world today. Every year many thousands of Christian people are beginning to keep the seventh-day Sabbath. They have discovered that God's law is binding and that the seventh-day Sabbath should be observed. The testimony of all those who keep God's Sabbath is that it brings a great spiritual blessing to them. In your very community, but perhaps unknown to you, there may be some Christian people who observe the seventh-day Sabbath.

There are only seven days in each week. Six of these are working days. Only one day of the week can be the Sabbath. The other six are working days. God has set the seventh day, Saturday, apart as the Sabbath.

It is as impossible to change the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first day of the week as it would be to change your birthday. A person might choose to celebrate as his birthday a day other than that on which he was born. Regardless of the day one may celebrate, his birthday is fixed by the fact of his birth. So by the act of God, the seventh-day Sabbath was established. It stands as a memorial of His creation.

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## CHAPTER 8

### LIFE ONLY IN CHRIST

**M**AN needs salvation because he is lost — hopelessly lost. He cannot save himself, and no human being can save him. If he is ever saved, it will be by a power outside himself and the human family.

Innate in the heart of man is a desire to live. Man not only wants life now, but he wants to live for ever. God has put this desire in the heart of man. It is as universal as hunger for food. In the heart of man is a longing for God. He may not recognize this longing as a yearning for God, but his soul cries out for something he does not possess. It is God that he wants. Job expressed his heart's longing in these words: "Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!" Job 23:3. Says the Psalmist: "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" Psalms 42:1, 2. Six thousand years of sin have not obliterated the deep longing and the insatiable hunger for God that exists in every heart.

God who made man and planted deep in his heart this desire to live, also made ample provision whereby this desire might be realized. In the creation of the human race, God intended that man should live for ever. However, God took into account every contingency that might arise, that would hinder or derogate this plan. In the event that man, endowed with the power of choice, should choose a wrong course and thereby forfeit his right to live, God had a plan which would restore man to his rightful place.

When Adam and Eve were placed in the garden of Eden, their love and loyalty to God were to be tried by the acid test of obedience. The penalty for disobedience was death. "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Genesis 2:16, 17.

In this first test, man failed. The death penalty was pronounced. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Genesis 3:19.

To think that the human family was for ever lost and would be eternally separated from God caused Jesus to offer Himself as man's substitute. Here began God's tireless quest

for man. Here the plan of redemption became operative. In the early chapters of the Bible we find God searching for lost man. Strange as it may seem, it was not lost man that sought God. Adam had sinned, and he was afraid. He tried to hide himself. "And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." Genesis 3:9, 10.

From that ancient day until this very hour, sinful man has been trying to hide from God, because sin has made him afraid.

Realizing that man was forever lost unless won by Christ, God has continued His quest for him down through the centuries. "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars." 2 Chronicles 16:9.

Man was made in the image of God — he is God's masterpiece. He differs from all other creatures of earth in that he is kin to God. The mark of man's greatness is that God has chosen to seek him out and give him a place as a son in His kingdom.

In our first glimpse of God, He is seeking for lost man: Adam, "where art thou?" Our last shows the same loving quest: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17. This continual search for man is the great central theme of the Bible.

The tragic story of man's disobedience, his separation from God, the pronouncement of the death penalty upon him, forms one of the earliest chapters in human history.

Man needs a Saviour because he is lost, and he is lost because of sin. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Psalms 51:5. Like some dreaded disease, the tendency to sin has been inherited from generation to generation. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" Romans 3:23. (See Romans 5:12).

Since all have sinned, all are lost — eternally and forever lost. "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" Romans 6:23. Not only is man lost, he is helpless. He cannot save himself. If saved, he must have help from another source. Had not the plan of salvation been made, he would have been forever lost.

The only One who could redeem man was He who had created him. Nothing short of creative power could redeem man, since he must become a new creation and experience a new birth.

Not only must lost man be recreated, but also the penalty of a broken law which demanded death must be met. Guilty man could not be released from the death penalty, the only course left was for Christ, who created man, to offer Himself as his substitute and accept the penalty of death which the law demanded. This Christ did. He not only died for man, but *died in place of man*. In dying for man upon the cross, Christ took upon Himself the guilt of man's sin and thereby released man from the death demanded by the broken law.

Under divine inspiration prophets foretold the time when Christ would come to this world, be born as a babe; grow to manhood, and actually die for man's sins.

When the angel announced the birth of the Promised One, he told the shepherds who were watching their flocks in the Judean hills: "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Luke 2:10-14.

With the passing of the years "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him." Luke 2:40.

After His baptism, "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." Mark 1:14, 15.

Christ had come into the world on a definite mission, and never for one moment was that mission forgotten. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." John 10:17. At last the hour of His death arrived. It is all written in four words, "And they crucified Him." The climax of the ages had come. The prophecies and dreams of seers for centuries culminated here. The sacrificial system ended here. As Christ died He said, "It is finished." The price for man's redemption had been paid.

In Jerusalem that day two things happened, one in the temple in the heart of the city, the other in the suburbs on Calvary's hill.

When Christ said, "It is finished," to the astonishment of worshippers in the temple, the veil which hid from view the second apartment of the sanctuary, by unseen hands was "rent in twain from the top to the bottom." Before the gaze of the worshippers stood the holy of holies. The earthly sanctuary service had come to its end. All the types and shadows which had expressed the faith of God's people for many centuries culminated here at the cross.

At the edge of the city something new and different in the annals of religion had taken place — something that was to mark a new day in the history of the world. Christ had been crucified. This was all in keeping with God's original plan for man's salvation.

Man is not saved from the penalty of sin by any meritorious work of his own, but by what Christ has done for him. He is saved by the grace of God. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God Not of works, lest any man should boast." Ephesians 2:8, 9.

Salvation is a gift, and anything that is a gift cannot be earned or purchased. It is something free. There is nothing man can do to gain salvation except to accept it. It is freely offered to him "without money and without price," without penance or works.

While salvation is the free gift of God and man can in no way earn or buy it, yet he has a very definite part to act in obtaining it. What is man's part? It is accepting by faith the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour from sin, by believing and accepting Christ as the One who died on the cross in his stead.

When the godly of ancient times asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas immediately replied, "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Acts 16:31. To this earnest seeker for salvation, only one requirement was necessary: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." That was all that was necessary then — that is all that is required now. Nothing else would save a man then, and nothing else will save him now. "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Romans 10:9.

In John 3:16, that most familiar passage of Scripture in all the Bible, is set forth the heart of the plan of salvation: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is belief in Jesus Christ as our Saviour from sin, and the accepting of the atonement He made for us on the cross, that give everlasting life.

To teach His disciples that there was no way to obtain eternal life except through Christ, He gave them the parable of the good shepherd. In this parable He states plainly that only by Him can men be saved. "Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:7-10. "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.

What does accepting Christ as a personal Saviour do for man? What change does this make in him? When Christ is accepted as a personal Saviour, the heart of man is completely changed and a great transformation is made in the life. By nature, man's heart is sinful,

prone to do wrong. He must have a change of heart, and when this takes place, the life is changed. Man becomes a new creature, or creation. "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.

It takes creative power to transform a sinner into a saint, to change a wicked, evil person into a candidate for heaven. Yet that is what God does for those who believe.

Said Jesus to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again." John 3:7. Only twice-born men — those who have had their nature changed by experiencing a new birth — can enter the kingdom of God. "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:5.

Man cannot change his own nature. This is just as impossible as for a leopard to change his spots. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Jeremiah 13:23. It takes creative power, the new birth, to give man a new heart. Since man in his sinful nature cannot enter heaven, it is imperative that this nature be changed.

Evil men who put Christ to death little realize that their actions, instead of being the end of Christ and His work, simply marked the beginning of a greater work.

His death, resurrection, and ascension made possible a more complete and universal ministry. "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:" Hebrews 9:24. Christ returned to "heaven itself." The purpose of His return was "to appear in the presence of God for us."

Man now has a direct approach to God through his High Priest, Jesus Christ. "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:" 1 John 2:1.

How can a man, lost in sin and without hope, come to Christ? The cry that went up from sincere hearts on the day of Pentecost, when they sought to come to God, was, "What shall we do?" The first word of Peter, the great preacher on that occasion, was, "Repent." This has been a text of all great preachers. It was the text of John the Baptist. "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Matthew 3:1, 2. Christ Himself preached repentance. "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 4:17. The last message to be sounded in the earth, the message to the Laodiceans, is one of repentance. See Revelation 3:19.

Repentance is sorrow for sin. Repentance is turning away from a life of sin. It is more than an outward reformation. It is a heart experience. Unless the heart is changed from sin, there will be no change of life, for out of the heart are the issues of life.

We need not repent before coming to God. The sinner need not wait until he turns his heart to God. When he answers the invitation, "Come unto Me," Christ then, by His Spirit, gives him repentance. Repentance is a gift.

Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Acts 5:31.

We cannot make ourselves better by waiting. Like some dreaded disease that has fastened itself upon us, our sins become worse the longer we wait.

No one ever becomes better by his own efforts. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." 2 Corinthians 6:2. "To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts." Hebrews 3:7, 8.

Closely related to repentance is confession. Sins are to be confessed to God, for only He can forgive them. True confession acknowledges specific sins, and should be definite. Confession is not acceptable to God without sincere repentance. It is not an excuse for sin, but an acknowledgement of sin. Confession denotes humility, a humbling of the heart before God. "The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Psalms 34:18.

Everything necessary has been done to redeem men from sin. Christ has made ample provision for all. He has paid the price. He has redeemed us. He invites all to come. Will you accept the invitation? "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30.

Notwithstanding man's follies, faults, and sins, he is still God's creature. He was created in the image of God to enjoy the fellowship of God. Although God's original plan has been marred, His original purpose will yet be fulfilled. "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.

There is one way, and one way only, to obtain eternal life. Christ says, "I am the way." "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." John 17:3. "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." John 1:12.

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## CHAPTER 9

### WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

IN the widely read columns of the late Arthur Brisbane there appeared, a few years ago, this remarkable story:-

"In a Boston alley a baby was found with a washcloth over its face, a cord around its neck, black and rigid. Nonetheless, Dr. Frank M. Deich, night superintendent of Boston City Hospital, put the baby on the operating table, and began breathing into its mouth, forcing air into its lungs. Twenty doctors took turns, forcing air into the baby's lungs for three hours, and now the child, pronounced dead, is restored to life, breathing comfortably in an incubator.

"Most interesting, all honour to the kindhearted doctors. You ask yourself: 'Where was the *soul* of that baby during the three hours of apparent death? Had it not left the body, or was it hovering around in the neighbourhood, waiting to come back in case life should start again?' "

Mr. Brisbane asks the question, "Where was the soul of that baby?" No doubt many people, on learning of this remarkable incident, thought of the same question. Can we know? Yes, the Bible gives the answer.

This question is perhaps one of the most widely discussed subjects in the religious world. This is because it comes close to the homes and hearts of so many. Scarcely a home can be found where the grim reaper has not taken his toll.

This is a personal question. Every person in this world knows that sooner or later he must face death. One by one, loved ones, friends, and acquaintances are carried to their last resting-places. Every day we are reminded that we live in a land of the dying.

In view of the much thought given to this question, probably most persons have arrived at some conclusions. Not all have found their answers in the light of the Scriptures. Some do not know just why they believe as they do, but since others think the same way, they have simply accepted that doctrine. Not all are satisfied with the light they have on this subject.

This question can be answered only by the Bible, since only God knows the answer. Only in the Word of God can questions of eternity be solved. By going back to the beginning, back to the garden of Eden, we find God's original plan for man. Here it is plain that provision was made whereby those who were placed upon this earth would live forever. God never intended that man should die.

The story of the creation of man is short, dear, and convincing. "The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Genesis 2:7. That which was only a lifeless form, made of the "dust of the ground," became a living soul when God breathed into it.

This man, Adam, and his wife, Eve, were to have access to the "tree of life," and by partaking of this tree they were to live for ever. That which was to give them a never-ending life was not the dust or the breath that brought them into being. It was the eating of the tree of life.

When Adam and Eve sinned by disobeying God, they were denied the privilege of eating of the tree of life. "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." Genesis 3:22-24.

Since it was the eating of this tree that was to perpetuate life, and this tree was put beyond the reach of the human family, death has been the common lot of man.

The result of the fall of man was far-reaching. Up until this time no trace of sin had marred this world. All was peace and joy in happy obedience to the law of God. Adam and Eve had been told: "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Genesis 2:17. Notwithstanding this plain declaration, the misery and woe that would follow could hardly be imagined. Death was something unknown. There had never been a pain or an ache, never a tear or a moan on the earth.

Every death we see should be a reminder of the disobedience of our first parents. "Wherefore, 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. A Bible understanding of what death is will clear up any questions.

There are two deaths spoken of in the Bible. They are called the first and second deaths. The first death is the one that comes to all as the result of Adam's transgression. The second death is the final destruction that comes to the lost when they are forever destroyed. Revelation 20:15. The first death is a sleep; the second death is eternal destruction. The first death comes to all; the second death comes only to those that are lost.

Jesus said to His disciples: "These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep." John 11:11. But the disciples thought of physical rest, for they replied, "If he sleep, he shall do well." But "Jesus spoke of his death: but they thought that He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead." Verses 12-14.

The Apostle Paul says: "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." 1 Corinthians 15:51. The prophet Daniel speaks of the dead as those that "sleep in the dust of the earth." Daniel 12:2. Again Paul writes: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep." 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15.

It is said of Stephen, who was stoned to death and became the first martyr in the New Testament, "And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." Acts 7:60.

Since death is a sleep, we may properly ask, Where do the dead sleep? What place has God prepared for tired and weary pilgrims of this earth who have finished their course and have closed their eyes in death?

The prophet Daniel says that when Christ returns to this earth to receive His redeemed people, "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake." Daniel 12:2. This language is plain. "Man shall turn again unto dust." Job 34:15. "Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust." Psalms 104:29.

Perhaps the greatest tribute ever paid to any man was that given by Jesus Christ to King David. Christ said: "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will." Acts 13:22.

If the good were taken to heaven at death, David surely would be one who would be there. But where is David? "For David is not ascended into the heavens:" Acts 2:34. This text says plainly David is not in heaven. If he is not there, then where is he? "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day." Acts 2:29. These two texts reveal these facts: David was buried; David's sepulchre is in the earth; David is not in heaven.

Christ said to Adam, and through him to the human race: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Genesis 3:19. How dearly He states where man goes when he dies — "till thou return unto the ground." "Out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

If the dead are asleep, unconscious, and in their graves, natural reasoning would lead us to believe that they know nothing while in this state. But we are not left alone to our reasoning. God has spoken in dearest language on this point. "For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten." Ecclesiastes 9:5.

If the dead know not anything, then they know nothing. "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Ecclesiastes 9:10.

The loved ones who have been torn from us in death are not in some heavenly abode. They are not in a spirit world, looking down on this earth with love and sympathy, rejoicing when we are good and weeping when we do wrong. Solomon, the wisest man, says of the dead: "Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun." Ecclesiastes 9:6. The very condition in death makes it impossible for the departed to have anything to do with things and affairs on this earth.

Instead of saying that the dead praise God around His throne, David says: "The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence." Psalms 115:17. It is impossible for the dead to render praise and adoration to God, because "For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" Psalms 6:5.

The closest tie known to human hearts is that between parents and their children. If anyone could be solicitous after death for the welfare of another, a parent would be for his own offspring. A kind father or a loving mother would be the first to reach forth from "the beyond" to lend a helping hand to his or her children if it were possible. Job says: "His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them." Job 14:21. Whatever children may do on this earth, the parent who has died "knoweth it not."

In sound sleep the mind is dormant; there is no consciousness. It may be that you have known someone who has been knocked unconscious by a blow from some object or by a fall. How much did the individual know while in this condition? Nothing, absolutely nothing!

Is it reasonable to suppose that the blow or the fall which results in unconsciousness, if a little more severe — sufficient to cause the death of the person — would produce a condition in which the individual knows everything? In other words, is it possible to hit a man and knock him unconscious so that he knows nothing, then hit him a little harder and kill him, and he know everything?

In the experience of Lazarus, as recorded in the eleventh chapter of John, we have the record of a man who lived on this earth, who died, was buried, then raised from the dead. When Christ came to the tomb to raise Lazarus, "He found that he had lain in the grave four days already." Surely this would be long enough to gather a complete report of the life beyond the tomb, if any such life existed.

What testimony does Lazarus bring back with him of his experience after death? We find him as silent on this subject as the tomb itself. Why? "The dead know not anything." He had been asleep.

Both the good and the bad who have died are in their graves. They will rest in unbroken sleep until final awards are meted out to them. "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. Job understood this subject. Under the inspiration of God he gives us very dear and convincing testimony: "So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep." Job 14:12. When man dies, he "lieth down," and here he sleeps "in the dust of the earth." This sleep continues until the "heavens be no more." It is at the second coming of Christ that the heavens shall be no more. "And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. . . . For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Revelation 6:14-17.

For fear some would become confused, and perhaps think that when death comes it is the end of man, Job asks this question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" Job 14:14. Then he proceeds to give an inspired answer: "If I wait, the grave is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness." Job 17:13. "All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come." Job 14:14.

Although heaven is the promised abode of the righteous, they do not enter this blissful land at death. They are taken there at the second coming of Christ, when they are raised, from their dusty beds. "For 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: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17.

The change that takes place at the resurrection, when the sleeping saints are raised, the Apostle Paul calls a "mystery." A mystery is something that cannot be fully explained or understood. "The word signifies a secret, . . . a thing kept secret and hid from our understanding, till it be revealed to us." (Cruden). Just how God can raise the multitudes of the righteous who have died, and give them immortal bodies and a never-ending life, we can never fully understand in our present state. "Behold, I shew 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.

Death is just the opposite of life. To die is not to live. "Set thine house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live." Isaiah 38:1. To die is not a transition into some mystic form or spirit; it is not an entering into heaven, hell, or purgatory. To die is to sleep. Man goes to the grave when he dies, and there he stays until the resurrection.

## CHAPTER 10

### “I WILL COME AGAIN”

**T**HREE great facts that make the plan of redemption sure are: First, Christ's advent to this world as the Messiah and His death on the cross as man's Saviour; second, His resurrection and ascension to heaven as man's advocate; third, His second coming to this earth to receive His people into His everlasting kingdom.

The first two of these great events are in the past. They are facts accepted by all Christian people. They are the fundamental basis of Christianity. But the third event is yet in the future. Not until Christ returns the second time and gathers to Himself His people, will the plan of redemption be complete.

No one would believe that God would lay a plan for the salvation of men, carry it out at such cost until it was two thirds accomplished, then abandon it. This is not the way God does things. His plans are complete. Nothing short of a finished work will ever meet God's mind.

The second coming of Christ is *the doctrine* of the New Testament. All other truths seem to revolve around this glorious event so forcefully portrayed by all Gospel writers. The best authority on this subject is Christ Himself. He well knew that the fact of His return to this earth the second time would be questioned by some; so in the most positive language known to man He emphatically stated, "I will come again." John 14:3.

The conditions under which this promise was made were most impressive. Christ had just told His disciples that He was going to leave them. The time for the second step in the plan of redemption had come. He was going back to heaven by way of the cross. The very thought of His leaving broke their hearts. They wanted to go with Him. "Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake." John 13:37. It no doubt pulled as strongly on Christ's heartstrings to leave this little group of believers as it did on theirs. "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards." John 13:36. No, they could not go with Him then. He had different plans for them.

To comfort their broken hearts He gave them this promise. Perhaps nothing so comforting has ever been written. "Let not your heart be troubled: ye 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 ye may be also." John 14:1-3. Here is the authority for believing in the second coming of Christ. It is Christ's own personal promise. Not until He comes the second time and takes His people to those mansions He has gone to prepare, will the plan of redemption be completed.

"If I go. . . I will come again." That He did go away we have the testimony of eyewitnesses. "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." Acts 1:9. For forty days after Christ's resurrection from the tomb He had met and mingled with His disciples. Now the last meeting and the last hour that He was to spend with them until He comes back the second time had arrived. They journeyed out to the Mount of Olives, where they often went to study and pray. As they gathered about Him He spoke to them, and then He rose from the earth. This very sight amazed them. They watched Him disappear into a cloud and vanish from sight. How empty the world seemed! Last separations are always hard. As they stood gazing into empty space, with hearts full of sorrow, angels from heaven came to comfort and instruct them. "And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." The "two men" in "white apparel" were angels

from the throne of God, who had been sent to the disciples in this hour of separation. They had come to assure them that Christ would return. "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

We have not only Christ's own personal promise for our belief in the second coming of Christ, but that of the angel's also. This give us the best possible authority. But we have still other authority besides that of Christ and the angels. The writers of the Bible made it an outstanding part of their teaching. The Apostle Paul speaks of this great event fifty different times in his writings. It is mentioned 290 times in the New Testament, which is an average of more than once for every chapter. Perhaps no other doctrine is mentioned so often. Not only in the New Testament, but in the old as well, it is mentioned over and over. We shall look at some of these inspired passages.

"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." Hebrews 9:28.

"Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;" Titus 2:13.

"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints." Jude 14.

"For 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.

"For I know that my redeemer liveth, 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: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." Job 19:25-27.

"Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." Psalms 96:13.

"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him." Psalms 50:3.

His going away was witnessed by only a few, but how different will be His return! Everyone will see Him then. The Patmos prophet declares: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." Revelation 1:7. His coming will not be in a corner; it will be worldwide. It will not be as a secret rapture; it will be visible. "Every eye shall see Him." "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. . . . Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matthew 24:23-27.

Christ's second coming will be *in person*. "This same Jesus" is coming back. His coming will be just as literal as was His going away. "In like manner" His coming will be visible. "Every eye shall see Him." Just as truly as human eyes gazed heavenward and watched Him ascend, just as surely will human eyes again gaze heavenward and see Him as He returns the second time. This will be the shout of triumph of God's people on that glad tomorrow. "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." Isaiah 25:9.

There are at least two very definite purposes in the second coming of Christ. First, Christ wants His people where He is. "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; *that where I am, there ye may be also.*" Just as heaven without Christ would not be heaven to God's people, no more would it be heaven to Christ without His people. So He is coming to receive His own. "In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Psalms 16:11. "And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads." Revelation 22:4.

Second, He is coming to give rewards to those who have been faithful. "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." Revelation 22:12.

Man's acceptance of Christ and his service for Him is not in vain. We cannot enumerate all the rewards of the faithful followers of Christ. "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." 1 Corinthians 2:9. Nothing in all this world should so quicken our interest as the second coming of Christ.

The great majority of people had no time or place for Christ at His first advent. They shut Him out of the inn and crowded Him out of their hearts. It will be no different with the masses when He comes to the earth the second time. To them He comes as a thief — *suddenly, unexpectedly*. "Of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." 1 Thessalonians 5:1, 2. His second coming will be a great surprise to most people. It is the unexpected that surprises us.

Those who put the second coming of the Saviour out of their reckoning will discover when too late that they are unprepared. One of the most impressive pen pictures portraying the distress and confusion of lost people is given by the prophet John. "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Revelation 6:15-17. They pray, but it is too late. They hide themselves, but to no avail. They are lost and they know it. They cry to the mountains and rocks to fall on them. They pray to be hidden "from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne." What a sad picture when it could have been so different!

Christ will have a church that is waiting and watching for Him. His coming will not be a surprise to them, they will be expecting Him. They will have heeded Christ's admonition and made the necessary preparation. "Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. (43) But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. (44) Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." Matthew 24:42-44.

Friend, will you be ready?

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### **HOLD FAST TILL I COME**

*Sweet promise is given to all who believe—  
"Behold, I come quickly, Mine own to receive;  
Hold fast till I come; the danger is great;  
Sleep not as do others; be watchful and wait."*

*We'll "watch unto prayer" with lamps burning bright;  
He comes to all others a "thief in the night."  
We know He is near, but know not the day —  
As spring shows that summer is not far away.*

*Yes! this is our hope, 'tis built on His Word —  
The glorious appearing of Jesus, our Lord;  
Of promises all, it stands as the sum:  
"Behold, I come quickly; hold fast till I come*

## PREPARE FOR THE BEST

**P**REPARATION is usually for some approaching calamity. Seldom do we prepare for the best. Life is pretty much of a battle and a march from the cradle to the grave — one continuous warfare. Since the worst usually follows battles, our philosophy of life is to prepare for one calamity after another. This is the stride with which most people go through life.

But God would have you *prepare for the best*. He has something good in store for you, if you will but make the necessary preparation to receive it. It will come only to those who are prepared. What is this good thing for which we are to prepare? The ancient prophet Amos gives us the challenging invitation, "Prepare to meet thy God."

This is not something that can be brushed aside without consideration. The facts remain that every soul will some day meet God face to face. In order that we might meet Him in peace, and receive at His hand a welcome into heaven itself, we must be prepared. To meet Him unprepared is simply to be lost, to be cast for ever away from His presence. This which indeed is intended as the best, will be to the unprepared the worst calamity ever to befall them.

On one occasion God came down to this world and held a meeting with the people. He spoke to them. The place and the hour had all been arranged by God Himself. "And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: There shall not on hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount." Exodus 19:10-13.

This was no ordinary meeting; God was to be the speaker, and careful preparation had to be made. God had something good to tell them and they must be prepared. At last the hour for this great appointment came. "And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount." Exodus 19:17.

The children of Israel in a great company marched toward Mount Sinai. Had anyone asked, "Where are you going?" he would have been told, "To meet with God." What a solemn thought!

The preparation for this meeting where God spoke His law was impressive and important. But there is another meeting that God has called, of perhaps greater importance, to which you are invited. This, too, calls for a special preparation. It is an invitation to meet God.

The best always comes as an opportunity. The history of the world is a sad commentary on its lack of preparation for the best. The world missed a great opportunity when Christ came to this earth as the Messiah. Instead of receiving Him, they crucified Him. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." John 1:11. They simply would not receive the best.

Good things are usually optional. This is true of the best — Christ; we can take Him or leave Him. Good things never force themselves upon us. Neither will Christ. Good things invite us. So does Christ. "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28.

Some day, and not in the dim distant future either, Christ is coming back to this earth. He is coming for His people. "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:3. Those who

make the necessary preparation will be ready to receive Him. In one of the most gripping stories ever told by Christ, the parable of the ten virgins, He beautifully illustrates the preparation that is necessary and how important it is to be ready.

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom." Matthew 25:1. This group of girls presented a fascinating picture as they joyfully went forth to join the bridal party. They all looked forward to the joyous occasion with pleasure, and all apparently had made the same preparations. They all had lamps. Outwardly they were all alike. The parable says of these ten virgins, "And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." Matthew 25:2-5.

The difference in these girls was not in their outward appearance, but in something else that classed five of them as foolish. It was not in a mistaken event. They had all gone forth on the same mission, to the same place. Their objective was one. If anyone had asked any of the ten where they were going, they would have answered that they were going to the same wedding party. Their intentions were the same. So it was something else that classed five as wise and five as foolish. What was it? The difference was in the preparation that had been made. Five were ready — they were wise. Five were unready — they were foolish. It seems strange that people should expect some great event and know that it requires a certain preparation, yet come right up to the very hour without the necessary preparation.

These five foolish virgins "took no oil with them." Lamps will not burn without oil. Nothing but darkness could follow, and the result was tragic. Because they failed to prepare they were left behind — they missed everything. They may have intended to make the required preparation, but good intentions never save anyone. Only actions count with God.

While waiting at the roadside for the bridal party all ten virgins fell asleep. Waiting time is always hard. "And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." Matthew 25:6. They all sprang to their feet, hurriedly lighted their lamps, and made ready to join the procession. "Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps." Matthew 25:7. The lamps of the wise burned brightly, but those of the foolish cast only a feeble ray, then sputtered and went out. They needed oil and they needed it badly. "And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out." Matthew 25:8.

But the five wise virgins had only enough oil for themselves. "But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." Matthew 25:9.

Frantically the five foolish virgins tried to secure oil, but it was too late. They had waited too long. While they were searching for oil, the bridal party came and passed by. "And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut." Matthew 25:10.

The point and purpose in this parable is expressed by Christ in these words: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Matthew 25:13. The coming of the bridegroom in the parable represents the second coming of Christ. Those who make the required preparation will be the ones who are ready to go home with Him. Those who wait too long will be left behind — lost. The way to be ready for His coming is to be ready now. More important than knowing the day or hour of His appearing is it to know that every day and hour we are ready. How you spend today will determine where you will spend tomorrow. We shall all go in the door for which we are ready.

The thing that will prevent people from being prepared to meet God is sin. Christ came to save sinners, but He will never take a sinful man to heaven. We must separate ourselves from sin that we may be ready to meet Him who came to save us from sin. "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21.

The question naturally arises: What is sin? If it will bar the way to heaven, if it will prevent us from being ready to meet God, how can we get rid of it?

The New Testament gives us this definition of sin. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:4. To break the Ten Commandments is to commit sin. This is illustrated in these verses of Scripture by another New Testament writer: "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." James 2:10,11. So the violation of God's law is sin.

The law of God points out sin. It tells us when we do wrong. The law itself cannot save anyone. But those who would be ready to meet Christ when He comes again should observe the Ten Commandments.

When we do wrong we sin. From the very beginning of time this principle has been recognized. Long before the Ten Commandments were given in written form it was recognized that to do wrong is sin. "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." Genesis 4:7.

There are sins of omission as well as of commission. One may be just as bad as the other. Not only is it a sin to do wrong, but it is a sin when we fail to do that which we know God requires. This most impressive statement comes ringing down to us from the beginning of the Christian Era, and it is just as true now as when the Apostle James uttered it centuries ago: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." James 4:17.

This earnest, honest appeal should go up to God from every heart: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Acts 9:6. This is what the Apostle Paul asked when he came face to face with the Lord on the Damascus road. God made duty plain to him. He always does. Our difficulty is not so much in knowing what we should do, but in doing what we know we should.

There is no substitute for obedience. With God that is the only thing that matters. From the days of Adam until now God has expected obedience from His children. If this is not true, God does not mean what He says.

God is particular, but His commands are reasonable. If we sincerely love Him, our greatest joy will be found in obeying Him. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." John 14:15.

Those who will not obey will be lost. If the Bible teaches any truth it is this: When Christ returns the second time, it will be the disobedient who will be unable to look upon Him and live. They are to be destroyed by the brightness of His coming. "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming;" 2 Thessalonians 2:8. It is the disobedient who will feel the fury of His vengeance. "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:" 2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8.

The obedient will be ready to meet Christ when He comes. To them the gates of heaven open wide. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" Isaiah 1:19. If you would walk the golden streets of that goodly land, you must walk in obedience the paths of duty in this world. There is no heaven, no eternal life, for those who will not obey Him.

Friend, are you ready to meet Him? He is coming soon. If you have not already done so, give Him your heart now and accept Him as your personal Saviour. Covenant to keep His commandments and be ready to go to those mansions above when He comes. "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. Revelation 22:20, 21.

