

Lafayette Bible Study Series
(January 26 - May 18, 1993)
by Mr. John Ogwyn

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Bible Study # 101
January 26, 1993
Mr. John Ogwyn

Hebrews 6 Series—Doctrine # 1: Repentance from Dead Works

We're going to be getting into our new series this evening. I want to focus in on the doctrines in Hebrews chapter 6. The Apostle Paul makes the statement, as he is writing a letter to people who primarily were long-time church members—old-time Christians—people who had been around a long time. Many of these, to whom the book of Hebrews was addressed, had very likely been converted on the day of Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2, or in the time right after that. So by the time Paul was writing, many of the people who were recipients of this letter had been in the Church for thirty years or more and the tendency of human beings is to grow weary of well doing. It can be very helpful to read the book of Hebrews from a standpoint that it is addressed to old-time members.

Notice what Paul says.

Hebrews 5:10-14, “[Christ] called by God as High Priest ‘according to the order of Melchizedek,’ of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God [the starting point of the Word of God]; and you have come to need milk and not solid food [KJV, “strong meat”]. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food [KJV, “strong meat”] belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” Now, we get to judgment. You see, discerning good and evil is judging. We use our senses to discern good and evil. The Bible is our criteria, and as we live and go through life, we have opportunity to gain experience using our mind to apply the principles of Scripture to different things with which we come in contact.

Paul is saying, ‘Look, you’ve been around a long time. You ought to be in a position to help and instruct others. You ought to be teachers. But actually, I’m faced with a situation where I have to come back and you need to be taught over again the first principles—the starting point—of God’s Word.’ He’s correcting them because they had let it slip.

On the Sabbath, we noticed in Hebrews 2:1-3 about neglecting so great a salvation and letting slip the Word that God has given to us. Here was the result of that. They had been around long enough to where they should have been able to help others that were just coming in, yet they needed to go back over the basics. They needed to go back to what was like milk rather than strong meat.

A baby has to grow and their digestive system has to mature to be able to handle strong meat. You don’t say to a newborn babe, ‘Well kid, here’s a steak. Dig in.’ Number one, he can’t chew it. Number two, even if he can chew it, his digestive system can’t handle it. This is used as a spiritual analogy to us. What can we spiritually digest? Paul is saying, ‘You ought to be able to handle strong meat and I find myself having to go back to the basics.’

Hebrews 6:1-2, “Therefore, leaving [going on from] the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection...” That’s what he wished to be focusing on. That’s where the attention needed to be. Paul was saying, ‘What we really need to be talking about is how to go on to perfection.’ “...not laying again the foundation...”

There are six foundational doctrines. The seventh doctrine is going on to perfection. That’s the one mentioned first. The other six are the foundation for going on to perfection—going on to develop to completion and maturity as a Christian. Paul is saying, ‘I have to go back to the basics with you. We need to be able to go on from the starting point.’ “...not laying again the foundation of **repentance from dead works** and of **faith toward God**, of the **doctrine of baptisms**, of **laying on of hands**, of **resurrection of the dead**, and of **eternal judgment**.”

Let’s look at these doctrines one by one. **The first part of the foundation (first doctrine) that is mentioned is repentance from dead works.** What is repentance from dead works? It is the starting point of the foundation. It is important that we make sure our foundation is solid. What is repentance from dead works? Let’s notice. This expression is used one other place.

In Hebrews 9:11, it talks about Christ becoming a High Priest.

Hebrews 9:12-14, “Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer,

sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Dead works are something that have to be purged from our conscience in order for us to serve the living God. Dead works were purged by the sacrifice of Christ. Dead works are called "dead works" because they are works that end in death. They are works that produce death. That is an important concept to understand. There are things that lead to life and there are things that lead to death. *Repentance from dead works involves a turning away from the works that lead to death.*

What leads to death? Let's go back to the book of Romans.

Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." The wages of sin is death. So dead works are works that end in death. In other words, they are the works of sin. The wages of sin is death.

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

What is sin?

I John 3:4 (KJV), "...sin is the transgression of the law."

Dead works are works that end in death. Dead works are the works of sin. They are the transgression of God's law. They end in death and they have to be turned from. We have to make a change of direction in our lives. A lot of professing Christianity places its emphasis on "you have to believe." We're told that the starting point spiritually is turning from dead works. We have to turn from the way that leads to death.

Let's notice.

Galatians 5:16, "I say then, walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."

Verse 18, "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." We're going to see what "if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law" means in just a second. A lot of people want to read that verse and say, 'See, you don't have to keep that old law. You don't have to keep that old Sabbath and those old Holy Days. You're not under the law.' That's not what that means at all.

Notice, hold your place and let's go back very quickly to Romans 3.

Romans 3:31, "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law." Trusting God, faith in God,

doesn't make void the law. That doesn't do away with the law. 'Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid! We establish the law.'

Notice back in Galatians 5.

Galatians 5:18, "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." That means, as we're going to see as we come on down, that the law exacts a penalty. If you are not led of the Spirit, you're following the way of the flesh and you are under the law—you're under the penalty of the law and the penalty of the law is death. Christ came to redeem us from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13). What's the curse of the law? The curse of the law isn't keeping the law. That's crazy! God didn't give His law as a curse.

Romans 7:12, Paul says, "...the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." The curse of the law is the death penalty. The wages of sin is death. That's a pretty good curse. Christ came to redeem us from the curse of the law. He was made a curse for us (Galatians 3:13). He died in our stead. He redeemed us from the penalty that the law exacts.

Galatians 5:18-21, it says, "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God."

The Kingdom of God is something that must be inherited, and those who are practicing the works of the flesh cannot inherit it. If we're led by the Spirit, we're not following the works of the flesh.

The starting point of the foundation as a Christian is to turn from dead works.

Let's notice in Galatians 6.

Galatians 6:8, "For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life." It has to do with a direction of life.

We are told to turn from dead works—works that are the result of following the pulls of the flesh, works that we produce in our lives by just doing what comes naturally, by responding and reacting just the way we naturally, normally feel, just following the pulls and the physical desires that occur to us. That's the way of the flesh. If we follow the way of the flesh, we're following the way that leads to death. Following the way of

the Spirit is contrary to the pulls of the flesh. Following the Spirit is based on the pulls and influences of God's Spirit and is in accord with the Word of God as revealed in the Scriptures.

Let's notice a little more.

II Corinthians 7:1, "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

As a response to the promises of God, we must do something. What we must do is clean up. We must clean up on the inside and the outside the filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit. Filthiness of the flesh is what you're *doing* and filthiness of the spirit is what you *are* on the inside. We must perfect holiness. We must go on to completion of the holiness of God—the holy, righteous character that God is developing in us.

The starting point is repentance from dead works—a turning away from the ways of the flesh, the ways that lead to death—the works that are the works of sin.

Ephesians 2:1, "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

We were as good as dead. Why? —Because of what we had done. That's why they're called dead works. We had done something. The works are what you do, and we were as good as dead because of what we had done. What we had done was sin. Sin is the transgression of the law (KJV, I John 3:4). We've all sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). We were in a heap of trouble. We were continuing to follow and practice the ways that led us into death. But now, "you He made alive."

The Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14). It is the evidence that God is going to come back and finish what He started.

Ephesians 2:1-2, "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience."

In times past, we were just like everybody else. We were following the direction of life just like everybody else. We walked according to the course of this world.

Paul had our conduct in times past.

Verse 3, "among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others."

We were part of the world. We talked like the world; we acted like the world; and we fit in with the world. This is our world; this is our society. We'd still be a part of it if God hadn't taken the initiative in our lives to open our minds to understand His truth. But when God takes the initiative to open your mind to understand the truth, you have to do something, and what you have to do is to respond to God's initiative.

The starting place of that response is to turn from your ways and to go God's way. You have to turn around and go the other way. "Repent" means "to turn." It's sort of like going down the street and all of a sudden, you realize you're heading in the wrong direction and you make a u-turn. You realize you've been going west and you need to go east. So you quickly make a u-turn and you're heading back the other way. That's what we have to do in our lives. We turn from wicked works. We repent from dead works. We saw in Romans 6:23 that the wages of sin is death. We saw in I John 3:4 that sin is the transgression of the law.

Let's go to Acts 2:38, which is the starting point of what Peter preached. The people were pricked in their hearts and they asked him what they could do (v. 37).

Acts 2:38, "Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" Peter told them to repent—to turn from sin, to turn around.

Repentance from dead works is the starting point in the foundation. Until we turn from our wicked works, until we turn from dead works, we haven't even started on the right path. The foundation begins with repentance from dead works.

Let's go back to the book of Colossians.

Colossians 1:12, "giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us [made us fit, suitable] to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light." God is the One who has made it possible for us to partake of the inheritance.

Verse 13, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness..." We were under the power of darkness, the ruler of the darkness of this world, Satan the devil. Our minds were deceived. There was a veil over our understanding. We were entrapped, ensnared and entangled in our sins and in the deception of Satan. We could not free ourselves.

Verse 13, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated [transferred] us into the kingdom of the Son of His love."

Our citizenship, loyalty and allegiance has been transferred. Now, our citizenship is in heaven. We're not *in* heaven. The kingdom is going to be brought down from heaven to earth. But we're ambassadors to Christ (II Corinthians 5:20). He is in heaven right now. Our citizenship is there. That is our city, the New Jerusalem.

In ancient times, citizenship was based on the city of the origin of your ancestors, of your family. The concept of citizenship was something that grew up in the Greek world. Even after someone had been removed and lived elsewhere, they considered themselves a citizen of Athens or a citizen of wherever.

God has transferred our citizenship to where now our citizenship, allegiance and loyalty is to the Kingdom of God.

Remember back in Hebrews 11.

Hebrews 11:15, "And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have opportunity to return."

Verse 10, they waited for a city that has foundations whose maker and builder is God, the New Jerusalem. That's where our citizenship resides. We're not going to heaven. The New Jerusalem is going to come down from God out of Heaven to the earth (Revelation 21:2). That's why we don't take part in the political/military affairs of this society. Our citizenship is no longer here. Our citizenship has been transferred.

Colossians 1:13-23, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated [transferred] us into the kingdom of the Son of His love in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him [by Christ] all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and irreproachable in His sight—if indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and

steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven, of which I, Paul, became a minister."

We were enemies. We were alienated—cut off from God. We were enemies in our mind by wicked works—the works of death, dead works—which separated us from God. We were alienated from God. It started in our minds. It didn't start with what you did with your hands or said with your mouth. The problem—wicked works—started in the mind.

Christ died to pay the penalty. We have to respond to that by turning from dead works.

Notice in Acts 20.

Acts 20:21, "testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Repentance is toward God. Sin is ultimately against God. When we repent of wicked works, when we repent of dead works, our repentance is toward God. We repent; we turn toward God. The repentance is a turning. We turn around toward God. It has to do with a direction in life that is traveled. A starting point of our spiritual foundation has to do with a reversal of the course of your mind—a change in life with a change of direction.

Let's go back to Ezekiel 14.

Ezekiel 14:5-6, "that I may seize the house of Israel by their heart, because they are all estranged from Me by their idols." "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God: 'Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations.'"" We see that repentance has to do with turning ourselves away from that which separates us from God. Sin separates us from God and interferes with our relationship with God. Idolatry is singled out here because idolatry involves having another god before the true God. It involves having an image that interferes with the knowledge of who and what God is.

In the New Testament, covetousness is equated with idolatry (Colossians 3:5) because that is certainly one of the prime forms of idolatry. Idolatry has to do with worshiping the creature more than the Creator. Idolatry has to do with worshiping—giving devotion, loyalty and allegiance to (that's what worship is)—the works of man's hand rather than the Creator of all that is. Idolatry is devotion, allegiance and loyalty to something that man has produced. It can be a work of art—anything from a picture or image—or everything in a more general sense. It's a devotion to man's creation rather than man's Creator. We have to turn from that. The source

of so many wicked works is ultimately a devotion to what man has created rather than a devotion to the One who created all. Repentance from dead works involves a turn toward God and away from idols.

Ezekiel 18:30-32, “Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways,” says the Lord God. ‘Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,’ says the Lord God. ‘Therefore turn and live.’” Repent and turn yourselves from all your transgressions.

The starting point to a relationship with God is repentance from dead works. If we’re going to have a relationship with God, we have to make a turnaround. Jesus Christ came to save us *from* our sins, not *in* our sins.

There are many fundamental errors that worldly Christianity makes. There are several, but one of those fundamental errors is the idea that the law is not that important.

The law is the means by which we respond to God. Repentance is not our initiative; it’s God’s initiative (Romans 2:4). The law is our response. They want to label us and say, ‘Well, you seek salvation by works.’ No! No, we seek death by works. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). We are to repent of wicked works. We are to repent of dead works. We are to purge the works that lead to death. God took the initiative to make that possible in our lives. We have to respond.

Daniel brings it out in his prayer, confessing the sins of Israel.

Daniel 9:13, “As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth.”

Do you see what we have to do? Our response to God? We must turn from our iniquity. We must turn from our lawlessness. We must turn from our sins and understand the truth today. It is our response toward God. It is a response to the law of God. God’s law is the way of righteousness. We wouldn’t know right from wrong. What would be the basis of judgment?

A lot of people in the world have a misconception of what’s right. They don’t know what love is. They say, ‘I just feel like God wants me to do this. I’m unhappy over here with

my wife and my neighbor’s wife looks pretty good. Since I’m sort of interested in her and she’s sort of interested in me, I just feel like God would want me to be happy. I don’t think God would want me to be unhappy. I’m unhappy with my wife and I think I’d be happy with my neighbor’s wife. She’s unhappy with her husband and she’d be happy with me. God will understand and He just wants us to be happy. Since I don’t think God wants me to be unhappy, I’m going to go ahead and do that.’

Now, what’s wrong with that? What’s wrong with that reasoning? Well, God says, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ He didn’t say, ‘You shall not commit adultery unless you think it’ll make you happy to commit adultery.’

Romans 7:7, Paul said, “...I would not have known sin except through the law.” ‘I wouldn’t have known what sin was.’ People have the criteria, but they look around and then think, ‘Well, you know, I think that this will make me happy or that will make me happy.’ There isn’t a basis of discerning what is right from wrong if we don’t have the law.

Notice Romans 7.

Romans 7:6, “But now we have been delivered from the law...” Now, someone put a period there, and you say, ‘Oh, okay, we don’t have to keep the commandments anymore.’ That’s not what it says. It says, “...we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by...” We were under the penalty of the law. We were delivered from the penalty the law exacts. “...so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.” It’s not enough to just keep the letter of the law; you go beyond and keep the spirit of the law. Christ magnified the law (Isaiah 42:21).

Romans 7:7, “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, ‘You shall not covet.’” Paul said, ‘I wouldn’t have known it was wrong to lust unless the law said, “don’t covet.” So I looked at the law. The law is the way by which I know sin. It’s the only way that I have of defining what’s right and wrong.’ Otherwise, you just use your own human feelings and emotions, and you know what happens. ‘I wouldn’t have known sin except through the law.’

Proverbs 14:12, it says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”

Romans 7:12, he says, “Therefore the law is holy, and the commandments holy and just and good.”

Verse 14, “For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.”

Verse 22, “For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man.”

Verse 24, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” ‘Who’s going to deliver me? Who’s going to make it possible for me to turn from dead works?’

Verse 25, “I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.” In other words, the flesh pulls us toward sin, but in our mind, we have made a commitment—we have made a choice—to follow the law of God.

Of course, Jesus Christ paid the penalty for sin in our stead. But we have to respond. Our response is to turn from wicked works, to turn from dead works—the works of sin that lead to death—and toward the ways of righteousness. God leads us to the paths of righteousness. God’s Spirit will lead us in the paths of righteousness (Psalms 23:3). The paths of righteousness are delineated by the commandments.

Psalm 119:172 says, “...all Your commandments are righteousness.” God’s law delineates and defines what righteousness is. Just as you wouldn’t have known what sin is without the law, you wouldn’t have known what righteousness is apart from the law.

Let’s notice what Paul says in Acts 26.

Acts 26:20, “...but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.” In other words, we should change the course of our lives. We should change the direction that we’re heading. We should change our whole set of priorities and change the whole course of conduct of our lives. We should, as it says here, “repent, turn to God, do works befitting repentance.” Replace dead works with the works of the living God. We demonstrate repentance.

Repentance is not just a matter of being sorry. It’s not just a matter of remorse and regret. The world is filled with people who are sorry. They’re sorry they got caught. They’re sorry they are in trouble. They’re sorry their whole world is collapsing around them. They may have a moment of emotional temporary remorse. They may be sincere at the moment. They’re sorry and all broken up emotionally, but that is not

repentance. That’s remorse. That’s regret. It’s not the same thing as repentance. The very word “repent,” if you look it up, means “to turn.” Repent has to do with changing. It has to do with a turning away from the works that led to death—the works of sin. It has to do with a change in the direction of our lives.

It is our response to God. When God calls, we answer. All of us were going the wrong direction when God called us. We had to turn around because we were going in the wrong direction. There’s only one right direction. There are many wrong directions. We weren’t all going in the same wrong direction, but we were all going a wrong direction. There’s one right direction. It’s not that all roads lead to God. It’s that all the roads that man have come up with lead away from God. There are a lot of different ways to get away from God, but there is one true way—the way of righteousness. We have to turn from the wrong paths and get on a different way—the paths of righteousness.

The works needed for repentance demonstrate that we’ve turned around by the change in what we’re doing. If we’ve really repented, it’s going to be evident in our lives. We’re going to try to start living a different way because now we have different motives and different desires.

Hebrews 6:1, the Apostle Paul says, “Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles [the doctrines of Christ], let us go on to perfection [going on towards the fullness—maturity and completion—of Christ], not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works....”

The starting point is a turning away from sin. In order to do that, you have to understand what sin is. You have to understand what repentance is. It has to do with a way of life. Christianity is a way of life. It’s not just a matter of, ‘Oh, I believe in Christ.’ Well, good, but so does Satan.

James 2:19, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!”

It’s great to believe. But what do we believe and how deeply do we believe?

Verse 20, “...faith without works is dead.”

Repentance from dead works is a change of life, and that’s what God is after. God takes the initiative in our lives. He’ll take an initiative with the whole world. The world is off the track. They don’t know. We were all off track in our life. Our minds have to be open to understand. Once our minds are opened to understand, we have to respond. It’s not enough to simply know. We must act on that knowledge. That becomes

the starting point of our relationship with God. We change the direction, which is a response to God—a response to the initiative that God has made. The whole act of repentance involves an initiative that God has taken (Romans 2:4), and there is a response that we must make to that initiative. God sets before us the necessity of choosing (Deuteronomy 30:19). Repentance is a reflection of who we are because it is a turning from the works of death.

Next Bible study, we're going to focus in very specifically on faith towards God. We will focus on what is involved in that. We will focus on some specific examples and applications of it and the ways that it applies in our everyday, day-to-day lives.

With that, we'll be concluded this evening. I look forward to seeing you on the Sabbath. Have a good evening.

Bible Study # 102
February 9, 1993
Mr. John Ogwyn

Hebrews 6 Series—Doctrine # 2: Faith toward God

Let's get into the Bible study this evening. We started in Hebrews 6.

Hebrews 6:1, we saw that Paul says, "Therefore, leaving [going on from] the discussion of the elementary principles [the beginning, the foundation, the foundational principles, the beginning words] of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment."

If you notice, you will find that there are six foundational doctrines and resting on these six foundational doctrines is the seventh, which is going on to perfection—going on to completion and maturity as a Christian.

We will go through these seven doctrines step-by-step. We will go through the six foundational doctrines. They serve a very important part. They serve a very important part because everything else rests on the foundation. Going on to perfection rests on the foundation.

The first part of the foundation is repentance from dead works. We went into that last time. Tonight we're **going to look at the second foundational doctrine of faith toward God and what is involved in faith toward God.**

Let's go to the book of James and see what does *not* constitute faith toward God. Does faith toward God merely mean that you believe that there is a God? Is just the fact that you're not an atheist all there is to this doctrine? Various opinion polls have been taken. I think the Gallop Poll took one and about ninety-five percent of the people in this country believe there's a God. James 2:19, James writes, "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!" Oh! So faith toward God must be a little more than simply believing that God exists. Over ninety percent of the people in this country claim to believe God exists.

In II Timothy 3:5, the Apostle Paul warned about those who have a form of godliness but denying its power (authority). This nation is filled with people who claim to believe there's a God. If you were to stop along the street and say, 'Are you an atheist?'—very few people, a very small percentage of the population, claim to be atheist.

Paul says they have a form of godliness. They have an outward display, an outward manifestation of godliness, but they deny the power and the authority.

You believe there is one God? So does the devil. If all you do is simply believe that God is, you're not even one up on the devil.

Let's notice what it says in James 2.

James 2:14-20, "What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?"

Faith that is not accomplished by works is a dead faith, and a dead faith can't save anyone. What kind of faith is required for salvation? Faith toward God is one of the foundational doctrines. Faith toward God is the foundational part of the message for God's people. *The kind of faith toward God that is required is a living faith—a faith that includes and is manifested by works.* A faith that is not accompanied by works is a dead faith, and a dead faith can't save anyone.

Verses 21-26, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

The kind of faith that we are to have toward God is living faith. It is a faith that has life. It is a faith that is demonstrated by actions. That is a very important point.

Matthew 7:21, notice what it says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." So it's not

enough just to profess Jesus Christ. 'Oh yes, I believe in Jesus.' Is that all there is to being saved? Is that all there is? A lot of people think that salvation is sort of a one-time emotional experience. All you have to do is go down the aisle, join the church and say, 'Oh, I believe in Jesus.' 'Oh, well, you're saved brother.' Is that what the Bible says? No, it doesn't say anything of the kind. It says, "faith without works is dead." It says, "not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of My Father in heaven." The kind of faith that is talked about is the kind of faith that trusts God and is yielded to the will of God—the kind of faith that believes God.

Salvation is not a one-shot thing. Salvation is a process.

Matthew 24:13, that's why it says, "But he who endures to the end shall be saved." Endures what? —He that holds on to the way of God, to the truth of God. He that endures through difficulty, adversity, persecution or whatever it is that may come. He that holds on faithfully to the Word of God and continues to walk with God in the midst of whatever confusion the world may have.

Down through the centuries, different ones of God's people have gone through different things—some more and some less. How long do you have to endure? You have to endure to the end. For some people, the end may be a few weeks, a few months or a year or two. For others the end may be thirty, forty or fifty years. We have to endure to our end. We have to endure to the conclusion—either the end of our life or the end of this age—whichever arrives first.

Matthew 7:21-22, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders [KJV, "wonderful works"] in Your name?'" "Oh, we did all these great things. We went out and we did this and we did that. We did all these wonderful things and we were doing it in Your name. Isn't that wonderful?"

Verse 23, "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" It's not enough just to go out and do nice things. Here are those who work iniquity—they practice lawlessness. They disregard the law of God. They may do all kinds of things. They may talk about God. They may talk about Jesus Christ—"Do you know the

Lord?"—and all these wonderful things. They talk about all these things and have all the nice sayings. They do this little nice thing, that little good thing and whatever it may be, but they're not keeping the commandments. They're not obeying God. They're just sort of creating their own little religion. A lot of people do nice things. You don't have to be a Christian to do nice things. Christians ought to do nice things; I'll grant you that. That's part of the commandments, too. But you can do nice things and not be a Christian. I haven't known very many atheists, but I'm sure that maybe one or two of them have done something nice for somebody. You can be a Buddhist, a Hindu, a Muslim or whatever, and you may do something nice. That's great! That's wonderful! But that's not what it means. That's not all there is to being a Christian.

Part of the foundation is faith toward God. We looked at repentance from dead works last time, so we're not going to get off into that aspect. This is another part of the foundation—faith toward God.

Let's go to I Peter. (If I don't move along we're not going to have time to get through faith toward God.)

I Peter 1:18, "knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold...." Our lives haven't been purchased with money.

Verses 19-21, "but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead [God the Father raised Jesus Christ from the dead.] and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God." We believe in God through Jesus Christ who God raised from the dead and gave Him glory.

Let's understand a little bit about God. Faith toward God means that our faith is directed toward Someone. Who is God? What is God like? The world has all sorts of ideas. Various religions have various concepts of God. The Bible reveals the only authoritative answer to who and what God is. Our faith must be directed toward the true God. *Our faith must be a living faith and must be directed toward the true and living God—the Eternal God that created heaven and earth.*

There are some things that can be understood about God. How do we know about God? **There are two ways that we can know about God.**

Everything we can know about God is only possible because God has chosen to make Himself knowable. We can know what God has chosen to reveal about Himself.

Let's go to the book of Romans and notice one source of knowledge about God.

Romans 1:19-20, "because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." God says there isn't any excuse for being an atheist. "His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." ***There are a lot of things you can understand about God from creation.*** For one thing, you can understand that creation demands a creator, design demands a designer and life demands a life giver. Those are basic things.

Perhaps you were hiking in some remote wilderness area and were under the impression that you were the first person there, the first explorer there. Maybe you were exploring the North Pole back at the turn of the century and maybe you were Admiral Perry or whoever. You were coming along exploring in some area. All of a sudden, you looked down and there was a watch. What would be your conclusion? Would you marvel at how that rock had evolved into a watch? Of course not! If you came back with that watch and said, 'Look at what this rock must have turned into!' That's stupid! Everybody would think that you're some sort of nut. If you looked down and found a watch, a radio or something like that, it would immediately prove to you somebody had been there first. How would you know? Because what you had in your hand reflected an intelligent design. Somebody made this; somebody conceived and manufactured it. You had proof that somebody else was there first because this was something that was made. It didn't just happen. People could look at that in the natural realm and see evidence that somebody was there first.

You go out hiking in the woods and you look down and see a beer can, which is more likely than a watch. You know that somebody was there. You know that the beer can didn't evolve. It wasn't a couple of rocks that sort of rubbed against each other over the centuries with the wind, rain and lightning and these two rocks sort of evolved into a beer can. That's insane! Anybody who seriously proposed that would be looked upon as a nut.

Now if you think a beer can is complicated, what about the human mind? Let's not even look at the human mind; let's look at a cow's brain. I'll tell you what—you can make a beer can a lot quicker than you can make the brain of a cow. There isn't any comparison. There absolutely isn't any comparison!

We can know some things about God from creation. We can understand that there is an intelligent Creator. We can understand that God is a God of law and design because we find there are very predictable laws in nature. If you study physics, chemistry, biology or some of the hard sciences, you will find there are physical laws that work. We can calculate and mathematically predict certain things—it works.

When they were ready to launch the spacecraft to the moon, they didn't just sort of aim it up and hope it would hit. They calculated. They didn't shoot it at where the moon was. They shot it at where they knew the moon would be a few days later because it was going to take the spacecraft some time to get there.

When you're hunting and want to shoot a duck or goose on the wing, you don't shoot where it is. At least you're not trying to shoot where it is; you're trying to shoot where it will be. But it's a lot more complicated when you're shooting for the moon. That's something you calculate out mathematically. It's predictable. There are mathematical laws. The only limit to what man can do in that regard is the limits of what man can understand about what God created. So the creation tells us about the Creator. God reveals Himself through creation. But there are things we can't know about God from creation. You can understand a certain amount, but you can't understand everything about God from creation. ***God has given us His Word, which reveals to us information that we could not otherwise have come to understand.***

Let's notice Hebrews.

Hebrews 1:1-2, "God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom He made the worlds." In these two verses we learn about two great Beings. One is called God and One is called the Son. We find that the One called the Son was the instrument of creation—"through whom He made the worlds [universe]."

Let's continue.

Verse 3, speaking of the Son, "who being the brightness of His glory [God's glory] and the express image of His person, and upholding all

things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

We read of two great Beings who were involved in the creation. We find that God, the One we know as the Father—we’re going to see that in just a moment—made things through Jesus Christ, the Son. We find that Jesus Christ was not simply an angel. He was not some super angel.

Verses 4-8, “having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For to which of the angels did He say: ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You’? And again: ‘I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son’? But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: ‘Let all the angels of God worship Him.’ And of the angels He says: ‘Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire.’ But to the Son He says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom.’”

We find that the Son is also God. God, the One that we know as God the Father, addresses the Son and He says, “Your [speaking to the Son] throne, O God, is forever.” Not only is the Father God, but the Son is also God. Does that mean there are two Gods? Well, no. We’re going to see that in just a moment.

Verse 9, “You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God [speaking to Christ]....” The Father addressed Christ as God in v. 8, and now in v. 9, we read of the Father being addressed as God. “...has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions.” “Messiah,” of course, means “Anointed One.”

Christ is not an angel.

Verses 13-14, “But to which of the angels has He ever said: ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool’? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?” Our destiny is not to become angels. We are heirs of God. Angels were created as ministering spirits.

Hebrews 2:1, “Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away [KJV, “let them slip”].”

It comes on down, speaking of these things.

Verse 9, we see, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little [or, “for a little while” as it could be rendered] lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.” The angels can’t die. Christ came,

and He was made temporarily lower than the angels, for the suffering of death. We now see Him. “...crowned with glory and honor, that He... might taste death for everyone.”

Verses 10-11, “For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author [KJV, “captain”] of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of One [of God], for which reason He [Christ] is not ashamed to call them brethren.”

Here, we see that Jesus was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death. We see that it was fitting for Christ, “for whom are all things, and by whom are all things in bringing many sons into glory.” God is bringing many sons into glory. He made the Captain of our salvation (Jesus Christ) perfect (complete) in sufferings. Here, we have a little bit of insight into the nature of God.

Let’s go back to the book of John.

John 1:1-3, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.”

In Hebrews, we read about God and the Son. We read that the Son also had the rank of God.

Hebrews 1:8, “But to the Son He says: ‘Your throne, O God, is forever and ever....’”

Verse 9, “...therefore God, Your God, has anointed [chosen or selected] You [the Messiah]....”

We read of two Beings with the rank of God. We read that Christ is the Captain of our salvation. God is bringing many sons into glory (Hebrews 2:10)—His heirs.

John 1:1, we see, “In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God.” So, again, two Beings are described—both called God. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God [This would be a reference to the One that we know as God the Father.] and the Word was [also] God.”

Verse 14, we find, “And the Word, became flesh and dwelt among us, and we behold His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Again, we find two Beings described—two Personalities, two Individuals that both hold the rank of God. Does that mean there are two Gods?

Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The word for “God” in the Hebrew language is “ELOHIM.” In the Hebrew language, the “IM” ending is a plural

ending similar to “s” in English. So when God introduces Himself in the Bible, He introduces Himself by a name that carries the connotation of something that includes more than one Being. There’s one God, but God includes, as we saw in John 1:1 and Hebrews 1, the One that we know as God the Father and the One we know as Jesus Christ, the Word.

Genesis 1:26-27, that’s why it says, “Then God [ELOHIM] said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air...So God created man in His own image; in the image of God created He him...’” Again, we see that God said, “Let Us.” Who are “Us”? We have, here, a description of what is involved with God. We begin to understand a little bit about God. We understand that God is the Creator, God is the Designer and God is the Lawgiver. God reveals Himself to us in the Scriptures as the One who is described as God or as God the Father and also including the One we know as Jesus Christ, the Word—the One who was in the beginning with God, the One who was also God and became flesh and dwelt among us.

There are many other places we could go to, but we begin to understand a little bit about the nature of God. We understand a little bit of God’s very nature.

We are to have faith toward God—the God who is the Creator, the God who is the giver of every good thing. We are to have faith toward Him.

Let’s understand a little bit more about this faith—the kind of faith that we’re to have. We understand a little more about God. God describes Himself in this way.

Jesus Christ came to reveal the Father (Matthew 11:27; John 1:18). The Israelites of the Old Testament period and the Jews of Christ’s day didn’t really understand anything about the Father. There are glimpses and little indications of information about the Father in the Old Testament, but they really didn’t understand anything about the existence of the One that we know as the Father and the One that we know as Jesus Christ. They didn’t really grasp that. Since Jesus Christ came to reveal the Father, we can have a clearer understanding.

Some of the prophets had insight to understand. I think, certainly, Moses and David did and others also. Certainly, God gave them insight to understand some of that, but by and large, the people did not understand. We can understand in terms of faith toward God.

Now, let’s look at the kind of faith—the kind of trust or confidence—that we are to have. **There are several different ways that the word “faith” is translated.** Faith toward God has to do with trusting God, having confidence in God.

Let’s notice something in Matthew 27:20. There is a term in the Greek language that, we’re going to see, is translated several different ways. When we look at all the different ways it is translated, we’re going to have a fuller explanation of what kind of faith, trust and confidence is needed if it’s faith toward God.

First, you have to know who God is and, secondly, you have to understand the kind of trust or confidence we’re to have toward Him. We’ve already seen it has to be a living faith and it has to be directed toward the Creator God.

Matthew 27:20, “But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.” The word “persuaded” is the word I’ll call your attention to. Notice this word “persuaded.”

Now let’s turn the page and notice vv. 41-43.

Verses 41-43, “Likewise the chief priests, also mocking with the scribes and elders, said, ‘He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” The word “trusted” in v. 43 is the same word that’s translated “persuaded” in v. 20. One aspect of faith toward God is being ***persuaded*** of what God says. In Matthew 27:20, it’s talking about people persuading other people to the wrong thing. You can put your trust—you can be persuaded—of the wrong things. People were persuaded to ask for Barabbas instead of Jesus. They had trust. They had confidence. They had faith. They were convinced. They were wrong! Our faith, our persuasion, our trust must be toward God.

There were individuals that were persuaded by the high priest, but they were persuaded in the wrong thing. They were persuaded to crucify the Messiah and ask for the release of a thief and a murderer. They were persuaded. They didn’t have faith toward God. They had faith and persuasion toward other people—other people who led them astray.

When we look at the foundations in Hebrews 6, where must our faith be toward? Our faith must be toward God. It’s faith toward God. Faith, the kind of trust and confidence we’re to have, involves being persuaded. That’s an important part of faith.

Let's go on to Mark 10 and notice that people have faith in different things; people trust in different things.

Mark 10:23-24, "Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!' And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, 'Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God!'"

Here, we have the same word; it's rendered "*trust*." It was rendered "persuaded" back in Matthew 27. Here, it's people who have trust in riches. Their faith, their confidence is in material things. They're depending on money. A lot of people put their trust and confidence in the wrong thing—and people have been "burned."

Years ago there were people who had money in the bank. The thirties came and the banks failed. The banks closed in much of the country, and a lot of people lost what they had in the bank. There were people who came out of that and they said, 'Boy, I'm not going to put my money back in the bank.' There were old people that never would put their money back in the bank. They kept it between the mattresses, buried it in the backyard or something. Of course, that wasn't the solution to the problem either because if you put it between the mattresses, somebody is liable to break in and steal it. The house can burn down or any number of things. If your confidence isn't in something that will never fail, then you're in trouble.

Here, it describes people who have their trust in riches. A lot of people have their trust in riches. They depend on money; they think that they can buy their way out of whatever the problem is.

Luke 11:21-22, "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted and divides his spoils." Here is a fellow who trusted in his armor. Today we would say he trusted in his semi-automatic weapon or in his gun. He trusted in his "whatever" it may be.

Maybe you've seen the signs. Somebody really "smart" will have a little sign up, "This vehicle is protected by Smith and Wesson" and there will be a little picture of a pistol—their gun, their armor in which they trust. That's all well and good. You can protect your place with that until somebody comes that has a bigger one. "A strong man guards his own palace, his goods are in peace." Boy, he's all fortified and locked up. He's all armed and ready. Everything is great

until somebody comes along that's "stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted." They pry his pistol from his cold, dead fingers and then they have two pistols. His armor wherein he trusted didn't deliver.

The point is riches won't deliver and armor won't deliver. People put their trust in that. They trust in what their money can get for them. The trouble is that those things will fail. That's where a lot of people's confidence is. If that's where their confidence is, they're going to be in trouble.

Coming on a little further in Luke, let's notice something else. Here's somebody else that made a serious mistake in what they trusted.

Luke 18:9-10, "Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 'Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.'" Remember the story?

Verse 11, "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.'"

Verse 13, "And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!'"

The Pharisee's problem was he trusted in himself. He was self-reliant. The problem with self-reliance is that you can't see yourself through. You rely on yourself, but sooner or later you're going to fail. They trusted in themselves that they were righteous. The publican was conscious of his spiritual inadequacy.

Brethren, if we see ourselves in proper relationship with God, one of the things of which we have to be fully persuaded is that we are very inadequate when it comes to God. That's what it means to be poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3). It doesn't mean to have just a little dab of God's Holy Spirit. It's not saying that you should be impoverished when it comes to the Spirit of God—God's nature and power that He pours out on His people, which we may all be partakers of. We're all partakers of one Spirit.

It says "the poor in spirit." That doesn't mean you ought to make sure you partake in just a tiny bit of it because you're more blessed if you have a little then if you have a lot. No, that's not what it's talking about at all. When it says "the poor in spirit," it's talking about those who recognize their spiritual poverty, those who recognize how totally inadequate they are, of and by themselves and how totally dependent upon God they are—

those who recognize how dependent they are upon God's grace, mercy and kindness that He extends.

Everything that we know and do is ultimately because God takes the initiative in our lives. We have to respond to God's initiative. We have an understanding of God's truth. Why? Is it because we are the smartest, most educated people in the world? It's because God takes the initiative. He took the initiative with you and with me. He opened our minds to understand the truth and the truth made sense. It didn't make sense to your neighbor or to your relatives, but it made sense to you. Why? –Because God took the initiative and He opened your mind.

We are dependent upon God—deeply dependent. Here are individuals who trusted in themselves that they were righteous. They depended on themselves. They were proud of what they were. Isaiah 66:2, we are told, "... 'But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.'" If we want God to take notice of us, we have to understand how limited we are, how weak we are, and how dependent upon God we are for everything. We are not to trust in ourselves. We are not to trust in our armor. We are not to trust in our riches. We are to trust in God.

Let's notice another aspect of this kind of trust, this kind of confidence. We find it in Acts 5:34; Gamaliel stood up in the council concerning Peter and John.

Acts 5:39-40, Gamaliel told them, "but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God." And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go." Did the disciples quit preaching?

Verse 42, "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ." They weren't going to back off from doing that. Of course not!

Verse 40 says, "And they agreed with him [Gamaliel]..." They agreed with him. Now, this word "agreed" is the same word that's translated persuaded or trusted. So one aspect of trust is **agreement**. If you trust someone, then you agree with them. You're on the same wavelength. You're persuaded that they are right. You're persuaded of what they say. You agree with what they say. There are different aspects of this kind of trust. You trust them. You agree with them. You are persuaded of what they say.

Now let's come on down a little further. Let's notice a little more about this kind of persuasion.

Acts 18:1, "After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth."

Verse 4, "And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks." This is the same term. He persuaded them; they were convinced. They trusted and agreed with what he said.

Come over to Acts 19.

Acts 19:8, "And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God." He persuaded in things concerning the kingdom of God. Again, the same term. If we're going to have faith toward God, we must be persuaded of what God says. We must be persuaded of the truth. We must be persuaded of what God says. We must be persuaded of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. We must be persuaded. We must agree with God. That's all a part of trusting God.

Continuing in Acts 26, we'll notice another example.

Acts 26:28, "Then Agrippa said to Paul, 'You almost persuade me to become a Christian.'" Agrippa was almost persuaded. That's not good enough. He almost had faith toward God. He was almost persuaded. He was almost in agreement. He almost had trust. Not quite! Being persuaded is a part. Being persuaded, being in agreement and trusting—those are all aspects of faith toward God.

Let's go to the book of Galatians and notice a couple of more things that are aspects of faith toward God.

Galatians 5:7, "You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?" The word "obeying" is the same word we've been reading. "Obeying" is the same word that's rendered trust, agreed and persuade. "Who hindered you from obeying the truth?"

When it comes to our relationship with God, the kind of trust that we're to have is the kind of trust that Jesus Christ had. That's what it says. It was used of Him in Matthew.

Matthew 27:43, "He trusted in God..." What kind of trust did Christ have toward the Father? Was it just some sort of vague sentiment? Was it some sort of "nicey-nice" feeling in His heart? No. He was in agreement with God. He was persuaded of what God said. He had trust and confidence in God. He obeyed what God said. If you really trust God, you will obey what He says. Faith toward God includes and is manifested by **obedience**. If we don't obey Him, then we don't really trust Him. What if God says, 'Come here,' and we don't? If we say,

‘Well, I trust You. Oh, yes, I have faith. I trust You, but I just don’t want to come here.’—that’s not faith. Faith and obedience go hand-in-hand together. You cannot separate faith and obedience. It’s used that way back in Hebrews. We are going to see that as we come on further. We have to obey the truth. The truth is not merely an academic list of things that we believe as a purely academic exercise. The truth must be acted upon and must be obeyed. If you don’t obey the truth, you don’t really believe it.

James 2:19, “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble.” Just simply a matter of belief, in an academic sense of the word, is not what is meant. You believe that Jesus Christ existed and that He walked the earth? That’s great! So do a lot of people. They may say certain things and believe that Christ was crucified and resurrected. So does the pope. At least he says he does. I assume he does. He says he does. So does Billy Graham and a whole host of others. Is that all there is? Is that all that’s meant by faith toward God? Well, if that’s all that’s involved, then we might as well go back to being Baptists or Catholics because it’s a lot more convenient, isn’t it?

There’s a lot more to faith toward God than just simply acknowledging the existence of God or even acknowledging that Jesus lived, died, was resurrected and ascended to heaven. Satan the devil believes that. He watched it happen. But, you see, faith without works is dead (James 2:20). It’s not enough simply to believe those things as a matter of history. The kind of faith that God is talking about is the kind of faith that encompasses trust, being persuaded, being in agreement and having the attitude of obedience and surrender. It’s a living faith.

Notice in the book of Philippians.

Philippians 1:6, “being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.” This word “*confident*” is the same term—having trust, being persuaded or being confident. Our relationship with God—understanding who God is, having trust and confidence toward Him, being persuaded that what He says is right, being in agreement with Him and obeying Him—is a natural outgrowth of faith.

Come back to Hebrews 11, the faith chapter. Maybe that’s where you thought I was going to stay tonight since we were talking about faith toward God. But we’re only going to touch on Hebrews 11. There’s nothing wrong with preaching on Hebrews 11. I’ve preached many sermons on Hebrews 11 over the years. It’s a

very inspiring section to go through when you’re studying about faith. But there are a lot of other things about faith. As you probably get the idea, we could go through a host of things on faith. We could go through Bible study after Bible study and sermon after sermon on faith.

Hebrews 11:13, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured [KJV, “persuaded”] of them, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” There were individuals who lived in faith. They lived their lives in faith toward God and they “died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured [KJV, “persuaded”] of them.” “Assured” is the same term—they were persuaded of them. Faith toward God involves being assured of what God says. They were agreeing with what God said, obeying what God said, trusting in what God said and having confidence in what God said. These are all aspects of the kind of living faith that we must have toward God.

This is a part of the very foundation of our Christianity. The seventh and final doctrine—going on to perfection—is built up on six doctrines. You can sort of see six piers anchored down that serve as a foundation.

Hebrews 6:1-2, “...let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms...”

We need to go on to perfection. We need to go on to Christian completion and maturity. But you can’t go on to that if you don’t have the foundation. We need to understand what the foundation is. Faith toward God is a very important part of the foundation. It’s reflected in Hebrews 11. Abraham, Noah and others were persuaded. They were absolutely convinced and had confidence in what God said because they were prepared to put their lives on the line. You don’t give up everything for something you’re not persuaded of. We better know, and we better know that we know, when it comes to the truth of God. Are we persuaded? How much confidence do we have? How do we reflect that? Let’s notice one other place.

1 John 3:19, “And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.” The word “assure” is the same word we’ve been looking at—trusting in God, having confidence in God or being persuaded of what God says. Being persuaded of the truth—faith toward God—has to do with *assurance*.

Verses 18-19 say, “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth [You know that you are of the truth.], and shall assure our hearts before Him.” You have trust and confidence.

Verses 20-22, “For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” It has to do with obedience. It has to do with the assurance we can have when we’re walking with God and serving Him in deed and in truth—not merely talking the good fight but acting on what God said.

Faith—real faith—involves action. Real faith is not merely a sentimental feeling. It’s not merely an academic belief. Real faith has to do with confidence, persuasion, agreement, trust, obedience and assurance. It is all wrapped up in what we must do if we truly have faith and confidence toward God because the faith to which God calls us, as His people, is a living faith.

Galatians 3:26-27 says, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

Our faith toward God is through Jesus Christ who gave Himself for us. We put on Christ. Christ dwells in us through the Spirit of God (Romans 8:9; Galatians 2:20)—God’s very power and nature. That is the means by which Christ dwells in us and permeates our lives. *Our faith—living faith toward God—is through Jesus Christ our Savior, the Messiah.* The One who gave Himself for us. The One who was glorified and ascended on high through the power of the Father. The One who is coming again to rule the world as King of kings and Lord of lords. The One who is now at the right hand of the Father on high as our High Priest and our Intercessor. We have access to the Father through Him. Our faith, our confidence in God, is through Jesus Christ.

Let’s notice in the book of Hebrews once again.

Hebrews 3:18-19, “And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest [speaking of Old Testament Israel; the ones who came out of Egypt with Moses], but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”

Hebrews 4:1-3, “...let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the

gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest....” God’s Word must be mixed with faith.

Verse 2, “...the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.” They didn’t genuinely believe it. Because they didn’t genuinely believe it, they didn’t act upon it. It’s not enough to simply, academically know the truth. It’s not enough to hear the truth. It’s not enough to read the truth. Faith toward God involves believing the truth with a living faith. A living faith! “The word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.” Faith toward God is a living faith—a confidence, an assurance.

Let’s notice I Peter.

I Peter 1:21, “who through Him [speaking of Christ] believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.”

God the Father raised up Jesus from the dead and restored to Him that glory that He shared with the Father before the world began. Remember, in the prayer that Jesus prayed, He asked the Father to give Him once again that glory that He had shared with Him before the world was (John 17:5). Through Him we believe in God—a real belief, a real faith toward God. God the Father who raised up Christ from the dead and gave Him glory, restored to Him that glory that your faith and hope might be in God.

Where did He raise Him up to? What did He do? He raised Him up to glory! What did we see in Hebrews 2:9 just a few minutes ago at the beginning of the Bible study?

Hebrews 2:9-10, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”

Faith toward God involves confidence and ***reliance on the promises of God***. Just as Jesus Christ was raised from the dead by the Father and restored to the glory that He shared with the Father before the world began, so is He going to come again. The trumpet will sound, the graves will be opened and those of us that are alive and remain will be changed in a moment.

I Corinthians 15:51-52, "...we shall be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye...."

Hebrews 2:10, He will bring many sons into glory.

Faith toward God is confidence, reliance and trust, coupled with obedience. It is reflected through obedience to the true and living God who has appointed us as His heirs—heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14)—to bring us into His Family, to bring us into glory, to share with us His glory. Faith toward God is a very important part of the foundation of our Christian life.

Next Bible study we're going to look at the third part of the foundation, which is the doctrine of baptisms. You might notice that the word is plural—baptisms. You may wonder what we have to say about baptisms that can take up a whole Bible study. You'll find that there's more than one—and you don't want all of them. This is one case where two out of three is really good. Next Bible study we'll see what those baptisms are.

Bible Study # 103
February 23, 1993
Mr. John Ogwyn

Hebrews 6 Series—Doctrine # 3: Baptisms

This evening we **are going further in our study on the foundational doctrines of the Church, as outlined in Hebrews 6.** The seventh doctrine, going on to perfection, is built on top of this foundation. We **will go to the third of the six foundational pillars, which is the doctrine of baptisms.**

The first thing you notice is that it's baptisms—plural. Sometimes we don't think of the fact that there is more than one baptism mentioned in the Scriptures. In fact, there are three baptisms mentioned in the Scriptures and we're going to look at each one of these three.

We will start out in Matthew 3 to get an overview of what is involved.

Matthew 3:1-6, “In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!’ For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.”’ And John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.”

Let's step back and look at where this practice of baptism came from. Where did John get the idea of baptizing? There are a couple of things to understand. To begin with, the word “baptize” or “baptism” comes from a Greek word. It's not a real hard Greek word to remember. The Greek word is “*baptizo*.” Our English word baptize is just an alternate spelling. Our English word is directly derived from this Greek term “*baptizo*” –spelled “b-a-p-t-i-z-o.” It's almost exactly like we spell baptize—just the ending letter is different. “Baptize” literally means “to immerse,” “to fully wet,” “to dip” or “to wash.”

The first thing you find as you look at the word and what it means is that the practice of sprinkling or pouring that is common in many churches doesn't fit the Biblical definition of baptism because baptism, by the very definition of the word in the Greek language, means to immerse, to fully wet, to dip or to wash.

One of the things that we find is that John baptized in the Jordan River. If all John had to

do was sprinkle a little water, he didn't have to go all the way to the Jordan River to do that. I'll just call your attention to people going down into the Jordan.

Verse 16, “Then Jesus, when He had been baptized, came up immediately from the water...” It doesn't sound like He was being sprinkled or dry-cleaned. *The very expression means to plunge into or to immerse.*

The second thing is: where did John get the idea for a ceremony such as this? There's an interesting background to it. In the Old Testament, particularly in Leviticus and other places, you read about various washings that are described. Why did someone have to perform these various washings that were given in the Old Testament? It was because they had become unclean. Generally, someone who had come in contact with something that was unclean would go outside the camp and wash themselves, wash their garments, stay outside the camp for a certain length of time and then come back in. *Washing was very directly connected with the symbolism of getting rid of uncleanness.*

When a Gentile converted to Judaism there were three things a Gentile male had to do to become a convert to Judaism—a full proselyte.

(1) He had to undergo circumcision. Now, all Jewish boys underwent circumcision when they were eight days old. But if a Gentile, however old he was, wanted to become a Jew, he had to undergo circumcision at that point because circumcision was the outward sign of the covenant God had made with Abraham. The Gentile males had to be circumcised.

(2) The second thing would also apply to Gentile women. They had to undergo what the Jews termed, “*mikvah*”—spelled “m-i-k-v-a-h.” Orthodox Judaism still does that. The mikvah is a ritual bath, washing, immersion or a baptizo in the Greek. Jews did not undergo that. The Jews didn't put little Jewish babies in that ritual washing. But a Gentile coming in underwent that rite of ritual washing.

(3) They had to offer a sacrifice in the temple. Since there isn't a temple today, they don't offer sacrifices. In Orthodox Judaism, they simply make a promise or take the pledge to do so if a temple is restored in their lifetime.

This ritual bath is not practiced among the Jews, but there is a reason why they insist that a Gentile undergo this mikvah—this ritual bath or washing—when they embrace Judaism. The Jews did undergo this washing, but it was only for specific reasons. If they came in contact with something unclean or if they became

ceremonially defiled in some way at various times through their life, they would undergo this mikvah.

The Gentiles had to undergo this washing when they came to embrace Judaism. The concept was that they (the Jews) were the children of Abraham and the kingdom was theirs by right of birth. They had a very physical concept of the kingdom. They viewed the Gentiles as unclean and themselves as clean.

What John the Baptist did was unique. He said, 'You're unclean, too.' Were the Gentiles unclean? Yes, they were. That's right! But guess what? So were the Jews! Now, that hadn't dawned on them. John preached the baptism of repentance. He said, 'You have all sinned and your sins makes you unclean.'

The reason why you had to undergo the ritual bath (the mikvah) was to come into the inner court of the temple—to approach the altar. No unclean thing could come into the presence of God. If you were ceremonially defiled in some way, you were excluded from the temple and from the presence of God until you had been cleansed.

God gave those rituals as a schoolmaster (Galatians 3:24, KJV) to teach a lesson. And, of course, the lesson is: What separates us from God? Our iniquities (sins) separate us from God (Isaiah 59:2). In order to have access to the presence of God, our sins must be washed away.

John came preaching.

Matthew 3:2, he said, "...the kingdom...is at hand!" What did he mean? Did he mean that God was going to set up His literal government on earth in just a few days or a few weeks? Of course not! Almost two thousand years have passed and the literal kingdom has not been established yet.

Daniel 2:44, we read of the time when, "...the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed..." The image, symbolizing the great Babylonian worldly governments, is going to be smashed on its toes by a Stone cut out without hands (v. 34) and the God of heaven is going to set up a kingdom that will never be removed.

Luke 16:16 tells us, "The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached..." Up until the time of John, the law and the prophets (the Old Testament) was all there was. John the Baptist came as the messenger preparing the way before Jesus Christ who came as the messenger of the New Covenant. You couldn't know anything about the New Covenant until the messenger of

the New Covenant came to tell about it. There were prophecies about it in the Old Testament, but the New Covenant was not really being made.

Mark 1:14, "...Jesus came to Galilee preaching the gospel [good news] of the kingdom of God..." He came proclaiming that good news. He came announcing that good news of the coming kingdom of God, the way we can respond to God and ultimately share in that kingdom.

John the Baptist came preparing the way. He came proclaiming the necessity to repent and turn from sin. He said all have sinned and are in need of a Savior. He came proclaiming the necessity to repent and the need of all to undergo a washing away of sin.

Matthew 3:6-7, "and were baptized of him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism,..." They came to see what was going on. They came, undoubtedly, to observe. They didn't come acknowledging their need of a Savior. They came to pass judgment on what he was doing. "...he said to them, 'Brood of vipers!...' 'You offspring of the devil.' That's what that means because Satan is called that old dragon, the old serpent. He called them the children of serpents, the children of the devil. He said, 'You offspring of the devil.' "...Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

Verse 8, "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance." 'You'd better go and show by the evidence of your life that you are turning around.'

Verse 9, "and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.'..." That was their claim. They claimed, 'We don't need your baptism. We don't need what you have.' He knew what they were thinking. He said, 'By the way, don't kid yourselves that being the children of Abraham is a guarantee of a place in the kingdom of God.'

The promises that God made to Abraham were of a dual nature. There were physical promises and there were spiritual promises. In the past we have sometimes used the statement, "race and grace" because it's sort of catchy. There are physical promises—the physical birthright that God promised to Abraham and confirmed through Isaac and Jacob, on down through Jacob's son Joseph and then on down through Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh. That is the physical aspects of the promises to Abraham. I think we're all aware of that. Read the booklet, "What's Ahead for America and Britain?"

That is one aspect of the promises to Abraham, but there was another aspect to the promises to Abraham. That, of course, was the promise of grace or the spiritual aspect of the promises that were to culminate in the Messiah and in the fact that all humanity could ultimately become accounted as the spiritual seed of Abraham for the purpose of eternal inheritance.

There are two aspects. There are physical promises that relate to the here-and-now that have prophetic implications for the world as it exists and the events that are going to culminate in the Great Tribulation. There's also a spiritual aspect of the promises that culminates in the Messiah and in the fact that all humanity can ultimately share in the promises to Abraham from a spiritual standpoint regardless of ethnic origin.

Matthew 3:9-11, “and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ [Don’t kid yourselves.] For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree, which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

What does that mean? ***There are three baptisms in Scripture.*** Here, we come to the second and third baptism. The first baptism was the ***baptism of water unto repentance.*** Two other baptisms are mentioned. John addresses all three. He mentions that he is offering a baptism of water unto repentance. But he said there's One coming that's going to offer an additional two baptisms—a baptism with the Holy Spirit and a baptism with fire. What are those? Do you want all three? You'd better stick with two out of three. I don't think most of us would want the third one.

When I read that, it always makes me think of A. A. Allen. He was an old radio preacher. Do any of you remember him? He came on the radio back in the 60s. When I'd listen to Mr. Herbert Armstrong, sometimes he would come on. He'd talk about wanting that baptism of fire. He just *thought* he wanted the baptism of fire. Christ is coming and He offers baptism with the Holy Spirit and baptism with fire.

Let's come on down and notice what it says about the ***baptism of fire.***

Verse 12, “His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His threshing

floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Notice the analogy that is being drawn. It talks about the fact that Christ will separate the wheat from the chaff. Some of you are very familiar with harvesting—like harvesting rice. Today, it's done in a mechanized way where there's a blower that separates the chaff from the grain.

They, of course, had to do it in a little more difficult way, but the principle was the same. They would beat the grain, which caused the grain to separate from the chaff, but it was all mixed up together. So there was somebody there with a giant fan. These fans were blowing and making air on the threshing floor, which was generally up on a high place where there was a breeze. This grain and chaff would be tossed up and as the air was being generated, the chaff was light and would blow off. The grain was heavier and would settle back down. They would go through this process of winnowing—to separate the wheat from the chaff until eventually the chaff was all blown off. The wheat came back down, but the chaff would blow a little ways and settle back down. They were able to divide it to where the wheat was gathered up and kept. That was what they were keeping. The chaff was burned up. The chaff was burned up with unquenchable fire.

What is unquenchable fire? It's fire that's not put out. It doesn't say it's a fire that burns forever. It says it's unquenchable. It is fire that is not going to be quenched, in a physical sense. What happened to the fire that they burned the chaff with? How long did it burn? It wasn't quenched. Nobody called the fire department and tried to put it out. They wanted it to burn and burn and burn until it burned up all the chaff. When it burned up all the chaff, it went out because all the fuel was gone.

Hold your place here and let's turn back to Malachi. Let's pick it up in Malachi 3.

Malachi 3:18, “Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked [separating the wheat from the chaff], between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.”

Let's continue.

Malachi 4:1-3, “For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day, which is coming shall burn them up,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘that will leave them neither root nor branch. But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. You shall trample the wicked,

for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this,' says the Lord of hosts."

This ties in with Matthew 3:12. Christ is going to separate the wheat from the chaff.

There are two baptisms that Christ will offer and all will ultimately experience either one or the other. We will all be baptized with the Holy Spirit or we will be baptized with fire. It all depends as to whether we are wheat or chaff. *The baptism of fire is to be immersed in fire.* What happens if you're immersed in fire? You burn up.

Matthew 3:13-15, "Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I have need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?' But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him."

John, of course, felt very awkward about this. He said, 'Well, wait a minute. I shouldn't be baptizing You. You ought to be baptizing me. If anybody is going to be baptized, it ought to be me. I feel uneasy about baptizing You. I don't feel like I ought to.' And Jesus said, 'No, I want you to go ahead and do it that I might fulfill all righteousness.' Christ was not baptized because He was unclean or because He was a sinner. *Christ was baptized to set an example for us.*

I Peter 2:21, we're told, "...Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps." Jesus Christ set an example; we can follow what He did. When John understood that, he was certainly willing to go ahead and baptize Him. But I think you can certainly put yourself in John's place and realize why he felt ill at ease. He felt like that was sort of backwards. But when he understood that it was because Jesus was setting an example for everyone else, he went ahead and did it.

Matthew 3:16-17, we're told, "Then Jesus, when He had been baptized, came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'"

Does this mean that the Holy Spirit of God is some sort of person? If it is, it looks like a bird! That isn't what this means at all. God performed an outward and visible miracle to demonstrate something that had taken place. It was an outward symbol to demonstrate to those who

were there something that could be theirs. The Holy Spirit is the power that flows out from God. It is the power by which God does and accomplishes the work that He does.

We read throughout the Scriptures of the way that God sends forth His Spirit or pours out His Spirit. We're going to go into a little more of that this evening because He talks about being baptized, but not only *baptized with the Spirit*.

The analogies that God uses for the Holy Spirit help us to understand what the Holy Spirit is. God compares the Holy Spirit to wind, air and breath. That's all sort of one thing. It's what we breathe. We breathe air and air can blow as wind. We can breathe it in. It's there surrounding us.

The Greek word for "spirit" is the same word that we would use to refer to "breath" or to "air." It is the word "*pneuma*"—spelled "p-n-e-u-m-a." It is the word from which we get our word "pneumonia" or like in a pneumatic pump. It's something that involves air. In the case of pneumonia, it has to do with the inability of our lungs to process air because there is fluid in them. It has to do with air and that's what the word means.

It was an analogy that was understood in the Greek language. It's interesting. The same term used for spirit in the Hebrew language (in the Old Testament) is a word that we also translate as breath, air or wind. It's "*ruach*" in Hebrew. The Greek term is exactly the same. The Spirit is compared to air.

How can we all be baptized with one Spirit (I Corinthians 12:13)? The same way we can all breathe one air. We're all in this room. We're all breathing the air. We're all breathing in the breath of life. We're all breathing the same air. In the same way, we can all be baptized into one Spirit.

The Bible uses analogies to help us understand God's Spirit. It uses the analogy of *air* or *wind*.

Another analogy the Bible uses is *water*. Jesus talked about rivers of living water. You remember the woman at the well? He asked her for a drink (John 4:7).

John 4:10, "Jesus answered and said to her, 'If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, "Give Me a drink," you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.'" She said, 'Well, where are You going to get that from?' (v. 11)?

And, of course, if you go on through, He was talking about the Spirit. God's Spirit is compared to air. It's compared to water and it's also compared to *oil*. We anoint with oil. That anointing oil is used as a symbol of God's Holy

Spirit—olive oil in particular. We'll get into that next Bible study when we address the doctrine of the laying on of hands.

All of those have a quality of flowing—oil, water and even air flows. We can all get in the same water. We can all get in the same river. We all breathe the same air. These are used as analogies of God's Spirit. God's Spirit flows forth from God. It is something we can all partake of and it connects us all back to God.

There are many aspects. I don't want to get into all of the details of the Holy Spirit. That could be a different Bible study on a different subject. But it does tie in with this because we are addressing what we're told in terms of baptism—being baptized with the Spirit of God.

You can read parallel accounts in Mark, Luke and John.

Notice what John said.

John 1:23, "He [John the Baptist] said: 'I am "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said."

Verses 25-29, "And they asked him, saying, 'Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?' John answered them, saying, 'I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose.' These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'"

John bore witness of the fact that Jesus was going to come to take away the sin of the world (v. 29), that He would baptize with the Holy Spirit (v. 33) and that He was the Son of God (v. 34).

Let's notice.

Matthew 28:18-20, "Then Jesus came and spoke to them [the disciples], saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'" "Age" (Greek, "*aion*") means "the end of the age," not the end of the physical earth.

I want to call your attention to something. Protestants and Catholics who believe in a trinity commonly quote, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." It is the scripture they think sort of substantiates

the trinity. But there isn't anything in the Bible that substantiates the trinity.

Let me call your attention to something. In virtually every single one of Paul's epistles—Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians and all the way through—he uses a standard opening, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," over and over and over and over. You can go through his epistles, "Grace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." If Paul believed in a trinity, why didn't he include the Holy Spirit? Wasn't that something that should be included? Obviously, Paul knew something that the Catholics and Protestants don't know. He knew a lot of things they don't know!

It's not that God didn't clue in Peter, James, John, Paul and all the rest of them, then waited three hundred years and told the early church fathers of the Catholic Church. Since those are the guys that gave you Christmas, Easter and Sunday, I don't think I'd look to them to find out a whole lot about God.

But what does this mean in Matthew 28:19?

Matthew 28:19, "...baptizing them [as it says here] in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." The first thing I'd call your attention to is this little word "in"—i-n. In the Greek language, throughout the New Testament in nearly every place you see the word "in"—"i-n," it is translated from a Greek word "*en*"—spelled "e-n." (We're learning all kinds of Greek words tonight, and words that are not hard to remember.) What is "*en*" in Greek? – Well, "in." That's really easy to remember. They just spell it "e-n" and we spell it "i-n." It means exactly the same thing. "*En*" in Greek means exactly the same thing "in" in English means. But this word "in," here, isn't translated from "*en*." It's translated from a different word "*eis*"—spelled "e-i-s." It's a word that literally means "into" or "unto" or something of that sort. It can mean "towards." It's translated all those ways. "Into" or "unto" is the preferable rendering.

What is being described here? We're going to see, as we go through the book of Acts and other places, that we're baptized *in* ("i-n"; "e-n") the name (by the authority) of Jesus Christ. We're baptized *into* ("e-i-s") the name (or the authority). We're baptized *unto* ("e-i-s") the Father—God the Father.

Verse 19 describes a relationship. We enter a relationship with the Father. He becomes our Father. That's our relationship. We enter a relationship with Jesus Christ. That relationship

is through His sacrifice. He is our elder brother (Hebrews 2:10-11). We're told He is the author (KJV, "captain") of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10). He is the firstborn of many brethren (Romans 8:29). He becomes our elder brother, the captain of our salvation who makes it possible for us to have God as our Father, and we enter into that relationship. We are baptized and placed into that relationship through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is what unites and connects us to God.

Just hold your place there for a second.

Ephesians 1:12-14, we are told, "that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee (KJV, "earnest") of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory."

We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. That's what sets us apart and authenticates us as the genuine article. It is by one Spirit that we are baptized into one body (I Corinthians 12:13). We're going to see that a little more clearly. The Holy Spirit is what imparts to us the nature of God. Peter says we become partakers of the divine nature (II Peter 1:4).

Hold your place here—I'm going to have you holding your place all over the place!

I Peter 1:3-5 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Our salvation is something that is to be revealed. It will be revealed when Christ comes back.

Matthew 24:13 says, "...he that endures to the end shall be saved." We're in the process right now. Christ made it possible. We're in the process of being saved, and it will be revealed when Christ returns.

As it says in I Peter 1:3, "...God...who according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." What is our living hope? We are baptized in the hope of the resurrection.

Actually, I wanted to go back to II Peter 1.

II Peter 1:4, "by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that

through these you may be partakers of the divine nature." We can actually partake of the nature of God. We do that through the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

Ephesians 1:13-14 says, "...you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the guarantee [KJV, "earnest"] of our inheritance...." When you get ready to make a major purchase, you often put down earnest money, which is for what reason? It is to prove or guarantee that you're going to come back and finish the purchase. If you've ever sold a house and somebody says they're serious about buying it and wants you to take it off the market, they put up earnest money. God's Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance. We haven't yet been transformed from mortal to immortal. What proof do we have that we will be? The Spirit of God dwelling in us is the earnest of our inheritance. It's what makes us partakers of the divine nature.

That's the problem with the analogy of adoption, which is fine in the sense that we are chosen and selected by God. The problem with that, and why it isn't the complete biblical analogy that's used, is the fact that an adoptive child who is chosen by his parents might share in the inheritance from his parents, but that child can never partake of the nature of its parents. If you were to adopt a child of another ethnic heritage, that child wouldn't undergo a transformation and suddenly shed his previous identity, in a physical sense, and become a partaker of your nature. He might share in your inheritance but not your nature.

But we literally partake of God's nature. God actually transforms us. The transformation starts on the inside, but it will ultimately be completed by a transformation on the outside when we are going to be transformed from mortal to immortal. We become a partaker of the divine nature by God's Holy Spirit. We're baptized into or unto the name of the Father. We're baptized unto a relationship with the Father. He becomes our Father. We're baptized unto a relationship with Jesus Christ. He's our Savior and our Elder Brother by whose sacrifice we have access to the Father. We enter into that relationship.

Let me finish in Matthew 28. I want to look at a couple of parallel scriptures that I think will help us connect "being baptized unto" and the relationship of the Spirit.

I Corinthians 10:1-2, we're told, "...that all our fathers [speaking of the Israelites] were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into [KJV, "unto"] Moses in the cloud and in the sea."

We're baptized unto a relationship with God—a relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ—made possible by the Holy Spirit of God. Here, the same word is used. They're not baptized *in* Moses. They were baptized *unto* Moses. Moses was in the role of lawgiver; he was the mediator of the Old Covenant. Jesus Christ came as the mediator of the New Covenant.

How were they baptized? Maybe you never thought of that as a baptism, but Paul says, "all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." They were surrounded by water. It's the only account that I know of in the Bible where somebody got baptized and didn't get wet. But it met the criteria. They were surrounded by water. There was water on both sides. When they walked through the Red Sea, there was a big wall of water on each side and a cloud on top. A cloud is water vapor. They were surrounded by water, but they walked across dry shod. When we go down into the water, we all get wet. This was a little different. Paul drew the analogy and he said it was like a baptism. They were immersed. They were surrounded by water and they emerged out of it.

Let's continue.

I Corinthians 6:11, "And such were some of you [speaking of these sins]. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Spirit of our God." We're washed; we're sanctified. To be "sanctified" means "to be made holy." How are we made holy? We're made holy by the indwelling of the Spirit of God. God places His presence in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. It proceeds out from God and it's what connects us—it's what connects the spirit in man to God. God places His presence in us. He dwells in us. We're washed; we're sanctified. The outward washing of baptism symbolizes the spiritual washing of the Holy Spirit, which puts us in a relationship with God. *We are justified by the sacrifice of Christ and sanctified by the indwelling of the Spirit of God—this is what makes possible that relationship with God.*

I Corinthians 12:13 says, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." The Spirit is compared to something that can be drunk. It's compared to water. "By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." The body of Christ is going to be complete at the resurrection. It includes all of the people of God. It includes many who have lived and died. It is the

individuals in whom dwells the Spirit of God (Romans 8:9).

The body of Christ is a spiritual organism. We are all placed into the body of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, and that involves a relationship with God.

Let's notice some things in the book of Acts about baptism. In Acts 2, Peter was preaching on the day of Pentecost.

Acts 2:37-42, when they heard what Peter said, "...they were cut [KJV, "pricked"] to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them, 'Repent [We've already looked at repentance from dead works.], and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.' And with many other words he testified and exhorted them...Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers."

We find that God is the One who adds. We find that baptism was a part of what happened. They were to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ and were to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. We're going to talk more about that part of it when we get into the laying on of hands next Bible study.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit involves God placing His Spirit in us. God, through His Spirit, makes us a part of the spiritual body of Christ. We enter into a relationship with God as a result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, which God offers to us.

In Acts 8, we have the story of the Ethiopian eunuch. He was reading these verses of Scripture.

Verses 30-31, Philip saw him and said, 'Do you know what this is all about?' And he said, 'No.'

Acts 8:35-38, "Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture [which is Isaiah 53:7-8], preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?' Then Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may.' And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both

Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.”

Again, this is another scripture that shows there was more water than was needed for a little bit of sprinkling. They had to go down into this water. Let me call your attention to this because some take this out of context and say, ‘Well, what is necessary for salvation? All you have to do is believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ Is that all you have to do? Is that all there is to it?

We’ve already looked at repentance from dead works and faith toward God (the first two foundational doctrines) and have seen that more is involved.

Go back to Acts 8.

Acts 8:27-28, “...And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet.”

Here was a man who knew the law of God. He didn’t have a question about which day the Christian Sabbath was. That wasn’t an issue. He knew where to worship. He had gone to Jerusalem to the temple. He had the Bible; he had the Old Testament. He was familiar with the law. Philip didn’t have to explain to him about clean and unclean meats. Philip didn’t have to explain to him about the Sabbath and Holy Days. He understood those things. He had been up to Jerusalem to observe those festivals. He had the Scriptures—the Old Testament. That was all of the Scriptures that existed at that time.

Sometimes people read this and say, ‘Well, if the Sabbath is necessary for us to keep today, why didn’t Philip explain it to him?’ He didn’t explain it because it wasn’t a question. Here was a man who had gone to Jerusalem to worship. He recognized those things. The issue that he needed to understand was that the Messiah promised in the Old Testament had come as Jesus Christ. Philip explained to him what he didn’t understand.

We emphasize (in our preaching) the answers to the questions people have or that they should have. Sometimes we have to educate them about the question because they don’t realize there’s a question. We have to educate them about the question and then educate them about the answer. When the preaching was to individuals who were familiar with the law, it was not necessary to explain the law because that wasn’t the issue.

They lived in a society where they were observing the Sabbath. They were observing

the Holy Days. They were familiar with the Old Testament. None of them were thinking the Old Testament was done away. What was emphasized to them was what they didn’t understand, and that was the fact that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was the Messiah prophesied—that He had been crucified, resurrected and was going to return as King of kings and Lord of lords.

When we address the subject today, we have to emphasize some things that are not emphasized in quite the same way because they’re different questions. The issue, at least among most in the western world, is not whether or not the Messiah has come. You have to tailor your preaching to what it is that people understand and don’t understand. You have to start where their understanding is. Most people in our society have at least some semblance of a Christian background. When I say “Christian,” I’m obviously talking about “professing Christian” doctrines.

The fact that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the Messiah is something that is sort of taken for granted. What it means maybe isn’t understood, but for the average person in the United States and in our western world, that isn’t their question. So we have to emphasize the things that they don’t understand. I think that’s important to have in mind as we read through here. We sometimes wonder, ‘Well, it seems like they emphasized “this” or “that.”’ They emphasized the questions that people didn’t understand.

There are other places we could go to in Acts. We’ll pick up some of that next time when we’re looking at the laying on of hands.

Let’s go on to Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4:3-6, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

The unity that Paul addresses here is the unity of the Spirit. We endeavor to keep that because there is ultimately one body. All in whom the Spirit of God dwells will be a part of that one body of resurrected glorified believers at the return of Jesus Christ. It is by one spirit that we are all a partaker of that. That is the one hope of our calling. It is one Lord through whom we have access to God. It is one faith—one body of belief. We have one baptism by which we are all partakers of that. We have one God and Father of all who is above all.

Let's understand a little more about the symbolism of the resurrection and its relationship to baptism because that's an important aspect. It helps us understand some of the outward symbols that we go through in terms of baptism. We are immersed in water and come up (or emerge) from that water into a newness of life.

Let's look at Romans 6.

Romans 6:3-5, "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection."

When you are baptized, it's like you are being buried in a watery grave. In baptism you are being buried with Christ. You are being buried in a watery grave and you come up—you emerge forth out of that water—just as Jesus Christ emerged forth from the grave and stepped from the realm of mortal back into eternal.

We're told that we undergo something that outwardly symbolizes the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and when we come out of that watery grave, we are to walk in newness of life. We are to live like a new creature because we are living our life in hope of the resurrection. We're living our life in hope of the Kingdom of God and of being a literal part of that Kingdom. We're going to see that as we go on a little further.

The old man dies.

Romans 6:11, "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Verse 13, "And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."

We haven't literally been resurrected, but we have symbolically. You went down in a watery grave and if you hadn't been brought up out of it, you would have died. It would have been your grave if you had been left there. We have undergone an outward symbol to impress something upon us.

We'll begin to wrap it up here.

Colossians 2:12, "buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."

Colossians 3:1-4, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind [KJV, "affection"] on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."

We're going to appear with Him in glory. Jesus Christ is coming back with glory. That's an entire study. In fact, you might want to go through and do a study of what it means to be "in glory." That's an expression we read of. A lot of times we look over it and don't think about what it means. But it means an awful lot. There's a lot that's involved in being in glory. We will appear with Him in glory.

It says we're raised with Christ. That doesn't mean there isn't a literal resurrection. It's saying that we're buried with Him in baptism and raised up through the faith of the operation of God who has raised Him from the dead. We go through an outward symbol of what we believe and what we are anticipating and looking to. Just as we have been baptized with water (gone down, immersed, plunged into, surrounded with water), we come forth (emerge out of that water) into newness of life.

In the same way, we are immersed (fully plunged) into God's Spirit. In that sense, God's Spirit overwhelms us and it is ultimately through the Spirit that we will emerge into newness of life in the resurrection. There's a picture of going into water, emerging forth out of the water and living a new way of life because the Spirit is dwelling in us (the earnest of our salvation), and we are looking to the time when we will emerge into the realm of spirit, which we are demonstrating.

If we are raised with Christ, if we have symbolically undergone that in hope of the time when we literally will be raised with Christ, then we need to set our affection on the things that are important to Christ. If we want to be with Him in the Kingdom, then what's important to Him needs to be important to us. If we can't live in newness of life now—if what's important to Him is not important to us now—then we're saying that we really don't want to be with Him in the Kingdom. If we're setting our affection on things above, we're saying that we want to share with Him what's important to Him. We want to live His way. We undergo being baptized in the hope of the resurrection, which is our hope as a Christian.

Colossians 3:1-2, we noticed, “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above...Set your mind [KJV, “affection”] on things above....”

Verses 9-10, “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him.” We undergo a renewal. It starts on the inside. We take on the inward image of the Creator. But that isn’t where it stops. Baptism pictures something.

Come back to I Corinthians 15 and we’ll wrap it up.

I Corinthians 15:28-29, “Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all. Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?” Or, “for the hope of the dead” is the sense of it. You don’t baptize dead people.

Verse 26, “The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”

All who were baptized and are now dead—where is their hope? We’re baptized in the hope of the resurrection.

Verse 35, “But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’” Boy, that really is a puzzle to some. ‘Well, I knew somebody who got blown up. How’s he going to come back?’ Maybe someone fell in the ocean and a fish ate him up. How’s he going to get resurrected? That’s a real puzzle.

People must have been asking Paul some silly questions like that because he was pretty aggravated.

Verse 36, he said, “Foolish one (KJV, “You fool”) [That was his choice of words. God inspired it and I’m reading it.], what you sow is not made alive unless it dies.”

Verses 37-38, “And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases....”

Verses 40-44, “There are also celestial [heavenly] bodies and terrestrial [earthly] bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is

raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body....”

A lot of the worldly religions have a concept of a “soul” as sort of a disembodied spirit. Since they don’t think there’s any body to it, they don’t really see the purpose of a resurrection. They buried the body; the soul went off to heaven and they’re sort of rolling around in heaven all day long.

God says the dead are dead.

Ecclesiastes 9:5, “...but the dead know nothing...for the memory of them is forgotten.” But there’s a resurrection coming. In the resurrection there will be a body.

That’s what it says right here in I Corinthians.

I Corinthians 15:38, “...God gives it a body as He pleases....”

There are earthly bodies and heavenly bodies and there are different levels of glory. He says, ‘Look in the heavens. You see the sun? You see how bright it is? Look at the moon. That’s shines, too. Look at the stars. They shine. The stars differ from one another in glory.’ Glory has to do with shining power.

You and I can’t look on the sun straight on. You can’t look up at the noonday sun. It’s so bright that it will hurt your eyes. You can’t look at it. If you can somehow force yourself to sit there and stare at it, it will put out your eyes. You will literally go blind. They always warn people about that when there’s an eclipse. They warn you not to look directly at it or it’ll put out your eyes.

God created the sun. If you think the sun is bright, how bright do you think God is? I don’t know, but He’s a whole lot brighter than the sun.

Think about it. You go into a dark room with a little dim flashlight or a little candle. That puts out a certain amount of light, and it may seem pretty bright if the room is pitch black. You think, ‘Well, I have a little light here.’ Then all of a sudden, somebody flips the lights on and there’s a great big beam of light all over the room. That light comes on and you can’t even see the little bit of light that your little candle or your little flashlight is putting out. It’s still putting out light, but it is so little by comparison to the big flood light that floods the room.

Likewise, the sun seems awfully bright to us, but if God were standing next to the sun, the sun would be so dim by comparison that you wouldn’t even notice it. It’d be like a flashlight in a flood-lit room. That’s why it says back in Revelation 21:23 that you won’t even need the

sun and the moon in New Jerusalem because the glory of God will light the place.

There are different levels of glory. The sun, the moon and even the stars differ from one another.

I Corinthians 15:42-43, it says, “So also is the resurrection of the dead...it is raised in glory...”

That doesn’t mean we’re going to shine as bright as God does. It doesn’t even mean we’re all going to shine with the same level of brightness.

The stars differ from one another in glory.

Verses 42-44, “So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory...It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body...” It’s still a body, but it’s a spiritual body. It’s not a body that’s composed of flesh that will decay and deteriorate. It’s a body composed of spirit. It’s still a body.

Verses 44-48, “...There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust;...” We’re all flesh and blood like Adam. We’re as they that are earthy. We’ve all been of the earth—earthy, physical, fleshly, mortal beings. “...and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly.”

Verses 49-50, “And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.” We are going to undergo a transformation.

We are baptized in the hope of the dead. We are baptized in water.

Matthew 3:11-12, John the Baptist said, “‘I indeed baptize you with water...but He who is coming...will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire...and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.’” He’s going to separate the wheat from the chaff and He’ll burn up the chaff—that’s the baptism of fire.

In the outward physical baptism of water that we undergo, we are baptized into His death. We are raised up to walk in newness of life, in anticipation of the fact that we will ultimately put on immortality.

I Corinthians 15:51, “...we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.”

Verses 53-54, “For this corruptible will put on incorruption, and this mortal will put on immortality...Death is swallowed up in victory.”

The doctrine of baptisms is a very fundamental doctrine that contains so much of the basic beliefs and what is involved in terms of Christianity. It is a part of the very foundation as Paul addressed it in Hebrews 6.

There’s an awful lot. I’ve only touched on it. I’ve only sort of hit the high points. I hope that maybe it has enlarged our view of the doctrine of baptisms.

Next time we’re going to look at the doctrine of laying on of hands. With that, we’ll be concluded this evening. I look forward to seeing you next time.

Bible Study # 104
March 9, 1993
Mr. John Ogwyn

Hebrews 6 Series—Doctrine # 4: Laying on of Hands

This evening we **are continuing our Bible study series on the doctrines outlined in Hebrews 6.**

Hebrews 6:1-2 (KJV), we're told, "Therefore leaving [or, going on from] the principles [the beginning words or the word of the beginning of Christ] of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment." The foundation includes repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms, and laying on of hands...." **Laying on of hands is the fourth of these six doctrines.** The seventh, going on to perfection, is built on top of these.

We are going to look at the laying on of hands this evening. There is a lot that is involved in it. Sometimes we look at something like that and we think, 'What is there to the laying on of hands? What does that mean? Why is the laying on of hands such an important part of the foundation? Why would God list that as a part of very foundational material?'

In a very special way, the doctrine of the laying on of hands points us to the power of God and the importance of relying on that power. I think we will see that in each case, it is involved with something that is very directly tied in with God's grace being extended. We will notice that.

In looking at the laying on of hands, let's start back in the book of Leviticus. Let's start with something that we perhaps would not normally think of for the laying on of hands.

Leviticus 1:1-3, we will notice, "Now the Lord called to Moses, and spoke to him from the tabernacle of meeting, saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: "When any one of you brings an offering to the Lord, you shall bring your offering of the livestock—of the herd and of the flock. If his offering is a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish; he shall offer it of his own free will [Jewish translation renders it, "to offer it that he may be accepted." It was a freewill offering, but it was an offering of access to God.] at the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord.'""

How does he do that? He offers it at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Eternal.

Verse 4, ""Then he shall put his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him."" This is not just a matter of leaving it at the tabernacle of meeting; it involved laying on of his hand on this animal.

As we come on down, we'll notice a few examples in this section.

Leviticus 3:1-2, ""When his offering is a sacrifice of peace offering, if he offers it of the herd, whether male or female, he shall offer it without blemish before the Lord. And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering, and kill it at the door of the tabernacle of meeting; and Aaron's sons, the priests, shall sprinkle the blood all around on the altar.'""

Verses 7-8, ""If he offers a lamb as his offering, then he shall offer it before the Lord. And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering, and kill it before the tabernacle of meeting...""

Leviticus 4:2-4, ""Speak to the children of Israel, saying: "If a person sins unintentionally [KJV, "through ignorance"] against any of the commandments of the Lord in anything which ought not to be done, and does any of them, if the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, then let him offer to the Lord for his sin which he has sinned a young bull without blemish as a sin offering. He shall bring the bull to the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the Lord, lay his hand on the bull's head, and kill the bull before the Lord.'""

Verse 6, this was to be done and the blood was to be sprinkled.

We could go back and notice numerous places that are there, but I think this suffices to show.

What was the significance of that? Why would you have the laying on of hands? Why would the laying on of hands be involved with the sacrifices?

Laying on of hands is a means of setting apart.

Something is set apart or designated in a special way. When these animals were brought as a part of the sacrifices, they weren't slaughtered as an animal that you were going to eat, although in most of the offerings, the offerer ate some of it. The priest ate some of it as well. It wasn't just taking an animal and slaughtering it. It involved a setting apart of that animal because that animal was set apart for a very special purpose, a very special reason.

Hebrews 9:22, Paul tells us, "...without shedding of blood there is no remission." By the shedding

of the blood of bulls and goats, there isn't a remission of sin.

Hebrews 10:3-4, "But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goat could take away sin." There is a reminder that is made from year to year. We are reminded that the penalty [wages] of sin is death. The laying on of hands was involved in terms of setting apart.

As the offerer came and brought an animal, he acknowledged his need for a Savior. When he brought an animal to be slaughtered that he might gain access to God [as in the case of the burnt offering] or that a sin might be atoned or an uncleanness removed, the offerer—by virtue of bringing that animal—acknowledged his need for a Savior. He acknowledged that he was a sinner cut off from God and needed a Savior. By bringing this animal that was a stand-in on behalf of the offerer, the offerer looked forward to and anticipated the ultimate stand-in that God would provide—Jesus Christ our Savior.

Hebrews 10:12, "But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God."

We find that the very first place the laying on of hands was used was to set apart the sacrificial animals—to set them apart for special service.

As I said, one thing that runs through is that God's grace is very much involved in each of these cases. Each of these areas of the laying on of hands has to do with God's grace being manifested or transmitted. In the case of the sacrificial animals, that certainly was an important aspect because the ultimate of God's grace and mercy for us is that He has provided a Savior for us. So we see that the laying on of hands was used in that case.

Let's go back to Genesis 48 and notice in terms of time sequence, *the first place we read about the laying on of hands—Ephraim and Manasseh's blessings of birthright inheritance.*

This is a remarkable incident and one that, of course, has great prophetic significance. We find in Genesis 48 that Joseph had heard that his father (Jacob; Israel) was in a very serious condition. He was, of course, quite elderly. His health and his eyesight had deteriorated and he had evidently taken to bed. When Joseph heard of it, he wanted to go down and visit with his father prior to his father's death. Evidently, he knew that time was drawing close for his dad. When he went, he took with him his two young sons, Ephraim and Manasseh and brought them before his father.

Genesis 48:2, when they told Jacob that his son Joseph was coming in, "...Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed."

That really got him excited and he sat up and tried to be ready in anticipation of this visit.

Verses 3-4, Joseph came in and Jacob began to speak to Joseph. He sort of went back to the beginning and began to recite the way that God had dealt with him over the years, the promises that God had made and the fact that he had never expected to see Joseph again. And now he not only saw Joseph but Joseph's sons.

Verse 5, "'And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.'" Ephraim and Manasseh were to be set apart in a special way—they were to inherit on the level of the sons of Jacob. They were, of course, grandsons. They were the only ones of the grandsons to inherit on this level. Joseph was, of course, the one for whom the birthright was to come. The birthright originally would have been Reuben's, but Reuben forfeited the birthright because of behavior on his part. In fact, I'll call your attention to it. You can hold your place in Genesis 48.

I Chronicles 5:1-2 says, "Now the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel—he was indeed the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel, so that the genealogy is not listed according to the birthright; yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph's—"

This makes it very plain that the birthright blessings went through Joseph and the scepter promise (the great line of rulership) came through Judah. We will see more details on some of that in Genesis 49, which we aren't going to go through in depth.

Anyway, Joseph brought Ephraim and Manasseh before Jacob. Jacob began to recite the circumstances of his life and bring things up to the present.

Genesis 48:9, finally, Jacob told him, "...Please bring them to me, and I will bless them."

Verses 10-12, "Now the eyes of Israel were dim with age, so that he could not see. Then Joseph brought them near him, and he kissed them and embraced them. And Israel said to Joseph, 'I had not thought to see your face; but in fact, God has also shown me your offspring!' So Joseph brought them from beside his knees...."

You sort of get the idea they were just little boys. You know they were young enough that, being

sort of intimidated and overwhelmed by what was going on, they did what little kids do—they sort of clung to daddy’s knee. They were a little bit intimidated and overwhelmed here. And this very elderly man—you read the account—was well past a hundred at this time.

Verses 13-14, “And Joseph took them both, Ephraim with his right hand toward Israel’s left hand, and Manasseh with his left hand toward Israel’s right hand, and brought them near him. Then Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it on Ephraim’s head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh’s head, guiding his hands knowingly, for Manasseh was the firstborn.”

This was not an accident. Obviously, it was something of great prophetic significance. That’s why it’s mentioned in detail. If there wasn’t any particular significance, then why is this account given in such detail?

Verses 15-16, “And he blessed Joseph, and said: ‘God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has fed me all my life long to this day, the Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.’” A special blessing was being conveyed.

Verse 17, “Now when Joseph saw that his father laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim, it displeased him....” He thought, ‘Dad has gotten mixed up here. You know, Dad is old and can’t see. He’s gotten confused and he has the boys mixed up.’ So he was going to stop him and switch his hands over because the right hand signified the greater blessing; the left hand, the lesser blessing. So he started to say, ‘Well, wait a minute Dad. You’re mixed up here. Let me straighten you out.’ But Dad wasn’t mixed up. Dad may have been blind, but God was guiding Dad. Dad knew exactly what he was doing. It was not an accident; he was not confused. It was none of the things that Joseph sort of assumed.

Verse 18, “And Joseph said to his father, ‘Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.’” ‘Here, you need to put your right hand on his head.’

Verses 19-20, “But his father refused and said, ‘I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.’ So he blessed them that day, saying, ‘By you Israel will bless, saying, “May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!”’ And

thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh.” Here, a special blessing is conveyed.

Genesis 49:1, now it was in this context, “And Jacob called his sons and said, ‘Gather together, that I may tell you what shall befall you in the last days.’” The clear implication is the fact that the tribes of Israel are to be identifiable all the way down to the last days. They’re separately identifiable and play a significant role in history.

All the details of chapter 48—the entire chapter—is devoted to the story of this elderly patriarch performing a special blessing through the laying on of hands on these two young boys who are probably overwhelmed and intimidated by the whole thing and don’t know what’s going on. It doesn’t say exactly how old they are, but I get the idea that they were very young. Joseph had to sort of push them out from behind his legs. You sort of get the idea of little kids who are about four or five years old and are sort of overwhelmed by being in this room and with this very elderly man. They know there’s a lot going on. They’re sort of intimidated by it and not sure that they want to get very far away from Dad. This is sort of the story you have here.

Here we have the laying on of hands being used to convey a special blessing—to set apart these two boys who ultimately became the father or the progenitors of two of the tribes of Israel. Ultimately, of course, Manasseh went on to become the United States and Ephraim the British Commonwealth nations—the birthright blessings that God outlined here. We don’t have time and the subject of the Bible study is not the birthright blessings. We’ve gone into that sort of thing many times in the past in sermons and other Bible studies. But we see the laying on of hands used.

Let’s notice one other example of the laying on of hands being used for the purpose of conveying a blessing. Notice *the second example that we see of the laying on of hands was used to set apart little children for a blessing—for God’s special blessing of grace.*

Matthew 19:13, you might notice, “Then little children were brought to Him [speaking of Jesus] that He might put His hands on them and pray,....” Why did they want Him to specifically put His hands on them? —Because the putting on of hands or laying on of hands signified a special setting apart. They brought them to Him for the laying on of hands that He would pray. “...but the disciples rebuked them.”

Verses 14-15, “But Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for

of such is the kingdom of heaven.’ And He laid hands on them and departed from there.”

Again, we see the laying on of hands used as an instrument of conveying God’s grace in the sense of a special blessing. Any blessing conveyed by God is certainly evidence of God’s grace because it is not based on what we have earned or deserved, but it is based on God’s mercy and blessing.

Let’s look at a third occurrence mentioned of the laying on of hands. We will go back to the book of Mark.

Mark 5:22-23, “And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, ‘My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live.’”

Here we find a **third use of the laying on of hands—the laying on of hands used in the context of physical healing**. Jairus came and sought out Jesus Christ that He would lay hands on his little daughter that she could be healed. Of course, you remember the story in the remainder of chapter 5.

Verses 35-41, by the time they got there, the little girl was dead, but Jesus did raise her up and restore her to life. —A very dramatic miracle of healing.

Mark 6:1-3, “Then He went out from there and came to His own country, and His disciples followed Him. And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, ‘Where did this Man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands? Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, and the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not His sisters here with us?’ And they were offended at Him.”

‘Where does He get off saying all these things? How does He know so much? Why, we’ve seen Him grow up!’ As though that proved something. Everyone has to grow up somewhere. But they sort of assumed, ‘Because we know His family, His brothers and sisters and we saw Him grow up, He obviously can’t be anyone all that important. How does He get off doing all these things?’

Verse 4, “But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house.’”

They sort of take Him for granted.

Verses 5-6, “Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick

people and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief. Then He went about the villages in a circuit, teaching.”

I want to call your attention here. Again, laying on of hands is mentioned in the context of healing. Something we ought to realize (in the context of healing) is that *healings take place in an atmosphere of faith*. What we have described here was an atmosphere of disbelief.

In fact, look back in Mark 5.

Mark 5:38-40, “Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. When He came in, He said to them, ‘Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping.’ And they laughed Him to scorn. But when He had put them all out, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying.”

The first thing Jesus did was to exclude all those who introduced this aura and climate of disbelief. He excluded them—got rid of them. They didn’t have a climate of faith. The father and the mother were looking to Him and they wanted Jesus to heal their daughter. He brought Peter, James and John in with him and He put the rest of them out. Once He did that, then He dealt with the issue.

There are many factors involved in healing. I don’t want to do a whole Bible study on healing this evening, but I think it is important as we note some of these things that healing, in particular, and miracles, in general, flourish in an atmosphere of faith and languish in an atmosphere of disbelief. Even Jesus Himself when He came to Galilee was not able to perform many miracles because people didn’t expect a miracle. They didn’t believe in that. They didn’t have particular regard for it.

They doubted that He was really who He said He was.

Mark 6:5, we’re told, “Now He could do no mighty work there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them.”

We see this matter of what Jesus Himself did, and healing is addressed in the context of the laying on of hands.

In Mark 16, we find a detailed account of Jesus’ commission to the apostles and to the Church. We find various summaries of what is sometimes called the “great commission,” which was Jesus’ commission to His apostles and to His Church, which was to go forth and teach the gospel. Jesus said more than one or two sentences. If we look at Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and even in the

beginning of Acts, you find each of them brings in some details that the others didn't. Mark gives a more detailed account of what Jesus said in this context than you find in Matthew. Matthew 28:19-20 is generally quoted. But if you look in a harmony of the gospels, you'll find that Mark 16 is the parallel account and adds in some details that Matthew doesn't. Each of them is simply a summary. It's just a general, brief summary as to what was to be done.

Let's pick it up in Mark 16.

Mark 16:15-17, "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned [or, shall be judged]. And these signs will follow those who believe....'"

In some modern translations, portions or all of vv. 17-20 are left out or considered questionable. But these verses are in the overwhelming majority of Greek text—the Byzantine text. About ninety-four percent of all the Greek text, which was beneficially preserved in the Greek world, certainly includes this. In fact, there's even more evidence of it in terms of the authority of it because there are writers that were not themselves biblical writers but writers who quoted the Bible, even one as early as the second century who actually quotes some of these verses, showing, of course, that they were in the copy of the book of Mark that he had access to. There are various places where portions of these verses are quoted by some of the very earliest writers attesting to the fact that they were a part of the original manuscript. Some copyists at a later time deleted them primarily because these signs weren't followed. So, it was a reason to delete them or not add it in at a later time.

Verse 17, "And these signs will follow those who believe...."

Miracles—the laying on of hands to perform healing and things of that sort—were not something limited to Jesus Christ. Yes, it was an evidence of the Messiahship of Jesus Christ, but it was more than that. It was not simply limited to that. Christ told the disciples that they would work miracles that He worked and greater miracles (John 1:50), even to the point that Peter's shadow passing over a man caused him to be healed instantly (Acts 5:15). There were dramatic miracles that occurred in the book of Acts. The purpose of miracles and healings went far beyond only showing the Messiahship of Christ.

Verses 17-20, "And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out

demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.' So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs...."

Let's look at these accompanying signs. I want to comment on them. He says, "In My name shall they cast out demons." That, of course, is certainly the case. There are records of it in the book of Acts, and it isn't something that ceased with the book of Acts. Down through the years, casting out demons has been a part of the signs that have been there and has been a part of God's confirming where He is working.

Probably any minister who has been in the ministry for a number of years has dealt with and on occasion, has had to cast out demon spirits. I may give one or two examples on some of these situations—not to sit here and just sort of regale off stories one after another.

One that comes to my mind immediately involves a situation a number of years ago in Houston. There was a young lady who was a prospective member and had begun to attend Church. She had various problems. One evening I got a call. I was at a Spokesman's Club Ladies Night and got a call. They were trying to track me down. I left and went over to the home of the member where she was. She was a small, young lady. She was, I guess, about nineteen and a small, young lady at that. There were four or five large men that had been doing their best to physically restrain her for about the last hour and-a-half, and they were much the worse in the situation. They were not simply dealing with a human being. There had been some demon problems in the past and this was the situation. They had been trying to restrain her to keep her from hurting herself and hurting them. Everything was in pandemonium when I got there. So I told them to get away and turn loose. They were a little reluctant to do that. When I told them the second time, they moved quickly. She got up and I cast out the demon. Within just a matter of minutes or moments, she was just as normal as a person could be. She was just sort of passed out at the time and within just a matter of moments, she sat up. She was herself and was able to talk, ask questions or answer questions. In her particular case, she went on to do the

things that she needed to do spiritually and has grown and done very well since that time.

There are other situations that have had different long-term results. Christ gave the warning that when a demon is cast out, if the individual does not replace and put into his mind something positive—if he just leaves his mind an empty vacuum—sooner or later the demon will come back and bring others worse than him. Christ gives that parable (Matthew 12:43-45).

In terms of casting out demons—of having the power and authority over demon spirits—that is something that has been a sign that has followed and certainly has been very much the case all the way down into our time.

Secondly, it mentions *speaking with new tongues or with new languages*. This particular sign isn't one that has been manifested at this particular point or stage of the Church. But it is one that, in different circumstances and different times, God has utilized as an evidence of His power and His Spirit. It certainly was evidenced several times in the book of Acts and very likely, according to certain prophetic indications in Joel, will be evidenced again prior to the return of Jesus Christ. It is something that undoubtedly has been manifested by God among His people at different times and places down through the centuries.

It mentions *taking up serpents*. We have a specific example of that in the book of Acts. Turn to the end of Acts—Acts 28:3-6. This isn't talking about snake handling like certain groups in Tennessee or Kentucky who are snake handlers. There is only one example in the Bible of this. In Acts 28, Paul and those who were with him (Paul was a prisoner in route to Rome) suffered shipwreck and finally escaped to the island of Malta (v. 1).

Acts 28:2-4, “And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold. But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand. So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, ‘No doubt this man is a murderer, whom though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live.’”

When the people saw what happened, they immediately jumped to a conclusion. They said, ‘This guy must have been a murderer and thought he was escaping from the sea, but you know, he's going to “get” his.’

Verses 5-6, “But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. However, they

were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead; but after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.” These were an impulsive group of people given to jumping to conclusions. That's the only exercise some people get—jumping to conclusions. They jumped to conclusions.

One of the things to realize, and that's shown in the context, Paul didn't go around looking for rattlesnakes to pick up and drape around his neck to prove that a snake couldn't hurt him. This was a miracle of God and involved a circumstance that arose. Paul wasn't tempting God. He wasn't looking for trouble. He wasn't trying to do something of this sort. It was simply something that occurred. A snake is specifically used in the Bible as symbolic of the devil, and I think God singled out the snake in this way.

Mark 16:18, we also find that it says, “...they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” Again, this matter of laying on of hands. Again, the matter of *laying on of hands for healing*—of “laying hands on the sick and they shall recover.” God has demonstrated that. That is certainly a sign that has followed down through the ages.

We have to understand that there are various aspects in terms of healing, and certainly the matter of faith is an important part. It isn't all that's involved, but God has manifested this many times.

There are many specific examples that I can think of. I remember one that occurred a number of years ago in Kentucky. This was an older man. In fact, one of the reasons this one stands out in my mind is because it was one that my own father later found out about. I'll tell you the story. It certainly served to impress a certain lesson upon him. Even though he never came into the Church he did, as a result of this particular incident, come to really understand some things about the laying on of hands and anointing and came to believe very much in that.

There was an older man down in Kentucky who called me one day (I think it was a Sunday). He told me of an accident that he had had and blood poisoning had set in. The red line had already moved well up his arm; he was very concerned and wanted to know if I would come and anoint him. And I did. He was about seventy-five miles from where I lived and I drove there. When I got there, the red line had proceeded all the way up to his shoulder. By that time, it had a very striking appearance as it came up his arm. The

blood poisoning had set in and looked very inflamed. We talked and I anointed and laid hands on him. As we sat there over a period of the next few minutes, he began to get relief immediately. I remained there probably the best part of an hour and in the course of that time, it was like watching the line on a thermometer—just down, down, down. This red line just began to disappear down his arm until the blood poisoning simply disappeared from his body. He was completely healed of the situation.

In fact, it's probably the only time my dad visited us while we were in Kentucky. He was there over a weekend and he came to Church on that particular Sabbath because he was visiting us and wanted to hear me speak. He had never heard me speak and he wanted to do so. While he was there, he met this particular man, who was a man about his own age, and they had similar interests. They both lived in the country and they struck up a conversation. My dad was the kind of person who enjoyed people; he enjoyed meeting people.

He was talking with this particular man and, of course, this incident was very much on this man's mind. Since it had happened only a short time earlier (about two weeks earlier) and had been a very dramatic situation, he recounted the story to my dad in sort of a matter-of-fact way. I wasn't there to hear all the conversation. I know he recounted the story to my dad because my dad later asked me some things about it. He wanted to see some of the verses in the Bible that talked about that. My dad was very, very much impressed by that and even mentioned that particular man and the situation from time to time over the years. I know that on at least a couple of occasions he, himself, asked for anointing and prayer for particular problems that he had. God did intervene, have mercy and grant healing on some of those occasions.

God certainly demonstrated that down through the years, and the laying on of hands is very much a part of that. It isn't the presence of human hands that performs the healing, but that is the way God used in setting apart with anointing and the laying on of hands.

I remember one situation that was, again, a very dramatic healing that occurred in somewhat of an unusual way. This was when I was in Texas. I got a call one day from a young man down in the Rio Grand Valley of Texas. He was a young Mexican man who had not been in the Church for all that long. He had a little daughter about two years of age, perhaps slightly older, but between two and three. He called me on the

phone and I was at my home in Corpus Christi, which was about a hundred and fifty miles away. He was very concerned because his daughter had appendicitis. His wife wasn't in the Church. All of his family was there and they were, of course, very concerned and very upset. They were upset with him because he wanted to take the time to call the minister. He wanted his daughter anointed and they thought, 'Well, this is crazy.' So he called. He was on the phone and he had his little daughter with him. He really didn't know what to do. I said, 'Look, if I were to just immediately hang up the phone, it would take me a minimum of three hours to get to your home; your daughter is in a state that she needs something right now.' I said, 'God isn't dependent upon my physical presence. You are doing what it says in the Scriptures; you called for the elders. I can't be right there at this moment to lay hands on her, but I'll tell you what to do. Hold on to the telephone and have your little daughter there in your arms. You kneel down right where you are and I'm going to kneel down right here where I am. We're connected to one another by the telephone, but God is the One that we really need to be connected to. I'm going to lay claim to God's healing promise on behalf of your little daughter.' I did that. I prayed and laid claim on God's intervention at that point, and the little daughter was instantly healed in a way that was very dramatic to the family who was there.

They were greatly impressed by that. In fact, about a dozen of them showed up at Church the next Sabbath. They were all Catholic. The little Church in the valley was only about seventy-five or eighty people. When that dozen showed up, it really made quite a stir. They came about two weeks. That was about how long it took for the miracle to sort of wear off. At the moment they were deeply impressed, but it was sort of like the Israelites of old.

It really helped me to understand the situation in the book of Exodus where God worked these dramatic miracles and a couple of weeks later, people were complaining and complaining and bellyaching. They had forgotten everything that they had just seen God do. That's the tendency. It's sort of like, 'Well, what have you done for me lately? I know what you did last week, but what have you done lately?' Sometimes people think, 'Well, if I saw a dramatic miracle, it would solve the problem of faith for all time.'

The most dramatic miracle that I have personal knowledge of occurred to someone I know. It occurred to a man who later wound up leaving

the Church and becoming very bitter. He was a man who was a quadriplegic as a result of the Korean War. He had to be wheeled on a stretcher into Church every Sabbath there in Pasadena. He was totally paralyzed as a result of injuries in the Korean War. In fact, it had been quite an ordeal to baptize him. It took quite a number of men because they had to actually keep him on the stretcher in order to baptize him. Some of you older members probably remember hearing about this. Mr. Dick Armstrong, in this particular case, laid hands on this man and he was instantly and very dramatically healed. In fact, it was about the last thing Mr. Dick Armstrong did in his life before his life was cut short in an automobile accident. It was perhaps the most dramatic healing that has occurred in this age.

This man was completely raised up from complete paralysis. He went on to live a very productive life over the next fifteen or so years. He served in the ministry. I had him as an instructor in college. He played handball and the whole works. He was a very dynamic and forceful individual. Later he became involved in certain problems and wound up ultimately turning aside from everything he had believed.

I mention it because sometimes we think, 'Well, if we had a dramatic miracle or if we saw a dramatic miracle, that would solve our problems of faith for all time.' No. What solves our problems of faith for all time is walking with God day by day. Faith is something you have to drink in from God's Spirit day by day. You can see the most dramatic miracle in the world one day and then a few days go by. As time goes by, your mind begins to sort of lose track of how dramatic it was.

Faith is certainly an important part of the laying on of hands for healing. There are many, many places that we could go—many other scriptures. We might notice just a very few.

Luke 5:12-13, "And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus; and he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, 'Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.' Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' And immediately the leprosy left him."

We could go through other accounts. We could look in the book of Acts. There are numerous accounts. We might just notice one or two. In Acts 9, we'll notice a situation involving the time the Apostle Paul was converted. Paul was struck down. God wanted Paul's attention and struck him down with this bright light that

blinded him. He was literally blind. He remained blind for three days (vv. 3-4, 9).

Verse 10, God sent Ananias, who was a disciple there in Damascus, to go to Paul and to baptize him. We find that Ananias was told that he was to go do this.

Acts 9:17-18, "And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized." Here again, the laying on of hands was involved.

In James 5, we are also given to understand that in the case of healing, we not only lay hands on someone, but we also anoint with oil.

James 5:14-15, "Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick..." In the case of healing, we anoint an individual and lay hands upon him following the instructions here and in other places.

We already read the account in Acts 28, but after this incident where the serpent's bite had not harmed Paul, we find that the ruler of this group of people was a man by the name of Publius.

Acts 28:8-9, "And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him. So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed."

This was a sign that has followed. It has certainly been evidenced in more dramatic ways at some times and in less dramatic ways at other times. God sometimes heals very instantly and dramatically. Sometimes God heals in ways that are perhaps not quite as dramatic—in ways that may involve a gradual recovery. There are various factors that get into the subject of healing, and I don't want to get off into that too much except to show that *this is a manifestation of God's grace, God's beneficence, His kindness, His mercy and conveyed through the laying on of hands.*

The fourth example of the laying on of hands involves the receiving of God's Holy Spirit at the time of baptism.

We'll pick up the story in Acts 8.

Acts 8:5, “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.” He explained who the Messiah was.

Verses 6-8, “And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city.”

Verse 9, we read of a man by the name of Simon the magician or Simon the sorcerer.

Verse 12, “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ...” The name of Jesus Christ signifies His authority, His rank, His position, the things that relate to Him and what God did through Him. Philip explained a number of things. “...both men and women were baptized.”

Verses 14-17, “Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them and that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He [It] had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.” We find that following baptism, the example of the laying on of hands is given. God offers His Spirit at that time.

We have a specific example, and an unusual example, because normally the laying on of hands is performed right after baptism. There’s one example in the Scriptures that is very unusual because it is the only account of people receiving the Holy Spirit before they were baptized. Normally, the Holy Spirit is given through the laying on of hands after baptism. There’s one account where the Holy Spirit was given prior to baptism, and that’s found in Acts 10. This is the story of Cornelius and the first Gentiles who were converted.

Peter began to speak to Cornelius and his household. Of course up until this time, no one who was uncircumcised had been baptized in the Church. The only Gentiles who had been baptized were Gentiles who had previously undergone the ritual of conversion to Judaism and who were themselves circumcised. You have to realize circumcision symbolized God’s covenant with Abraham. It symbolized what was necessary for access to God. It was a very difficult hurdle for the Jews to get past—to accept the fact that an individual who had not

undergone this rite and taken upon himself the sign of the covenant of Abraham could have access to God.

Acts 10:44-48, “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, ‘Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.”

God performed this dramatic miracle to make a point. Peter at this point said, ‘Look, God has accepted them. Who are we to refuse them? Can anybody say we should not go ahead and baptize them?’ At that point, nobody was prepared to say that.

By the time they got back to Jerusalem, some wanted to discuss the matter. The gift of tongues was not something that was automatically given when an individual received the Holy Spirit, but God performed the same miracle that He had at the time when the Holy Spirit was first given in Acts 2 because He didn’t want the Jews saying that it had been second-rate for the Gentiles. ‘Yeah, well, they may have gotten It, but they didn’t get It as good as we did.’ You know, since human beings like to compare, He gave the very same gift. And it struck them, ‘He’s poured It out on them the same as on us.’ So at that point, they recognized that God had accepted them. This was the only exception to that because normally the Holy Spirit is only given after baptism through the laying on of hands. *There’s a reason why the laying on of hands follows baptism rather than precedes it.* Baptism symbolizes a cleansing, a washing away of sin. God does not dwell in the midst of uncleanness. *First, we become clean and then God comes to dwell in us through the Holy Spirit.* There’s symbolism that’s involved.

Let’s notice one other example in II Timothy.

II Timothy 1:6-7, Paul says to Timothy, “Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” It’s a gift that you stir up. ‘The gift of God which is in you by the putting on of my hands.’ In this case, Paul can say to Timothy, ‘You have the

Holy Spirit as a result of laying my hands on you.’

The Holy Spirit that God gives is not a spirit of fear, but it is the spirit of power and of love and of sound-mindedness. The Holy Spirit that God gives through the laying on of hands is a spirit of power. The word “power” is “*dunamis*” in Greek; it’s the same word we get our English word “dynamic.” “*Dunamis*” means “power” and in particular, “miraculous power.” It’s the word that’s used in the New Testament that’s generally referring to miracles or miraculous power. So God’s Spirit is the spirit of miraculous power, the spirit that makes possible the performance of miracles—casting out demons, healing the sick and all of the things that God does. God’s spirit is the spirit of miraculous power.

It’s also the spirit of love. It’s the spirit of love because it reflects God’s very nature. It’s the spirit of miraculous power. It’s the spirit of love. It is the spirit that transforms us. It sheds abroad in our heart the love of God (KJV, Romans 5:5)—the love of God that is His nature (I John 4:7-8). It involves the fulfilling of the law in the true sense—in the spirit of the law (I John 5:3). God’s Spirit is the spirit of miraculous power. It is the spirit of love and the spirit of sound-mindedness—of wisdom and balance.

This is something worth giving consideration to—*three things that summarize what we receive from God’s Spirit*. *One* is miraculous power as a result of God’s Spirit. *Second* is the transformation of our nature as a result of God’s love. The fruits of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)—all these things are the result of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit reflects God’s miraculous power. It reflects and is involved in the transformation of our nature. *Third* is the spirit of sound-mindedness—of balance and wisdom. It gives us that proper perspective.

God’s Spirit is to be stirred up. We have it as a result of the laying on of hands. God’s grace is manifested in a very remarkable way with imparting to us His nature. His Holy Spirit seals us and sets us apart. It authenticates us as His own.

The fifth and final example of the laying on of hands involves ordination. If you look up the word “ordained” (particularly in the original language) you’ll find that it’s a term that means “to commission.” An ordination was a commission. If they were ordained, it involved giving a charge or a commission to someone,

and this was done through the laying on of hands.

Numbers 27:18-19, we find, “And the Lord said to Moses: ‘Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate [KJV, “give him a charge”] [a commission; a job] him in their sight.’”

You can find what that commission was in Joshua 1 where God rehearses it to Joshua.

Joshua 1:7, “‘Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.’” That was his charge, his commission or his ordination, if you please.

Numbers 27:23, we’re told, “And he [Moses] laid his hands on him [Joshua] and inaugurated him [KJV, “gave him a charge”], just as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses.” —An example of someone who was ordained or set apart in that way.

Coming back to the New Testament, notice in Acts 6:1-5 where seven men were selected out to take care of a particular matter. There had arisen problems concerning the distribution of certain goods to the widows. There were problems and complaints. The apostles said, ‘Look, this is an important matter and needs to be looked after, but we have our commission that is to go forth preaching the gospel. Christ gave us our commission and we can’t leave that to go and tend to all these physical things and spend our time waiting on tables. We can’t do both. It’s not fitting that we should leave the commission that Christ has given us and tend to this.’ So they made the decision that seven men were to be selected who were full of God’s Holy Spirit and appointed them over this matter. This is, of course, the first ordination of deacons.

Acts 6:6, “whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.” So they were set apart or ordained through the laying on of hands.

In Acts 13, we have another example.

Verse 1, we find that there were some prophets who had come down from Jerusalem.

Acts 13:2-3, “As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.”

This is the account of Paul and Barnabas being ordained as apostles. Again, it was through the

laying on of hands. –Clear examples, in terms of this setting apart.

We will notice one other example in I Timothy.

I Timothy 4:12-14, Paul told Timothy, “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery [elders].” “Presbytery” is a Greek word that means “elders.” Usually it’s translated as elders. Here it’s spelled out in the Anglicized form of the Greek word itself.

Timothy had a special gift in him through the laying on of the hands of the elders—his ordination. He was to be an example and to take heed to his ministry. He was told not to neglect the gift that he had as a result of the laying on of hands. Again, God’s grace was manifested in this way to an individual being set apart and imbued with a special measure of God’s Spirit and the certain things that were to be done.

Let me call your attention to something that is sort of an aside. If you do a little study on it, we find that in the case of healing, anointing is used with the laying on of hands and not with any of these others. They didn’t anoint the sacrificial animals. They didn’t anoint someone to convey a blessing. You’re not anointed to receive God’s Spirit at baptism. We don’t anoint someone when they’re ordained.

But anointing is mentioned in one other case. There were two ordinations that were done by anointing rather than by the laying on of hands. Do you know who they were? One was the ordination of Aaron as the high priest. You read about that in Leviticus 8. In Leviticus 8, you read the story of where Aaron was ordained or set apart as the high priest.

Leviticus 8:12, “And he poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron’s head and anointed him, to sanctify him.”

We find the second example of David in the book of I Samuel.

I Samuel 16:1, Samuel was told, “...‘Fill your horn with oil, and go; I am sending you to Jesse the Bethlehemite....’”

Verse 12, we find that David was selected.

Verse 13, “Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward....”

The high priests of Israel and the kings of Israel were set apart by anointing. Every other office

was by the laying on of hands. Do you know why the high priest and the king were set apart by anointing? It’s sort of an aside to the Bible study, but I think it’s an interesting point. The word “Christ” in the Greek language and the word “Messiah” in the Hebrew language have the same meaning. They mean “the Anointed One.” The very name of the Christ or the Messiah was “the Anointed One.” Christ combines the two offices because He’s our King and our High Priest. The king and the high priest in their official function were both types of the Messiah and in that sense, they were both anointed ones. They were set apart by anointing with oil and in that sense, their offices were a type of the office of the Messiah. He will be the ultimate High Priest forever and the ultimate King of kings. God uses that symbol in a different way for those two offices. Anointing was unique to those offices. It wasn’t used for any of the other offices. It was used for those two because those two, in a very special way, typified the role of the Messiah. Normally, ordination didn’t involve anointing, but it did involve the laying on of hands.

We see here, again, that God worked through individuals, and we find that the laying on of hands involves a setting apart: 1) In the case of the sacrificial animals being set apart, it points toward the Savior. 2) In the case of conveying a blessing, it sets an individual apart as a recipient of a special blessing from God. 3) In the case of healing, it sets an individual apart to receive God’s miraculous healing. 4) In the case of after baptism, it sets an individual apart to receive God’s Holy Spirit to dwell in him. 5) In the case of ordination, it involves a setting apart to fulfill a commission and responsibility that devolves on that individual.

So with that, perhaps this evening you have a little better overview of this doctrine of the laying on of hands, what is involved with it and why it is one of the foundational doctrines that is given in Hebrews 6. This completes the fourth of these six foundational doctrines.

Next time we will go on to the resurrection of the dead. With that, we’ll be concluded this evening. I look forward to seeing you on the Sabbath. Good night.

Bible Study # 105
March 22, 1993
Mr. John Ogwyn

Hebrews 6 Series—Doctrine # 5: Resurrection from the Dead

This evening we **are continuing our Bible Study series in the book of Hebrews 6—the fundamental doctrines of the Church.**

Let's note once again.

Hebrews 6:1 (KJV), "Therefore leaving the principles [or, going on from the beginning parts] of the doctrine of Christ; let us go on unto perfection [that final and seventh of the doctrines]: not laying again the foundation [there are foundational doctrines] of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment."

This evening we **are dealing with the fifth of these doctrines—the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead.** The doctrine of the resurrection from the dead involves a lot of things, and it certainly ties in with the sixth doctrine, the doctrine of eternal judgment, which we will get into in the next Bible study.

The doctrine of the resurrection from the dead involves quite a bit that is different from the attitudes and approaches of the various worldly religions. One of the universal beliefs of virtually all of the various religions is the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. This shows up in various things in modern Catholicism and Protestantism. It shows up in the belief that when you die, you'll either go wafting up to heaven or go to hell. Or if you're a traditional Catholic, you can go in between to purgatory. They believe in various stages of limbo and various other things that may be a factor, but basically, the traditional heaven/hell approach is common in western religions.

The Eastern religions tend to have other approaches, primarily centering around some form of reincarnation, as is the case in India and various other religions. But the point is that all of these religions center around the doctrine of the immortality of the soul—the idea that there is something inherent within you, which is uniquely you, that has a consciousness that is apart from the body and that is immortal—that you have an immortal existence.

Some religions, particularly the Eastern religions, have the idea that there's this ongoing series of reincarnations or rebirths, as they term

it. The Buddhists, Hindus and various religions hold to that sort of belief. The idea is, of course, that what you did in this life will determine what you come back as in the next life—everything from some sort of an animal to the whole caste system in India, ranging from the untouchables at the bottom all the way up to the top—and is based on the idea that you're getting repaid for the way you conducted yourself the last time around. This idea is something that just goes on and on. These ideas and attitudes permeated and were certainly characteristic of ancient Egyptian and Babylonian religion.

The archaeologists demonstrate that idea in the things they've uncovered in the various tombs. We're familiar with the funeral pyres of the ancient Greeks when their heroes were burned. The idea was to destroy the body and set the soul free. The same attitude underlines the use of cremation in many of the Eastern religions—the concept of destroying the body so the soul can be set free. The idea is, of course, that there's something inherently wrong and bad about the body; the body imprisons the soul and the soul needs to be set free from the body.

I'm getting into this a little bit because we're going to see that what God reveals in the Scriptures is totally different from what really is, in some ways, the universal lie of virtually all false religions. It goes back to the Garden of Eden when the devil spoke to Eve, as recorded in Genesis 3.

Genesis 3:1, "...And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, "You shall not eat of every tree of the garden"?'"' 'What about the fruit of the trees here in the Garden, and can you eat of it?'

Verses 2-4, "And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" And the serpent said to the woman, 'You shall not surely die.'" *The very first recorded lie is the doctrine of the immortality of the soul—"You shall not surely die."*

We find that is the one belief that permeates virtually every religion. It permeated the religions of everything from the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans to Hinduism, Buddhism, even the Islamic religions, which derived there and all of the western religions. The doctrine of the immortality of the soul even came into Judaism, primarily through their exposure to the Greek philosophers.

There are consequences. One thing to understand is that matters of doctrine like this are not merely

isolated matters. Ideas have consequences. The issue of the immortality of the soul is not an isolated issue. Ideas have consequences.

Let me give you an example. The concept that permeates so-called modern “Christianity” is the immortality of the soul and the idea that God is desperately trying to save the whole world right now—the soul-saving crusade. Many of us came out of Protestant-type backgrounds and others came out of a Catholic background. They all accept the immortality of the soul. The concept of the soul-saving campaigns is based on the idea that because you have an immortal soul, when you die, that soul has to go somewhere. It goes up or it goes down, but it has to go somewhere because it’s immortal. Their concept is that since something has to happen to it when you die, ‘We have to get you saved right now.’

Of course, when you understand it from a biblical standpoint, you understand that when you die, you die. We’re going to see how the Bible defines the soul in a few moments. When you die, you die. The only way you will ever have life in consciousness again is through a direct act of a miracle of God to bring you forth out of the grave and restore life and consciousness to you. You will not just continue on with this life in consciousness. You don’t have that life and consciousness inherent within yourself. When you die, the only way you will ever have life and consciousness again is through a direct act of a miracle of God.

God has as His purpose the resurrection of all who died—the restoration to life—but each in his own order and each at the right time. That solves the whole dilemma because God is not desperately trying to get the world saved now. If He is, He certainly hasn’t done very well. If God and the devil have been in a great contest—the devil trying to get the world lost and God trying to get the world saved—you’d have to say that the devil has really come out ahead. If numbers count, God is hopelessly behind and He’ll never catch up. That’s an idea that makes God inadequate and the devil more powerful, and that’s not true at all!

To begin with, let’s look at what we’re told about the soul. Let’s understand what the Bible teaches about the soul—whether or not the soul is immortal. I’ve already stated that it’s not, but let’s see if we can prove that from the Scriptures. Then let’s see what the Bible teaches about a resurrection because the concept of the resurrection is a fundamental concept and something that sets things apart.

Again, in terms of the immortality of the soul, many of us in various other church backgrounds were familiar with verses that talked about the resurrection. I can remember thinking, ‘Well, if I go to heaven when I die, what would I need to be resurrected at some later time? What’s going to be resurrected? Well, they’ll resurrect my body. My soul goes to heaven; they’ll resurrect my body. Well, fine. Am I just going to be wafting around up in heaven sort of like a vapor? What is this “soul” that’s going to heaven? And when my body is resurrected, what’s that going to be? Is it going to be resurrected to where it’s going to be in pain or dependent on air, water and food? Oh, no! It’ll be a spiritual body. Well, what is it that I take to heaven with me when I die?’

See, you can’t answer that. The reason they can’t answer it is because the doctrine of the immortality of the soul comes from paganism and the doctrine of the resurrection came from the Bible. Christianity’s attempt to wed the two produces something that’s simply incongruous—it doesn’t fit together. You can have one or you can have the other, but if you try to marry the two together, they don’t make sense. If you have an immortal soul, you don’t need a resurrection. And if the resurrection is going to be the issue, then you don’t have an immortal soul because the very fact that you need to be resurrected means that you’re dead—you’re not alive, conscious and off somewhere else. That’s why I say ideas have consequences. A lot of times people go for an idea, but they don’t consider where it leads.

I’m going to get off that part of the subject. I don’t want to spend the whole Bible study on it. But I want to give you an assignment to understand the consequences of the idea. I would suggest you go to Mr. Armstrong’s book [The Missing Dimension in Sex](#). I didn’t look up the pages, but the book has an index in the back. Look up “immortality of the soul” or look up “soul” and read those pages. You will find that the whole concept of the immortality of the soul ties in with the idea of pagan dualism and a whole code of conduct. The whole doctrine of asceticism means self-denial—that abusing or depriving the flesh is inherently better and more righteous because the flesh is inherently evil and the immortal soul is imprisoned.

The Monastic orders of the Catholic Church—the vows of poverty, chastity and humility—came from the doctrine of asceticism. By chastity, of course, they don’t simply mean the avoidance of immorality. They mean maintaining perpetual virginity (a complete

rejection of marriage), keeping yourself perpetually unmarried, which they believe is superior to being married in a right and moral way, and the very rejection of even the enjoyment of physical pleasure. They view physical pleasure as inherently wrong—even the physical pleasure that is enjoyed within the context of God’s law. That concept is the outgrowth of pagan dualism—this righteous immortal soul, this pure immortal soul is imprisoned within this flesh.

You might go back and read those pages. It isn’t a really lengthy section, but Mr. Armstrong discusses the philosophy of Socrates and Plato and their teachings, in terms of the immortality of the soul and the way in which this has played a role in shaping the so-called western “Christian” world. Of course, most of the so-called early “church fathers” or early “Christian fathers,” men like Tertullian, Origen and later Augustine, were totally steeped in pagan philosophy. They were educated in the Greek philosophies. “Neoplatonism” simply means the new version of Plato’s teachings. They were filled with those things. They attempted to hold on to what they had and to somehow fit it in with Scripture, which meant having to twist and distort Scripture. This, of course, produced the so-called western “Christian” world in its many aspects.

Let’s go on back now to Genesis. When you see the word “soul” in the Old Testament, it’s translated from the Hebrew word “*nephesh*.” But the Hebrew word “*nephesh*” is not only translated “soul.” Let’s notice some places where it is translated otherwise.

Genesis 1:20 (KJV), “And God said, ‘Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving [margin, “creeping”] creature [margin, “soul”] that has life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.’”

When it says the “moving creatures,” there are two terms used: one is “*sherets*,” which means “something that wiggles,” and the other is the term “*nephesh*,” which means “soul.” God said, “Let the waters bring forth the wiggling souls.” They have life. “Life” is another Hebrew word, “*taavah*.” It’s the root word from which the word “Eve” comes from. “Let the waters bring forth wiggling souls [This is talking about tadpoles, fish and all sorts of little things that are there in the waters.]”

Let’s continue.

Verse 30 (KJV), “And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creeps upon the earth, wherein there is

life [margin, “living soul”], I have given every green herb for meat’: and it was so.”

Here, again, we find where it says, “wherein there is life” or the literal Hebrew is “wherein there is a living soul.” So the “*nephesh*” is something that tadpoles have. It’s something that birds have. It’s something that everything that creeps upon the earth has. Ants have it; grasshoppers have it; and cockroaches have it. They creep upon the earth. So whatever a “*nephesh*” is, everything from tadpoles to cockroaches, cows and birds have a “*nephesh*.”

Now, let’s come on down a little further.

Genesis 2:7 (KJV), “And the Eternal God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.” The word “soul” here is “*nephesh*.” Man became a living “*nephesh*.” So everything from wiggling tadpoles to great eagles soaring through the sky, little cows contentedly munching their grass, cockroaches creeping across the floor, all the way to man made in the image of God are living souls, living “*nephesh*.” So there’s nothing inherently immortal about a soul, as the Old Testament uses the word “soul” or “*nephesh*.”

In Ezekiel 18:4 and also in Ezekiel 18:20, it makes the very clear, simple statement, “...the soul that sins, it shall die.”

Ezekiel 18:4 (KJV), “Behold, all the souls are mine; the soul of the father; so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sins, it shall die.” v. 20, “The soul that sins, it shall die....” The “*nephesh*,” the soul, is not inherently immortal. Souls can die. Animals have souls; people have souls. Souls are mortal. They die.

Let’s come on back to the New Testament. In the New Testament, the Greek word translated “soul” is the word “*psuche*.” The word is commonly spelled out and pronounced in English as “psyche.” “P-s-y-c-h-e” is the English equivalent. Our word “psyche” comes from the Greek word that is translated “soul.” Anywhere you see “soul” in the New Testament, it’s the Greek word “*psuche*.”

Now, notice what we’re told.

Matthew 10:28, “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [Gehenna fire].”

Notice what we’re told about Gehenna fire. Gehenna fire is not something that tortures soul and body forever. It is something that destroys both soul and body. There’s a distinction between soul and body, but the distinction is not that one is mortal and the other is immortal. That

is not the distinction. The “*psuche*” or the psyche is your individuality, that which is inherently you.

Sometimes people have tragic accidents and they lose a hand or an arm, a leg or both legs or maybe even both arms. Have you ceased to be yourself? No. In your mind and in your thoughts, you are still yourself. What is it that is uniquely you? The “unique you” is your personality, character, nature, mind and memory. Christ is saying, ‘Look, the most any human being can do is kill you.’ You think, ‘Oh, well that’s pretty bad.’ Well, yeah, that sounds pretty bad. A person can kill you, but God can resurrect you. God can destroy you forever, but a human being can’t destroy you forever. A human being can only destroy you until God resurrects you. But God will destroy forever in the Lake of Fire not only the body but the individuality—your existence as an individual, as a person. There’s nothing here that talks about some immortal ongoing consciousness, but rather that “*psuche*” or psyche that is there that is unique to the individual.

Come on down.

Verse 38, “‘And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.’”

Christ used this as an illustration to refer to your burden—your responsibility and duties in life. You have to take up those responsibilities and duties and follow Him. If you’re unwilling to do that, you’re unworthy of Him.

Verse 39, “‘He that finds his life will lose it, and he that loses his life for My sake will find it.’” The word “life” here, in both cases, is the Greek word “*psuche*,” soul. “He that finds his soul will lose it, and he that loses his soul for My sake shall find it.”

That would shock people if they could lose their soul for Christ’s sake. They’d think, ‘Oh no, you couldn’t lose your soul for Christ’s sake.’ When you understand what your soul is, you understand your soul is your life. What He’s saying is, ‘Look, if the primary thing in your mind is preserving your life, if you’re willing to compromise anything, if you’re willing to go to any lengths to preserve yourself, if self-preservation is the basis of your life, then you’re going to wind up losing everything. If you are willing to give up yourself—to sacrifice yourself for My sake—you’re going to find it. It’s the paradox that is presented.

Let’s go back just a few more pages.

Matthew 16:25-26, “‘For whoever desires to save his life [again, the word “*psuche*”; soul— whoever will save his soul] will lose it, and

whoever loses his life [soul] for My sake will find it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?’” The same word translated “life” in v. 25 was translated “soul” in v. 26.

The point is that it refers to your life, to you, to your individuality and focuses on what is involved in terms of your priorities. Do our priorities focus simply on the here and now or simply on self-preservation? For a lot of people, their great priority is being comfortable, maintaining themselves, taking care of themselves and that sort of thing.

During war, many times when nations are invaded and conquered, the enemy can always find collaborators. There are always people who will sell out their fellow citizens in order to get a good deal. When the Germans overran France, there were French who were willing to collaborate and form the Vichy government. Some of you remember that back during World War II. There were collaborators. They were willing to sell out their fellow citizens because they were interested in protecting and preserving themselves. When the Germans invaded Norway or any country they invaded (I’m not just picking on them—you could look at other situations or other wars.), there was always those who placed expediency above principle, and they were willing to sell out for selfish advantage.

Of course, the problem is that when preserving yourself is your top priority, you’re jumping on and off the bandwagon trying to get onboard whoever looks like they’re going to win. Sooner or later, you’re going to jump on the side you think is winning. ‘Boy, they’re winning!’ You think, ‘This is great!’ You’re going to ride the crest of the wave, only to find out that things take a turn.

There’s only one place that you can attach yourself to and never have to worry about someone else winning. That’s God! If He comes first, you don’t have to worry about being caught in a bad “spot.”

John 10:11, “‘I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep.’” The word “life” is “soul.”

A good shepherd gives his soul for the sheep. A hireling doesn’t; he’s just in it for the money.

Verse 15, “‘As the Father knows Me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down My life [“*psuche*”; soul] for the sheep.’”

Verse 17, “‘Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life [“*psuche*”; soul]....’” The soul is something that can be laid down. It’s

something that involves our life, and it isn't something that's inherently immortal. We're going to see that in just a minute.

The words "immortal soul" do not occur anywhere in the Bible. In fact, the very opposite occurs.

John 3:13, "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man, who is in heaven." Since John was writing this about sixty years after Jesus spoke it, he added in this parenthetical thought, "No man has ascended to heaven, *but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man, which is in heaven.*" John added sort of a parenthetical thought because about three years after Jesus made the statement, no human being had ascended up to heaven. One Man, Jesus Christ, did ascend up to heaven. John added that in as a parenthetical thought.

What Christ said was true when He spoke it, and it is still true, with the one exception of He Himself because ***He is the only One who has been resurrected to a spiritual body.*** There has been restoration of human life, but Jesus Christ is the only One who has been resurrected with a spiritual body, which is what He does have. We're going to see that in just a few minutes as we get into the resurrections themselves.

But again making clear the fact that the Bible does not teach the immortality of the soul or going off to heaven, notice I Timothy 6.

I Timothy 6:11-12, "But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses." Eternal life is something you have to lay hold of. He didn't say you're already in possession of eternal life, that you already have it. Eternal life is something you have to lay hold of. It's not something you possess already or is inherent within yourself.

Verses 13-16, he says, "I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate [Sovereign], the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen."

We're told that God only has immortality. God dwells in light. Where does God dwell? Well, He dwells in light. It's light that is so bright and so brilliant that no man can approach it; no human being can even look on it. God dwells there, and He only has immortality. Immortality is something He possesses. He didn't say, 'Look, all of you have immortality and it's just a matter of where you're going to be immortal.' The issue isn't a matter of where you're going to spend eternity, in the sense that you already have immortality and it's just a matter of location. The issue is a matter of duration. Are you going to last? Are you going to live or are you going to die and cease?

Let's come back to I Timothy 1.

I Timothy 1:17, "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."

God is eternal, immortal and invisible. God inhabits eternity (Isaiah 57:15). We inhabit a finite realm that is bound by the three linear dimensions of height, width, depth, plus the fourth dimension of time. Those are the finite bounds of human life. We are bound by time and by space. But God inhabits eternity; God possesses eternity. He is immortal. He isn't bound by time and space in the way that we are. The Scriptures tell us that. Time doesn't mean to God what it means to us. Eternal life, immortal life, is something that God has and we don't have.

Romans 6:23, notice a familiar scripture, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." There's a contrast between life and death.

Romans 5: 9-10, "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall [future tense] be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled [past tense] to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

We've been reconciled by His blood and we shall be saved by His life. We're in need of being raised from the dead. In fact, simply having the penalty for our sins paid is not enough because we will die, and unless God restores us to life, we will never awaken on our own.

Job mentions that in Job 19. Some of the commentaries and a lot of critics say the Old Testament does not teach the resurrection. Well, the Old Testament does teach the resurrection and so does the New.

Job knew about the resurrection. The book of Job is perhaps the earliest book in the Bible that

was written in complete form because Job was a contemporary of, let's say, the twelve sons of Jacob. He was contemporary with them, as you put the story together. We could go through and look at some of that. Job was certainly written prior to the time of Moses. Moses may have been the one that actually included it in the canon of Scripture. Job was certainly a very early book of the Bible, and Job talks about the resurrection.

Job 19:25-27, Job says, "For I know that My Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"

The marginal rendering of v. 26 in the King James Version is actually a little clearer.

Verse 26 (KJV, margin) says, "After I shall awake, though this body be destroyed, yet out of my flesh shall I see God."

Job understood the truth of the resurrection.

Job 14:1-2, he says, "Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away; he flees like a shadow and does not continue."

Man isn't permanent.

Verse 7, he says, "For there is hope for a tree, if it is cut down, that it will sprout again, and that its tender shoots will not cease."

We've all experienced that. Most of us have probably cut down a tree and thought that you're rid of the thing. But the next thing you know, you have a little shoot coming up from the root. Man isn't that way. "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and he's cut down." His life ends. In a tree, there is a natural regeneration process that takes place where you cut down a tree and it may spring back; it may come back. People aren't that way.

Verse 10, "But man dies and is laid away; indeed he breathes his last and where is he?"

He isn't going to suddenly come back up on his own.

Verse 12, "So man lies down and rises not. Till the heavens are no more, they will not awake nor be roused from their sleep." Job understood that.

Verse 14, he asks the question, "If a man dies, shall he live again? [Not on his own, he won't. Job says,] All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my change comes."

Verse 15, "You shall call and I will answer You; You shall desire the work of Your hands." Job understood the resurrection.

There are many places we could go to look further at the resurrection. There are allusions to it. It's true that there isn't a lot of detailed teaching on the resurrection in the Old Testament, but the book of Job and the book of Daniel provide some of the clearest teaching, along with Ezekiel chapter 37 and also some in the book of Isaiah.

In Psalm 16, there's a clear prophecy of the resurrection of Christ.

Psalm 16:9-10, "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul [my "nephesh"] in Sheol [in "sheol"; in the grave]. Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption."

David understood that his flesh would rest in hope and that his "nephesh" would not be left in the grave. And the Holy One, the Messiah, would not even suffer corruption. You see, Jesus Christ was resurrected, not after three years, three hundred years or three thousand years after His flesh had corrupted and decayed and returned to the dust, but He was resurrected after three days and three nights. His body had not yet decayed. This is a prophecy of that. "Nor will You allow Your Holy One, Your Messiah, to see corruption." –A reference to the resurrection.

Let's go to Isaiah 53 where there is a detailed prophecy of Christ as the Messiah.

Isaiah 53:10, "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul [His "nephesh"] an offering for sin [Jesus Christ gave His life; He gave Himself as an offering for sin], He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand." He did make His soul an offering for sin. He did die. But God was going to prolong His days.

In Isaiah 56, there is an allusion to the resurrection. It addresses individuals who, under the ceremonial rituals of Deuteronomy and Leviticus, were not allowed access to the inner court of the temple. It's speaking specifically of eunuchs and also from a ceremonial standpoint, principles that God was trying to convey. But it had nothing to do with the ultimate destiny of these individuals. Notice Isaiah 56. The resurrection isn't a new concept that just came along in the New Testament.

Isaiah 56:1-5, "Thus says the Lord: 'Keep justice and do righteousness, for My salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from

doing any evil.’ Do not let the son of the foreigner who joined himself to the Lord speak, saying, ‘The Lord has utterly separated me from His people’; nor let the eunuch say, ‘Here I am, a dry tree.’ For thus says the Lord: ‘To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant, even to them I will give in My house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.’”

Verse 6 goes on and talks about the sons of the foreigner that join themselves to Him.

God alludes to an eternal life—something that goes beyond the physical. You could go to Deuteronomy 23:1 and find that eunuchs were not allowed to enter into the congregation. They were not able to participate in the temple service and neither were the sons of the foreigner. Did that cut them off from God in the true sense? No. There were ritualistic concerns, in terms of the Old Testament ceremonies, that they were not free to participate in, but real salvation and eternal life is a matter of the heart and spirit and of the relationship with God. Here’s a prophecy that to the sons of the foreigner, the eunuchs—those who really turned to God and kept God’s covenant—God would give an everlasting name that would not be cut off—eternal life.

Over in Isaiah 60:21, there is a reference to the people inheriting the land forever. Well, “forever” is not going to do you any good if you aren’t going to be around but for a few years. It’s sort of like buying something that is warranted to last two hundred years. You aren’t going to be around for two hundred years. Inheriting the land forever only has value if you’re going to be there forever. That’s the only way you can inherit it forever.

Isaiah 66 also makes reference to these things.

Isaiah 66:8-10, “‘Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion travails, she gave birth to her children. Shall I bring to the time of birth, and not cause to delivery?’ says the Lord. ‘Shall I who cause delivery shut the womb?’ says your God. ‘Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you who love her....’”

Then it talks about how God will come back to establish His government.

We find an interesting description.

Ezekiel 37:1, “The hand of the Lord came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones.”

Here Ezekiel is having this vision and in vision, he’s transported to a valley that’s full of bones.

Verses 2-7, “Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and, behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry. And He said to me, ‘Son of man, can these bones live?’ So I answered, ‘O Lord God, You know.’ Again He said to me, ‘Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, “Oh, you dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: ‘Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I put sinews on you and will bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.’”’ So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone.”

Can you imagine Ezekiel seeing this vision? He sees this valley just full of bones. The next thing he knows, there’s shaking and rattling. Bones start coming together with other bones, with all the shaking and the rattling going on. That must have been quite a thing to see. The next thing he knows, there’s skeletons lying all over the place. Then he looks and sinews and flesh come up. They aren’t just bones; they aren’t just skeletons. These are corpses. These are human beings, but they are dead. They are just corpses lying there. There isn’t any breath in them (v. 8).

Verses 9-10, “Then said He to me, ‘Prophecy to the breath, prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.’”’ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, and exceeding great army.” —A great multitude, a gigantic number of people. They were alive.

Verses 11-13, “Then he said to me, ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, “Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!” Therefore prophecy and say to them, “Thus says the Lord God: ‘Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves....’”’”

Then in v. 14, “‘I will put My Spirit in you....’” He’ll put His Spirit in them. He begins to convert them and work with them. Here’s a prophecy of a time when ***God is going to resurrect Israel to physical life***. A physical resurrection is described

here. It's a resurrection to physical flesh and blood life.

Let's go back to the book of Daniel. There are quite a number of places in the Old Testament that talk about the resurrection.

Daniel 12:1-2, "At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince [the great archangel] who stands watch over the sons of Your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time Your people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt."

It does not differentiate when these awakenings will take place or in how many increments these awakenings will take place. It's just simply the fact that there will be awakenings, and some will awaken to everlasting life and some to shame.

Verse 3, "Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament [They'll shine like the sun, moon and stars.], and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever."

Verse 4, Daniel was told, "But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase."

As an aside, I think v. 4 is an interesting statement, in terms of a definition of the end-time because the twentieth century is unique. In the sixty centuries of mankind's history, the twentieth century has seen a revolution in transportation and information. It has seen a multiplication of knowledge in a way that is unparalleled in any other time. I know you can trace some of the transportation revolution back to the early nineteenth century with the steam engine, but do you realize that when the twentieth century dawned, no human being had ever flown in an airplane? The vast majority of people well on into the twentieth century got where they went by walking, riding an animal or riding in something that was pulled by an animal.

A lot of you remember when you plowed with a mule or you walked to where you were going. You can remember when the transportation that we take for granted was not very common. It was in this twentieth century when the Wright brothers flew their first plane. Now, we can send space probes. We have the whole realm of computer technology and all of these things. I mean, "Many shall run to and fro and knowledge shall increase." Does that not refer to

this twentieth century in a unique way, a descriptive way?

If Abraham had been resurrected at the beginning of the twentieth century, he would have been in a world that would have certainly been different from his own, but not so drastically different that he would have been unable to cope. He would have found that when most people cooked a meal, they used a wood fire. They used a stove or some sort of thing that did that. They drew their water out of a well. They rode on an animal or they walked if they went somewhere. If they plowed a field, they hooked up an animal. Abraham would have noticed some technological changes and differences, but everything that had transpired in four millennia (forty centuries) would not have been nearly as drastic as what has transpired from the beginning of this century to our time. I think that's a remarkable thing. You really have to put it in perspective.

Anyway, that's not really what I wanted to focus on. I'm getting sidetracked here. Let's continue.

Verse 13, Daniel was told, "But you, go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise in your inheritance at the end of the days." –A reference to the resurrection.

Come on back to the New Testament.

I Peter 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," We have a living hope. And we have that through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Verses 4-5, "to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."

We don't have our inheritance. It's going to be revealed in the last time. We're kept through God's power awaiting that. It is an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that doesn't fade away. The inheritance is reserved in heaven for us.

Revelation 22:12, Jesus said, "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work."

Our reward is reserved in heaven for us. We're not going to heaven to get it. Christ is coming to the earth and He brings it with Him. It's an inheritance that's incorruptible. It's undefiled. It's not going to fade away. It's being kept for us, and we're being kept by God's power awaiting a salvation that will be revealed.

John 5:28-29, “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation [or judgment] [KJV, “damnation”].” The Greek word is spelled “k-r-i-s-i-s.” They’d say “*kreesis*”; we’d say “crisis,” spelled with a “c.” I’ll get into that next Bible study when we talk about eternal judgment. But ***there’s a resurrection to life and a resurrection of judgment.***

In Romans 6:4-5, it says, “Therefore we were buried with Him [with Christ] through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.”

Baptism is a type of death, burial and resurrection. We figuratively die, are buried and come up. We’re to live in newness of life in anticipation of the time when we will literally come forth out of the graves to new life in the true sense. In the new life we live here and now, we’re still physical; we’re still mortal. We still ache and hurt, have pain and get tired. We still have to sustain our life by taking in the physical elements, but we’re living life with a new motivation, new understanding and with a new relationship with God. We’re living our life in anticipation of the time when this very life will be changed or exchanged for something else.

We find in I Corinthians 15 the so-called “resurrection chapter.” It very much deals with the resurrection.

I Corinthians 15:3-8, “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas [Peter], then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep [died]. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.”

God was not dealing with Paul at the same time as the others, but His dealing with Paul came along later.

He comes on down.

Verses 12-20, “Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the

dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is vain and your faith is also vain. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”

The resurrection of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of all of God’s people are inexorably tied together. You can’t separate the two. The very reality of our future hope is anchored on the truth of the resurrection. The fact that Jesus Christ not only died (poured out His life’s blood) and was buried in the grave for three days and three nights, but as Paul says right here, “He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” Just as surely as the Scriptures were fulfilled that said He would rise again the third day, so also, the Scriptures that say we will rise at the last day will also be fulfilled. The fact that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead (and God provided many witnesses to testify to that), attest to that fact. Our hope is not predicated on an immortal soul or that we have immortality inherent within ourselves or of and by ourselves. Our hope is anchored and predicated upon the fact that the same God who raised up Jesus Christ from the dead will also raise up you and me.

Verse 20, when Christ rose from the dead, He became the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. Death is compared to sleep.

Verses 21-24, “For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father....”

Verses 35, “But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’” Oh, that sounds like a good question. You see, the Greeks were really bothered with the resurrection.

Hold your place here and let’s go back to Acts.

Acts 17:22, “Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus [KJV, “Mars’ Hill”] and said, ‘Men

of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious.”

Verse 23, he talked about their altar to the unknown god.

Verses 31-32, “because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.’ And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, ‘We will hear you again on this matter.’”

The Greeks thought the resurrection—the idea that the body being restored to life—was crazy. The Greek philosophers thought the thing you wanted to do was to get rid of your body. They had this strange concept that the thing to do was get rid of the body. Here, Paul is telling them that God was going to bring the body to life again. Now, that perplexes some.

Paul addresses it.

I Corinthians 15:35, “But some will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’” ‘How is He going to do that? Why, the body is decayed and it’s turned to dust. Maybe they were blown to bits in an explosion, or maybe they died at sea and a shark ate them up. How is God going to resurrect them?’ People think they have all of these great questions. ‘How is “so-and-so” going to be resurrected? How could God resurrect him?’ Evidently, Paul got rather irritated. Corinth was just down the road from Athens, and these Greeks had just a little trouble with the idea of a resurrection.

Verses 36-37, Paul said, “Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain....”

When corn comes up out of the ground, what did you do? Did you put the whole corn stalk down there—ear and all? No. You put one little grain. You put it in the earth. You covered up one little grain and the next thing you knew, you had a whole plant growing up. Where did God get the whole plant? Do you think it’s going to be hard for God to get the whole body out of whatever’s left? He can get the whole stalk of corn out of the ears that it has on it; he can get a whole pecan tree out of one little pecan. Do you think He’s going to have a hard time getting a body out of whatever there is?

Paul said, ‘Look, use your mind a little bit. You think God is perplexed? Do you think there is somebody He can’t figure out how to resurrect because He doesn’t have enough left of him?’

What body are you going to come up with?

Verse 38, a simple answer, “But God gives it a body as He pleases [How is “so-and-so” going to get resurrected, and what body is he going to have? God will give him a body that pleases God. God will give him a body as it pleases Him. Simple!], and to each seed its own body.”

Verse 40, “There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies [heavenly bodies and earthly bodies]....”

Verse 41, he compares the glory of the heavenly with the glory of the earthly. There are different types of glory—different levels of brightness from the sun, moon and stars.

Verse 42, he says this is the way the resurrection is.

The point is that everybody’s going to be raised up with a body. The idea of some immortal soul—some sort of disembodied spirit wafting around—is ridiculous. The Bible doesn’t teach anything like that.

Verses 42-44, it teaches, “So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” It’s very clear.

The fact that God is in heaven doesn’t mean we’re going to heaven. The fact of a spiritual body doesn’t mean we’re going to heaven. It means we’re going to have the kind of bodies that are had in heaven. What kind is that? Spiritual bodies. It’s still a body, but it’s a spiritual body. It’s not a natural body. As we come on down, we’ll see the difference. We already have a contrast. The body that’s buried is weak—it’s decayed; it’s dead. It’s sown in dishonor; it’s raised in glory. The life has expired and gone out of it. It’s sown in weakness; it’s raised in power. This is a total contrast between what goes in and what comes back.

Verse 45, “And so it is written, ‘The first man Adam became a living being [a living soul].’...” We read back in Genesis that the first man Adam was made a living soul. That doesn’t mean he was immortal. That means he was a living, breathing human being. “...The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”

Verses 46-49, “However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are

those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.”

The point is we have all been born as the seed of Adam—after the flesh. We’re all descended of Adam and have a body like he had—flesh and blood and mortal—the kind of body that was dependent on the breath of air that God breathed into Adam and Adam became a living soul. But that’s life that’s temporary. That’s a body that is made out of the elements of the ground and is continually dependent upon taking in of those elements to sustain it.

The life we have is not self-sustaining. It’s a temporary chemical existence based on our utilization of the oxygen out of the air and the nutrients that ultimately derive from the soil. If you eat a plant, you’re eating something that derived its nutrients from the air and the soil. If you eat an animal (if you eat flesh, meat) you’re eating a creature that derived its nutrients from plants, which in turn, derived their nutrients from the soil. We’re ultimately taking in the nutrients that come out of the ground. Our bodies have their origin with the dust of the ground, and we sustain the life that God has placed in us by taking in of those things.

We have borne the image of the earthy; we’ve been like Adam. And in the resurrection, we’re going to bear the image of the heavenly. Adam was made in God’s image and after His likeness, but Adam was not made of spirit. Adam was made of flesh. “Of the earth” is such that are earthy. That’s us right now. We’ve borne the image of the earthy. We’ve been in the same category as Adam was.

Verses 48-54, “As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell 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 trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’”

What is described is the resurrection—a restoration to life.

I Corinthians 15 describes a spiritual resurrection—a resurrection to the same kind of life that Jesus Christ was resurrected to when He came forth out of the grave, no longer bound by time and space.

You put man in a spaceship and it takes days to get him to the moon. We haven’t been able to send people beyond that to this day. We certainly could not send one all that far because, after all, it takes years. We have satellites or space probes, but they are still within our solar system. They haven’t even gotten to the closest star.

Yet when you read the gospel accounts, it’s very apparent that when Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene early in the morning, He told her, ‘No, don’t touch Me. I’ve not yet ascended to My Father’ (John 20:1-17). But later in the same day He allowed the disciples to embrace Him (Matthew 28:9; John 20:27)—clearly having already been to the throne of the Father in heaven and come back. He wasn’t bound by time and space.

Science says the speed of light is the fastest thing there is. No, it’s not. The speed of spirit is the fastest thing there is. That’s a whole lot faster. That’s like the speed of thought. You think and you’re there. You and I can’t do that, but Christ could. And it didn’t take Him some great, prolonged period of time to get there. When the time came to ascend to the throne of the Father, faster than you could say it, all of a sudden, there He was. And when the time came to return, there He was. It worked a whole lot better and a whole lot more rapidly than any science fiction device that man could come up with. He was resurrected and no longer bound by time and space.

Now, as a human being walking the earth, He had been bound by time and space. When He wanted to get to Jerusalem or to Samaria, He walked. He walked along the dusty road. He got thirsty and tired because He had emptied Himself and became a human being. He had made Himself of no reputation (Philippians 2:7). He had taken upon Himself the nature of the seed of Abraham, as we are told in Hebrews 2:16. He was made like unto His brethren (v. 17). He became a human being like us. Now, His origin was not the same as ours, but He voluntarily emptied Himself. He divested Himself. Isn’t that what we’re told in Philippians 2:7-8? Aren’t we told that Jesus Christ became flesh?

John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.”

When He came forth out of the grave, He was no longer in the same state. The Father had restored to Him the glory that He had shared with the Father before the world was. That was what he prayed in John 17. We always read it at the Passover.

John 17:5, he said, “And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” He underwent what He did in total faith that the Father would do that—and the Father did.

I Corinthians 15:48-49, “...and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.” This mortal is going to put on immortality. We’re going to come forth out of the graves with a spiritual body. There is a resurrection from the dead—something that has been almost universally misunderstood by all of the religions.

Revelation 20:4-6, we will notice in closing, “And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

Verse 12, “And I saw the dead [the rest of the dead, v. 5], small and great, standing before God....”

We saw a preview of their status back in Ezekiel 37. Israel was used as a type of all mankind. They were raised up, restored to a physical life, given an opportunity to understand God’s plan and purpose and to have God’s Spirit placed within them.

We’re not going to go further into that aspect of it because we’re going to save that for next time when we get into the doctrine of eternal judgment.

Hopefully, this evening, we have a little better insight into the doctrine of the resurrection and the importance of it—understanding the central focus of the resurrection in God’s plan and

God’s working and accomplishing and fulfilling His plan with mankind.

With that we’ll be concluded, and I will look forward to seeing you here on the Sabbath. Good night.

Bible Study # 106
April 13, 1993
Mr. John Ogwyn

Hebrews 6 Series—Doctrine # 6: Eternal Judgment

This evening we **are continuing in this Bible study series**. This evening we **are dealing with the sixth doctrine of the doctrines outlined in Hebrews chapter 6, and that is the doctrine of eternal judgment**. Last Bible study we went into the doctrine of the resurrection; tonight we are going into the doctrine of eternal judgment.

Now the two doctrines—the doctrine of the resurrection and the doctrine of eternal judgment—are very much linked together because you can't fully understand one without the other.

They are quite in variance with what is generally assumed and considered in the world around us. The approach on this subject that is extant in most of the Protestant and Catholic religions involves sort of a marriage of concepts from the Bible with pagan concepts from the Greek and Roman philosophers. There is a problem in the presentation they normally have. They talk about the resurrection and about judgment, but they also talk about the immortality of the soul—that you have an immortal soul that goes flitting off to heaven or hell when you die. Now, since the Catholic Church at least recognized that they needed to sort of do something in-between, the doctrine of purgatory was developed because they recognized that most people really didn't deserve to go to heaven and probably knew that they didn't. Besides, when it comes to getting out of purgatory, that's turned out to be a whole lot better fundraiser than selling oranges ever was.

The Protestants sought to claim that they were rejecting the approach that the Catholic Church had added to the Bible. Nevertheless, the Protestants held on to the fundamental error—the doctrine of the immortality of the soul—which we went into last time when we looked at the doctrine of the resurrection. You see, if you are an immortal soul and you go flitting off to heaven or hell when you die, where is the need for a resurrection and future judgment?

I can remember as a child being confused because you would hear both concepts. You would hear, on the one hand, the preacher telling you that if you died tonight and you weren't saved, you were going to go straight to hell. So you had better come down the aisle and give

your heart to the Lord. On the other hand, they would from time to time read Scripture about the judgment—the time of judgment, the White Throne Judgment—and the resurrection. Of course, if you thought about it, it never made sense. What was the purpose of a future judgment if you were already in heaven or hell and had been there for who knows how long? Were you going to get someone out of heaven and check to make sure that they were supposed to be there? Maybe they sort of sneaked in the back gate and should have been in the other place all this time—or vice-versa. Of course, that's silly and nobody really thought that. What they had was one concept that came out of the Bible and another that came out of pagan mythology. When they tried to marry the two and teach both, they wound up with two incompatible doctrines, which each rendered the other sort of needless.

The Scriptures do teach the mortality of the soul—the fact that when you die, you are dead. But after death, there is a resurrection. When we get into the doctrine of eternal judgment, as we are this evening, we will find that there are different resurrections for different purposes.

The terms that relate to judgment derive from a term in the Greek language which means “to divide,” “to sunder” or “to separate.” It has to do with dividing out what is accurate from what is inaccurate and coming to a conclusion—a period of separation. That is what “judgment” is. It involves separating fact from fiction.

There have been a couple of well-publicized cases in the news recently that the jury has considered. Of course, their responsibility in a situation like that is to separate out all of the information that they hear. They are to sort it out and separate between what is true and what is false, what is accurate and what is not. Now, judgment involves more than simply a verdict. Judgment can be the process of deciding and coming to a conclusion.

There are a number of things from which we can take note. Let's begin in John 9.

John 9:39-41, “And Jesus said, ‘For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.’ Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, ‘Are we blind also?’ Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, “We see.” Therefore your sin remains.’”

Turn back to John 7. If we notice the context, we find that this section of Scripture is dealing with the Last Great Day.

John 7:37, “On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.’”

He goes through John 7, 8 and 9 in the context of what He addressed on the Last Great Day. It is in this context that Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world.” ‘I have come into the world for the purpose of discernment, of judgment, of making and drawing distinctions and making decisions.’ One of the things He brought out in this context is that those who did not see would be able to see because it is in the context of the Last Great Day that all humanity will ultimately have an opportunity to really see the truth.

Of course, the Pharisees raised the question and said, ‘Well, You consider us blind?’ And He said, ‘Well, if you were blind, you wouldn’t have any sin and you wouldn’t be responsible in the way that you are. You say, “We see.” Therefore your sins remains.’

It is a matter that we are responsible.

James 4:17, “...to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”

In Acts 24, we find Paul on trial. He had been arrested and brought before Felix.

Acts 24:24-25, “And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. Now as he reasoned about [What did Paul speak about?] righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid [KJV, “trembled”] and answered, ‘Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.’”

Now, it didn’t take long for Felix to hear all the sermons that he wanted to hear because Paul addressed three topics: righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come. When he spoke about righteousness (the standard by which God ultimately will judge), self-control (that we should be exercising—control upon ourselves) and judgment (that there is ultimately an accountability to God), we find that Felix trembled. Felix became very nervous and very upset.

Here is why.

Verse 26, “Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him.” He called him in and gave him a chance to bribe him. Felix wanted a bribe! Here was Paul talking about

righteousness, temperance and the judgment to come and old Felix (sort of the “Edwin Edwards” of the day, as far as governor) was there and waiting to see what Paul was going to give him to turn him loose. He became nervous when Paul discussed the judgment to come. And he said, ‘You know, look, we better talk more about this later.’ The judgment to come—there is an accountability; there is a time of decision. There is a time of judgment that is to come, and it will come with consequences that will last forever. You know, man’s courts make a decision and that decision has impact right now. But there is coming a judgment that has consequences that go way beyond right now.

Romans 2:2-3, it says, “But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?”

Verse 1 says, “Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.” Here were people who stood ready to judge and condemn others, yet they were themselves doing the same things.

We are reminded that the judgment of God is according to truth. It’s not based on rumor; it’s not based on hearsay. It’s not based on circumstantial evidence. The judgment of God is according to truth. Those who are quick to condemn others, while they themselves are doing the same things, are not going to escape the judgment of God. There is a judgment with eternal consequences. We, of course, read over that a number of times in Hebrews 6.

Hebrews 6:2, “...of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.” A judgment with eternal consequence—the doctrine of eternal judgment.

The purpose of the resurrection is because there is accountability. Man is not simply an animal that lives his life as just a blimp on the screen, just an accident. Man is part of a grand purpose and design that God is working out. There is accountability because man is made in the likeness and image of God.

I Peter 4:17-18, we notice a little more about judgment, “For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now ‘if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?’”

The time has come that judgment must begin at the house or household of God. So the time of judgment is not necessarily all future tense. **The time of judgment for the people of God is now.** God is judging the Church right now. The time has come when judgment must begin at the house of God. If it starts with us, where is it going to lead for those that obey not the Gospel of God? There is this judgment of God. The judgment that comes begins with the people of God. It is a judgment for those in the Church. There is a judgment that is in process right now. There is a judgment to come for others.

Revelation 17:1-2, “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, ‘Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication [speaking of this great false religious system]....’ It says, ‘I will show you the judgment that is going to come to pass, what will occur.’”

As we come on down in Revelation 18, we find the story of this judgment.

Revelation 18:2, “And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a habitation of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!’”

In v. 10, it says, “‘standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’””

The judgment of Babylon the Great is yet future. The judgment of the house of God is present. The judgment of Babylon the Great is coming.

Come on a little further in Revelation.

Revelation 20:1-3, we find, “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more....”

Verses 4-5, “And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (But the rest of the dead did not live again until

the thousand years were finished.) This is the first resurrection.”

Here, we see thrones and they that sat upon them. Judgment is given to them. Judgment is something that Jesus Christ came to bring about. Judgment—there is a judgment to come. There is a judgment and accountability to God. There is currently judgment upon the Church. There is future judgment upon this world’s system—upon Babylon the Great.

During the thousand years, the saints are going to reign with Christ and judgment will be given to them—the authority to make decisions and make judgments. So a part of what we are being trained for is to take part in judgment—to take part in judgment that has very far reaching consequences—eternal consequences, if you will. And, of course, the basis of that judgment is the basis of all of the judgment that we are given, that we are told. Jesus instructed His disciples to judge righteous judgment.

John 7:24, Jesus said, “‘Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.’” What is righteous judgment?

In Psalms 119:172, it says, “My tongue shall speak of Your word, for all Your commandments are righteousness.”

Back in v. 144, it says, “The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting....”

In v. 142, it says, “Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is truth.” Come on down in Psalm 119.

Psalm 119:160, “The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.”

When we are told that we will sit on thrones, we will be in the process of judging, of exercising judgment. The kind of judgment we are to judge is righteous judgment, which is judgment that is based on the law of God—the commandments of God.

Notice back in Isaiah 32.

Isaiah 32:1, “Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice.”

We are going to sit on thrones judging; judgment will be given to us. That is what it says, “a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice.”

Coming on down in vv. 16-17, it says, “Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.” You see, there is a consequence to righteousness. Righteousness produces peace.

When people are obeying the commandments of God, there will be peace because nobody is going to be coveting, stealing, trying to do violence to his neighbor, engaged in immorality or spreading lies and deceit. You know, when you eliminate those things, then you eliminate the very things which are the basis of all of the strife and the trouble. So there is a consequence here. We will administer. In order to make judgment, in order to exercise judgment, we will administer the basis of God's judgment. The basis of God's judgment is God's law—God's Word. The world will be judged by the Word of God.

Isaiah 33:5-6, speaking of this time, it says, "The Lord is exalted, for He dwells on high; He has filled Zion with justice and righteousness. Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times, and the strength of salvation; the fear of the Lord is His treasure."

Verse 6, "Wisdom and knowledge will be the stability of your times..." We have the basis for stability in a very unstable world because we have wisdom and knowledge that originates from God.

Psalms 119:98-99, David said, "You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation." We have the basis of wisdom and of proper knowledge.

Psalms 111:10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments." David addressed all those subjects.

We are going to exercise judgment and that judgment is going to be based on the Word of God. Eternal judgment means that there is a judgment to come. Jesus Christ is going to come to judge the world. Judgment right now, though, is on the House of God. We are being judged by the same standard that the world will ultimately be judged by, and that standard is the Word of God—being judged by things which are written here in this Book.

Notice Matthew 19.

Matthew 19:27, "Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?' So Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My

name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit everlasting life.'"

They were to sit, as He said, "in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you shall sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Here, we find a time of judgment. Now, this time of judgment was not going to be just a time of sentencing. Judgment is a process of dividing or separating, of making a decision. It goes way beyond simply rendering a verdict because there is that time of judgment coming.

Let's notice John 3.

John 3:17, "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world [The word that is translated "condemn" is the same word as "judge." "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world" or "to judge the world."], but that the world through Him might be saved."

Verse 18, "He who believes in Him is not condemned [judged] already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

The point is that Jesus Christ did not come the first time for judgment; He came for salvation. He came to make possible our salvation. He is going to return to judge the world and the saints of the most high will share that judgment and kingdom under Him. That's why we're in the process of being converted, of being transformed, being renewed in our inward man—Christ living and dwelling in us.

We are told in John 5...

[Tape ends on side 1.]

[Editorial comment: The material in brackets is missing on the tape.]

[John 5:22-24, we're told, "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.'"]

In v. 25, we are told, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live."

Verses 28-29, it says, "...for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation (KJV, "damnation")."

The term is "judgment." In fact, interestingly, the word in the Greek language is a word that we would spell out in English as "k-r-i-s-i-s." Now, if you look at that, it looks like "crisis," except it is spelled with a "k" instead of a "c." We pronounce the "c" in "crisis" as though it were a "k." "Crisis," or "*krisis*" in the Greek, is a term that is used in some places for "judgment" and it focuses in on the verdict that will ultimately be rendered. We use the term "crisis" in the context of an illness when it reaches the point where it's going to go one way or the other—the person is either going to die or they are going to get better. That was the crisis.

The same is used in the context of battles, where it was going to go one way or it was going to go the other. We find, as we look at some of the places this word is used, that God allows events to come to a point where they will go one way or another. One of the statements refers to the end-time as the "crisis at the close of the age" or "the judgment at the end" because when events of the magnitude that are going to happen do happen, it forces people to make decisions and go one way or another. God allows circumstances in that way. There are times of separation; there are times of decision-making.

In Matthew 10, we will note some things about a time of judgment, a time of verdict.

Matthew 10:15, "Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!" —Speaking of the city that would not receive Christ's disciples (v. 14). Here, we find a time of future judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah. Their judgment was not total, not all finished. There is a time of future judgment for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Matthew 12:39-42, Jesus said, "...'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and

condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.'"

We find it clearly stated that there is a future day of judgment. **There is a time of judgment in which people of all generations, backgrounds and ethnic groups will arise.** There is a time of judgment. We know the men of Nineveh, who flourished perhaps eight centuries prior to the time Christ, were prophesied to rise up with the generation He was addressing right here. The Queen of the South, who flourished nine centuries before the people of Sodom and Gomorrah—who flourished perhaps seventeen or eighteen centuries before—all of them were prophesied to rise up with the generation that Christ was addressing. Here are people separated by time and space. People who spoke different languages, who came from different cultures and backgrounds, who were separated by vast distances of time—they are all going to rise together in a future period of judgment. There is a judgment of far-reaching consequences that is going to come. We will look a little further and see even more about this judgment that is to come.

We saw Jesus addressed the subject in John 3:17-18. His first coming was not coming for judgment; it was coming for salvation.

John 5:22, we also find, "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son."

Let's notice a little bit about the judgment.

John 12:42-43, "Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God."

Here is one of the crucial points of understanding judgment: Whose approval are we seeking? The doctrine of eternal judgment is very important because it reminds us of the fact that there are consequences for our decisions and our actions that go far beyond right here and right now. It's not enough to win the approval of people. It's not enough to get people to agree with you. There are things that are far greater than that because there is a time of judgment.

Here are individuals who were not willing to take a stand because they didn't want to be put out of the synagogue. And the Pharisees who controlled the synagogue had already made up their minds. Christ mentioned in Matthew 23:2 that the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. They exercised quite a bit of authority. They had

already made a decision that if anyone were to acknowledge that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, this was going to be grounds to put them out of the synagogue. Here were individuals who were sure that He probably was the Messiah, but they were more concerned about what people thought than they were about what God thought. That is a very fatal decision.

John 12:44-50, “Then Jesus cried out and said, ‘He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.’”

The point is that while Jesus Christ did not come to judge the world at that time, there is a time of judging. There is a time of judgment! And one of the things we recognize, if we really understand the doctrine of eternal judgment, is that God’s evaluation is far more crucial than the evaluation of people. It is something which we must be far more concerned with than simply what people think. People tend to be concerned about what other people think because that is who they can see. They look around and they can see other people. People can say things and do things, and we live in a world where we are impressed by what we see.

In II Corinthians 5:7, God tells us we must walk by faith, which involves being impressed by what we can’t see. Recognizing that even if no one sees what you do, God sees and knows. *We live our lives before God—not simply before human beings.* A lot of people think they can really put something over if they manage to do something, keep it covered up and other people don’t find out. They don’t understand the doctrine of eternal judgment—there is an accountability that we have. That accountability isn’t simply to people; it’s to God.

In Acts 17, the Apostle Paul speaks of that as he is addressing the Athenians on Mars’ Hill.

Verses 22-24, he told them, “...‘Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the

objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the one whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: God, who made the world and everything in it [This is the Creator God, the God that made the world.]...”

Verse 26, “‘And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their habitation.’”

Verses 28-29, “‘for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’” Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising.’”

Verses 31-32, “‘because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead. And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked...’”

They thought that was crazy. They didn’t believe in the resurrection. They believed that the last thing you wanted to do was to resurrect the body. They believed that death separated this pure, immortal soul from this old evil body. This was, of course, the doctrine of the Greek philosophers, certainly going back to Socrates and Plato.

So Paul addressed the subject of the resurrection and the subject of judgment—that the Creator God had appointed a day in which He would judge the world. He would do so in righteousness and He would do so through an Individual He had already testified to through raising Him from the dead. The resurrection—raising Him from the dead—was God’s stamp of authenticity that Jesus Christ was exactly who He said He was.

Well, the Athenians were not impressed. But we learn here, again, that there is a time of judgment and that judgment is going to be administered through Jesus Christ. He is the One that has been appointed to that office.

Let’s notice one other place.

II Timothy 4:1, “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom.” We find that Jesus Christ will judge the world. He will judge the living and the dead at the time of His appearing—the time of His Kingdom. There is a time of judgment. God has appointed a time of judgment to come.

We saw in the book of Revelation the statement that the judgment of the Great Whore would come.

Revelation 17:1, "...‘Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters.’"

Revelation 18:4, "...‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.’"

Verse 10, "...‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’" There is a time that God is going to judge this world’s system.

God steps in to judge the world with those events that are called the Day of the Lord. The period called the Great Tribulation is called the time of Satan’s wrath directed against physical Israel (It’s called, in the book of Jeremiah, “the time of Jacob’s trouble.”) and against spiritual Israel—the Church.

Revelation 12:17, we read, “And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.” He goes to make war with the rest of her offspring. The Tribulation represents Satan’s wrath, but God is going to step in and He begins to pour out His wrath in that final year called the Day of the Lord.

Joel 3:14, that’s why we read, “Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.”

Verse 12, “Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations [KJV, “heathens”].”

In v. 12, it talks about the Valley of Jehoshaphat and in v. 14 it is called the Valley of Decision—the valley of judgment.

When all of these armies converge and the great God steps in, it is the Valley of Decision—or the Valley of Judgment—because God is going to judge the world. He will judge the world in righteousness. The sinful nations will be judged as the plagues of the Day of the Lord are poured out. That is described in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 11:15, “Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever!’”

Verse 18, “The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged....” It is, of course, a time when the nations are angry and God’s wrath is come, a time when the nations shall be judged.

There will come a time of accountability that we find here. We could go on through all of the description that is given here of the time of God’s judgment. But the judgment that God pours out on the sinful nations sets the stage of conquest for the beginning of the Millennium. It merely sets the stage for what is to come.

Revelation 19:1-2, we read, “After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, ‘Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her.’” Here, we have God’s judgment referenced.

Verse 11, “Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.” We find Jesus Christ returning to judge the world.

Revelation 20:4, “And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them...And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”

Verse 6, we are told, “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” Here we find the role of the resurrected saints as kings and priest and to reign with Jesus Christ for the thousand years. They sit on thrones judging the nations.

The twelve apostles specifically will be judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). God is a God of order and organization. There’ll be structure and organization set up.

There is a time of judgment coming, a time we read of in Isaiah 32.

Isaiah 32:1 when, “...a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule with justice.” It is a time of judging the nations. This is not just a matter of sentencing the nation. Here are individuals that will be judged, that will be separated out. The role of the priests and the king was to administer God’s judgment and to teach the people the basis of that judgment. That is our function through the thousand years.

Now, that’s not the end of the story because what about all the people who have lived and died down through the centuries, all “the dead small and great.” (the significant and the insignificant)?

Revelation 20:11, “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there

was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.” Here, we find a time of judgment, a time that will be after the thousand years.

Revelation 20:5 tells us, “...the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished....”

Those who are in the first resurrection are called blessed and holy.

Verse 6, “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” They are those who are Christ’s at His coming.

Judgment is now of the house of God (I Peter 4:17). We are under God’s judgment now.

Revelation 22:12, when Jesus Christ returns He says, ““And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.”” Christ is going to come back and His reward is with Him. He says, “I come quickly and My reward is with Me.”

We are saved by grace and rewarded according to works. We could go through various parables and different things Christ gave illustrating that principle. The point is that our time of judgment is now. The judgment of the nations will begin during the final year leading up to Christ’s return, called the Day of the Lord. The time when the plagues begin to be poured out on the Beast and the Beast system culminate when Christ returns, and then there will be judgment that will begin to be exercised over the nations. We will share in that process of judging. There is a time to come, a time when all the dead, small and great, will stand up and will stand before God. We find that referenced in Revelation 20:12.

We already read Matthew 10 and Matthew 12, where Jesus spoke of a time when people separated by centuries of time and by hundreds of miles and location would all rise together in a time of judgment. And He spoke of the fact that it would be better for some—of course, for Sodom and Gomorrah or the people of Nineveh or the Queen of Sheba—than for the generation He was addressing.

Let’s understand a little bit about the judgment that is described here because there are **three resurrections** that are described in the Bible. The **first resurrection** is the one we commonly

focus on. It is the resurrection to glory—the resurrection of those who are Christ’s at His coming. It is the resurrection of the saints who will rule and reign with Christ for a thousand years. That is the best resurrection, the better resurrection (Hebrews 11:35). Those who are in that resurrection are called blessed and holy because they are part of the first resurrection and don’t need to fear death ever again because they have been resurrected to immortality.

But what about the people of Sodom, the people of Nineveh and the people of Jesus’ day—are they going to be resurrected to immortality? Well, no. Why would that be?

There is an interesting account given back in Ezekiel 37, which is the **second resurrection**.

Ezekiel 37:1-5, “The hand of the Lord came upon me [Ezekiel] and brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones. Then He caused me to pass by them all around, and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed they were very dry. And He said to me, ‘Son of man, can these bones live?’ So I answered, ‘O Lord God, You know.’ Again He said to me, ‘Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, “O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: ‘Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live.’””

Verse 7, “So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone.” –Leg connected to the knee bone and all the way up.

Can you imagine this vision? Ezekiel was transported in a vision, in likeness as though he was there. He gazes out and sees a giant valley just full of dry bones. When he makes this announcement, all of a sudden, the bones are shaking and rattling and all this noise and commotion is going on. He looks and here are all these bones are coming together. Can you imagine what this must have looked like? Even if it was a vision, it must have scared the daylight out of him to see this—all these bones beginning to rattle and shake and begin to come together! He saw that and before long, it was like there were skeletons all over the place where just before, it had been a jumble of dry bones.

Then he did as God told him and sinews and flesh came upon them (v. 8)—the skin covered them. So all of a sudden, from skeletons—it’s like he could see it step by step as the veins and internal organs appeared, the flesh came and covered them, then the skin covered them and

the valley was littered with corpses. They were dead. There wasn't any breath in them (v. 8).

Verses 9-10, he was told, "...'Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, "Thus says the Lord God: 'Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.'"" So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army." –An exceedingly great multitude. They were alive.

Verses 11-14, "Then He said to me, 'Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, "Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off!" Therefore prophesy and say to them, "Thus says the Lord God: 'Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves. I will put My....'"'"

[Tape ends on side 2.]

[Editorial comment: The material in brackets was taken from a sermon Mr. Ogwyn gave on June 23, 1990, which completes this topic.]

[Verse 14, "....'...Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it,' says the Lord."'"

God will restore the whole house of Israel to life. Matthew 12:41-42, "'The men of Nineveh will rise in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.'" –Resurrection to judgment.

Over half of all the people who ever lived on earth are alive right now.

The **third resurrection** is described.

Revelation 20:14-15, "Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." –The second death.

Malachi 4:1-3, "'For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day

which is coming shall burn them up,' says the LORD of hosts, 'that will leave them neither root nor branch. But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this,' says the LORD of hosts."

Hebrews 10 explains who will be in the second death.

Hebrews 10:26, "For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins."

Appreciate and value the knowledge God has given us. Set your heart on fulfilling the great purpose God is working in our lives.]

Bible Study # 107
May 18, 1993
Mr. John Ogwyn

Hebrews 6 Series—Doctrine # 7: Going on to Perfection

Brethren, this evening we **are drawing to the conclusion of this Bible study series taken from the book of Hebrews.** To me, it seems like we've run through it awfully quickly, but this **is the seventh part in the series, going on to perfection.**

In Hebrews 6—well, let's go back and pick it up in Hebrews 5:12. Paul is writing to old time Christians—people who had been in the Church for many years.

Hebrews 5:12, he tells us, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God [the very beginning, the very elemental principles of God's Word]; and you have come to need milk and not solid food." He's sort of correcting them. They had been in the Church long enough that by this time, they should have been in a position to be of help to others and able to teach others, but now they needed to actually have somebody take them back through the basics so they could really understand them. The basics were things they should have been grounded in back in the beginning.

He said they had "come to need milk and not solid food." The analogy is to the digestive system. A little child or someone, in that sense, who is immature (compared here in a spiritual sense) is not able to digest the really strong body building material. They are not able to digest meat and have need of milk. Paul is comparing, saying their spiritual digestion is very underdeveloped. That's what he's telling them.

Verse 13, "For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe." He is saying that if they are still using milk, it's because they don't have experience in really using God's Word. You see, God's Word was given to us as a means of being able to distinguish between what's appropriate and inappropriate conduct, of being able to regulate our lives in all these areas. He's bringing out that those who still need milk have not developed skills in using God's Word to regulate their lives and be able to really see things as they are.

Verse 14, "But solid food belongs to those who are of full age [those who are mature]...." The word "mature" is a word that we are going to notice for the doctrine that we are going through this evening. The word in the Greek language is "*telos*." In many areas, it's translated "perfect." It is a word that is used in v. 1 of Hebrews 6 when we are told about going on to perfection.

Verse 14, "...solid food belongs to those who are of full age [those who are mature and developed spiritually] that is, those...." —Now, who are "those"? Who are those that are mature and spiritually developed? Because the doctrine we are going to focus on this evening is going on to—advancing to that state of—spiritual maturity—going on to perfection, as it is in the King James Bible.

Verse 14, "...solid food belongs to those who are of full age [those who are mature and spiritually developed], that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." So here are people who have utilized their senses, their abilities. God has given us a mind and they have exercised that mind to understand the truth.

Hold your place here because I want to take you to a warning that the Apostle John gave a few years later. We understand a little bit of the problem that Paul was addressing. Just hold your place here in Hebrews and let's turn back to I John 2

I John 2:24-25, "Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life." This is why we continue.

Verse 26, "These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you." So there were those in the first century who were attempting to deceive the early Church. In fact in III John, John talks about an individual who actually gained control in a local Church area and was putting out true Christians—a man by the name of Diotrephes who is mentioned in III John 9.

In I John 2:26, he is talking about those who deceive you.

Verse 27, "But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you, but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him." Now, what is he talking about? This anointing or "unction," as it is sometimes translated, is a reference to the

receiving of the Holy Spirit. It is a comparison of being anointed with oil because the Spirit is compared to something that can be poured out. One verse says we have an unction of the Spirit or an anointing of the Spirit.

Notice I John 2.

I John 2:20-21, “But you have an anointing [KJV, “unction”] from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth.” Now, when he said, “you have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things,” he says you have an anointing; you have the indwelling of the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God opens your mind to understand the truth.

Now understand, the problem that was creeping into the early New Testament Church is what is described as the mystery of iniquity, the mystery of lawlessness (II Thessalonians 2:7). It was the mystery religion. It was based on the belief that you couldn't understand, that the average person couldn't expect to understand the Scriptures and understand the truth. They said you had to have it interpreted for you. You had to have the mystery interpreted. This was the concept.

Many of you grew up in a Catholic background. Those of you who are a little older know that you were told there wasn't any need to study the Bible. They used to stress it in the Catholic Church. ‘Look, you don't need to bother yourselves studying the Bible. You can't understand the Bible. The priest will tell you what you need to know.’ Those of you who came out of Catholic backgrounds—particularly some of you who are a little older—know what they have traditionally said. The only reason they don't say it quite as emphatically today is because they have all the bright lights shining in on them. They still think that, but they don't emphasize it quite as strongly. They used to discourage people from reading the Bible. A lot of devout Catholic families didn't have a Bible in the house. They discouraged you from reading the Bible. Again, many of you are aware of that. This was the beginning of that sort of attitude. They said, ‘You don't need to read the Bible; we will tell you what you need to know. You don't need to study it. You can't understand it anyway.’ Now, that's not the biblical approach. That is not truth.

Obviously, that's not what he's talking about when he said, “you don't need that anyone teach you.” He was, of course, doing some teaching right here. What he was talking about is the fact that when your mind is open and God is working

with your mind, you have the ability to recognize and understand the truth. If God's Spirit is working with you, the truth makes sense. It just does, and the truth isn't something that you can't understand or that you can't come up with. So he stressed the anointing because this was already beginning to be promulgating.

You have to realize that by the time John died—less than twenty years from the time of John's death or within about twenty years of John's death—the Church was already gravitating toward Sunday keeping. Within thirty-five years of John's death, the Sabbath observance was quickly being stamped out in the main areas that call themselves “Christians.” That's how quickly some of those things happened. Those forces were already at work.

Verse 27, John was warning them about that and the fact that you have, “...the anointing [the receiving of the Holy Spirit] which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true....” It's truth. The Holy Spirit is what opens your mind to understand the truth. You can understand the truth.

Now with that as the background, we come back to Hebrews 5

Hebrews 5:14, “...solid food belongs to those who are of full age [those who are mature and complete; coming to spiritual maturity and completion] that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” In other words, they have been using their mind. God gave them a mind. They have been utilizing that mind empowered by the Holy Spirit to evaluate what they were seeing and hearing and compare it with the Scriptures.

Years ago, Mr. Herbert Armstrong ran an article on education and he had a little cartoon drawn to illustrate the article. This cartoon emphasized and really illustrated—a picture is worth a thousand words and a good cartoonist can capture an entire article or essay in one picture—students in a classroom sitting in their desks. They all had a little hole on the top of their heads, and the teacher was coming around with a funnel, sticking the funnel on the top of their heads and pouring knowledge in. —Just sort of pouring it in, just funneling it into their heads. They were just sitting there, little automatons, and everything was being poured in.

That illustrates, of course, a lot of their approach, but that's not the approach God wants if we are ever going to come to spiritual maturity. Rather, we have those who are of full age. Those who

come to spiritual maturity are “those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” They’ve made a habit of exercising their senses—exercising their mind guided by the Spirit of God to discern good and evil. They compare what they hear, what they see and life’s situations and circumstances with which they deal and things that they encounter. They compare those things to the Scriptures and are able then to develop a spiritual maturity—a spiritual mind.

A carnal mind looks for loopholes. ‘What can I get out of doing this? What is it that I don’t have to do? What kind of trouble will I get into if I don’t do this? What kind of trouble will I get into if I do this? I wonder, what they’ll do about it if they find out?’ That’s a carnal approach. It’s not a spiritually-minded approach.

A spiritually-minded approach is a matter of searching the Scriptures and trying to understand and discern what the will of God is. What would God have us do? God doesn’t spell out everything—“Thou shall and thou shall not.” He spells out a number of basic things, but many things God illustrates by examples. You can go through, read examples and find certain actions and approaches that pleased God and God praised them. And you can find other actions and approaches that didn’t please God and brought evil consequences. We are given insight into the mind of God.

As we go through life, we combine education and experience. That is what the Christian life is. You could compare it to somebody just coming out of college that got an education. Maybe they have been studying engineering. Well, that’s great, but they have never engineered anything. Maybe they have been studying civil engineering, but they have never built anything. Maybe they’ve never had any practical hands-on experience. All the knowledge and information that they’ve gained in college is great, but if they combine it with practical work in the field over a period of years, the combination of utilizing that knowledge in a practical way deepens it, and they’re able to apply it in practical situations. They grow in their ability and they get to a point where they’re not only capable of carrying things out without a lot of supervision, but they are in a position to explain to others and offer advice because they have the combination of knowledge plus practical experience.

That’s what mature Christianity ought to be. We gain basic knowledge as we read the Scriptures and as we live and apply them to our day-to-day life circumstances—in our marriage, in our

family, on our job, in our relationship with our neighbors, in our day-to-day life and in all the things that come up, issues that arise—searching the Scriptures and being able to apply Scriptural principles. Over a period of years, we ought to develop that mature experience that God is talking about right here.

Hebrews 6:1-2, Paul then goes on to say, “Therefore, leaving [or going on from] the discussion [the first words] of the elementary principles of Christ [KJV, “the doctrine of Christ”], let us go on to perfection [let us go on to maturity and completion as a Christian], not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works [If you don’t know what sin is, what the law is and the role of sin and the law, you have to go back to the beginning.] and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.” These things provide a basis. Then we need to go on to perfection. We need to go on to perfection! As I mentioned, this term “perfection” used here comes from the Greek word “*telos*” which has to do with “the end,” in the sense of “an end result, of working toward an end, working toward a goal, a completion with a specific end in view.” That’s sort of the concept. The “*telos*” is the concept of “end,” not in the sense that it’s over with or that it’s finished, so much as it is that a specific goal or a specific thing has been accomplished.

We’ll notice some places that the word is used and the context. Let’s notice in Colossians 3.

Colossians 3:13-14, “bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.” What is the thing that binds together spiritual maturity and completion? —Love. So if we are going on to perfection, that is certainly going to involve the matter of love.

Let’s go on. We have a lot to cover if we are going to get this concept in full perspective.

John 4:34, “Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.’” —To bring to the desired end and completion. Not just get it over with, but to bring it to the desired end and completion. “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.” If we are really following Christ, our desire is to finish the work of God. If we are indifferent toward really carrying out the commission that God has laid out, if we are, Jesus Christ said, “My food is to do the will of

Him who sent Me, and to finish [to bring to the desired completed result] His work.”

John 17:4, “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.” The specific work that Jesus Christ was to accomplish as a human being, He brought to the desired result. He didn’t just come to quitting time and punch out.

That’s the concept a lot of people have with being finished. The whistle blows; they think it’s quitting time. ‘I’m ready to punch out.’ They may not have gotten the job done, but that doesn’t matter. It’s quitting time. That’s not the perspective that we’re to have in terms of finishing the Work. That’s not the “finish” that Christ had in mind. It’s not a matter of just getting to quitting time; it’s a matter of bringing to the desired result.

Christ brought through what was given to Him to do as a human being. Now He has been working through His people down through the centuries. God has a Work that is to be completed, and it will be completed—no question. The only question that ever arises is: what will be our role as individuals? Will we be a part of what God finishes?

Romans 9:28, he says, “For He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness. Because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth.” God’s going to make a short work. He’s going to cut it short in righteousness and it’s going to be finished.

It’s what you read of in Matthew 24.

Matthew 24:14, He clearly prophesied, “...this gospel of the kingdom [the same gospel Jesus Christ brought] will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” It’s not a matter of, ‘Well, maybe that will happen; maybe it won’t.’ No, it’s going to happen. It’s clearly prophesied and directed that it will happen. The only thing that’s ever at issue is our role as individuals. And part of that centers around our desire and our fervency to bring to completion what God has called us to do.

Notice Paul’s approach. Some think they already have it made. I grew up in the Baptist Church and remember years ago one of the things that was a defining doctrine of the Baptist Church was “once saved, always saved.” Some of you who were Baptist are aware of that. Well, Paul didn’t believe that doctrine. If you really understand *when* you are saved, then that is true.

Matthew 24:13, “...he who endures to the end shall be saved.” So once you’ve endured to the

end and have been changed to spirit at the resurrection, you will always be saved—once you’ve been saved in the full and complete sense.

Philippians 3:12, Paul says, in terms of our present circumstance, “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected [Paul says, ‘I am not complete; God’s not through with me yet, and I know that I have not already attained.’]; but I press on [I am pursuing something.], that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.” He says, ‘I am pursuing an end. There is a goal in mind that I am pursuing, and I desire to apprehend that.

Verses 13-15, “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended [Paul says, ‘I don’t kid myself that I’ve already made it.’]; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature [KJV, “perfect”] [be coming to maturity and completion], have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you.” The emphasis here, as we find, is a direction, a course of conduct.

Now, let’s look at what this end involves and what it is we are to be attaining.

Hebrews 2:9-11, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower [or, temporarily lower] than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone, for it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.”

God is using Him to bring many sons to glory. That’s our destiny, as sons of God, to inherit in the Family of God, to inherit God’s glory. We’re not going to be angels or some super-duper angels. We’re going to be part of the very Family of God, “bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect [complete, brought to maturity] through sufferings.”

Jesus Christ learned in the things that He went through. He developed in that way as experiencing what’s humanity. He was in the beginning with the Father.

John 1:1-3, we are told, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with

God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” He was the instrument of creation—the One by whom all things were made.

But as He tells us in Philippians 2:7, He emptied Himself. He took upon Himself the nature of the seed of Abraham (Hebrews 2:16). He became a human being and went through life as a human being.

Hebrews 5:8-10, “though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected [being made spiritually complete and mature], He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest ‘according to the order of Melchizedek.’”

Now this brings us right into the very section that we are looking at. Why does God allow us as Christians to go through trials, tests and difficulties? Why hasn’t the history of the Church of God been smooth sailing all the way along—calm waters, smooth sailing? Why haven’t the lives of individual Christians just been smooth sailing? You come into the Church and, boy, everything is great because after all, you’re trying to obey God now. So everything is smooth; you never have problems, difficulties, traumas or tragedies. No!

As God’s people, we certainly can look to God for help, strength and blessings, but we’re not insulated from the fact that we still live in Satan’s world. We are brought to spiritual completion and maturity through things that we suffer—adversities, difficulties, ups and downs that we go through and choices we have to make. “He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected [brought to completion as a human being]....”

Now, He was perfect as God before He ever became a human being, but He elected to become human and go through life as a human being and set us an example that we should follow in His steps, showing us that it is possible. It is possible! None of us are totally, completely and perfectly yielded as Christ was. None of us have the fullness of God’s Spirit that He was given—the Spirit without measure. But He set us an example, and to the extent that we really seek to utilize God’s Spirit and following after that example, we can reap the benefits. He went through these things.

Come on down in Hebrews 7.

Hebrews 7:19, “for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.” The law couldn’t bring us to spiritual

completion. The law, the commandments, reveals the standard. You wouldn’t know what sin was if it weren’t for the law. The law tells you what’s right and what’s wrong. Then the ceremonial law pointed us to the fact that we are sinners in need of a Savior. But that could not make us spiritually complete. But, of course, “the bringing in of a better hope,” which is what Jesus Christ did, is the means by which we can come to that completion.

Come on a little further in Hebrews 9.

Hebrews 9:8-9, speaking of the tabernacle and the ceremonial system, “the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All [the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and later in the temple] was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect [complete, finish] in regard to the conscience—” Those things only made a reminder.

If you want to know what part of the law was done away, it’s given in the next verse.

Verse 10, “concerned only with foods and drinks [the meat offerings; the drink offerings], various washings, and fleshly ordinances [the physical rituals] imposed until the time of reformation.” So the only part of the law that was temporarily added was the food (KJV, “meat”) offerings, the drink offerings, the various washing and the physical rituals. Those were the parts of the law that were added until the time of reformation. All the rest of the law was still enforced and in effect. It is simply the ceremonial aspects of the law—the physical rituals, the food offerings, the drink offerings and the various ceremonial washings—those all had to do with impressing a spiritual lesson.

The food (meat) offerings and the drink offerings pointed out the fact that there was need for a Savior, that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (Hebrews 9:22), that the blood has to be poured out, that a life has to be slain because the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). The various washings pointed out the fact that we are unclean and have to be washed. We are washed by the washing of the water and the Word (Ephesians 5:26), in a spiritual sense.

The physical rituals impressed upon us the fact that God wants things done a specific way. You can’t just do it any old way and figure God will be pleased with it. He won’t. He tells us the way He wants to be worshipped. He wants us to worship in spirit and in truth. It’s not enough just to worship God in a good attitude. Now, you

ought to worship Him in a good attitude. That's the only kind of worship that will be acceptable to God, but that's not enough. You also have to worship Him in truth—in spirit and in truth; the two go hand in hand together. The physical rituals served to emphasize the point that God wanted things done in a specific way.

Hebrews 10:1-2, “For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered....”

If those sacrifices could have brought about spiritual perfection and completion, they would have been finished. They were offered as a reminder. It was only the shed blood of Jesus Christ—the very member of the God Family that had knelt down, created the first man out of the dust of the ground, took a rib out of Him and from that fashioned the first woman, the One who breathed into Adam the breath of life and he became a living being, and the One who was the actual giver of life—whose life was worth more than the sum total of all human lives added together. So the law was a shadow. The ceremonial law, the sacrificial law, was a shadow. It foreshadowed the things that were to come but couldn't bring about completion. They couldn't bring things to the finish.

In Hebrews 11, we go through all the men and women of faith.

Hebrews 11:39-40, it says, “And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.” – Should not be brought to completion. They obtained a good report through faith, but they've not yet received the promises. They are asleep in the grave awaiting the resurrection. “God having provided something better for us [or foreseen some better thing for us] [the giving of His Holy Spirit] that they should not be made perfect apart from us [or, prior to us].” They would not be brought to completion because the ultimate perfection (“telos”), if you will, is in the resurrection.

That's why we read of that as we come to Hebrews 12.

Hebrews 12:22-23, it says, “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in

heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect.”

That's what's made perfect. What's brought to completion is the spirit. We will never become completely perfect in the flesh, but our attitude can become surrendered to God. It is a process of developing an attitude of unconditional surrender to God. The spirit in man, the character that is developed—an attitude and a character of surrender to God—that is what will be brought to perfection. When we are given a spirit body at the resurrection, the temptations of the flesh are no longer there. The temptations of a corrupt society, the influence of Satan the devil, those things are no longer there. There is an attitude, a spirit that has repented and has yielded to God, has developed spiritual character, and has had the very character of God imprinted, “to the spirits of just men made perfect.”

Come on over to the book of James.

James 2:21-22, “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?” It was brought to completion. Faith is evidenced by action. If we believe it, we act on it. If we won't act on it, we obviously don't believe it very much. We're told here that, “by works was faith made perfect [brought through to the end; to the desired result].”

1 John 2:5, “But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected [brought through to the desired result] in him. By this we know that we are in Him.” If you keep the Word of God, then the love of God is brought to the completion—to perfection. It is brought to the desired result in your life.

There are those that think, ‘Well, love is one thing and law is something else.’ And, of course, the world is filled with that approach because they don't really understand the relationship of love and law. Love is not just a feeling or an emotion. If you keep the Word of God, then God's love is brought to the desired end in your life. The Word of God and the law of God provide the channel—the directed channel—through which love can flow.

It's sort of like taming a river, if you want to look at it that way. When levees are built and channels are cleaned so the river is useable and flows in a useable way, it doesn't spread out and flood all the farm land. It's not rushing through rapids and everything in ways that just make it unusable for navigation. It flows through a channel, and the love of God flows through the

channel as the channel is given shape and definition by God's law.

Let's go on. Let's look at I Corinthians 14.

I Corinthians 14:20, where Paul says, "Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature [KJV, "men"] [be perfect]." It's the same word that we've been looking at. It's rendered "men" in King James but only in the sense of being compared to children. Be those who are mature. We are to have a child-like attitude in terms of guile, malice and evil motives, but in terms of understanding, in terms of comprehending, we are to be mature. God wants us to deepen and develop our level of understanding. That's what we build and develop by practicing God's Word, by applying God's Word in our lives, and by exercising our senses to discern what is appropriate and inappropriate.

Let's go to Ephesians 4.

Ephesians 4:11-15, where it says, "And He Himself gave some [talking of gifts Christ gave to the Church, to His people] to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man [to a complete spiritually developed man], to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—"

Our object in developing spiritually is to become just like Jesus Christ. He is our pattern. He's our example. And the whole reason why God instituted a ministry....

[Tape ends on side 1 and continues on side 2.]

Let's notice.

Colossians 1:26-27, "the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed [What is revealed?] to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery [The magnitude of what this is is just incredible.] among the Gentiles [Paul was making it manifest among the Gentiles.]: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

We will share God's glory. We'll be filled with all the fullness of God. God is reproducing

Himself, in that sense. It's Christ *in us*! As we surrender unconditionally to God, then we are saying we want Jesus Christ to live His life in us through the power of the Holy Spirit, and we are seeking to apply the principles of God's Word. *The Bible is God's Word in print. Jesus Christ was the Word of God in the flesh—He personified the Bible.* As we yield to Him, He will live His life in us and, "Christ in us is our hope of glory" because we are developing the character and the nature that God will perpetuate forever and upon which He will pour out His glory. We will share in the glory of God. Obviously, we'll never have the wisdom, the experience or the full power that God Himself has. God the Father will always be God the Father and Jesus Christ will always be our elder Brother and our Savior. But the mystery is, "Christ in you the hope of glory."

Verses 28-29, "Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect [brought to completion; brought to the desired end] in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily."

Paul says it takes work on our part. It takes work on our part, "To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily." You see, Christ living in us works in us in a mighty way, but we also have to labor and strive according to His working. We're "striving according to His working." It's His working *and* our working.

Now, how does that fit? Well, I dare say, everyone here has used a power tool. Whether it has been a vacuum cleaner or a power saw or whatever. You know there are two components on using a power tool. One, you have to plug it in and turn it on. If you don't do that, you're not going to get much use out of it. But if you plug it in and turn it on and just sit there and watch it, it's just going to be there. You ladies, wouldn't it be nice to turn on your vacuum cleaner and just sort of sit down in your chair and just watch it clean the house? It doesn't work that way. You have to work. You're putting forth effort, but what would all your effort accomplish if you didn't plug it in, if you didn't have power or if the power went out? Boy, you could work all day. You could work two days, a week, a month and wouldn't accomplish anything because it takes power. And it takes the power of God working in us, together with our effort in utilizing that power. You have to have the two working together.

Paul says, "To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily." We're putting forth our effort and it *does* take effort. You don't build and develop holy righteous character—the very character of God—by just sort of sitting there, watching television and waiting for God to funnel it in. But you can work and put forth all the effort in the world, and if the Holy Spirit of God isn't working in you, you'll never do it. You'll just beat your head against the wall because you can never do it.

So, "Christ in you is the hope of glory!" "Christ in you is the hope of glory!" What we're learning is to be like Him. God isn't going to perpetuate something that is this rotten, carnal type of an attitude forever. If God perpetuated that kind of an attitude, Tomorrow's World would be just like the world today—people trying to steal and take what their neighbor has and be violent. It would be a miserable place.

The thing that God does not instantly create is character. God is developing His nature in us—"Christ in us."

Verse 28, "...that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." –Every man brought to the desired end result of developing the character and nature of God.

Let's look a little bit at God's character and nature since we have seen that developing His character and nature is what God is doing. What is God's character and nature?

Let's go back to Matthew 5:48. God is putting His nature within us. We have to strive mightily according to His working. It takes our effort, plus God who is doing it. God makes it possible, but our effort has to be put forth as well.

Matthew 5:48 says, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." We are to become like God, having His character and His nature. We are to come to the end result of having the very nature and character of God. We are to become like Him.

Now, let's see a little bit about what that means. We are to become like God; we are to have His character, His nature. How do we do that?

Let's notice in I John.

I John 4:8, "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love." God is love. That is the statement of the very essence of the very nature of God because God is love.

Go down to I John 5.

I John 5:2-3, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God that we keep His commandments. And

His commandments are not burdensome." *Love is channeled through and by the law of God.* We know that we love the children of God when we love God and when we keep His commandments. The starting point to love your neighbor is to love God because if you love God, truly you will love your neighbor who is made in the image of God. The basis of respect for the sanctity of human life is the realization that human beings are made in the image of God. So we love God and keep His commandments. "This is the love of God that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome." If we are going to become like our Father in heaven, having His nature inscribed in us, then the very essence of God's nature is love, and that love is expressed through God's law.

Romans 13:8-10, "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."

What is Paul quoting from in v. 9? He is quoting from the Ten Commandments.

Matthew 22:36-40, Christ said when He was asked, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Here we have them summarized. The last part of the commandments, we are told, are summarized by the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." So when Christ summarized God's law as love to God and love to neighbor, that was a summary of the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments tell you how to love God and how to love your neighbor. Love is the fulfilling of the Law. Real love carries out that Law.

It's not real love to run off with your neighbor's wife. 'Oh, but you know, we were in love.' No, you may have been in *lust*. You used to see some of the old "hippy" bumper stickers, "Make love, not war." Well, of course, what were they talking about? They were talking about fornication.

That's what they were equating with love. That's not love. Love is fulfilling of the law. They said, 'Oh, we are making love, not making war.' No, they were making illegitimacy; they were making venereal diseases, and now they are making AIDS. They are making all sorts of heartaches and headaches. They are making tragedy and pain. Oh, it may be "the pleasures of sin for a season" (KJV, Hebrews 11:25), but the consequences as you go on through life is a lot of heartaches and headaches.

Love is the fulfilling of the law. Real love follows through on the principles of God's law and this brings us to the complete reflection of the very nature of God.

"Going on to perfection" means "being brought to the end result that God has in mind for us." It means God is making us to be like Him so He can share life with us in His Family forever.

When you go to Genesis 1, you read how God made the fish after the fish kind, the birds after the bird kind and the cattle after the cattle kind. When it comes to man, He didn't say, 'Let's make man after the monkey kind.'

Genesis 1:26, He said, "...Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..." Man was made in the outward similitude of God. God has a spiritual body; we have a natural body, a physical body as brought out in I Corinthians 15. The "image" and the "likeness"—if you go back and look up it up in the Hebrew, you will find that they are two separate words. One has to do with "the outward" and the other with "the inward." In other words, we are not merely made in the outward similitude of God (which we are); we are also made with a capacity that is God-like, in the sense of being able to reason and have a concept of spiritual things.

God has put a spirit in man that sets apart the human mind from merely the animal brain. There is a capacity for communion with God, a relationship with God and the development of righteous character. God said, "Let Us make man in *Our* image, according to *Our* likeness." Man was made after the God kind—not made of spirit, but of matter, made of the ground, made where he is mortal and temporary.

Man is made with free moral agency where he can choose because the essence of building holy righteous character is having the ability to choose. God didn't make robots and automatons that were simply programmed and had to react and respond a certain way. God has given us a capacity to make choices. That's why we have to voluntarily surrender to God. God will work

through circumstances to bring us to that point, but we ultimately have to exercise choice.

Let's go back to the book of Hebrews, once again, as we understand that we are to become like God, which is what going on to perfection involves.

Hebrews 1:1-3, "God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person [His character], and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." He was made "the express image of His person."

Let's go back to Matthew 22, and I want to show you what the word "image" means. The word is "*eikon*" in the Greek language, "e-i-k-o-n." In Matthew 22, we find another place the word is used. In Matthew 22:17, the Pharisees showed Him the money, wanting to know if it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar.

Matthew 22:19-21, He told them, "'Show Me the tax money.' So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, 'Whose image and inscription is this?' They said to Him, 'Caesar's....'" It was Caesar's image on there. That's what this word meant.

Hebrews 1:3, "who being the brightness of His glory and the express image [the stamp impress of the very character of God] of His person [the very stamp, the express image, the stamp impress of God's very character, of His nature]...." *So Jesus Christ perfectly reflected the essential character and nature of God.* He was the stamp impress of that nature.

Romans 8:29, we're told, "For whom He foreknew [that's us], He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." God predestined that Jesus Christ would be the firstborn among many brethren.

Colossians 1:18, we are told He is, "...the firstborn from the dead...." He was destined to be the firstborn among many brethren because there are going to be *many* who will come up. I Corinthians 15 and other places shows us this.

What does it say here?

Romans 8:29, "For whom He foreknew [He determined ahead of time—God knew ahead of time that He would call out a people and He foreknew us collectively in the sense that He would call out a people.], He also predestined to

be conformed to the image of His Son [His whole purpose for calling out a people was to conform them to the image of His Son.], that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

He was bringing many sons into glory (Hebrews 2:10). Jesus Christ came as the author (KJV, “Captain”) of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10)—the One who set the pace. He bore the stamp impress of the very character and nature of God and what God is doing in us. His purpose is that we conform to the image of His Son, that we be molded and fitted and fashioned to being just like Jesus Christ who was the stamp impress of the very character of God. So we are to be developing—going on to perfection is developing holy, righteous character, developing the very character of the very nature of God—God’s character in us.

I Corinthians 15:49, “And as we have borne the image [or, iconic] of the man of dust [speaking of Adam], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.” In the resurrection, we are going to be changed into spirit.

Verse 44, “It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” We are going to be raised a spiritual body. God can create a spiritual body “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (v. 52). We don’t understand how that occurs, but through the power of His Holy Spirit, this mortal flesh is energized and transformed into the most elemental constituent of the whole universe—a spirit—which is the essence from which energy originates. Spirit comes from God. God can create a spiritual body from a natural body “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” That’s what we are told in I Corinthians 15 and in I Thessalonians 4.

But creating a spiritual mind is not something that is done “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.” That’s something that is done throughout the Christian life. It takes our cooperation and effort because it involves the development of spiritual, holy, righteous character.

Verse 49, “And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.” God is changing and transforming us. He is converting us.

II Corinthians 3:18 tells us, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Remember in James 1, God compares looking into the perfect law of liberty like looking into a mirror.

James 1:23-25, He says, “For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”

It’s like looking into a mirror. You see yourself, immediately forget what you saw and go your way. That isn’t of any value. We look and what we are seeing is the reflection—our reflection—compared with the reflection of Jesus Christ. When you look into the Bible, it’s like a spiritual mirror. You are seeing your actions, your behavior and your choices compared with the Word of God.

II Corinthians 3:18, “...we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory...” It’s progressive. We grow reflecting to a greater and greater extent the nature and the character of God. We do so, “...with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image [We are changed into the same image; we are being made like Him.] from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” Progressively, we undergo a transformation. That’s what going on to perfection is all about.

Let’s conclude in the book of Colossians.

Colossians 3:1, “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above...” Now, you know that we are risen with Christ, in the sense that when you come up out of the watery grave of baptism, that prefigures your coming out of the literal grave at the resurrection. You are baptized in the hope of the dead—the resurrection. You are baptized, looking beyond this physical life to the resurrection from the dead. So, figuratively, when you come out of the watery grave of baptism, it’s like being risen with Christ.

Verse 1, “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.” In other words, we ought to have a godly set of priorities.

Verse 2-4, “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” We will be transformed.

I Corinthians 15:49, "...as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man."

Colossians 3:5-10, "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth [put to death the old ways of living]: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire [rotten desires, dirty thoughts and desires], and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you also once walked when you lived in them. But now you must also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him."

We are being changed through knowledge of learning the will of God, being "renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created Him." We are to become like God.

Colossians 1:27, "...Christ in you, the hope of glory."

In Hebrews 5:12, Paul explains to those whom he was writing the letter that they were at a point where they ought to be teachers. They ought to be able to help others to understand, and yet he found himself at that point (about 60-61 A.D.) having to go back and stress basic, elemental things because somehow or another they had not shown the spiritual sturdiness and depth that they should have. He said, 'I shouldn't have to go back and spend my time emphasizing the foundation. You ought to be concentrating on going to perfection.'

Going to perfection (Hebrews 6:1) is built on the foundation. You can't go on to perfection until you lay the foundation. That's what the Christian life is all about. The foundation gives you your perspective. Then as you live and put things into practice in your life—day by day, week by week, month by month—you develop godly character. God develops it in us through the Holy Spirit, but it takes our cooperation and our effort. Paul talked about that. He strived mightily according to the working that was working in him (Colossians 1:29). God does it, but we have our part to play, too. You can't have one without the other.

People get into semantics. 'Do we build character or does God build character in us?' I guess you could say God builds it in us with our active cooperation. It takes our active cooperation to build it and it takes God's power to build it. The purpose of the Christian life is to

learn how to handle life in a godly way—putting the Bible into action in our lives, putting away the old ways. The essence of it is a different set of priorities.

Colossians 3:2, that's why it says, "Set your mind [KJV, "affection"] on things above, not on things on the earth." When what is important to us is to fit in with the world, we will never build godly character.

James 4:4, if what's really important to us is to fit in with the world and be accepted by the world, then, "...Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." You can't fit in with the world and fit in with God at the same time because the world is not conformed to the image of God. The world takes its conformity from the god of this world—Satan the devil, which is a different set of priorities and values.

We are to set our affection on things above and then actively follow through, exercise our mind and our senses to take and process things in our lives, compare these things and take God's Word and apply these principles in our lives. As we do all of those things, we have the basis of Christian growth and development. We have the basis of going on to perfection and completion—God bringing us to the result that He has called us for—the purpose of producing in our lives. We have the anticipation of sharing life with Him and being a part of His Family on into eternity.

You and I can't even begin to fully grasp and comprehend what all is involved in that. God whets our appetite with it and lays out these principles. These are things we must grab hold of and never turn loose because it is the essence of our calling.

Well, with that, we have completed this series that we have been going through. We will look forward to whatever we will start next time.

I won't be able to be with you this Sabbath but, God willing, be with you the following Sabbath—the Pentecost weekend—both for the Sabbath and for Pentecost. So I look forward to seeing you then.

Good night.