

# ***The Teachings of Jesus for the 21st Century***

Col 2:8

8 See to it that no one takes  
you captive through hollow  
and deceptive philosophy,  
which depends on human  
tradition and the basic  
principles of this world  
rather than on Christ.

**13 Lessons**  
**by Jim Wilsford**

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(NIV) unless otherwise indicated

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## 1. Authority in Religion for the Modern World

What is your authority in religion? *An authority* is **one** whose will must be obeyed; *authority* is **the right of one** whose will must be obeyed. To test yourself to see whom you see as your authority in religion. Ask these questions. Do you see your preacher, pastor, or priest as being the one to tell you what is right and truthful in religious faith and practice? Do you believe that the church through its hierarchy (councils, synods, or conventions) can decide religious issues for you? Do you believe that your church can override the teaching of the New Testament on sexual preference and immorality? Do you believe that there are latter day revelations, since the Bible, that provide you with the authority for faith and practice? Do you believe what one person thinks is just as good as what another thinks in religion? Do you follow a creed (manual or book) written by your church leaders? Do you believe that we will all be saved, no matter what religion we follow?

This lesson will contend that Jesus Christ is the only true authority in religion, and the New Testament expresses his will for us in the modern world.

### ***The God of Heaven, the Supreme Authority in All Matters Physical and Religious***

God planned and purposed all things that have happened (Eph 1:3-14). In Eph 1:11, Paul taught that he works out everything, "In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works **out everything** in conformity with the purpose of his will." Paul also stated this before the Greek philosophers in Acts 17:25-26; 28:

He himself gives all men life and breath and **everything else**. 26 From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. . . .28For in him we live and move and have our being.

Jesus clearly understood this full and complete authority of his Father and prayed in Matt 26:42, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done." In fact he taught his disciples likewise to pray in Matt 6:10, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

By God's very nature he holds all authority over the whole creation. He created the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1). Through His plan and gift, redemption came. Paul taught in 1 Cor 2:7-10:

7 No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 However, as it is written:

"No eye has seen,

no ear has heard,

no mind has conceived

what God has prepared for those who love him"

10 but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.

Of the certainty of what God had prepared and revealed for those who love Him, Jesus said in Matt 7:21, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

### ***Christ, the One to Whom God Gave All Authority***

On the Mount of Transfiguration in Matt 17:5, God said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" The word of Christ superseded the Law of Moses and the word of the prophets. They were true to their times and purposes, but now we are to hear the Christ. He was not only the one to whom we were to listen, but he fulfilled the law and the prophets by his own testimony in Matt 5:17, "17 Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." Heb 1:1-2 asserts this very same fact:

1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

We must not only hear his word, but we must do it. James wrote in James 1:22-25:

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror 24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it – he will be blessed in what he does.

### ***The Apostles and Prophets, the Ones Whom Christ Commanded to Teach***

In Matt 28:18-20, Christ claimed all authority to himself and gave the apostles the right to teach all things:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

The apostles' word is so certain that to pervert or change it is to risk eternal condemnation. Gal 1:6-9 teaches:

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!

Only this gospel preached by the apostles saves. Paul wrote in 1 Cor 15:1-3:

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in

vain. 3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance.

God's power is in this gospel revealed by Christ and the apostles. Rom 1:16 teaches, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."

Christ gave only the apostles the right to bind and loose. In Matt 16:19, Christ said: "19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." The church is to receive the teaching of the apostles as the very word of God. Paul wrote in 1 Thess 2:13, "13 . . . you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe." Christ promised the apostles that the Spirit would guide them in all truth in John 16:13-14:

13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

### ***The Bible, the Standard of Authority for All Ages***

The result of the promise to the apostles was the revelation of God in written form. Paul explained thoroughly in Eph 3:3-5:

3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

The result of this revelation was the New Testament scriptures. God breathed [inspired] those scriptures, and they are all that man needs. 2 Tim 3:16-17 teaches, "16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." That no one else can produce scripture is certain, according to Peter in 2 Peter 1:20-21:

20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Jude declared the completeness of God's revelation through these apostles and prophets for all time in Jude 3, "I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints." Not only was it once for all delivered, but God warned against adding to it or taking away from it in Rev 22:18-19:

If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. 19 And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

We have already noted that Paul added the greatest condemnation for those who turn to a different gospel or pervert the gospel of Christ in Gal 1:6-9, "Let them be eternally condemned.

## **Conclusion**

The only true standard of authority is the will of God as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. When one accepts the teaching of the scriptures and obeys them, one accepts Christ and his teaching. When one accepts Christ and his teaching, one is to be saved. The scriptures are the key to salvation for the modern world. The religious world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century rejects the authority of the scriptures. They reject God's plan for salvation for obeying the gospel, for worshiping Him, for organizing the church, and for doing His work in this present world. They reject His teaching on His kingdom and the church of the Lord. Yet, the scriptures are clear: Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth. Hear him. The only way to do that is by searching and keeping the scriptures – the religious authority for the modern world.

## **Study Questions from the Scripture**

1. Eph 1:11: What does God work out in conformity with the purpose of his will?
2. Acts 17:25-26; 28: What does God give us? In whom do we live and move?
3. Matt 26:42: Whose will did Jesus seek to please?
4. Matt 6:10: How are we to pray?
5. Gen 1:1: What did God create?
6. 1 Cor 2:7-10: Whose wisdom did Paul reveal?
7. Matt 7:21: Who will enter into the kingdom of heaven?
8. Matt 17:5: Whom are we to hear?
9. Matt 5:17: What did Jesus claim in regards to the Law and the Prophets?
10. Heb 1:1-2: Through whom does God now speak?
11. James 1:22- What authority did Christ claim? What authority did he give the apostles? What are we taught to obey?
13. Gal 1:6-9: What will happen to those who pervert the gospel?
14. 1 Cor 15:1-3: By what are we saved? What must we do with the word preached? When is belief vain?
15. Rom 1:16: What is the power of God for salvation?
16. Who received the keys of the kingdom?
17. 1 Thess 2:13: How are we to receive the word of God?
18. John 16:13-14: What did the Spirit of truth do for the apostles?
19. Eph 3:3-5: How can we understand Paul's insight into the mystery of Christ?
20. 2 Tim 3:16-17: From where does Scripture come? How are we equipped?
21. 2 Peter 1:20-21: How does prophecy come?
22. Jude 3: How many times was the faith entrusted to the saints?
23. Rev 22:18-19: What will happen to those who take away or add to the book of prophecy?

## **2. Correctly Handling the Word of Truth in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Paul admonished Timothy in 1 Tim 2:15:

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

The teaching of Christ specifically requires us to understand the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament, the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ, and the Patriarchal, Jewish and Christian dispensations. The true church and true Christians correctly handle the word of truth, understanding the relationship between the Old Testament law of Moses and the New Testament law of the spirit and life. Paul explained in 2 Cor 3:2-11:

2 You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. 3 You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

4 Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. 5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. 6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant- – not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

7 Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, 8 will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? 9 If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! 10 For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. 11 And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!

Few religious groups of the 21<sup>st</sup> century make this distinction of rightly handling the word of God, understanding that competency comes from God and not from

mankind's wisdom, wit, and knowledge. However, Christ and the apostles did God's word in his son, only, is the glory that lasts.

### ***God Speaks through His Son***

God made clear that we should hear Christ. On the Mount of Transfiguration in Matt 17:5, He said: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" The writer of Hebrews told us how to correctly handle the relationship between the Old and New Testaments: "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, has at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son (Heb. 1:1)." Few religious groups of the 21<sup>st</sup> century make the distinction that God speaks through his son and not through the Old Testament prophets.

### ***A New Covenant Was to Replace the Old Covenant***

The Old Testament taught that a new covenant would replace the old. The Lord God spoke through Jeremiah in Jer 31:31-32:

31 "The time is coming," declares the LORD,  
"when I will make a new covenant  
with the house of Israel  
and with the house of Judah.

32 It will not be like the covenant  
I made with their forefathers  
when I took them by the hand  
to lead them out of Egypt.

The writer of Hebrews in the New Testament endorses this principle that the New Testament should replace the Old Testament by quoting Jeremiah in Heb 8:8. The writer concluded in Heb 8:13, "By calling this covenant 'new,' he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear." Few religious groups of the 21<sup>st</sup> century recognize that the Old Testament said that the New Testament would take its place.

### ***Christ Taught the Proper Relationship between the Two Testaments***

Jesus himself taught the proper relationship between the Old and New Testaments. At the beginning of his preaching in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught in Matt 5:17: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."

At the end of his time on earth he said in Luke 24:44: "He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

At his death, John records in John 19:28, "Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty."

In addition, a little later, he said in John 19:30, "30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."



According to Matt 27:50-51, at this very time, “50 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. 51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.”

Few religious groups of the 21<sup>st</sup> century teach that Jesus taught that he would fulfill the Old Testament Law and the prophets. Instead, they turn to the Old Testament to find authority for their practices; such as, instrumental music, infant baptism, incense, relics, polygamy, divorce and remarriage for reasons other than sexual immorality, and various speculative teachings in support of their millennium theories.

### ***The Apostles Taught That the Old Testament Ended at the Death of Christ***

The apostle Paul confirms the changes that occurred at the death of Christ. Speaking of the Jews and Gentiles, he said in Eph 2:14-16:

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

Of the Old Testament law, Paul added the following in Col 2:13-14, “He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.” Paul and the other apostles and prophets considered themselves to be ministers of a New Covenant in 2 Cor 3:6, “He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant- – not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

The summation of the law was Christ and his church, with the New Testament firmly in place. Gal 3:24-25 teaches that we are no longer under the law:

So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. 25 Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

Further, Rom 10:3 teaches, “Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.” Many modern religions do not see the law as fulfilled in Christ; and therefore, they justify many religious acts from passages in the Old Testament.

### **Conclusion**

The New Testament church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will correctly handle the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Appropriately, the true church follows the New Testament in all matters of faith and practice. As Peter wrote in 1 Peter 4:11, “If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. In 1 John 4:1, John warned us to test everything to avoid false teaching, “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” Paul warned us in the same way in 1 Thess 5:19-21, “19 Do not put out the Spirit's fire; 20 do not treat prophecies with contempt. 21 Test everything. Hold on

to the good." The New Testament teaching of the 1<sup>st</sup> century can only survive if we test the false teaching of the 21<sup>st</sup> century against the word of God.

Just as we must follow the very words of God we must also follow the interpretations of God given to those words. Peter explained in 2 Peter 1:20-21:

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

### **Study Questions from the Scriptures**

1. 1 Tim 2:15: To whom are we to best present ourselves? How should we handle the word of truth?
2. 2 Cor 3:2-11: From where is the *letter Christ written by the Spirit of the living God*? From where does our competency come? What is the difference in the letter and the Spirit? What ministry is more glorious than Moses' engraved letters on stone?
3. Matt 17:5: Whom does God want us to hear?
4. Heb. 1:1: Through whom has God spoken to us?
5. Jer 31:31-32: What did God forecast that he would make? What will the new covenant not be like?
6. Heb 8:8: What is the effect of quoting Jeremiah in this passage?
7. Heb 8:13: When God called the covenant of Christ new, what happened to the first covenant?
8. Matt 5:17: What did Christ come to do as regards the Law and the Prophets?
9. Luke 24:44: Where was everything fulfilled in Christ written?
10. John 19:28: What did Jesus know was going to be fulfilled in his death?
11. John 19:30: What did he say just before dying?
12. Matt 27:50-51: At the point of Christ's death, what happened to the temple veil?
13. Eph 2:14-16: What did Christ abolish? Who did God reconcile in the body of Christ? Through what did he reconcile them?
14. Col 2:13-14: Who forgave us our sins? What did he cancel? What did he nail to the cross?, 15. 2 Cor 3:6: Of what are we ministers? What kills? What gives life?
16. Gal 3:24-25: What no longer supervises us?
17. Rom 10:3: What is the end of the law?
18. 1 Peter 4:11: Whose words are we to speak?
19. 1 John 4:1: Who are we to test? Who has gone out into the world?
20. 1 Thess 5:19-21: What are we not to treat with contempt? What are we to test? We are to hold on to what?
21. 2 Peter 1:20-21: What is the origin of Scripture? What is the origin of the interpretation of Scripture?

### **3. The Kingdom of God in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, some religions teach that Christ failed to set up an earthly kingdom and, having failed, he set up the church until he comes back to reign 1,000 years on earth. All these doctrines summarize under the various millennial (1,000-year reign of Christ on earth) theories. There are millennial, premillennial, and postmillennial reign theories. False allegations abound as the proponents of these doctrines pervert the scriptures to make their cases. Instead of looking to the hundreds of false contentions and allegations made, this lesson will look to the scriptures that expose the false teaching of millennial theories.

#### ***Old Testament Prophecies Regarding the Kingdom of God and Christ***

The Old Testament was very clear when the true King would reign and his kingdom would come. In his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel made very clear that the eternal kingdom of the Lord would come in the days of the Roman kings: In Dan 2:39-43, Daniel described how four kingdoms in the same

class with the Babylonian kingdom would rise one after the other. Only four kingdoms fit this description in all of history: the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Greek, and the Roman kingdoms. In the time of the Roman kingdom, God would set up a kingdom which would last forever:

44 "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.  
45 This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands – a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces. Dan 2:44-45.

Nothing ever can destroy this kingdom, it will endure forever; and it is the kingdom of the God in heaven. Such a kingdom set up by God of heaven was to come in the days of the Roman kings. It cannot be in the future for those of us still living, as many contend.

Zechariah, God's inspired representative, wrote about the work of the Messiah. In Zech. 6:12-13, through His prophet Zechariah, God struck a deathblow to the doctrine of millennialism--the doctrine that holds that Christ is yet to come to reign over his kingdom on earth for one thousand years. Zechariah wrote in Zech 6:12-13:

12 Tell him this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the LORD. 13 It is he who will build the temple of the LORD, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne. And there will be harmony between the two."

Premillennialists teach that Christ functions as a priest now, as Heb 4:15 clearly shows, but that he is not reigning as king now. They say that Christ will begin his reign as king when he returns sometime in the future. But Zechariah said, "He shall be a priest upon his throne." At the same time Christ serves as high priest, he sits upon his throne. If Christ is high priest now; he is king now. If he is king now, his kingdom exists now here upon the earth and now in heaven.

God told Zechariah to place two crowns on the head of Joshua, the high priest (Zech. 6:10-11). Joshua, with the two crowns was a type of the Branch—the Christ. The two crowns represent the two positions filled by the true Branch. The two-tiered crown represents the simultaneous kingship and high priesthood of Christ.

### ***Teachings in the Gospels Regarding the Kingdom of God and Christ***

Even before the birth of the Lord, the angel Gabriel told Mary that her son would sit upon his throne and reign over his kingdom, which will never end, forever and ever. Luke 1:30-33 leaves no wiggle room for millennialists:

30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. 31 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

In Acts 2, Peter describes the exact fulfillment of this prophecy and the prophecy of

Zechariah. Christ sat on David's throne when he rose from the dead. In Acts 2:30-33:

30 But he [David] was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. 32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. 33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

Jesus and John the Baptist taught in the gospels that the kingdom was at hand, coming in the lifetime of those then living.

1 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea 2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." Matt 3:1-2.

17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." Matt 4:17

5 These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. 6 Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. 7 As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near. Matt 10:5-7

32 I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Luke 21:32.

9:1 And he said to them, "I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power." Mark 9:1

"Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." Acts 1:4-5

In speaking of the kingdom, Jesus made clear that it would come in Jerusalem with power in Acts 1:3-5:

He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. 4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

The power and the kingdom came to this earth on the Day of Pentecost. In Acts 1:7-8, the power would come with the Holy Spirit:

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

On Pentecost, Luke recorded that the power of the Holy Spirit came upon them in Acts 2:2-4:

Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to

be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Paul described in Eph 1:19-23 how at his resurrection, Christ rose to sit at the right hand of God:

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.

Christ clearly spoke that his kingdom would not be a physical earthly kingdom. In Luke 17:20-21, the Lord taught:

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, 21 nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."

In John 18:36, the Lord taught, "Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

### ***The Teachings of the Apostles and Prophets Regarding the Kingdom of God and Christ***

Prior to the coming of the Kingdom of Christ with power on the day of Pentecost, all statements point clearly to that day when the kingdom of God came with power. The kingdom is in the immediate future for Mary, John the Baptist, and Jesus. After that notable day of Pentecost, the Apostles and prophets speak of it as already being in existence. Paul wrote in Col 1:12-13:

Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.

In 1 Thess 2:11-12, Paul made it clear that we are called into his kingdom and glory now:

11 For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, 12 encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

Our suffering now is not for some future kingdom but for the kingdom now in existence, according to 2 Thess 1:5, "All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering."

Heb 1:8-9 teaches us that God has anointed His son, and the throne of the son will last forever and ever:

8 But about the Son he says,

"Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever,

and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom .

9 You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy."

According to Heb 12:28-29, we are now receiving that kingdom:

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire."

John concurs with this view of the kingdom in Rev 1:5-6:

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

We are clearly the kingdom of Christ right now. John spoke intimately about his and our relationship in the kingdom in Rev 1:9, "I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus." The elders and living creatures in Revelation recognized that the kingdom is now, and we are in it upon the earth and in heaven forever and ever. They sang a new song in Rev 5:10: "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." Loud voices in heaven also said in Rev 11:15: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

### **Conclusion**

Finally, Rev 17:14, describes the war as spiritual war to include those of us in the kingdom who are faithful followers: "14 They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings – and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers." Paul makes sure that we know that this is a spiritual war in Eph 6:11-12:

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

### **Study Questions from the Scriptures**

1. Dan 2:39-43: What are the four elements of Nebuchadnezzar's dream? For what four earthly kingdoms do they stand? When will God's kingdom be destroyed?
2. Zech. 6:12-13: Who will build the temple of the Lord? From where will this one rule?
3. Heb 4:15: Who is our high priest?
4. Luke 1:30-33: On whose throne did the angel promise Mary that her son would sit? How long would he reign? When would his kingdom end?
5. Acts 2:30-33: Who did God tell David would sit on his throne? Where is Jesus now?

6. Matt 3:1-2: Where did John say the kingdom was?
7. Matt 4:17: Where did Jesus say the kingdom was?
8. Matt 10:5-7: What were the twelve to preach about the kingdom?
9. Luke 21:32: When did Luke say these things would happen?
10. Mark 9:1: When did Jesus say that the kingdom of God would come with power?
11. Acts 1:4-5: When did Jesus tell the apostles that they would receive the Holy Spirit?
12. Acts 1:3-5: What did Jesus speak about for forty days?
13. Acts 1:7-8: When was the power of the spirit to come?
14. Acts 2:2-4: When did the power come? How was it manifest?
15. Eph 1:19-23: Where is Jesus now? What is he over? In what ages does he reign? Over what is he head?
16. Luke 17:20-21: Where is the Lord's kingdom?
17. John 18:36: What is the nature of the Lord's kingdom?
18. Col 1:12-13: What are we qualified to inherit? To what has God brought us?
19. 1 Thess 2:11-12: Into what are we called?
20. 2 Thess 1:5: Of what are we counted worthy?
21. Heb 1:8-9: How long will Jesus remain on his throne?
22. Heb 12:28-29: What are Christians now receiving?
23. Rev 1:5-6: What has Christ made us?
24. Rev 1:9: In what is John our companion?
25. Rev 5:10: What did Jesus make us to be?
26. Rev 11:15: Over what does Jesus reign? For how long will he reign?
27. Rev 17:14: What is Jesus called? Who will be with him?
28. Eph 6:11-12: In what kind of war are we? Who is the enemy? What must we put on in order to stand?



#### **4. The Return of Jesus as Taught By Christ and the Apostles for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Many false doctrines of 21<sup>st</sup> century are at odds with the teaching of Jesus and the apostles on the subject of the Lord's return. Most come out of the various millennial doctrines of *the Rapture* and a *1,000 year reign of Christ on earth*. Many Christian faiths believe and teach about an end-times event when all true believers, who are still alive before the end of the world, will be taken from the earth by God into heaven. The term describing this event is *the Rapture*, a term not found in the Bible. Those who accept the Rapture theory believe that all non-believers on the earth at that time will be left behind for the *tribulation period*. According to most who hold this view, *the tribulation* period will last for seven years, the final seven years of this age, until Christ returns to set up his earthly kingdom during *the Millennium*, another term not found in the Bible. Their false words teach false doctrine.

The plain teaching of Christ and the apostles preclude any of these false ideas.

#### ***What Jesus and the Apostles Taught in the 1st Century about His Certain Coming?***

Jesus and the apostles taught emphatically that Jesus would come again. Jesus himself taught in John 14:2-3: "2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." When Jesus comes, he will take the righteous to be where he is and not remain himself on the earth where they are. Paul describes this coming in detail in 1 Thess 4:13-17:

13 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

The Lord will come back, and we be caught up to meet him, and so we will be with the Lord forever. Jesus is coming back to take us with him and not coming back to be with us on the earth. There is not one scripture that says Jesus will step foot on the earth.

### ***What Jesus and the Apostles Taught about the Predictability of His Coming***

Jesus and the apostles taught clearly that no man knows when the Lord will come. Many 21<sup>st</sup> century religions predict the coming of Jesus. Some religions predict his coming, and then alter their predictions, when he fails to come. Jesus taught that no one knows the time or place of his coming. Jesus taught in Matt 24:23, "At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it." In Matt 24:26-27, he added:

"So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. 27 For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man."

When the Lord does come it will be apparent to all, and we will not be left to wonder. Peter described the coming as that of a thief in the night in 2 Peter 3:10, "10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare." In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, if men predict the coming of the Lord, they will always be wrong.

### ***What Jesus and His Apostles Taught about How Apparent His Coming Will Be***

All the scriptures speak of the coming as instantly apparent. Yet, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, some teach that Jesus' coming was a secret event. For example, there are those who claim that his coming was with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. His coming will be as visible as the lightning that is seen from the east to the west (Matt 24:2). It will be with the command of the archangel and the trumpet call of God (1 Thess 4:16). It will be apparent to all men everywhere. Any 21<sup>st</sup> century doctrine that teaches that it has already happened is false doctrine, and not worthy of consideration.

### ***What Jesus and the Apostles Taught about the Fate of Mankind at His Coming***

When Jesus comes, he will deal with three groups of people in three distinctly different ways: The dead in Christ shall rise, the living in Christ will change, and the wicked will receive vengeance. Consider the dead in Christ. The teaching is plain in 1 Thess 4:14, "14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him." Paul further teaches, "16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first (1 Thess 4:16)." The dead in Christ will join the living in Christ, being caught up with them where they will ever be according to 1 Thess 4:17: "17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever."

1 Cor 15:42-44, agrees with the passage in 1 Thess 4:

42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

Paul explains this happening at the coming of Christ in 1 Cor 15:51-53:

51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.

Notice that the coming is quick like a flash or a twinkling, yet in the 21<sup>st</sup> century some teach that there will be other events like the rapture (unscriptural term) and a thousand year earthly reign (unscriptural concept). These ideas are 21<sup>st</sup> century false doctrines regarding the coming of Christ.

With those dead in Christ and those living in Christ being immortal and living forever with the Lord, what will be the fate of the sinners and unbelievers? James asked this very same question rhetorically in 1 Peter 4:17-18:

17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And,

"If it is hard for the righteous to be saved,

what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

Paul answered the question explicitly in 2 Thess 1:7-10:

This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

### ***What Jesus and the Apostles Taught about the Fate of the Earth***

The best explanation of the destruction of the physical universe and the earth is 2 Peter 3:10-12:

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.

Again, his coming is sudden, leaving no time for the false doctrine of a 1,000-year reign on earth. At this very same and sudden time when the earth will be destroyed with fervent heat, when those in Christ become immortal by resurrection from the dead or by being changed, and when they are forever with him, the last enemy will have been conquered and the kingdom will be delivered to the father. Paul explains completely in 1 Cor 15:22-28:

22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has

destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. 28 When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

### **Study Questions from the Scriptures**

1. Where are the terms *the rapture* and *the millennium* found in the Bible?
2. John 14:2-3: Where did Jesus go? Why did he go? Will he come back? What will he do?
3. 1 Thess 4:13-17: What do we believe about Jesus' death? Because we believe this, what do we believe about those who have fallen asleep? What about those who are alive? How will we know when Jesus comes? When the strumpet call sounds, what will happen to the dead? The living? Where will they all meet the Lord? How long will we be with the Lord?
4. Matt 24:23: How are we to respond if someone says that here is the Christ?
5. Matt 24:26-27: How will the Lord's coming be like the lightening?
6. 2 Peter 3:10: How did Peter describe the day of the Lord? What will happen to the the earth?
7. 1 Cor 15:42-44: How will be the resurrection of the dead? How will the body change?
8. 1 Cor 15:51-53: How will the dead change? What two groups of people will be changed?
9. 1 Peter 4:17-18: What will become of the sinner and the ungodly? What will happen to those who do not obey the gospel?
10. 2 Thess 1:7-10: How will Jesus be revealed from heaven? What will happen to those who know not God and obey not the gospel?
11. 2 Peter 3:10-12: What will happen to the earth when Jesus comes? What kind of people ought we to be?
12. 1 Cor 15:22-28: When will the end come? What will Christ do with the kingdom? What all will be under the feet of Christ? Who, after the end, will *all in all*?

## **5. Obedience—a Requirement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Obedience was a command, clear and certain, to Jesus and the apostles. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many do not see obedience as necessary. Some religions ignore the specific teachings of the scriptures, such as, the belief and baptism requirement to be saved in Mark 16:16 and 1 Peter 3:21. Further, some religions completely rewrite the moral prohibitions of the Gospel, becoming ever more immoral in their teachings: homosexuality as an acceptable life style, permissive sex among the unmarried, and divorce for any cause are commonly held. The situation ethics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century replaces the ethics taught by Jesus in the 1<sup>st</sup> century for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thus, “*Do not lie to each other*” of Col 3:8 becomes *do not lie if it hurts some one else*. This inquiry begins with establishing what Jesus and the apostles taught about the necessity for complete obedience to the scriptures.

### ***What Did Jesus and the Apostles Teach about Absolute Obedience?***

**Do we really have to obey everything?** In Matt 7:21, the Lord taught, “21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” When Jesus gave his great commission, he established the necessity of absolute obedience in Matt 28:20, “20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” From the very beginning of the Christian age, Jesus taught the scope and the parameters of obedience. In the 1<sup>st</sup> and in the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries alike, Christians are to obey *everything* commanded by the Lord and taught by the Apostles. This absolute requirement continues *always* and to the very end of the age. Jude taught this same principle in Jude 3, “Dear friends,

although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints." The *faith* that Jude speaks of is, by definition, the revealed system of faith; and parallel, therefore, to Jesus' statement: *all things that I have commanded you*. This faith is once for all delivered.

The gospel and its power come from our obeying this faith. Jesus taught in John 14:15-17, "If you love me, you will obey what I command. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth." Anyone who loves the Lord obeys him. The love of Jesus equates to keeping his commandment. Not loving Jesus equates to not keeping his commandments. Jesus continued in John 14:23-24, "Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. This was true in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, and it is true in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It is not enough to give mere credence to the commands of Jesus; we must hear and do. Paul wrote in Rom 2:13, "13 For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous." The demand to obey comes directly from the proclamation of Jesus and the gospel preached by the apostles and prophetic writings. This revelation is by the command of the eternal God and remains in force forever. Paul summarize in Rom 16:25-27

25 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, 26 but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him— 27 to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

**What are the consequences of not obeying?** Having called mankind to obedience, God placed serious consequences on those who do not obey. These consequences were for those of the 1<sup>st</sup> century and those of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Peter forecast these consequences by asking about the fate of those who do not obey the gospel in 1 Peter 4:17-18:

17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And,

"If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

Paul answered the question asked by Peter in 2 Thess 1:8-9: "He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power."

**What Are the Excuses Used in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Order to Deny Obedience to the Lord?**

**Tradition keeps people from obeying the entire gospel.** My *folks' religion*, usually a denominational creed, does not practice that. The church I grew up in did not

require that. My parents did not do those things. The answer is the same in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and the 21<sup>st</sup> century: we must set aside all traditions and obey the teaching of Christ. Jesus said in Matt 15:7-9:

7 You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

8 "These people honor me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.

9 They worship me in vain;  
their teachings are but rules taught by men."

We have already seen that obeying the teaching of Jesus is required of all men, "And teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Matt 28:20. "Rules taught by men" cannot save.

**Some think that what we do or how we do it makes no difference.** This is equivalent to the popular saying, "You go to your church, and I will go to mine, and we will all go to heaven." These 21<sup>st</sup> century sayings are just the opposite of what Jesus said in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. In Matt 7:21-23, partially cited above, the Lord said:

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

**The Bible does not say not to do it.** The world could not contain the books if the Lord had specifically forbidden everything we are not to do. What He has done is to provide the scriptures that tell us exactly what to do by thoroughly equipping us for every good work. Paul summarizes in 2 Tim 3:14-17:

14 But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, 15 and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Even small changes in these scriptures bring the most severe of consequences. Paul wrote in Gal 1:6-9:

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!

**It does not hurt anybody.** This idea is the foundation of situational ethics. The point missed by these folks is that our spiritual relationship is between our heavenly Father and us. One wants to lie and says that this will not hurt anyone,

and after all, who will know. It hurts that very same person because God knows. We must all be righteous before God for it is unto him that we obey and serve. Paul concluded in Rom 6:17-18, "But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness." Our duty before God is to obey him and establish our righteousness. The situation has no effect on this obligation to God.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, God required absolute obedience, with serious penalties for those who do not. This principle is as true in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as it was in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. `Who among would dispute the word of the Almighty God.

### **Study Questions from the Scriptures**

1. Mark 16:16: What did Jesus require to be saved?
2. 1 Peter 3:21: What does now save us? What does the water of baptism cleanse?
3. Col 3:8: May we tell a white lie as long as it does not hurt anyone?
4. Matt 7:21: Who will enter the kingdom of heaven?
5. Matt 28:20: What must we always obey?
6. Jude 3: What was once for all delivered?
7. John 14:15-17: What will we do if we love Jesus?
8. John 14:23-24: If we love and obey Jesus, what will we receive?
9. Rom 2:13: Who are the righteous?
10. Rom 16:25-27: What are all nations to do?
11. 1 Peter 4:17-18: Who are scarcely saved? What will become of the unrighteous and the sinners?
12. 2 Thess 1:8-9: What will happen to those who do not obey the gospel?
13. Matt 15:7-9: Whose rules do men follow when they worship in vain?
14. Matt 7:21-23: What will God say to those who do not do his will?
15. 2 Tim 3:14-17: Where do we learn exactly what we must know?
16. Gal 1:6-9: What happens to those who pervert the gospel of Christ?
17. Rom 6:17-18: From what are we set free, when we obey the teaching of Christ?

## **6. The Faith Required of Believers in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

*Faith* and the similar words *belief* and *believe* carry at least three important meanings. To give mere credence is one meaning, as in the statement, "Even the demons believe that—and shudder." James 2:19. Another meaning is the one given by the Hebrew writer in Heb 11:6, "6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." This definition takes the meaning of



believe beyond mere credence to the place where one believes but also earnestly seeks God. Finally, faith is a revealed system of belief, which is what Jude meant in Jude 3, "I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints."

### ***What Jesus and the Apostles Taught about Faith***

Jesus predicated his offer of salvation on the fact that the believers must obey. He stated clearly in the great commission in Mark 16:16, "16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." Even those who hold faith enough to claim great things in the name of the Lord are still not justified. Jesus taught in Matt 7:21-23:

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

The key to the proper understanding of faith and obedience is that we must hold exactly to the teaching of Jesus; for many who do not hold to the teaching of Jesus are people who believe. Jesus spoke to such a group of people in John 8:31-32, "To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." The passage clearly asserts that these Jews believed on him, yet they were not saved as indicated in the rest of the story. In John 8:42-45, Jesus, speaking to this same group of Jews who believed, condemned them as children of the devil:

42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. 43 Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. 44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. 45 Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me!

True belief is belief that fully holds and obeys the teaching of Jesus. John 12:42-43 illustrates this same point: "42 Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved praise from men more than praise from God." Many today claim to have faith that saves, but they do not fully obey the teachings of Jesus, seeking earthly favor and approval.

Whether baptism, the Lord's supper, the work and worship of the church, or any other matter of faith and practice, man cannot be saved by faith alone. James taught in James 2:24: "You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone." He concludes in James 2:26: "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."

### ***What Some in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Teach about Faith***

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many have come to believe that the commands of the Lord do

not necessarily have to be obeyed. The most common example of this is baptism. Where Jesus required people to believe, repent, confess, be baptized, and be faithful unto death in order to be saved, modern folks follow ideas that exclude these commands of the Lord. Some of the positions taken in the religious world today negate the need to obey exactly what the Lord has commanded.

**Call on the name of the Lord.** The idea that a person need only to call on the name of the Lord to be saved is common in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Radio evangelists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century popularized this idea as they asked people to place their hands on the radio and call on the name of the Lord and they would be saved. They simplified the demands of their gospel to make it easy for their audience to respond. There was in this doctrine, as is common in all perverted teaching, an element of truth. Peter quoted the prophet Joel to say in Acts 2:21:

“21 And everyone who calls  
on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Joel was prophesying when salvation would come to all people. Peter preached that this time had come on the Pentecost after Christ’s resurrection, and with that preaching told them exactly what to do. In fact, they asked Acts 2:37, “37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” That they were cut in the heart and asked shows that they had believed. Yet that was not enough to save them. Peter’s answered their question and told them what they must do to call on the name of the Lord and be saved: “38 Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.” Acts 2:38-39.

**Accept Jesus Christ as your personal savior.** Justification by faith only has as its common invitation, “Accept Jesus Christ as your personal savior and be saved.” This contrived command is not found in the Bible, yet is the common plea among those that believe in faith only. The scriptures require faith, repentance, confession, and baptism in order to be saved, in order to have the forgiveness of sins, and in order to be added to the church. If one were to confess only, it would not be enough. If one were to repent only, it would not be enough. If one were to be baptized only it would not be enough. And if one were to have faith only, it would not be enough. One must do the complete will of the father. Remember, Jesus taught, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” Matt 7:21.

**Be a born again Christian.** Much is made of being a born-again Christian. In the New Testament, being born again is not a sudden, mystical feeling that overcomes the recipient. Being born again is the direct result of obeying the gospel of Christ in all its fullness. Jesus introduced the concept to Nicodemus in John 3:3-8. In John 3:3, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” Nicodemus asked in John 3:4, “How can a man be born when he is old?” To which Jesus answered in John 3:5, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.” Being born again requires *water* and the *spirit*.

Paul explained how we are born of the water in Rom 6:3-4, “Or don't you know

that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." The only path to the new birth is through the water of baptism into the death of Christ in order to have the new life.

In 2 Cor 5:16-18, Paul explained this new birth is not from a worldly point of view, but from the spiritual point of view:

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God.

God has given us the new life as new creatures in Christ. This spiritual aspect of being born again in Christ connects once again to baptism. Paul wrote in Gal 3:27-28, "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." In Christ is where we are new creatures. One not baptized is one not in Christ, not a new creature, and not born again.

### **Conclusion**

New Testament belief, as taught by Christ and the apostles, is belief that actualizes one to obey all the gospel of Christ. Belief without this obedience is dead.

### **Study Questions from the Scriptures**

1. James 2:19: How do the devils manifest their belief?
2. Heb 11:6: What must one have to please God? How must one seek God?
3. Jude 3: For what must we contend?
4. Mark 16:16: What two things must one do to be saved?
5. Matt 7:21-23: Will everyone enter the kingdom of heaven? Who will be included? Who will be excluded?
6. John 8:31-32: What does it really take to be a disciple of the Lord? What must one know to be set free?
7. John 8:42-45: Why did Jesus say that these who believed on him had the devil as their father?
8. John 12:42-43: What would not these Jews who believed do? Why would they not do it?
9. James 2:26: What is faith without deeds?
10. Acts 2:21: What happens to those who call on the name of the Lord?
11. Acts 2:37: What did the people of the day of Pentecost ask Peter?
12. Act5s 2:38:39: What was Peter's reply? What did they receive?
13. Matt 7:21: Will everyone enter the kingdom of heaven?
14. John 3:3: Who did Jesus say could enter the kingdom of heaven?
15. John 3:4: What did Nicodemus ask?

16. John 3:5: Of what must one be born?
17. Rom 6:3-4: What does it take to live a new life?
18. 2 Cor 5:16-18: What is true if we are in Christ?
19. Gal 3:27-28: How is one clothed in Christ?

## **7. Teaching of Jesus on the Baptism of Believers in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Jesus and the apostles clearly taught an easily understood and consistent view of baptism. In brief, they taught that men and women should believe, repent, confess, and then be baptism by immersion in water unto (for) the forgiveness (remission) of sins. The 1<sup>st</sup> century meaning of the word *baptism* has changed though the centuries to a 21<sup>st</sup> century meaning which includes practices not found in the New Testament. For example, W. E. Vine wrote, "Baptizo, "to baptize," primarily a frequentative form of bapto, "to dip," was used among the Greeks to signify the dyeing of a garment, or the drawing of water by dipping a vessel into another, etc." (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.) However, by the 21<sup>st</sup> century general use had caused the word to reflect the various religious teachings of the time, which included sprinkling and pouring. The etymology of the word shows that it meant *to dip* from the beginning: "Middle English, from Anglo-French *baptiser*, from Late Latin *baptizare*, from Greek *baptizein* to dip, baptize, from *baptein* to dip, dye."

### ***Immersion, the Baptism of Christ and the Apostles in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century***

Christ and the apostles taught that baptism was immersion in water. In addition to the word itself, to dip or bury, the New Testament examples show that baptism was always an immersion and a burial. In Matt 3:16-17, Jesus had come to John the Baptist to be baptized:

16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

He could not have come up out of the water unless he had been down into the water. All the examples are clear: to baptize, one required enough water to bury. John recorded in John 3:22-23:

After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptized. 23 Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized.

The *plenty of water* in this passage precludes sprinkling or pouring. In Acts 8:38-40, Philip converted the eunuch; and after having taught him, baptized him:

Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went

on his way rejoicing.

The scripture spells out the method of baptizing: they went down into the water; Philip baptized him; and they came up out of the water. The examples of New Testament baptism teach that baptism is immersion.

In addition to these examples, the direct teaching of the apostles teaches that baptism is a complete burial—no sprinkling and no pouring. In Rom 6:3-4, Paul taught that we are buried with Christ in baptism and raised to live a new life:

Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

The phrase *just as* leaves no room for dispute. Christ was buried and raised; just as he, we are buried and raised. Paul summarized this point in Col 2:12, "12 having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead."

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century and the 21<sup>st</sup> century, baptism is always a complete burial or immersion in water. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many folks sprinkle and pour as the mode of their baptism. Thus, they pervert the teaching of Christ.

### ***The Forgiveness of Sins and Salvation, the Baptism of Christ and the Apostles in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century***

Christ and the apostles taught that baptism was for the forgiveness of sins and salvation. Few in the 21<sup>st</sup> century believe that baptism is necessary for forgiveness of sins and salvation. Jesus taught clearly Mark 16:16, "16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved." To refuse baptism as a necessity for salvation is to deny this plain teaching of Jesus. Luke recorded the Lord's giving his great commission in Luke 24:46-47:

46 He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

When Peter preached this forgiveness of sins, he told his hearers in Acts 2:38: "38 Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" People who are not baptized cannot have the forgiveness of sins. When the apostle Paul was converted, he was told in Acts 22:16, "And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name." Of course, salvation is in the name of Christ and no one else. Acts 4:12 teaches, "12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Peter directly stated that baptism saves in 1 Peter 3:21, "21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

### ***How Disciples Are Made, the Baptism of Christ and the Apostles in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century***

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century and the 21<sup>st</sup> century, teaching and baptism are the means by

which disciples were made. In Matt 28:19-20, Jesus said:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

Jesus specifically taught that baptizing and teaching made disciples. There is no other way. In Acts 2, when Peter and the other apostles taught on the Day of Pentecost, the result was that the people were baptized and made disciples. This teaching, baptism, and making disciples come to fulfillment in Acts 2:40-47:

40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." **41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.**

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. 44 All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. **And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.** [Emphasis added]

By this same process, the Lord added them to the church. Paul wrote in 1 Cor 12:13, “13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.” The body into which we are baptized is the church, according to Eph 1:22-23:

22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

Discipleship and church membership go hand in hand in 1<sup>st</sup> century and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century according to the teaching of Christ and the apostles.

## **Conclusion**

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, baptism was central to the teaching of Jesus and the apostles. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, these teachings have been completely ignored or perverted to meet the requirements of the teaching of men. To so ignore and pervert the gospel leaves one open to the most severe of penalties. Paul wrote in Gal 1:6-8:

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!

If one in the 21<sup>st</sup> century wants to be in Christ, it will require the same kind of baptism as that practiced in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. In Gal 3:26-27, Paul wrote, “26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized

into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”

### ***Study Questions from the Scriptures***

1. Matt 3:16-17: Jesus was baptized, then what? What did God say about this?
2. John 3:22-23: What were they doing in the Aenon? Why did they pick this place?
3. Acts 8:38-40: Into what did Philip and the eunuch go down? What happened there? What did they come up out of?
4. Rom 6:3-4: Into what two things are we baptized? Why are we baptized into his death?
5. Col 2:12: How is baptism a death and resurrection?
6. Mark 16:16: What did the Lord command in order for us to be saved?
7. Luke 24:46-47: What was going to be preached to all nations beginning in Jerusalem?
8. Acts 2:38: What did Peter say was needed for us to receive the forgiveness of sins?
9. Acts 22:16: What was Paul told to do?
10. Acts 4:12: In whose name are we saved?
11. 1 Peter 3:21: What does now save us?
12. Matt 28:19-20: According to Jesus, how are disciples made? What are they taught to do?
13. Acts 2:40-47: What happened to those who accepted the message? To what were they added? What was happening to those who were added to their number?
14. 1 Cor 12:13: How do we get into one body?
15. Eph 1:22-23: What is another name for the body?
16. Gal 1:6-8: What happens to those who preach another gospel?

## **8. The Lord's Supper as Taught by Christ and His Apostles for the 21st Century**

In the 21st century, many confusing doctrines exist concerning the Lord's Supper. These confusions are about the time and number of times that the Lord's Supper to observe, about the name of the Lord's Supper, and about the nature and purpose of the Lord's Supper. Some denominations observe the Lord's Supper only on their Easter holiday or the Thursday before their Easter holiday. Other groups observe the Lord's Supper annually, semiannually, or quarterly, all arbitrary times set by the groups themselves. Some groups arbitrarily name the Lord's Supper an unscriptural name. One of the names, *Eucharist*, comes from the Roman Catholic Church; it does not come from the scriptures. *Eucharist* means gratitude or grateful. Other groups call the Lord's Supper *Holy Communion*. According to Wikipedia, It has evolved within the theologies of the various denominations into a broad variety of liturgies that range from the silent communion of the Quaker to the transubstantiation of bread and wine into the actual flesh and blood of Jesus of the Roman Catholic Church. In the 1st century, Christ and the apostles were very clear in their teaching on the Lord's Supper.

### ***The Symbolic Nature of the Flesh and Blood of Christ***

Jesus himself set the symbolism of his flesh and blood, which later he extended to the Lord's Supper. In John 6:48-58, he seized on the example of the loaves and fish and the manna eaten by the forefathers to show that to have eternal life, we must eat his flesh and drink his blood:

48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. 50 But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from



heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

52 Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

53 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. 56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. 57 Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever."

In Matt 26:26-29, the Lord symbolized our partaking of his body and blood in the Lord's Supper:

26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

27 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

The metaphoric nature is clear: this (the bread) is my body; this (fruit of the vine) is my blood of the covenant. There are those who believe that these representations (the bread and the fruit of the vine) actually become the body and blood of Christ. These people call the doctrine *transubstantiation*. There is no supportive textual evidence here or elsewhere for this doctrine. In fact, Paul on two occasions made clear that it was not the literal body and blood. In 1 Cor 10:16, Paul used the metaphoric cup (fruit of the vine) to show our participation in the blood of Christ: "16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?" If the doctrine of transubstantiation were true, the literal cup (metal, crystal, or clay) itself would be the literal blood of Christ.

Paul also locked the meaning to the metaphors of the gospels. In 1 Cor 11:23-26, stating that it was from the Lord that he had received it, Paul wrote:

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

To be literal in one part requires one to be literal in all parts; therefore the cup is the literal fruit of the vine and metaphorically the blood of Christ. Likewise, the bread is literally bread and metaphorically the body of Christ.

### ***The Lord's Supper to Be Observed on Every First Day of the Week***

Jesus had foretold that the kingdom would come with power during the lives of those living. He said in Mark 9:1: "And he said to them, 'I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.'"

With this statement, the Lord established that the kingdom would come quickly. In Matt 26:27-29, he instituted the Lord's Supper and said:

Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

He was going to drink the fruit of the vine in the kingdom. He set once again the time of the coming of the kingdom with power in Acts 1:7-8:

He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Peter, in Acts 2, when the power of the Holy Spirit had come, quoted Joel the prophet to show the kingdom going forward from that time. Joel 2:32 reads:

32 And everyone who calls  
on the name of the LORD will be saved;  
for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem  
there will be deliverance,  
as the LORD has said,  
among the survivors  
whom the LORD calls.

From that day in Acts 2 until today, disciples devote themselves to the breaking of bread. Acts 2:42 says, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." The Lord is there and he drinks with them the fruit of the vine, just as he had promised. This act of worship was on the first day of every week. Acts 20:7 teaches, "On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight."

In the New Testament church of the 1st century, they came together as the church to partake of the Lord's Supper. 1 Cor 11:18, 20 says that they came together as the church, "In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church:

. . .20 When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, 21 for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk.

In this abuse, they established that the Lord's Supper was the prime event of the coming together, which occurred on the first day of every week. Paul placed the

frequency and time of this coming together on the first day of the week, in 1 Cor 16:2, "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income."

### **Conclusion**

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the purpose of the Lord's Supper was to remember the Lord until he comes again. Bread and the fruit of the vine are emblematic, representing the broken body of the Lord and his blood of the covenant poured out unto the remission of sins. This covenant relationship exists between the Savior and the saved in the kingdom of God. How can one take the Lord's Supper any less than on every first day of the week? Yet, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, many would pervert these plain teachings of Christ and the apostles concerning the Lord's Supper.

### **Study Questions from the Scriptures**

1. John 6:48-58: Who is the bread of life? From where does the living bread come? How can this man give us his flesh to eat? What represents the flesh of Christ? What represents the blood of Christ?
2. Matt 26:26-29: What did Jesus say the bread was? What was the cup? For what is the blood of Christ poured out? When does the Lord drink the fruit of the vine anew?
3. 1 Cor 10:16: In what are we allowed participation by the cup and the bread?
4. In 1 Cor 11:23-26: Whom are the bread and the cup taken in remembrance? What is proclaimed when we eat the bread and drink the cup?
5. Mark 9:1: In what period would the kingdom of God come with power?
6. Matt 26:27-29: What would Christ do anew in the Father's kingdom?
7. Acts 1:7-8: When and where would the kingdom come with power?
8. Joel 2:32: Where did Joel say the deliverance would come?
9. Acts 2:42: Who devoted themselves to the breaking of bread?
10. Acts 20:7: On what day did they come together to break bread?
11. 1 Cor 11:18: What did the Corinthians come together as? Why?
12. 1 Cor 16:2: How often did they come together?

## **9. The Music Commanded of the Church in the 21st Century**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century sees many, many innovations to the worship, which Jesus and the Apostles did not command. These include the centuries-old issue of singing and instrumental music in the worship. However, these innovations now include, but are not limited to, hand clapping, arm waving, dancing, choruses, choirs, dramas, choral readings, candle burning, and the singling out of lead singers. The list could go on *ad infinitum*. The case gets down to this proposition: Must 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians worship in the manner specifically commanded in the 1<sup>st</sup> century by the Lord and his apostles, or are we free to add to the worship as we see fit, thus making it a contemporary worship. It should be clear to sensible people that the New Testament cannot tell us everything not to do – the list would be endless.

This lesson will focus on the principles of interpretation that to follow in order to maintain the integrity of the New Testament and the word of Jesus Christ and his apostles. This lesson applies these principles to establish the New Testament pattern for singing in the church. They will also apply to every other situation where innovation attempts to override the specific pattern of teaching in the New Testament.

### ***The New Testament, a Pattern for Work and Worship***

In matters of religion, man must follow the pattern of sound teaching. In 2 Tim 1:13, Paul wrote, "13 What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus." In the 1st century, the apostles made very clear that there was this *pattern of sound teaching* and that there was also a *pattern of the world*. Paul said in Rom 12:2, "2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will." In the question of what kind of music, singing or playing, one must ask, "What is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God?" In the New Testament, every single mention of music in the church specifies singing. When we test and approve what God's will is, it will have to be singing.

People of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, who permissively add to the worship innovations of their own liking or invention, ignore that to change the pattern given to us is to be an enemy of the cross of Christ, according to Phil 3:17-19:

17 Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. 18 For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Our salvation and our deliverance depend on following this pattern. Rom 6:17-18 teaches:

But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

The word *form* used in this passage is from the word, *tupos*, translated *pattern* in the previously cited verses. This form of teaching that we are to follow comes from only one source – the God-breathed scriptures of 2 Tim 3:16-17:

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

The scriptures equip us for every good work. In the case of music, we then can only use the music of the pattern of sound words found in the scriptures. That music is singing.

### ***Understanding Generic and Specific Commands***

Innovators in the manner and means of worship in the church ignore God's teaching and examples regarding generic and specific commands. From the beginning, God held man to keeping his specific commands. For example, when the New Testament specifies singing, it excludes other specific kinds of music.

Paul told us exactly how our music (general) is to be singing (specific) in Eph 5:19, "19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord." In Col 3:16, he restated the same specific command, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." This same requirement to obey the specific commands of God was true from the very beginning. In Gen 4:2-7, we find Cain the son of Adam made a sacrifice (general) of fruits of the soil (specific):

Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. 3 In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. 4 But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, 5 but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? 7 If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it."

All innovators of the 21<sup>st</sup> century should get the message, "Sin is crouching at your door." If the church is to master sin, we must do only what is accepted – sing and make melody in our hearts. In Lev 10:1-2, Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron, used unauthorized fire in their worship. Here fire is generic and unauthorized fire is specific:

Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. 2 So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.

All innovators should get this message, too. Unauthorized worship, contrary to the commands of the Lord, results in death before the Lord. Noah, in contrast, to these first two examples, fulfilled God's specific command when he built the ark of gopher (specific) wood (generic). Gen 6:13-14 gives God's command, "Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood."

### ***Conclusion: Guiding Rules of Faith and Practice in Worship***

Jesus and the apostles laid down the guiding rules of faith and practice in worship to the Lord, Jesus, and God, almighty. The worship cannot be of our own invention, but it must be of the Father. Thus, we must sing in worship and not play. Jesus taught in Matt 7:21-23:

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

Our worship cannot be from the traditions of our families or from men. Thus, we must sing in worship and not play. In Matt 15:3-9, Matthew recorded:

3 Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of

your tradition? . . . Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. 7 You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

8 "These people honor me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.

9 They worship me in vain;

their teachings are but rules taught by men."

Our worship cannot be from what was done under the Old Testament. Thus, we must sing in worship and not play. Paul wrote in Col 2:13-17:

He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. . . .16 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. . . .

Our worship cannot be based on what we like or what makes us feel good. Thus, we must sing in worship and not play. Paul continued in Col 2:20-23:

20 Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: 21 "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!"? 22 These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. 23 Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

### ***Study Questions from the Scripture***

1. 2 Tim 1:13: What is the pattern of sound teaching?
2. Rom 12:2: To what pattern are we not to conform? How can we test and approve what God's will is? Whose will is good, pleasing, and perfect?
3. Phil 3:17-19: Whose example are we to follow? By what pattern are we to live? What does Paul call those who do not live by this pattern?
4. Rom 6:17-18: What did the Romans obey? From what were they set free?
5. 2 Tim 3:16-17: What is God-breathed? For what do the scriptures equip us?
6. Eph 5:19: What music does Paul require?
7. Col 3:16: With what kind of music are we to teach and admonish one another?
8. Gen 4:2-7: What kind of sacrifice did God require? What did Cain offer? How did God look upon the sacrifice of Cain? What did God tell Cain that he would have to do to be accepted? What is crouching at the door?
9. Lev 10:1-2: What was wrong with the fire of used by Nadab and Abihu?
10. Gen 6:13-14: What did God require Moses to use to make the Ark? Which part is a general command, and which part is a specific command?
11. Matt 7:21-23: Who will enter the kingdom of heaven? Can one prophesy, drive out demons, and perform miracles and still be lost?

12. Matt 15:3-9: May family traditions break the commands of God? What kind of worship results from rules taught by men?

13. Col 2:13-23: What happened to the Law of Moses? What must we no longer follow? Where is the reality of the Christian religion? What is the destiny of worldly practices?

## **10. Names as Used by Jesus and the Apostles for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Jesus and/or the apostles used the names *Christian*, *my church*, *Church of Christ*, *bride of Christ*, and *new name* to designate the church and the believers in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. It was abundantly clear in the New Testament that the name of the Lord Jesus, and no other, carried all the power and authority of heaven in heaven and on earth. The great commission attests to the power and authority of his name in Matt 28:18-20:

**All authority** in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the **name** of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Peter also recognized the all powerful nature of this name in Acts 4:12, assigning to it the power of salvation itself: "12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is **no other name** under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." In Col 3:17, Paul concluded, "17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the **name of the Lord Jesus**, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Emphasis added in this paragraph).

Yet in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, men take unto themselves names that are of sectarian and denominational origin. The list is too endless to repeat, but one need only to read the signs on the various meetinghouses to see that almost no one uses the names, Christ or Christians, in their religious designations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. How far they remove themselves from Christ and the command of Peter in 1 Peter 4:11:

If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.

### ***The New Name—Christian—and the Body of Faithful—the Church of Christ***

From the Old Testament, the followers of the Christ were to have a new name. In Isa 62:2, Isaiah prophesied:

2 The nations will see your righteousness,  
and all kings your glory;  
you will be called by a new name  
that the mouth of the LORD will bestow.

Near the end of the first century Tacitus wrote, "The vulgar call them Christians. The author or origin of this denomination, Christus, had, in the reign of Tiberius, been executed by the procurator, Pontius Pilate" (Annals xv. 44). W.E. Vine concluded, "From the second century onward the term was accepted by believers as a title of honor." (Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, © 1985,

Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

The revelation itself concluded that the faithful would wear the new name in Rev 2:17:

To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.

In Rev 3:12-13, the Lord promised:

"12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of **the city of my God, the new Jerusalem**, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name." (Emp. added).

The *city of my God* and the *New Jerusalem* are the Church of Christ. Paul taught in Heb 12:22-23:

22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the **heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God**. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to **the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.**" (Emp. added).

The *church of the firstborn*, Christ, can only be the Church of Christ and *my (Christ's) new name* can only be Christian.

The New Testament chronicles the advent of the new name, Christian. In Acts 11:26, "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." *Christian* means slaves or servants of Christ. In Acts 26:28-29, the narrative of the almost conversion of Agrippa, Agrippa and Paul use the name *Christian* in such a way as to make certain that it is the name by which followers of Christ should go. The passage begins, "28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" It is clear that Agrippa knew exactly what he would become if he were to succumb to the teaching and persuasion of Paul—a Christian! To this Paul responded, "29 Paul replied, "Short time or long – I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains." Paul confirmed that should Agrippa obey the gospel, he would be what Paul was—a Christian. Paul did not say, "Oh, no, Agrippa, you will not be a Christian. You will be of this sect or of that denomination."

In 1 Peter 4:16-18, Peter similarly closed the door to calling Christians any other sectarian and denominational names:

16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. 17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And,

"If it is hard for the righteous to be saved,  
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"

The teaching is clear. Praise God that you bear that name—Christian. We (us), Christians, are the family of God. The others are those who do not obey the gospel.



The Christians are the righteous to be saved. The others are the ungodly and the sinners.

### ***The Name of the Body of the Faithful is the Church of Christ***

The word translated church is *assembly*. W. E. Vine explains:

1. ekklesia . . . , was used among the Greeks of a body of citizens "gathered" to discuss the affairs of state, Acts 19:39. In the Sept. it is used to designate the "gathering" of Israel, summoned for any definite purpose, or a "gathering" regarded as representative of the whole nation. . . . It has two applications to companies of Christians, (a) to the whole company of the redeemed throughout the present era, the company of which Christ said, "I will build My Church," Matt 16:18, and which is further described as "the Church which is His Body," Eph 1:22; 5:23, (b) in the singular number (e. g., Matt 18:17, RV marg., "congregation"), to a company consisting of professed believers, e. g., Acts 20:28; 1 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:13; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1; 1 Tim 3:5, and in the plural, with reference to churches in a district.

(from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

This study has shown that the church of the firstborn, Christ, can only be the Church of Christ, as in Heb 12:22-23:

22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the **heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God**. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to **the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.**" (Emp. added).

Jesus named this church his church in Matt 16:17-18, "17 Jesus replied . . . '18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.'" From this point forward, men can never give the church any other name except his name to which the church belongs. The apostles recognized this truth in their common greetings as in Rom 16:16, "All the churches of Christ send greetings." Paul taught that Christ is the head of the church, his body, and taught that the church was his wife. In Eph 5:23-30, Paul wrote: "23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior." The analogy of the church as the bride and wife of Christ continues throughout the New Testament, becoming a thread woven throughout the last book, the Revelation. How can one call a bride or wife by a name other than her husband's name?

In Rev 19:7-8, John recorded the great multitude of heaven shouting like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder:

For the wedding of the Lamb has come,  
and his bride has made herself ready.

8 Fine linen, bright and clean,  
was given her to wear."

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

The Lamb, the son of God, is the groom, and the called out, the church, clothed in

righteous acts, is the bride. The husband and bride analogy continues in Rev 21:2, "I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." Keep in mind that the church of the firstborn is the Church of Christ, the Holy city, the new Jerusalem (Heb 12:22-23). The bride of Christ can only take the name the Church of Christ. Finally, the Revelation concludes with a vision of this bride of Christ in Rev 21:9-11:

"Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. 11 It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

For the church to wear some other name than Christ's is blatant infidelity. Paul wrote in 2 Cor 11:2, "2 I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him." The name of the body of the faithful can only be the name, Church of Christ

### ***The Oneness of the Church, the Bride of Christ in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century***

In the light of the evidence that the Church of Christ is the bride of Christ, and that Christ is the husband of the church, it becomes clear that there can be only one church, the Church of Christ. Paul made it clear that there is only one body in Eph 4:4-6:

There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

He also taught clearly that the one body is the church in Eph 1:22-23,:

22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

There is only one head, Christ, and only one body, the church. By the 21<sup>st</sup> century, sectarianism and denominationalism have proliferated names to designate the myriad of groups of their own followers. Yet, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is only one church, the Church of Christ just as there was only the Church of Christ in the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

### ***Conclusion***

Nothing shows how much man has digressed from the teaching of Christ and the apostles than the use of non-scriptural names to designate their groups and the individuals of their groups. The 1<sup>st</sup> century teaching is clear:

We are to do all things in the name of Christ.

The church is the Church of Christ.

Members of his church are called by the new name, Christian.

There is only **one** church of which the Lord is the savior—the Church of Christ.

There is only **one** name for the saved who are also added to the Church of Christ—

Christian.

### **Study Questions from the Scriptures**

1. Matt 28:18-20: In whose names are disciples made? Who has all authority?
2. Acts 4:12: In whose name must we be saved? Where do we find salvation?
3. Col 3:17: What are we to do in the name of the Lord Jesus?
4. 1 Peter 4:11: What should we speak?
5. Isa 62:2: By what are we called? Who will bestow that name?
6. Rev 2:17: What will the Lord give those who overcome? What will be written on it?
7. Rev 3:12-13: What is the name of the city of God?
8. Heb 12:22-23: When we come to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God, to what church do we also come?
9. Acts 11:26: What were the disciples called first in Antioch?
10. Acts 26:28-29: What was Paul trying to persuade Agrippa to become?
11. 1 Peter 4:16-18: For what are we not to be ashamed? For what are we to praise God?
12. Matt 16:18: What did Christ build?
13. Eph 5:23-30: What else might one call the body, the church?
14. Rev 19:7-8: Who is the bride of the Lamb? What is her clothing?
15. Rev 21:2: How is the Holy City, the New Jerusalem dressed?
16. Rev 21:9-11: Who is the bride of the Lamb?
17. 2 Cor 11:2: What did Paul promise the Lord?
18. Eph 4:4-6: How many bodies are there?

### **11. Ethics and Morality for the 21st Century as Taught by Christ and the Apostles**

*The Ethics and Morality of Jesus for the 21st Century* was a companion study, composed of 13 lessons. If you wish to find these lessons in detail, you may find them at the Gospel Lessons web site: <http://www.gospellessons.info>. In this present set of lessons, which compare the doctrinal teachings of Jesus and the apostles to the present day sectarian and denominational teachings, one can not overlook the moral and ethical departures of the 21st century from the teachings of Jesus and the apostles. A single question summarizes the direction this lesson takes: how can professed followers of Christ so blatantly ignore his teaching on the central moral issues of our time?

Three issues illustrate how and why 21st century folks depart from the New Testament teaching. These issues are adultery and unlawful divorce, permissive sex, and homosexuality. Jesus and the apostles taught that sex outside the marriage contract is sin. It is sin for the teenager tempted as rising hormones

produce new and enticing feelings. It is sin for single men and women to lead a modern life style, which permits casual or even committed sex outside of marriage. It is a sin for professed homosexuals to cave to unlawful desires, blaming God for their misdeeds.

### ***What Jesus and the Apostles Taught about Adultery and Unlawful Divorce***

It is sin for husbands and wives to fool around promiscuously and divorce for causes other than adultery. Adultery is a word that describes unfaithful sexual immorality when the participants are married. The definition includes those with an unscriptural divorce and remarriage or those married participating in illicit unlawful sex. Jesus and the apostles taught emphatically that these are sins of equal and condemning nature. Here is what Jesus and the apostles taught.

In Matt 5:27-28, while delivering the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said:

“27 You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

To this mental prohibition, Jesus added prohibition against the physical act when it includes married and divorced people in Matt 5:32:

“32 But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.”

In Mark 10:11-12, Jesus includes both men and women:

11 He answered, “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. 12 And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.”

The exception given here to the rule of divorce is marital unfaithfulness. The exception appears again in Matt 19:9:

“9 I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

Adulterers will not inherit the kingdom of God. Paul wrote in 1 Cor 6:9-10:

9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the **sexually immoral** nor idolaters nor **adulterers** nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

In the 21st century, illicit sex among married people abounds, receiving tacit approval in most cases and a blind eye in others. The courts now generally approve of divorces for grounds other than sexual unfaithfulness. Flirtations and even the consummation of sex acts are common in the 21st century work places, social circles, and even within families. The mores and ethics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have rejected the 1st century teaching of Jesus and the apostles.

### ***What Jesus and the Apostles Taught about Permissive Sex***

1 Cor 6:9-10, cited above, separates sexual immorality and adultery. The next two points will cover two types of sexual immorality: permissive sex and

homosexuality, although both by definition are sexual immorality. Permissive sex best describes the 21st century view that teenagers can make out, that adult singles can have full-blown sexual encounters outside marriage, and that adults may have live-in partners and enjoy sex without the benefit of marriage. All of these acts of permissive sex have the general approval of the media and of the national culture. However, the 1st century teaching of Jesus and the apostles condemned them with strong language, teaching that those who practice sexual immorality cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. Jesus set the high standard for sexual conduct in Matt 5:27-28. While delivering the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said:

“27 You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

We are not even to look upon another to lust after them. To this eternal principle, the apostles added specific commands prohibiting sexual immorality. Paul included sexually immoral, adulterers, male prostitutes and homosexual offenders among those who will not inherit the kingdom of God. In 1 Cor 6:9-11, he taught:

9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

In 1 Cor 6:13-18, he followed up by teaching how sexual immorality is so spiritually devastating:

The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! 16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." 17 But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.

Sexual immorality separates us from Christ and defiles the body created when we joined our bodies to Christ. Such a sin becomes the very essence of the works of the flesh. In Gal 5:19-21, Paul taught:

19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: **sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery**; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Once again, heaven is at stake when we commit sexual immorality. Therefore, Rev 21:8 includes the sexually immoral as those with a place in the fiery lake of burning brimstone:

But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.

For those of us who are God's holy people, there should not even be a hint of sexual immorality, according to Eph 5:3-5:

3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. 4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. 5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person – such a man is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

### ***What Jesus and the Apostles Taught about Homosexuality***

In the 21st century, society has come to look upon homosexuality as a genetic disposition out of the control of the individual so tempted to sin. Some homosexuals even say that God made them that way. One who takes the New Testament point of view will be called *homophobic*. Homosexuality receives the approval of most of the entertainment media, the political establishment, and the *enlightened* public. Yet, homosexuality is a succumbing to the lust of the flesh, just as a single person might or just as a teenager on the couch might or the husband on a business trip might or just as a bored and neglected housewife might. All these would be sexually immoral and powerfully tempted by the devil to pursue their lusts. The homosexual has no special excuse for the sin. Of homosexuals, Jude uses the expression *gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion*. In Jude 7, he wrote:

7 In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

The sin of Sodom was the sin of homosexuality. (See Gen 13).

Paul was so emphatic in his teaching that one cannot ignore it. He taught in Rom 1:24-27:

24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. 25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator – who is forever praised. Amen.

26 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. 27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

In 1 Cor 6:9-10, Paul wrote:

“9 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”

### ***Conclusion***

The ethics and morality of Jesus are unchanged over the centuries. Men and

women today must accept the moral principles as Jesus and the apostles taught them. Neither time, nor situations, nor genetic inclinations can change what Jesus taught. Certain acts may be legal, and one's civil right allows the committing of the sin; but it remains unscriptural and a moral wrong to commit that very same sin. Let us not be confused in the present world, seeking temporal pleasure and satisfaction. We wish to inherit the kingdom of God.

### ***Study Questions from the Scriptures***

1. Matt 5:27-28: When does one commit adultery in the heart?
2. Matt 5:32: By what exception may one divorce his wife? What is one's condition if they marry a divorced woman?
3. Mark 10:11-12: How are the rules of adultery the same for men and women?
4. Matt 19:9: What is the single reason for divorce and remarriage?
5. 1 Cor 6:9-10: Will sexually immoral and adulterers inherit the kingdom of God?
6. Matt 5:27-28. What high standard of sexual morality did Jesus set?
7. 1 Cor 6:9-11: What sexual offenses did Paul include under the category – wicked?
8. 1 Cor 6:13-18: For what are our bodies meant? Of whom are our bodies members? How can one unite the body of Christ to a prostitute? What are we to flee? What sin is against a person's own body?
9. Gal 5:19-21: What are the sexual acts of a sinful nature? Who will not inherit the kingdom of God?
10. Rev 21:8: Where is the place for the sexually immoral?
11. Eph 5:3-5: What among the children of God must there be no hint?
12. Jude 7: Up to what did Sodom and Gomorrah give themselves?
13. Gen 13: What was their specific perversion?
14. Rom 1:24-27: Over to what sinful lusts did God give men and woman?
15. 1 Cor 6:9-10: What will be the fate of male prostitutes and homosexual offenders

## 12. Salvation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as Taught by Christ and the Apostles

In the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, folks take many different views of salvation. Some believe that all humankind will be saved, thinking that a loving God could not condemn people to eternal punishment. Others think that as long as a person's conscience is clear, that God will save that person. Still others think that to go to the church of one's choice, is to have salvation. Yet, Christ and the apostles taught salvation, which only goes to the faithful and obedient followers. He taught in Matt 7:21-23:

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Not every religious person, not every worshipper, and not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven.

In Matt 15:7-9, the Lord extended this excluded group to include false worshippers:

"7 You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

8 'These people honor me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.  
9 They worship me in vain;  
their teachings are but rules taught by men.'"

The question of this study becomes, "If salvation does not go to everyone, to whom does it go?"

### ***Salvation Goes to Those Who Are Born Again***

Sectarians and denominationalists might easily agree that salvation goes to those who are born again. Even politicians courting the religious vote are quick to say, "I am a born again Christian." Do they mean the same thing as the Lord and the apostles meant. The Lord and the apostles conditioned the new birth on being born again. Jesus and Nicodemus had this discussion in John 3:3-8:

3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

4 "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"

5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'"

The language of the Lord is not obscure: no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again, and you must be born again.

The new birth is not some super awareness or emotional experience. Paul told us exactly how the new birth occurs in Rom 6:3-7:

3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were



baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

In his death, Jesus poured out his blood for many unto the remission of sins, according to Mt.26:28. He shed his blood at his death in John 19: 34. Paul taught that this new creation [the one born again] is in Christ in 2 Cor 5:17-18:

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation." The saved are born again, and the new creation so made is in Christ.

### ***Salvation Comes to Those Who Are in Christ***

We have learned that the new creation, those born again, are in Christ. Therefore, salvation goes to those in Christ. Peter states this principle, of salvation in Christ, directly in Acts 4:12: "12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Those in Christ find salvation, and salvation comes to them in the same way that the new birth came to them. They are baptized into him according to Paul in Gal 3:26-28:

26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

In none other than Christ is salvation, and we are baptized into him.

### ***Salvation Is the Spiritual State of Those Who Are in the Church***

On the day of Pentecost, after the death of Christ, Peter and the other apostles, preached baptism for the remission of sins. The previously cited scriptures show that this same baptism results in the new creation—the recipients are born again and that those baptized are also baptized into Christ. Acts 2:38 reads, "38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The passage goes on to say in verse 41 that those who accepted the word and were baptized were added to their number: "41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day." Those baptized formed the church. The Lord did this, adding to their number as stated in verse 47: "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." The King James Version translates this passage, "The Lord added to the church." Still many 21<sup>st</sup> century folks would argue that people are saved outside the church; Paul also emphatically teaches that the saved are in the church. In Eph 5:23-28, Paul taught:

Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their

husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Christ is the savior of the church, having made the church holy and clean by the washing with water through the word. Just as one is born again of water and the spirit (John 3), the church, the body of those baptized (Acts 2) receives its cleansing and salvation by baptism. Paul made this matter the more certain in 1 Cor 12:13 by clearly stating, "13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."

### **Conclusion**

Universal salvation is not a part of Bible teaching. Neither is the salvation of the good moral person a part of that teaching. Neither is the salvation of religious people following teaching other than that 1<sup>st</sup> century teaching of Christ and the apostles. The saved are those born again, in Christ, and in the church as a result of their believing and obeying Christ's teaching in baptism, where they are raised to walk in newness of life. Salvation is the subject of the coming of Christ to the earth and his dying for the sins of all. Salvation of humankind is the subject of the praise and the glory to God. John records in Rev 12:10

10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

"Now have come the salvation  
and the power and the kingdom of our God,  
and the authority of his Christ.  
For the accuser of our brothers,  
who accuses them before our God day and night,  
Has been hurled down."

### **Study Questions from the Scriptures**

1. Matt 7:21-23: Who will enter into the kingdom of heaven? To whom will the Lord say: "I never knew you?"
2. Matt 15:7: Why did the Lord call these people hypocrites? What was their worship? What was their teaching?
3. John 3:3-8: How can one be born again when he is old? Of what are those who are born again born?
4. Rom 6:3-7: Those baptized into Christ were also baptized into what? In what are they raised to live? What happens to the old self? What happened to the body of sin? From what are we freed?
5. Mt.26:28: For what did Jesus pour out his blood?
6. John 19: 34: When and where did Jesus pour out his blood?
7. 1 Cor 5:17-18: What is one who is in Christ?

8. Acts 4:12: Where is salvation found? In what name must we be saved?
9. Gal 3:26-28: How are we clothed with Christ?
10. Acts 2:38: For what are people to repent and be baptized? What will they receive?
11. Acts 2:41: What happen to those who accepted Peter's message? Who and how many were added to their number?
12. Acts2:47: Who were those added to their number?
13. Eph 5:23-27: Of what is Christ the Savior? How did he cleanse the church?
14. 1 Cor 12:13: Into what are we baptized?
15. Rev 12:10: What four things are now come? Who has been hurled down?

### **13. Heaven and Hell in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as Taught by Christ and the Apostles**

This is the final lesson of this series comparing the teaching of Christ and the apostles in the 1st century to the teaching of sectarians and denominationalists in the 21st century. The following is a short summary of the belief of various groups about heaven and hell. This material relies heavily on the online, free encyclopedia, Wikipedia. There are few scriptural references to the specific teachings of Jesus and the apostles in the representation of these doctrinal viewpoints.

#### ***What 21 Century Sectarians and Denominationalists Teach***

##### **The Roman Catholic Church**

The Roman Catholic Church bases its belief in Heaven on some main biblical passages from the Old and New Testaments and from the books of the apocrypha and from collected church wisdom. Heaven is the Realm of the Blessed Trinity, the Blessed Virgin Mary (also called the Queen of Heaven), the angels and the saints. According to the dogma of Assumption of the Virgin Mary, the Virgin Mary, "having completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory." This implies that heaven must have some facility to support human bodies, as well as souls, or that the experience of heaven is to be understood as a spiritual (soul) experience while still on earth.

The essential joy of heaven is called the beatific vision, which is derived from the vision of God's essence. The soul rests perfectly in God, and does not, or cannot desire anything else than God. After the Last Judgment, when the soul is reunited with its body, the body participates in the happiness of the soul. It becomes incorruptible, glorious, and perfect. Any physical defects the body may have labored under are erased.

The Roman Catholic teaching regarding Heaven is in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Upon dying, each soul goes to what is called "the particular judgment" where its own afterlife is decided (i.e. Heaven after Purgatory, straight to Heaven, or Hell.) This is different from "the general judgment" also known as "the Last judgment" which will occur when Christ returns to judge all the living and the dead.

Roman Catholics commonly believe that St. Michael the Archangel carries the soul to Heaven. They believe that Saint Peter meets the soul at the "Pearly Gates," an artistic application of the belief that Christ gave Peter, believed by Catholics to be their first Pope, the keys to Heaven.

### **Protestant Christianity**

The intermediate state (between death and the resurrection) is unclear in Protestant Christian thought, but the following may be generally concluded about the eternal life that Jesus promised those who believed in him:

Biblical authors apply the term Heaven to the realm in which God currently resides. Eternal life, however, occurs in a renewed, unspoiled and perfect creation, which can be termed Heaven, since God will choose to dwell there permanently with his people (Revelation 21:3). There will no longer be any separation between God and man. The believers themselves will exist in incorruptible, resurrected, and new bodies; there will be no sickness, no death, and no tears. Not only will the believers spend eternity with God, they will also spend it with each other. John's vision, recorded in Revelation, describes a New Jerusalem which comes from Heaven to the new earth, which is seen to be a symbolic reference to the people of God living in community with one another. *Heaven* will be the place where life will be lived to the full, in the way that the designer planned. All believers will love the Lord their God with all their hearts and with all their souls and with all their minds. They will love their neighbor as themselves (Matthew 22:37-38) – a place of joy, without the negative aspects of earthly life.

### **Seventh-day Adventists**

Seventh-day Adventists believe that heaven is a material place where God resides. They believe that Christ promises to return as a Saviour at which time He will resurrect the righteous dead and gather them along with the righteous living to heaven. The unrighteous will die at Christ's second coming. After Christ's second coming, there will exist a period of time known as the Millennium, during which Christ and His righteous saints will reign and the unrighteous will be judged. At the close of the Millennium, Christ and His angels return to earth to resurrect the dead that remain, to issue the judgments and to rid forever the universe of sin and sinners. On the new earth, in which righteousness dwells, God will provide an eternal home for the redeemed and a perfect environment for everlasting life, love, joy, and learning in His presence. It is at this point that heaven is established on the new earth.

### **Jehovah's Witnesses**

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus' death was necessary to atone for the sin brought into the world by the first man, Adam, opening the way for the hope of everlasting life for mankind, and that 144,000 people will receive immortal life in heaven as co-rulers with Christ. They and Christ will rule over the rest of mankind during the Millennial Reign. Witnesses believe that during the imminent war of Armageddon, the wicked will be destroyed, and the survivors, along with millions of others who will be resurrected. These will form a new earthly society ruled by a heavenly government, and they will have the possibility of living forever in an earthly paradise. The vast majority of Jehovah's Witnesses expect to live on a

renewed paradise on Earth.

### **Latter-Day Saints**

The view of heaven according to the Latter-day Saint's movement is based on Section 76 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The afterlife is divided first into two levels until the Last Judgment; afterwards it is divided into four levels, the upper three of which are referred to as "degrees of glory" that, for illustrative purposes, are compared to heavenly bodies. Before the Last Judgment, spirits separated from their bodies at death go either to Paradise or to Spirit Prison, based on their merits earned in life. Paradise is a place of rest, while its inhabitants continue learning in preparation for the Last Judgment. Spirit Prison is a place of anguish and suffering for the wicked and unrepentant; however, missionary efforts done by spirits from Paradise enable those in Spirit Prison to repent, accept the Gospel and the atonement and receive baptism through the practice of baptism for the dead. After the resurrection and Last Judgment, people are sent to one of four levels:

The *Celestial Kingdom* is the highest level, with its power and glory comparable to the sun. Here, faithful and valiant disciples of Christ who accepted the fullness of His Gospel and kept their covenants with Him through following the prophets of their dispensation, are reunited with their families and with God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit for all eternity. Men and women who have entered into celestial marriage are eligible, under the tutelage of God the Father, to eventually become gods and goddesses as joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

The *Terrestrial Kingdom's* power and glory is comparable to that of the moon, and is reserved for those who understood and rejected the full Gospel in life but lived good lives; those who did accept the Gospel but failed to keep their covenants through continuing the process of faith, repentance, and service to others; those who "died without law" (D & C 76:72) but accepted the full Gospel and repented after death due to the missionary efforts undertaken in Spirit Prison. God the Father does not come into the Terrestrial Kingdom, but Jesus Christ visits them and the Holy Spirit is given to them.

The *Telestial Kingdom* is comparable to the glory of the stars. Those placed in the Telestial Kingdom suffered the pains of Hell after death because they were liars, murderers, adulterers, whoremongers, etc. They are eventually rescued from Hell by being redeemed through the power of the atonement at the end of the Millennium. Despite its far lesser condition in eternity, the Telestial Kingdom is described as being more comfortable than Earth.

Perdition, or outer darkness, is the lowest level and has no glory whatsoever. It is reserved for Satan, his angels, and those who have committed the unpardonable sin. The only known son of Perdition is Cain, but it is generally acknowledged that there are probably more scattered through the ages.

### **What Jesus and the Apostles Taught in the 1st Century**

Bible concepts of heaven and hell are straightforward. Jesus related eternal life to belief and the resurrection in John 6:40, "40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." He also taught that those with eternal life would never perish in John 10:28, "28 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no

one can snatch them out of my hand." This eternal life was central to the purpose of God, according to Paul in Rom 6:23, "23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. "

### **The Righteous and Wicked Separated For Ever and Ever**

Jesus described the separation of righteous and wicked. In Matt 25:31-34, 41, he taught:

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

### **Disaster Awaits the Wicked**

Paul also described the disaster that will confront the wicked in 2 Thess 1:6-10:

6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

### **The Righteous Will Be Changed**

The *how* of the transition to heaven is clearly taught in 1 Thess 4:13-17:

13 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. 14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

In 1 Cor 15:42-44, 50, Paul showed how flesh and blood will not be in heaven:

42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

50 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of

God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

### **Eternity Awaits the Both Righteous and the Wicked**

There is in the teaching of Jesus and the apostles an eternal home of the wicked and an eternal home of the righteous. Rev 21:6-8 separates the eternal fate of the believers and the unbelieving:

6 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. 7 He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

In Rev 22:14-15 describes those who enter the heavenly city:

14 "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. 15 Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

### **The Heavenly Home of the Righteous Is Perfect and For Ever and Ever**

The heavenly home of the righteous is perfect and for ever and ever Rev 22:1-5:

22:1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

### **Conclusion**

Each of the 21<sup>st</sup> century groups that we have studied, take their authority from themselves. The Roman Catholics have their traditions and church dogma. The Protestants have the creeds, disciplines, and manuals, the findings of their councils and conventions. The Seventh Day Adventists have the writings of Ellen G White and the pronouncements of their General Conference. The Jehovah's Witnesses have the teachings of Charles Taze Russell and Joseph Franklin Rutherford. The Latter Day Saints have the Book of Mormon and their *Doctrine and Covenants*. All of these add to the plain teaching of the New Testament. All mankind should pay close attention to the Revelation of Christ where one finds all one needs to know about heaven and hell. That Revelation closes after describing heaven and hell with these words in Rev 22:14-20:

14 "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. 15 Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. 19 And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon."

### ***Study Questions from the Scriptures***

1. John 6:40: What did God promise those who believe on the Son?
2. John 10:28: What does Christ give us? When will Christians perish?
3. Rom 6:23: What is the gift of God? What are the wages of sin?
4. Matt 25:31-34: When Christ comes where will he be sitting? Who will be on the right? The left? What is the reward for the blessed of the Father? To where will the cursed go?
5. 2 Thess 1:6-10: Who will Jesus punish? With what shall they be punished?
6. 1 Thess 4:13-17: Who will come with Jesus? What will the Lord's coming be like? Where will we be forever?
7. 1 Cor 15:42-44, 50: What can not inherit the kingdom of God? What are our resurrected selves like?
8. Rev 21:6-8: What will happen to those who overcome? What will happen to the sinners?
9. Rev 22:14-15: Who are blessed? What will they receive? Who are those outside?
10. Rev 22:1-5: Figuratively speaking, what will heaven be like?
11. Rev 22:14-20: What do the Spirit and bride say? What will happen to those who take away from the words of this prophecy? What will happen to those who add to the words of this prophecy?