

The Keys Of The Kingdom

May 2015 - Vol: 2 Number: 5



Published By: J.F. Miller
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Eric Farrior: Gospel Preacher for the church of Christ in Freeport, Florida for the past 3 years. I have one daughter, Jaeda. It is my privilege to preach and teach the word of God in Freeport and have various other opportunities to do so through the use of the internet.



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Scott Crawford: Currently a member at the Roebuck Parkway church of Christ in Birmingham, AL; preaching part-time for the Montevallo church of Christ in Montevallo, AL. Married to Kathy L. (Joynes) Crawford of Elkton, KY for 25 years with 2 children: Attended Harding University from '85 to '89 with concentrations in Psychology, Music, Bible Studies. Currently working on a Master's Degree in Theology through the Trinity Collage of the Bible and Theological Seminary.



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Doug Post: Has been in full time ministry for 15 years, preaching in Indiana and Connecticut. Received his BA in Communications, UCONN; MA in Biblical Studies, Southern Christian University; New Testament Theology and New Testament Greek, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Theological University of America. Doug is married to Debbie, his wife of 22 years.

If you would like to be a guest writer for TKOK you may contact me at jfmiller61@gmail.com. To announce up coming events like Gospel Meetings, Lectures, Singing events etc... Just use the email link above to contact me. Please feel free to tell others and have them sign up for their copy today. Use this link to join the mailing list. http://jfmiller.com/keys-of-the-kingdom/?page_id=1316 . May God Bless You. Jim and the StaffChanges

Changes

Some changes have been made to our writing staff and we wanted to take time to say goodbye to Logan Summers and Cloyd Frock. Cloyd has been editing for us since almost the start of our publication and his service will be missed as will the contributions of Logan. We thank these men for their service to God and wish them well in their new endeavors. May God richly bless them.

We also want to take time to welcome our new writers John Mabrey of Tenn. and Eric Farrior of Fla. Both men are dedicated Gospel preachers and I am sure will serve you well with their writings.

I will be asking you to bare with me as I am not as good an editor as Cloyd, and I am hoping to brush up on my skills as we continue with this publication. We will always strive to bring you the truth from Gods word and keep you informed of heresies that seem to keep coming out of the darkness to attack us and draw us away.

We also want to thank you the reader for your love of the truth and your support for the work we are doing here. Several people have asked if we make this publication available in a hard copy they can give to their friend. The answer to that is no and the reason is that we would then have to charge for it and we do not believe that it would be right to do so. However, We do allow you to print this off on your computer and give it away, you may make as many copies as you wish as long as you **Never** charge for it and **Never** make any changes to it. I will be adding this notice to the last page of every edition from this month on. We ask that you please abide by it.

We thank you again for being a loyal reader and look forward to serving you for many years to come if it be Gods will.

Jim Miller & Staff

Voices from the Past

Some Things Paul Saw While Blind

Charles Brown
Stanford, Kentucky

David said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes" (Psalms 119:71). I heard of a very wicked man going blind. His little daughter read the Bible to him he learned the Truth and obeyed the Gospel. Pain and sorrow are not God's converting power but the Gospel is (Rom. 1:16).

Now let us consider what Paul saw. First, Paul saw that he was a sinner (I Tim. 1:15). One thing the Pharisee could never see was that he was a sinner (Luke 18:10-14). The Prodigal Son was very frank to admit, "I have sinned against Heaven" (Luke 15:18). Judas said, "I have sinned" (Matt. 27:4). Also Pharaoh said, "I have sinned" (Exodus 9:27). I have heard of those who think they cannot be wrong about anything.

Second, Paul saw that his "father's Religion" was wrong. Many people think their religion was good enough for their fathers and is therefore good enough for them. We do not measure other things by this standard. Paul could have reasoned that the religion of his fathers was older than that which began with Jesus, but Paul was not guided by human reasoning (Gal. 1: 11-12).

Third, Paul saw that conscience was not a safe guide. Paul had always had a good conscience (Acts 23:1). One should always have a clear conscience, but conscience is not a safe guide. Conscience condemns, but good judgment restrains. I can think of no more lamentable condition than one having a seared conscience (I Tim. 4:2). When Paul's conscience was properly taught he obeyed the Truth.

Fourth, Paul saw that prayer did not save. I know of no teaching in the book of God where alien sinners are taught to pray for anything. All the needs of the alien sinner are supplied in the word of God. Sometimes sinners are told to pray for the love of God, but one receives the love of God without any condition on his part (John 3:17). Prayer is for the child of God. Solomon said, "He that turneth his ear away from hearing the law, his prayer shall be an abomination" (Prov. 28:9).

Fifth, Paul saw that it was no disgrace to change when wrong. Paul changed out of conviction. I have no doubt that many of us have changed over the years, and will continue to change when convinced we are wrong on any point. What is the motive of our change? Saul's motive was not for wealth, nor popularity, but of conviction. This is honorable in anyone.

Sixth, Paul saw that baptism washed sins away. "Arise be baptized and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16). Members of the Church of Christ have been accused of thinking that water washes sins away. But the blood of Christ washes sins away. The poet has said in a song, "What can wash away my sins, nothing but the blood of Jesus." We must know how and when we reach the blood of Christ. Paul said, "We are baptized into his death" (Rom. 6:3-4). Christ shed his blood in his death (John 19:34). Therefore we reach the blood of Christ in baptism.

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The Elders

Jim Miller

Gray, Maine

An Elder is a man who first must meet the qualifications set forth in the scriptures. Today, due to lack of teaching and desire many churches do not have elders. Those fortunate enough to have them are often under the misconception that the elders are the bosses of the congregation and therefore what they say is law. Yet there are still others who believe that elders are simply figure heads and have little or no duty at all in workings of the church. Like the preacher the elder in reality understands he will be held more accountable than others and is willing to serve God to the best of his ability.

I believe brother Dub McClish might have explained the eldership in terms that all can understand. I quote: *“Elderships are God’s wall of defense for His church—accountable for congregational welfare and safety—and are directly responsible to God for that which is taught in the classrooms, the pulpit, the church bulletin, and all other teaching media they supply. They need not do all of the teaching personally (impossible even in an average-size congregation), but **they must know what is being taught**. This knowledge includes the material that is used and that which is taught in the Bible classes.*

Also, elders need to know that the teachers are both morally and doctrinally sound. They must do this by personal interview, written questionnaire, or some other means, or be guilty of grave neglect.

They dare not merely assume that all is well in these matters. It is their business as overseers and pastors to find out—to know.”

Keep in mind if a congregation has no elders it is Not the responsibility of the preacher to lead or shepherd the flock in their absence. Till elders can be found the men of the congregation should do their best to meet regularly and keep the congregation informed of what is going on and make sure the Lords work is continuing forward.

Qualified elders are a necessity for the well-being of church. Titus was told to "ordain elders in every city" (Tit. 1:5). Paul, on the return trip of his first

missionary journey, appointed elders in every church (Acts 14:23). So we clearly see churches are to have elders. God has assigned the role of elders not man. This is a grave responsibility and not to be taken lightly. Those who take this position lightly, treat it as some kind of glorified bosses position rather than as a work to be done. The scriptures teach otherwise "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work" (1 Tim. 3:1).

Those who look at the Eldership as a means of control are Not motivated for the right reasons. A lack of study and teaching has misguided not just elders but also congregations who look upon their work as that of a board of directors or the like. Some even among the faithful look at the position as a means of gaining power over others and nothing could be further from the truth. Of course elders are to make decisions, however, there are other important things elders are to do. We should thank God for those men who have the ability to be elders and accept the responsibility to serve the Lord.

Once scriptural qualifications are met it is a must for an elder to have the ability to lead. The Bible states, "Obey them that have the rule over you . . ." (Heb. 13:17). The word, "rule," in this passage signifies "to go before, to show the way, to guide, to lead. We must remember

that in scripture elders is always plural. These men should meet on a regular basis and not worry about time limits or huddling for a few minutes in the corner somewhere hoping to come to agreement on matters of the church. Elders are to rule diligently (Rom. 12:8) and not slothfully (Rom. 12:11).

It has been said "A leader sees three things: what ought to be done, what can be done, and how to do it." These are qualities we should look for in an elder. Let us look at some of the duties of the elders.

God gave elders the authority to rule the church, but this does not preclude distributing work to the other members. In fact, delegation of responsibility must be made to others if the work is to get done. This is good leadership. A good leader has a harmonious relation with his followers. He takes them into his confidence and at times asks their advice. In addition to being leaders, elders are shepherds or pastors of God's flock. Paul told the Ephesian elders "to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28, NASB). Peter exhorted elders to "shepherd the flock of God among you. . ." (1 Pet. 5:2,

NASB). The King James has "feed" instead of "shepherd." Feed the flock. One of the qualifications of an elder is "apt to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2). This indicates that he must know the Scriptures and be able to nurture and strengthen those whom he watches over.

A good shepherd watches for the spiritual safety of their flock and if one wanders off and becomes lost the shepherd leaves the flock and searches for the lost sheep until he finds it (Lk. 15:46). The Hebrew writer proclaims that elders "watch for you souls. . ." (Heb. 13:17) Good Elders/Shepherds will protect the flock from predators. Paul told the Ephesian elders, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch. . ." (Acts 20:29-31).

Elders must be careful as to what preacher they secure to fill the pulpit. Good churches have been ruined by preachers seeking to spread false doctrine. Shepherds must know the truth and be able to see the ways in which error has a way of creeping in to lessons from the pulpit. The scriptures teach elders are to be examples to the flock. Peter exhorts elders, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:3). In Hebrews, the inspired writer says, "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation" (Heb. 13:7). Elders must go before the congregation demonstrating New Testament Christianity and how it is to be practiced.

Elders must demonstrate how to get along with people. They must be willing to listen to others when they have suggestions or problems, and respond with respect and appreciation. They must show that there can be matters of disagreement over opinions without losing their temper and becoming angry. Elders are not to be soon angry (Tit. 1:7).

To quote H. E. Phillips. *"The responsibility of the elders is continued from day to day in the congregation over which they rule. They have not been appointed to 'let another do the work' of overseeing and tending the flock, because only elders can do the work of elders. The sooner elders realize their duties and respond to them the sooner the church will begin to grow spiritually and numerically in every city of this great country"* (Scriptural Elders and Deacons, p. 189).

All scripture quoted is from the KJV unless otherwise stated.

H. E. Phillips: *Scriptural Elders and Deacons*, p. 189

Dub McClish: *From his writings on Elders*.

Who is God?

Eric Farrior
Freeport, Florida

The only Eternal Being in existence introduces Himself by the pen of Moses in the 4th word of the 1st sentence of divine revelation. “*In the beginning God*” (Genesis 1:1a).

There is no “beating around the bush” with Jehovah, He asserts Himself as the infinite antecedent to all of creation... In keeping with scientific laws He created, He is the Great cause of the Universe. Now, how did He accomplish such a magnificent act? Did He do as man does now and take some “pre-existing matter” and re-form it? No.. Did He set forth events that over countless eons would produce certain things which would lead to others? No.. Absolute power was demonstrated because God SPOKE every material thing into existence... By divine fiat, God spoke and matter obeyed! Notice: *By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast* (Ps. 33:6-9).

The bible reveals that God exists in 3 divine Persons:

- The Father- Mt. 5:45, Jn. 17:1
- The Son- Jn. 1:1ff, Heb. 1:8
- The Holy Spirit- Gen. 1:2, Acts 5:3-4

Who is God? God is the Almighty Creator!

God is Holy:

Absolutely essential to an understanding of God is to study His nature.

Attributes of the Almighty include:

- Holiness: Merriam-Webster defines “holy” as exalted or worthy of complete devotion as one perfect in goodness and righteousness—

In the truest sense, Deity is holy and is the source of holiness.

He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name (Ps. 111:9). The term “reverend” = fearful,

terrible, make afraid (Strong's)--- Holiness signifies separation (Vines)-- Absolute holiness by its very nature is separate from all else!

Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest (Rev. 15:4).

An understanding of the holiness of God is essential for a person to truly recognize WHO Jehovah is! For a glimpse of this, notice that the Seraphim, who are powerful beings in close proximity to the throne of God, cover their faces and feet in His presence, notice: *In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts (Is. 6:1-5).*

Please notice further regarding His holiness being emphasized: By the division of the holy place from the most holy place in the Tabernacle (cf. Exod. 26:33).

Notice that the ark of the covenant was placed in the most holy place, where God would meet with the high priest once per year (Exod. 25:22, 30:10). The holy place symbolized God's people (the church) and the most holy place symbolized heaven, yet the veil still separated the two; this was taken away by Christ, notice: *And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent (Mt. 27:51).* Jesus made God accessible to man thru His sacrifice- *By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh (Heb. 10:20).* The earthy high priest could only enter the holiest place once per year and only with blood offered for himself and the people (Heb. 9:7), yet Christ has paved the way to the Father with His own blood, having made peace by the blood of His cross (Col. 1:20).

Notice this taught: *Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal*

redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Heb. 9:12-14)?

Anything less than holy cannot possibly be in the presence of Absolute holiness -- Say unto them, Whosoever he be of all your seed among your generations, that goeth unto the holy things, which the children of Israel hallow unto the LORD, having his uncleanness upon him, that soul shall be cut off from my presence: I am the LORD (Lev. 22:3).

Please study the following to further emphasize God's holiness:

-By allowing no strange incense to be offered to Him - Exod. 30

- No strange incense on altar - vv. 9

- They had to wash that they die not - vv. 20-21

- The making of the Holy oil - vv. 31-33

- The making of the Holy perfume - vv. 37-38

Death to those who would use these for any other purpose than that which it was intended!

Christians (cf. Acts 11:26) therefore are "*be ye holy; for I am holy*" (1 Pet. 1:16) One cannot possibly be in fellowship with God (cf. 1 Jn. 1:5-10) without holy living, listen to inspiration:

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves

servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness (Rom. 6:6-16)?

(All scripture from the KJV unless otherwise noted)

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Cloyd Frock

Cloyd's Facebook Page offers a great resource for preachers seeking churches and churches needing preachers. Use the link below to visit his page.

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Nero (Part 2)

Tim Bench

Abilene, Texas

Nero's father (December 11, 17 BC – January, 40 AD) was the only son of Antonia Major, niece of the emperor Augustus and daughter of Augustus' sister Octavia Minor, wife of Mark Antony. Agrippina, Nero's mother, was a great-granddaughter of Augustus, granddaughter of Emperor Tiberius, sister of the Emperor Caligula, niece and 4th wife of the Emperor Claudius (whom by some accounts she poisoned).¹ It is interesting to speculate on the moral foundations and environment in which Nero would be raised and the resulting results which would become obvious in his later life.

Nero's path to the throne was not typical, to say the least. Nero's uncle, Caligula, assumed the throne in 37 AD at the age of 25 and along with his wife, Caesonia, and infant daughter, Julia Drusilla, was murdered in 41 AD. Afterwards, Claudius, Caligula's uncle, assumed power and became emperor. Claudius would have his wife Messalina executed in 48 AD and would then marry Agrippina, Nero's mother. Nero, still known as "Lucius", was adopted officially in 50 AD and renamed Nero Claudius Caesar, and became heir to the throne upon the death of Claudius, which would occur in 54 AD. At 16 years of age, Nero was thus Emperor. As the ruler of the vast Roman Empire, Nero and his mother Agrippina would quarrel frequently, often to bitter extremes. Nero, wed to Octavia, began an adulterous affair with Claudia Acte, a former slave, a development which did not sit well with Agrippina; in 55 AD, she attempted to demand that her Emperor son dismiss Acte, which Nero refused. Nero's friends and advisors began to advise Nero to avoid his mother and her efforts to control his actions.

In 58 AD, Nero would orchestrate the murder of his own mother.

"But being terrified with her menaces and violent spirit, he resolved upon her destruction, and thrice attempted it by poison. Finding, however, that she had previously secured herself by antidotes, he contrived machinery, by which the floor over her bed-chamber might be made to fall upon her while she was asleep in the night. This design miscarrying likewise, through the little caution used by those who were in the secret, his next stratagem was to construct a ship which could be easily shivered, in hopes of destroying her either by drowning, or by the deck above her cabin crushing her in its fall. Accordingly,

under colour of a pretended reconciliation, he wrote her an extremely affectionate letter, inviting her to Baiae, to celebrate with him the festival of Minerva. He had given private orders to the captains of the galleys which were to attend her, to shatter to pieces the ship in which she had come, by falling foul of it, but in such manner that it might appear to be done accidentally.” From Suetonius, The Twelve Caesars, Nero, XXXIV.

Multiple attempts to have his mother killed had proven fruitless. Nero finally resorted to constructing a boat which was designed to collapse upon the seas, thereby causing the drowning of Agrippina. The boat did indeed sink, yet Agrippina was able to swim to shore. 19 Agrippina likely knew what was happening as she watched an attendant of hers clubbed to death on the shore after claiming that SHE was Agrippina. Finally, Nero likely tiring of repeated failures, sent a detachment of soldiers to kill his mother; Agrippina, no pillar of morality herself but ashamed at the specter of evil she had brought into this world, faced death with the following comment....

“When she was struck across the head, she bared her womb and said, "Strike here, Anicetus, strike here, for this bore Nero," and she was brutally murdered”.

from “Nero” at www.roman-emperors.org.

“...But the sea would not endure the tragedy about to be enacted on it nor would it submit to assume responsibility for the deception wrought by the monstrous contrivance: therefore, though the ship parted asunder and Agrippina fell into the water, she did not perish. In spite of the fact that it was dark and she was full of strong drink and that the sailors used their oar blades on her, so much so that they killed Acerronia Polla, her fellow voyager, she nevertheless saved her life and reached home. Thereupon she affected not to realize that it was a plot and let not a word of it be known, but sent speedily to her son an account of the occurrence with the implication that it had happened by accident, and conveyed to him the good news (as she assumed it to be) that she was safe.

Nero hearing this could not endure the unexpected outcome but punished the messenger as savagely as if he had come to assassinate him, and at once despatched Anicetus with the sailors to make an end of his mother. He would not entrust the killing of her to the Pretorians. When she saw them, she knew for

what they had come, and leaping from her bed tore open her clothing; exposing her abdomen, and cried out: "Strike here, Anicetus, strike here, for this bore Nero!"....

Thus was Agrippina, daughter of Germanicus, grandchild of Agrippa, descendant of Augustus, slain by the very son to whom she had given the sovereignty and for whose sake she had killed her uncle and others."

from "DIO'S ROME: AN HISTORICAL NARRATIVE ORIGINALLY COMPOSED IN GREEK DURING THE REIGNS OF SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS, GETA AND CARACALLA, MACRINUS, ELAGABALUS AND ALEXANDER SEVERUS: AND NOW PRESENTED IN ENGLISH FORM BY HERBERT BALDWIN FOSTER", 1906, www.gutenberg.org, volume V, page 13.

Nero had become romantically involved with Poppaea Sabina, wife of future emperor Otho. Reports differ as to the rationale behind Nero's killing of Agrippina, as many suggest that his dalliance with Sabina was frowned upon by Agrippina (Nero would indeed marry her in 62 AD) while others argue that the execution was motivated by Agrippina's attempts to have Nero removed from the throne. Nero would divorce and banish Octavia on "grounds of infertility", allowing him to marry the already-pregnant Poppaea (Octavia would ultimately return from exile, but like Agrippina, would be summarily executed, scalded to death in a boiling hot bath, under orders from Nero). Nero would then kill his pregnant wife Poppaea by violently kicking the woman in the stomach, his victims now including his mother, his first wife, his second wife, and unborn child.

Arguably, Nero would then commit arguably his most shocking act of moral depravity...

"Besides abusing freeborn boys and seducing married women, he debauched the vestal virgin Rubria. The freedwoman Acte he all but made his lawful wife, after bribing some ex-consuls to perjure themselves by swearing that she was of royal birth. He castrated the boy Sporus and actually tried to make a woman of him; and he married him with all the usual ceremonies, including a dowry and a bridal veil, took him to his house attended by a great throng, and treated him as his wife. And the witty jest that someone made is still current, that it would have been well for the world if Nero's father Domitius had had that kind of wife. This Sporus, decked out with the finery of the empresses and riding in a litter, he took with him to the assizes and marts

of Greece, and later at Rome through the Street of the Images, fondly kissing him from time to time. That he even desired illicit relations with his own mother, and was kept from it by her enemies who feared that such a relationship might give the reckless and insolent woman too great influence, was notorious, especially after he added to his concubines a courtesan who was said to look very like Agrippinina. Even before that, so they say, whenever he rode in a litter with his mother, he had incestuous relations with her, which were betrayed by the stains on his clothing.”

(from Suetonius, The Twelve Caesars, Nero, XXVIII).

We will continue with part three next month.....

SEARCHING FOR TRUTH

Truth is a most precious thing.

In our world, everyone is searching for something. If you are searching for answers to questions regarding God, Jesus, hope, happiness, faith, life after death, good and evil, the church, the Bible, God's plan for you, or Jesus' love for you, the answers to these can be found in this series of programs.

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The Church in Revelation – The Challenge to Be Overcomers

Scott D. Crawford
Clay, Alabama

The Church, as arranged and exemplified in the New Testament (NT), stands as an integral part in the social and spiritual life of mankind. Jesus promised to build “*my church*” (notice the possessive pronoun there), and once built, “*the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it*” (Matt. 16:18)¹. Toward that end our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ purchased the church of God “*with His own blood*” (Acts 20:28), an assemblage of peoples that Paul – thru the Ephesian Elders – instructs all Elders to defend. The Church has been, is now, and will always be until the end of this worldly existence the vehicle by which “*the manifold wisdom of God might be made known ... to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places*” (Eph. 3:10); the vehicle by which glory is given to God “*to all generations, forever and ever*” (Eph. 3:21). The singularly wondrous part, a most glorious part, and an amazingly personal part is that WE are the Church, WE are built up “*as living stones ... a spiritual house*” (Pet. 2:5), and that “*Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen*” (Rev. 1:5, 6). I urge you brothers and sisters to honor the extraordinary and blessed gift which is the one universal Church (Eph. 4:4; 5:23; Col. 1:18) by regular attendance and involvement with a local assemblage of the church of Christ.

Because of the great importance of the Church, it blesses us to study all the wonderful examples that are presented in the Scriptures. To that end, we will be undertaking a brief study of the Church as it is presented in The Revelation – the last book of our Bibles. Although Revelation can be intimidating on several levels, we should never miss one overall message and comforting thought – GOD AND HIS PEOPLE ARE VICTORIOUS!

Some Preliminary Considerations

The Book of Revelation, or referred to by its Greek name – The Apocalypse – is truly one of the most fascinating of the books in the Bible. There are several

different styles of writing found in the Scriptures and The Book of Revelation covers three of those styles prominently. First, Revelation is an epistle, a letter. Revelation begins and ends like a typical NT letter with an introduction (Rev. 1:4, 5) and a conclusion in the form of a benediction (Rev. 22:21)². As any letter, the Book of Revelation is also situational. The seven churches of Asia are addressed specifically (Rev. 2:1 – 3:22) where we find both encouragement in the face of increasing hostility and warning against the easy path of conformity to the world³. Second, Revelation is a form of apocalyptic literature. Apocalyptic writings in the Bible would not only include Revelation, but also Daniel, Zachariah, as well as some of the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel in the Old Testament (OT). Some NT passages might also be included in this category: the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24 and parallels), 1 Corinthians 15, 2 Thessalonians 2, 2 Peter 3, and perhaps parts of Jude. The original meaning is “to reveal,” and without going into the intricate details of apocalyptic writings, a general description would be “the revelatory communication of heavenly secrets by an other-worldly being to a seer who present the visions in a narrative framework; the visions guide the readers into a transcendent reality that takes precedence over the current situation and encourages readers to persevere in the midst of their trials.”⁴ One of the things that can make Revelation so baffling at times is the profuse use of imagery – some drawn from the OT, some the NT, and some original. Finally, we also know that the Book of Revelation is prophetic in nature. We are told in the introduction that a person is blessed that reads and hears the “*words of this prophecy*” (Rev. 1:3), a designation that is repeated in the final chapter no less than four times: Revelation 22:7, 10, 18, 19. The role of prophetic writings has been noted to be two-fold: both in forthtelling by which we mean exhortation, reproof, correction and instruction; and, in foretelling by which we mean prediction of events to come – immediate, distant, or very distant.⁵ These three types of literature – epistle, apocalyptic, and prophetic – will form a sort of framework as we examine the presence of the Church in Revelation.

A few brief words about interpretation are also in order. This writer considers himself a partial-Preterist with Idealistic sprinkles. There are four basic approaches when interpreting Revelation.⁶ The Historic approach views Revelation as a survey of the entirety of Church history. Those that consider themselves a Preterist look into Revelation and see its complete fulfillment in the past and shortly after the time of writing. The Futurist views the events taking place after chapter three as awaiting fulfillment sometime in the future. Then the Spiritual approach, or Idealistic view, which views no single future

fulfillment; the imagery provides a basis for understanding transcendent principles and recurring themes. There is also the idea of some that can only be described as Eclectic.⁷ As a partial-Preterist with Idealistic sprinkles (an eclectic approach) we view many of the events as occurring to the Church as it existed in the 1st century, yet some obvious events remain in the future to occur – notably the Judgment scene in Revelation 20. The idealistic sprinkles allows one to see the great themes of “Good vs. Evil,” “The Church Victorious,” and “Preservation During Persecution” – all themes that can apply to the Church throughout time.

Disclaimer! The purpose of this study is not to examine the multitude of images that are presented in Revelation and determine their correct interpretation, but to look for the Church as she is portrayed in three distinct phases in Revelation: the Church in time, the Church in tribulation, and the Church in triumph. Do not be surprised to disagree with some of what will be discussed.

The Church in Time – the Challenge to be Overcomers

One of the first and most recognizable images presented in Revelation shows us Jesus the Christ walking among seven lampstands, having seven stars in His right hand (Rev. 1:12-16). The wonderful thing about this image is we don't have to wonder or speculate about the meaning, John himself relates the words of Jesus when He says, *“The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches (Rev. 1:20).* The reason we refer to this section as the “Church in Time” is simply because the congregations noted in Revelation 1:11 – Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea – *“are in Asia.”* These congregations currently exist when the Book of Revelation is being written; therefore, we find the first of our literary divisions since the letters of the NT are considered to be addressing a specific situation or particular occasion. As we will shortly observe, Jesus addresses each of the individual congregations directly and three considerations can be noted.

First, Jesus addresses each congregation and recognizes something very specific that each assembly is dealing with at the time. If one is to look into a New King James Version of the Scriptures it will be noticed that topical headings are placed before each section or paragraph, but this should not be taken as a definitive descriptor of the particular congregation, only a generalized indicator (although they are amazingly accurate).

The first congregation to be addressed is the church in **Ephesus** (Rev. 2:1-7), and they are appropriately noted to be the Loveless Church, but they have also been rightly characterized as the Wandering Church. They have some good qualities to be sure: their works, labor, patience, unwillingness to bear those that are evil, the testing of false apostles, perseverance, and endurance (2:2, 3), and a hatred of the Nicolaitans (2:6). Yet for all their good qualities, they also are found wanting when Jesus says to them, *“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love”* (Rev. 2:7). Here is a congregation sitting amidst a city that was a center for trade in that part of the world, and was famous for one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World: the temple of Artemis (Diana),⁸ and it is her followers that fueled the riot Luke records in Acts 19:23-41. Ephesus also had the distinction of hosting Paul as an evangelist for three years (Acts 20:31), and during that time *“all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks”* (Acts 19:10). It is likely that Paul used Ephesus as a base of operations for reaching out and starting the other congregations that are also addressed in Revelation. The church in Ephesus is addressed by Paul in its own letter, and at that time Paul remarks, *“I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints”* (Eph. 1:15). How sad, how tragic, that a leading congregation such as this would be found wandering from the words of Jesus, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself”* (Matt. 22:37, 38).

The church in **Smyrna**, also referred to as the Persecuted Church, is addressed next (Rev. 2:8-11). Here is a congregation already poor in a material sense, the Greek word describing these people is that which means destitute of even the necessities of life,⁹ and yet more suffering is on the way. *“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer”* (Rev. 2:10) are the words they hear from Jesus. Sufferings upon suffering; persecutions upon persecution – some possibly even to the point of death. During the 1st century many Christians were persecuted for their belief, this is a well-documented and established fact. How sad these Christians will be living and dying to the words of Jesus: *“Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you”* (John 15:20).

Pergamos, sometimes called the Compromising church, had the distinction of sitting in the middle of Sin City (Rev. 2:12-17)! This congregation is established *“where Satan’s throne is ... where Satan dwells”* (2:13). If the Roman

government was a great arm for Satan then this description well fits Pergamos. This city was reported by some writers as being the center of Roman provincial government in Asia and was responsible for the enforcement of emperor worship,¹⁰ and emperor worship was but a drop in the bucket of idolatrous worship of the Roman world. We find this congregation was holding fast to the name of Jesus and didn't deny His faith (2:13), yet they allowed those to continue among themselves that "*hold the doctrine of Balaam*" (2:14) and "*also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans*" (2:15). The Nicolaitans, also appearing earlier in the letter to Ephesus, are believed to be a group of Gnostics claiming to have special knowledge or insight unavailable to others. Those holding the doctrine of Balaam are seen in the light of Balaam and Balak from Numbers 22-25, two men that conspired to destroy the Children of Israel. In the city of Pergamos the destruction of the Children of God was going to result from the stumbling blocks of idolatry and sexual immorality, unless repentance followed in short order (2:16). The NT is clear that false teachers should be noted and turned away from (Rom. 16:17), and that brethren walking against Apostolic tradition should be withdrawn from (2 Thess. 3:6). How we pray the church in Pergamos took heed to the dire warning given them.

We will continue our study next month.

All Scriptures taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

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3 Merrill C. Tenny, *New Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1961), 386.

4 Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 221-22.

5 A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), 287.

6 Steve Gregg, *Revelation: Four Views a Parallel Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), 34-46).

7 J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 289.

8 David L. Roper, *Truth for Today Commentary: an Exegesis & Application of the Holy Scriptures Revelation 1-11* (Searcy: Resource Publications, 2002), 109.

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10 David L. Roper, *Truth for Today Commentary: Revelation 1-11*, 130.

11 Steve Gregg, *Revelation: Four Views a Parallel Commentary*, 73.

12 Lehman Strauss, *The Book of the Revelation* (Neptune: Loizeaux Brothers, 1964), 85.

13 Steve Gregg, *Revelation: Four Views a Parallel Commentary*, 78.

14 Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary: Volume VI. – Romans to the Revelations* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1966), 986.

15 William D. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 329.

Learning to Give an Answer (1)

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Introduction: This is the beginning of a series of articles that I presented as a Bible class at the Hilham Church of Christ.

The purpose of this series of articles is to teach all of us to answer questions that we may be asked from time-to-time from those who do not understand why members of the Lord's church do the things we do in worship and in conduct of our daily lives. Why is this so important that we know these things? NOTE: All scripture references are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

Peter wrote: *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:”* (I Pet. 3:15)

Many times we look at this verse of scripture and we concentrate more on the “answer” than we do on the “reason.” The “answer” is important, but the “reason” is the “why” of the answer being what it is. So, in this series of lessons we are not only going to search the scripture to come up with the proper answers, but we are also going to see the “reason” (the why) things are done in the church the way they are done. This should motivate us to want to share these “reasons” to the extent that we may take the gospel to others in a loving spirit to “every man” that has occasion to ask.

Why is this important? The writer of the book of Hebrews gives the following admonition: *“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again the first principals of the oracles of God; and have need of milk, and not of strong meat, For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.”* (Heb. 5:12)

Therefore we are going to return to the “first principles” so that we all may learn to give an answer to “every man” why we in the church of Christ do what we do; and believe what we believe. To some of you this will seem to be new material;

to some it will be a refresher course depending on how long you have been a member of the Lord's body. Either way, oftentimes all of us need our memories refreshed lest we forget. *"Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.* (II Pet. 1:12)

These lessons will be presented according to the following outline:

1. Learning to give an answer about the origin of the church.
2. Learning to give an answer about the authority/organization of the church.
3. Learning to give an answer about salvation.
4. Learning to give an answer about church membership.
5. Learning to give an answer about the mission/greatness of the church.
6. Learning to give an answer about prayer.
7. Learning to give an answer about the Lord's Supper.
8. Learning to give an answer about music in worship.
9. And, other "answers you ought to know."

And thus we begin with Learning to give an answer about:

The Origin of the Church in Prophecy:

In the year 1970 AD, ground was broken for a new building in Chicago. The construction was completed some 3-4 years later making it (at that time) the tallest building in the world. This building was known as the Sears Tower (later renamed the Willis Tower). On those facts, many people might proclaim that the "origin" of that building was in 1970; but is that the building's origin? The fact is that great tower could not exist today without first being conceived in the mind of an architect. Long before one shovel of earth was moved for the construction of the great Chicago tower, this building existed only in the mind of the architect who designed it; Mr. Bruce J. Graham. We can all learn a lesson from architecture.

God is the architect of the universe, and even though Christ said *"I will build my church"* (Matt. 16:18), God is the architect of the church as well. Many of us point to the day of Pentecost when we seek the "origin" of the church. But, is this correct? After the fall of man in the book of Genesis, God knew and

declared that he was going to send the world a Savior. This is evident when we read the first prophecy given by Jehovah in Genesis 3:15: *“And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it (he) shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”* A bruise to the heel symbolizes a minor scratch in comparison to a bruise to the head, which is a deathly destructive blow.

This is not to say that the church was established or ever physically existed in Old Testament times, but it existed in its “origin” in the mind of God. How do we know this? The Old Testament is full of prophecy concerning the church. Let us consider a few of these refernces:

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” (Isa. 2:2-3)

The Old Testament forecasts a day when God would make a “new covenant” with his people. Consider the words of the prophet Jeremiah. *“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband to them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.* (Jer. 31:31-34)

Another of the great prophecies found in the Old Testament concerning the Lord’s church is found in the book of Joel, chapter 2:28-32. Verse 32 says, *“And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.”*

All of these aforementioned scriptures point forward to a time when a “new covenant” shall be made between God and his people. Terms such as, “a new nation”, “all nations”, “forgiveness of sins”, “remember their sins no more”, and “calling on the name of the Lord” for deliverance were concepts that even the prophets did not fully understand; but the prophets wrote these words as they were inspired of God. (In other words, they wrote what God told them to write by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.) Perhaps the most significant prophecy concerning the church is in (what we call) the New Testament. This scripture is Matthew 16:17-18 when Jesus himself said: “...Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” This prophecy made by Jesus, tells us at least four (4) significant things about the building of the church.

- 1) First, it acknowledges that Jesus is indeed that long sought Messiah of whom the Jews longed for based on the statement that Peter had just made in v. 16. (the “rock” being the truth of Peter's affirmation that Jesus is that “Christ, the Son of the living God.”)
- 2) Second, it tells us that the church had not yet been constructed. We know this by the language used: “I will build” indication that he would build his church at some future date and time.
- 3) Third, we learn who the builder of the church is to be. Jesus said, “I will build MY church” indicating he, himself, would be the builder of it.
- 4) Fourth, it tells us who did NOT build the church. Any church or institution that promises salvation under any other name than the name of Christ cannot deliver on those promises. (Acts 4:10-12) There are many people in the world today that lay claim to John the Baptist as the origin of the church; but according to the scripture this cannot be the case for two distinct reasons:
 - e. First, Jesus said the church would be his (that is, belong to him.)
 - f. And, at the time Jesus indicated his intent to build his church, John the Baptist, had completed his ministry in the wilderness, had been thrown in prison, and had already been beheaded. Therefore the church does not, and could never have belonged to John the Baptist.

There are many more prophecies that pointed to the building of the Lord's church, but this should suffice to make clear that the church

was NOT some afterthought, or interim measure that God set up till the “kingdom come.” The church is the kingdom, and those that would promote the doctrine of premillennialism need only to look into the scripture to see this doctrine is full of holes and holds no water. We will continue this next month, Lord willing, by looking at the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the building of the Lord's church.

All scripture quoted is from the KJV unless other wise stated.

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The Holy Spirit Has Left Israel

Doug Post
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The rabbis of old taught that “[S]ince the death of the last prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, the Holy Spirit has left Israel.”¹

At the close of the Old Testament and the penning of the last Old Testament book, all prophecy ceased. The revelation of the Old Testament was complete. No further prophetic messages were forthcoming, because inspiration ended. The Revelatory process, whereby the Holy Spirit supernaturally revealed God’s message to the prophets, inspiring them with the exact words to speak in revealing the Will of God to His people, had ceased.

With the end of prophecy came the abrupt end of Scripture. Since the Holy Spirit stopped revealing God’s Will to the prophets, the prophets had nothing more to speak and nothing more to write. Scripture ceased because the Holy Spirit stopped working through men, guiding them to write down God’s Will. Communication between God and man ceased! Prophetic silence would last some 400 years until the next prophet, John the Baptizer would come preparing the way of the Lord (Isa.40:2-3; Matt.3:3). The Holy Spirit, indeed, left Israel.

However, at the dawning of the New Covenant and the preaching of John, who began his work in preparing the people for the coming Messiah, the Spirit once again began working in revealing God’s Will to the people. John the Baptizer was God’s new prophet to the people. As the first century progressed, other inspired men, including the apostles, would proclaim God’s Will as the prophets of old once did. The Holy Spirit, working through these men, delivered the gospel to the world. Just as the prophets of old, these inspired men were supernaturally guided by the Holy Spirit, in writing down Scripture,

ensuring that the Truth of the New Testament would be preserved for mankind.

However, with the penning of the last inspired book of the New Covenant, revelation and inspiration came to end. The gospel of Jesus Christ was complete. The work of the apostles, prophets, and other inspired men, had ceased. The Old Covenant message pointed the Jews to Christ (Gal.3:19-24), living under the Old Covenant law, while the New Covenant grants access for BOTH Jew and Gentile (the world) to Christ (Matt.28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:44-49), while living under the New Covenant law.

With the completion of the New Covenant or Gospel, communication between God and man has once again ceased. No further revelations and/or messages are forthcoming from God. God's plan for human redemption has been fulfilled and recorded in Scripture. The design of Scripture is to lead and direct man to Christ and salvation. The resulting product of the supernatural and prophetic era, during the development of the New Covenant, are the New Covenant Scriptures themselves. While God is silent, in that He is no longer directly communicating with man through chosen, inspired men, He does continue communicating with mankind, so to speak, only through the Scriptures. God's New Covenant message has been once for all delivered to His people (Jude 3), and within it, we have all things pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet.1:3). There are no further messages because there is no more revelation and inspiration. There is no more revelation and inspiration because there are no longer apostles, prophets, and other inspired men:

The Holy Spirit, Himself, tells us that the Scriptures make us complete and thoroughly equipped. They are all sufficient, "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim.3:16-17), that is absolutely comprehensive in scope. The Bible meets our every need. The word of His grace strengthens us (Acts 20:32) and the Scriptures comfort us (Rom.15:4). In a good and honest heart, the word of God (i.e., the –seed, the Gospel – Luke 8:11; Rom.1:16) produces fruit (i.e., fruit of the Spirit – Luke 8:15). The

Holy Spirit, through Scripture, reveals Christ to mankind. Along with other providential actions operating in the world, it is specifically Scripture that makes us complete in procuring and maintaining salvation. It is not the Bible and something directly affecting our personal will, either in motivation or in action. It is not Scripture plus a direct supernatural infusion from the Holy Spirit (illuminations, revelations, messages, promptings, prodding, and signs from God). This false, denominational concept circumvents the Scriptures – the very source which the Holy Spirit says makes us complete.

Psalm 19 is a miniature of Psalm 119. In the first six verses God reveals Himself in nature (i.e., General Revelation), but in verses seven through fourteen God reveals Himself through Scripture (I.e., Special Revelation), and it is in this particular passage where the all-sufficiency of Scripture is underscored. The God-breathed Word is called several names and is synonymous with, the law of the Lord, the testimony of the Lord, the statutes of the Lord, the commandment of the Lord, the fear of the Lord, and the judgments, or ordinances of the Lord. From this passage, there are at least ten things the Word of God can do for the individual: 1. It is complete in converting the soul (v.7) 2. It makes the simple, wise (v.7) 3. It causes the heart to rejoice (v.8) 4. It enlightens the eyes (v.8) 5. It causes one to fear and respect (v.9) 6. It offers completeness (9) 7. It warns or protects (v.11) 8. It offers great reward (v.11) 9. It purifies the heart (v.12) 10. It restrains one from sin and apostasy (v.13).

The Bible is the place where we can go to find joy, relief, and happiness. Jeremiah, in the midst of tremendous stress and rejection, gave great testimony to the joy that comes through the Word of God saying, "Thy words were found and I did eat them and Thy word was in me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jer.15:16). John writes, "These things are written that your joy might be full" (1 John 1:4). God gives testimony to the fact that His Word is the source and definition of joy.²

However, making such a bold statement in saying the "Spirit has left," might cause some to feel uncomfortable or angry. Some might

exclaim, “How can you say such a thing? Did not God promise to be with us, after all doesn’t the name of Jesus mean “God with us? And what about the Holy Spirit? Doesn’t the Bible tell us that He lives inside us?” Many other such things might be asked.

First, the Spirit has stopped providing messages to men – Divinely selected men, supernaturally empowered by the Spirit, in order to preach God’s Will and Word to the rest of the people. Such direct supernatural revelation has ceased (1 Cor.13:8-13; Eph.4:11-15). Since there is no longer inspiration and revelation, there are no longer inspired men (prophets, apostles, etc.), and since there are no longer supernaturally guided men, there are no longer on going inspired writings, or Scripture.

Second, did Deity (Holy Spirit) really abandon God’s people simply because supernatural activity, including inspiration and revelation ceased? For instance, does the phrase “the Holy Spirit left Israel” imply that God abandoned His people? No. Simply because one aspect ended does not mean all aspects ended. While God was no longer guiding them through inspired prophets (those who supernaturally spoke for God by foretelling and forth-telling, preaching) they still had His message, His Will, in the form of Scripture. Folks that is a Divine gift of God’s grace.

The end of inspiration and revelation meant the end of the Old Covenant, which meant the end of its Divine purpose, which was to point the Jews (not mankind) to Christ (Gal.3:19-24). The idea of pointing them to Christ was not just about pointing them to the Person of Christ, but to the New Covenant He would usher in with His blood (Matt.26:28). Christ’s blood was shed for more than sins, it was shed for the establishment of the New Covenant, a covenant with far better promises (Heb.8:6, 10:9-10, 19-20; cf. 9:15-22).

The fact that the people still had Scripture to consult showed, quite clearly, God was still with them, for Scripture contained His Will, His concern, and His love for His people. Why some today doubt that is

beyond me. Therefore, the Spirit had not abandoned them simply because inspiration and revelation had ceased. Moreover, when the rabbis stated that “the Holy Spirit has left Israel,” they used that metonymically. To say the Spirit left is simply to say that the source of inspiration and revelation ended. To say inspiration and revelation ended is to say the Spirit metaphorically left. I believe it is just here, that the inability, for some, to discern figurative and metaphorical language, is that which causes misconceptions, consternation, and knee jerk reactions, leading folks to unnecessary anger toward such statements.

The same scenario applies to God’s people living under the New Covenant. The supernatural process involving the Holy Spirit ended: the Spirit no longer empowers selected men to speak on His behalf; the Holy Spirit is no longer guiding selected men in writing down that which was spoken by inspired men, creating Scripture (sacred writings); there is no Scripture being written because God’s message to mankind is complete ... since there is no modern day sacred writings being created today, there is no modern day supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit in leading men to write; since there is no modern day supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit, there is no modern day inspiration and revelation; since there is no modern day inspiration and revelation, there are no modern day inspired men, including prophets and apostles; since there are no such modern day people, then there is no modern day working of the Holy Spirit in inspiration and revelation.

The Will of God for mankind has been revealed and captured in sacred writing. Scripture is complete, therefore, the Will of God for mankind is complete. The only form of the revealed Will of God we have today is found in Scripture, only! His complete Will for us today is the New Covenant, the gospel of Jesus Christ. Having access to God’s revealed Will is identical to having access to the mind of Christ, which we have today through Christ’s Word, the Scriptures (1 Cor.2:16).

Abiding in His Word means we are walking in the light (John 8:31; 1

John 1:7), which is the same as continuing in the apostle's doctrine (Acts 2:42); which is equal to walking in the Spirit (Rom.8:14; Gal.5:18), which is the same thing as walking in and according to the law of the Spirit (Rom.8:1-2). The Spirit does not DIRECTLY lead anyone, which is the common misnomer. Many remove the metonymical nature of the phrase "led by the Spirit", running ahead of God, assuming that a DIRECT supernatural leading is meant. It is, therefore, supposed that to be "led by the Spirit" means a direct, supernatural manipulation of the mind, in which the Spirit does something to the individual, moving the individually mentally, emotionally, and spiritually (perhaps even physically) to a level they could not otherwise reach or attain through their own cognitive functioning God gave them.

This, of course, is the appeal to a miraculous or supernatural working of the Spirit upon the mind or heart of the Christian (the Bible "heart" is the "mind"), something the Bible does not so teach. A miracle, is the setting aside nature, the natural. In this case it would be setting aside the natural cognitive processes – that somehow God sets aside a Christian's natural human faculties of the mind: cognition, recognition, reasoning, thinking, and comprehending.

This doctrine places the work and the responsibility upon the Holy Spirit. He is now responsible for setting aside the natural process, affecting the human being with supernatural enhancement. That the Spirit is said to supernaturally infuse energy – directly expanding and enhancing the mind with wisdom, thoughts, words, so that the Christian can arrive at the right conclusion, think the right things, and say and do the right things. For some this also means that the Spirit is responsible for creating within them certain physical or emotional sensations that otherwise would not occur through the natural human processes. This is mind control. It is nothing more than the supernatural manipulation of the human mind and human free will. It is supernatural interference. It is not allowing the free course of human functioning, eliminating the Free Will of the Christian.

Attributing such a work to Deity, where the Bible does not, is based

upon the premise that Romans 8:14 is a “direct” leading, separate and apart from the Word of God. That is a gross misapprehension of the passage through eisegesis. Note that this is a promise – an automatic blessing – because one cannot be a child of God without being “directly” led by the Spirit. If that is what is meant, the Spirit MUST lead an individual every moment, every time, no matter the circumstance or situation, in order to remain a “son of God.” There are no limitations intimated here. However, since each individual sometimes thinks the wrong things; says the wrong things; makes the wrong choices; does the wrong things, not understanding, is unsure and in doubt, then the text cannot be speaking about a “DIRECT” (Holy Spirit upon human spirit), leading of the Spirit. Rather, the text is still speaking about the law of the Spirit of life (Rom.8:2), and it is through this law or gospel (Rom.1:16-17; 2 Cor.3) that the Spirit INDIRECTLY leads. This coincides with man’s Free Will in following the Spirit. To follow or walk in the Spirit is simply to abiding in the Christ’s Word (John 8:31). It is simply walking in the light (1 John 1:7). It is submitting to the law of the Spirit or gospel (Rom.8:2; cf Rom. 1:16-17). When one, through his own thinking, reasoning, and will (whosoever will), sets his or her own mind on spiritual things (Rom.8:5-6; Col.3:1-2), or is simply minding the things of the Spirit’s law, then one is being led by the Spirit. I would also add that the person is being led by the God the Father, God the Son, the apostles, and other inspired writers of the New Testament.

So, the promise of the leading of the Spirit in Romans 8:14 is contingent upon the individual Christian’s thinking process and the willingness to submit. This is true since God requires and demands “faith” to be exhibited by the individual, not by the Holy Spirit! A little later, Paul says, “but be transformed by the renewing of YOUR MIND” (Rom.12:2). The “renewing” is the “setting of one’s mind” on things above (things of the Spirit). This is a command for the individual Christian to carry out, not the Holy Spirit.

The Bereans searched the Scriptures. (Acts 17:11). They literally “sifted, scrutinized, examined, judged, determined, distinguished, appraised, and assessed” with their own mind, their own thinking. The Holy Spirit did not come along and enhance their minds so they could discern truth and error, right and wrong. This was something

they did, according to the thinking and reasoning abilities God gave them. There is not a hint or intimation that the Holy Spirit was interfering or tampering with their minds.

David said: "When I consider your law," he was saying what he does. When David says that he meditates on His Word" he is saying (actually the Spirit is saying this through David) that those are David's own thoughts, his own contemplations, his own mind working. Passages such as a 1 John 2:27, 1 Cor.2:13-16, and John 14:26 are also shown to be taken out of context, and proven NOT to be proof-texts for some direct operation of the Spirit.

Is it possible that some have fought so hard against the phrase, "the Holy Spirit left Israel," that they are guilty of leaving the Holy Spirit? I believe that is the case.

Miraculous means something that is undeniable; that which is absolutely identifiable, it is that which is separate and distinct from the natural, it's visible and knowable. A body of water does not divide itself and fly up in the air. Fire does not come from the sky. The dead are not raised. Body parts are not restored, and should these things occur it would not only be unnatural it would be supernatural - above and beyond the natural occurrences of life and nature. Miraculous interferes with the natural, setting aside its laws, making it supernatural. God still works today, but the age of the miraculous is over. He works through providence: something which is not distinguishable, discernable, could be denied or could not be denied at the same time. With a miracle, no one could say "perhaps" or "maybe", it either was a miracle or it was not. With providence, God is working behind the scenes working with nature, working with natural order, working with the natural processes, not disturbing them, not interfering with them, not manipulating them. And this would be true with the human body and mind. If God is working directly, it would be a miracle, the setting aside of laws of nature.

As for being "sealed" with the "Spirit" that too is a misnomer - an "old wives tale." One was sealed with the Spirit with power from the Spirit. Acts 19:1-6 took place in Ephesus and serves as Divine commentary for Eph.1:13-14 with regards to "sealing." They were sealed when Paul

laid his hands upon them and they received power from the Spirit. The church in Ephesus had miraculous power in people (Eph.4:8-11). They, too were "sealed" with power. A "seal" means something visible, something distinguishable, it authenticates a thing. An invisible seal does not fit the meaning of the word. To say you are "sealed" with the Spirit and then if asked how do you know? And you respond by saying "Because the bible tells me so," does not fit the definition of "seal." On the other hand, those who were truly "sealed" with the Spirit had POWER and people saw it, and people recognized it, and people could tell that they were of God, and that their message was from God ... that's a seal, not what is currently being defined by some today.

It needs to be understood that when some affirm the Spirit works directly upon them in leading and guiding them, they are in effect declaring that the Scriptures are not all sufficient as the Holy Spirit declares them to be (2 Tim.3:16-17). If there were a for a direct supernatural working, in order to affect the natural processes of man, ultimately enhancing the human mind, then such an occurrence would make void human free will. If the natural cognitive processes of the human being must somehow be enhanced by the Holy Spirit (Divine Illumination) in order to understand Scripture, then that would setting aside the natural faculties of man. If accountable human beings cannot understand the Holy Spirit's revelation in Scripture, then it cannot be said to be a revelation. If an accountable human being cannot understand the Holy Spirit's revelation in Scripture, then what makes a person think he will be able to understand an additional revelation from the Holy Spirit? Will the individual need another direct revelation (illumination) to understand the additional revelation, which was allegedly necessary to understand the original revelation? The Holy Spirit has, indeed, left "Israel."

WORKS CITED

Rodkinson, Michael Levi. *New Edition of the Babylonian Talmud Original Text Edited, Corrected, Formulated, and Translated into English*. 2d ed. Boston: Talmud Society, 1918. 12.

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40th Annual Bellview Lectures — 2015

Refuting Realized Eschatology

June 12 – 16, 2015

Open Forum Questions

To submit a question for the Open Forums please click on the link below:

[Submit Open Forum Questions Information](#)

Lessons on:

Viewing Times are for Central Standard Time (USA)

Friday, June 12

7:00 pm	What Is Realized Eschatology and Its History	Jess Whitlock
8:00 pm	Partial Versus Full Preterism	Danny Douglas

Saturday, June 13

9:00 am	Exposition of Daniel 7:13-14	Charles Pogue
10:00 am	Prophecy of Joel	Bruce Stulting
11:00 am	Exposition of Daniel 12	Dub McClish
<i>Lunch</i>		
<i>Break</i>		
1:00 pm	Exposition of Luke 20:27-40	Harrell Davidson
2:00 pm	Exposition of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12	Johnny Oxendine
3:00 pm	Open Forum	

Dinner

Break

7:00 pm	The Nature of Prophecy	Jerry Brewer
8:00 pm	Word Studies Refuting Realized Eschatology	Daniel Denham

Sunday, June 14

9:00 am	The End of the Law of Moses	Michael Hatcher
10:00 am	The Establishment of the Kingdom	Gene Hill

Lunch & Dinner

Break

1:00 pm	The Grave of Judaism Doctrine	Doug Post
2:00 pm	The Bible's Teaching of Spirit and Soul Regarding Man	Lee Moses

Monday, June 15

9:00 am	Allegory of Sarah and Hagar (Galatians 4:20-31)	Jess Whitlock
10:00 am	Sin-Death Doctrine of Realized Eschatology	Daniel Denham
11:00 am	Exposition of John 5:24-29	Charles Pogue

Lunch

Break

1:00 pm	Exposition of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18	Johnny Oxendine
2:00 pm	Old Testament Texts Misused by Realized Eschatology	David P. Brown
3:00 pm	Open Forum	

Dinner

Break

7:00 pm	Interpretation of Figurative Language	David P. Brown
8:00 pm	Exposition of 1 Corinthians 15	Harrell Davidson

Tuesday, June 16

9:00 am	Exposition of 2 Peter 3:1-13	Jerry Brewer
10:00 am	Does Revelation Prove Realized Eschatology?	Doug Post
11:00 am	Exposition of Acts 2:29-36	Dub McClish
<i>Lunch Break</i>		
1:00 pm	The Olivet Discourse and Luke 17:20-37	Lee Moses
2:00 pm	The Last Days	Gene Hill
3:00 pm	Open Forum	
<i>Dinner Break</i>		
7:00 pm	The Judgment and Resurrection of the Dead	Bruce Stulting
8:00 pm	Bible Doctrine of Hades, Heaven, and Hell	Danny Douglas

Travel directory of churches of Christ

Since we cannot attest to the soundness of any given assembly, we suggest you call ahead and speak with the Elders or Preacher.

Remember: always make plans to worship God, even on vacation, or just out-of-town for the weekend.

Alabama

Montevallo Church of Christ: 830 Vine St, Montevallo, AL. 35115

Sunday Bible Class: 10 AM ***Morning Service: 11 AM***Evening Service: 6 PM***Wednesday Bible Class: 7 PM***No Website***Phone: 205.665.7579 *****Preacher: Ray Brunner; Scott Crawford; & John Hutchinson**

East Huntsville church of Christ: 801 Humes Ave Huntsville, AL. 35801

Sunday Bible Study: 9:00 am***Sunday Worship: 10 am & 1 pm***Wednesday Bible Study: 7:00 pm
[Church Website Click Here](#)***Phone: 256.534.4001*****Preacher: Bill Cantrell**

Riverchase Church of Christ: 1868 Montgomery Hwy, Birmingham, AL 35244

Sunday Bible Class: 9:30 AM***Morning Service: 8:30 & 10:30***Evening Service: 6 PM***Wednesday
Bible Class: 7 PM***[Church Website Click Here](#)***Phone: 205.988.5808*****Preacher: Dewayne Spivey**

Roebuck Parkway Church of Christ: 400 Roebuck Pkwy, Birmingham, AL 35206

Sunday Bible Class: 9 AM***Evening Service: 10 AM***Evening Service: 5 PM***Wednesday Bible Class: 7
PM***[Church Website Click Here](#)***Phone: 205.833.1400*****Preacher: Jason Moon**

Austinville Church of Christ: 2833 Danville Rd. SW Decatur, AL 35603

Sunday Bible Class: 9:30 AM***Evening Service: 10:30 AM***Evening Service: 5:30 PM***Wednesday
Bible Class: 7 PM***[Church Website Click Here](#)***Phone 256.353.4256*****Preacher: Mark N. Posey**

Arkansas

Letona Church of Christ: P.O. box 141 Letona, Arkansas 72085

Sunday Bible Study: 10 am***Sunday Worship: 11 Am***Sunday Evening: 5 pm***Wednesday Bible Study:
6 pm***No Website***Phone: 501.230.1201*****Preachers: Sid Scudder, Jack Meredith**

Newton Street church of Christ: 412 Newton Street Paragould, AR. 72450

Sunday am Bible Study - 9:15***Sunday Morning Worship - 10:00***Sunday Evening Worship - 5:00
Wednesday Bible Study - 6:30***No Website***Phone 870.378.5551*****Preacher: Joshua Dement**

Connecticut

Tolland County Church Of Christ: 24 Hyde Ave (Rt.30) P.O. Box 3201 Vernon, CT 06066

Sunday Bible Class: 9 A.M.***Morning Service: 10 A.M.*** Evening Service: 12:45 P.M.***Wednesday
Bible Class: 7 P.M.***[Church Website Click Here](#)***Phone 860.810.9833*****Preacher: Douglas Post**

Florida

Bellview Church of Christ: 4850 Saufley Field Road Pensacola, Florida 32526

Sunday Bible Class 9:00 A.M.***Morning Service: 10:00 A.M.*** Evening Service: 6:00 P.M.***
Wednesday: Bible Class 7 P.M.***[Church Website Click Here](#)***Phone: 850.455.7595*****Preacher:
Michael Hatcher**

Freeport Church of Christ: 17003 Highway 331 South PO Box 66 Freeport, Florida 32439

Sunday: Bible Study: 9:00 am*** Sunday Worship: 11am*** Evening Service: 6pm*** Wednesday Bible study: 7pm*** No Website*** Phone: 850.835.4640*** **Preacher: Eric Farrior**

College Avenue church of Christ: 337 DeFuniak Springs, FL. 32435

Sunday Bible Class: 9 am*** Sunday Morning Worship 10 am*** Sunday Evening 6 pm*** Wednesday Bible study 6 pm*** [Church Website Click Here](#)*** 850-892-5384*** **Preacher: Robert Alexander**

Midway church of Christ: 7226 Tamiami Tr. Sarasota Fl. 34243

Sunday: Bible Class: 9:30 A.M.*** Morning Service: 10:30 A.M.*** Evening Service: 6:00 P.M.*** Tuesday: Ladies Class: 10:00 A.M.*** Wednesday: Bible Class 7 P.M.*** No Website at this time*** Phone: 941-355-6785*** **Preacher: Jack Pinckert Jr.**

Georgia

Hartley Bridge Road church of Christ: 3465 Hartley Bridge Road, Macon, GA. 31216

Sunday Bible Class 10 AM*** Sunday Worship 11 AM*** Sunday Evening 6 PM*** [Church Website Click Here](#) *** Phone: 478.781.1818*** **Preacher: Steve Waller**

Kansas

Parsons church of Christ: 2900 Briggs Ave., Parsons, Kansas 67357

Sunday Bible Class: 9:45 AM*** Morning Service: 10:45 AM*** Evening Service: 6:00 PM*** Wednesday Bible Class: 7:00 PM*** No Website*** Phone: 620-421-1497*** **Preacher: Cloyd "Ben" Frock, Jr.**

Kentucky

Mt Moriah church of Christ: 181 Mt. Moriah Rd. Dunmore KY 42339

Sunday Bible Study: 9 AM*** Morning Service 10 AM*** Evening Service: 6 PM*** Wednesday Bible Study: 6 PM*** No Website*** Phone: 270.934.2007*** **Preacher: Rick Shutt**

Sturgis church of Christ: 801 N. Monroe St. Sturgis, KY 42459

Sunday Bible Class: 10:00 AM*** Morning Service: 11:00 AM*** Evening Service: 6:00 PM*** Wednesday Bible Class: 6:00 PM*** [Church Website Click Here](#)*** Phone: (270) 333-4371*** **Preacher: Audie Cherry**

Maine

Gray Church of Christ: 13 Liberty Ave, Gray Maine, 04039

Sunday Bible Class: 10 A.M.***Morning Service: 11 A.M.***Evening Service: 6 PM***Thursday Bible Class: 6 P.M.*** [church website click here](#)***Phone: 207.299.0454*****Preacher: James Miller**

Michigan

Ridge Road Church of Christ: 1770 Ridge Road; Ypsilanti, MI 48198;

Sunday Bible Study 10:00 a.m.*** Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.***Evening Worship 6:00 p.m.***Wednesday Bible Study 7:30 p.m.***[Church Website Click Here](#)***Phone 734-485-293
Preacher: Leonard J. Whit

Nebraska

Kearney church of Christ 1004 East 16th St. PO BOX 643 Kearney NE 68848

Sunday Bible Class 9:30 a.m.*** Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m.*** Wednesday Bible Class 7:00 p.m.
[Church Website Click Here](#)***Phone: 308.240.4622*****Preacher:John Shafer**

North Carolina

Eden church of Christ: 250 the boulevard, Eden NC 27288

Sunday Morning Bible class 9am***Sunday Worship 10am***No evening service***Thursday Bible class 7pm***No Website***Phone: 276-340-2653*****Preacher: James Oldfield**

Ohio

Wolf Creek church of Christ: Malta, OH (Rt. 78-West of town)

Sunday Morning Bible Class 9:45***Morning Worship, 10:30 AM***Evening Worship 7:00PM***
Wednesday Bible class 7:00PM***No Website***Phone: 740-962-3363*****No regular preacher**

Tennessee

Sevierville Church of Christ: 208 Hicks Dr, Sevierville, TN 37862

Sunday Bible Class: 9 AM***Morning Service: 10 AM***Evening Service: 6 PM***Wednesday Bible Study: 7 PM***[Church Wesite Click Here](#)***Phone: 865.453.8009*****Preacher: John Daniels**

Cullom church of Christ: Hwy 84 & Collins Cove Rd, Livingston, TN 38570,

Sunday Bible Study 9am***Worship 10 am***Sunday Evening 6pm***Wednesday Bible Study 6pm***
[Chuech Website Click Here](#)***No phone*****William H. Sowder Sr.**

Central Church of Christ: 112 Hay Long Avenue Mt. Pleasant, TN 38474

Sunday Bible Study: 9:30 AM***Sunday Worship: 10:30 AM***Sunday Evening: 6:00 AM***Wednesday
Study: 6:30 PM***[Church Website Click Here](#)***Phone Number: (931) 325-3040*****Preacher: Danny
Douglas**

Texas

Oldham Lane Church of Christ: 5049 Oldham Lane, Abilene Texas,

Sunday Bible Class: 9 A.M.***Morning Service: 10 A.M.***Evening Service: 6 P.M.***Wednesday Bible
Class: 7 P.M.***[Church Website Click Here](#)***Phone: 325-695-0055*****Preacher: Chris McCurley**

Northpoint Church of Christ: 908 Imperial Dr. Denton, TX 76209

Sunday Bible Class 9:30 AM***Sunday Worship 10:30 AM***Sunday Evening 1:00 PM***Wednesday
B.C./Worship 7:00 PM***Scripture Cache www.scripturecache.com***[Church Website Click Here](#)***
Phone: 940.387.1429*****Preacher: Dub McClish**

Central Church of Christ: 507 Park Ave. Weatherford, Texas 76086

Sunday Bible Study: 9:30 AM*** Sunday Worship: 10:30 AM*** Wednesday Study: 4:30 PM***
No Website***Phone 817.304.3615*****No formal preacher: David Calvert**

Leonard church of Christ: 204 East Fannin St. Leonard, TX. 75452

Sunday AM B/S- 9:00-9:40***Sunday AM Worship- 9:45***Sunday PM Worship- 6:00***Wed. Bible
study- 7:00***[Church Website Click Here](#)***Phone: 903.587.2229*****Preacher: Bob Lewis**

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