

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?
and other
Short Sermons
Presenting Good News

by
Larry A. West

Published by
J.C. CHOATE PUBLICATIONS
Burton Drive
Winona, Mississippi 38967
U.S.A.

© Copyright 1981

First Singapore Printing, 1978
Second Printing in U.S.A. 1981
Typesetting in Singapore
Artwork in India
Offset Printing in U.S.A.



Larry A. West

Introduction

For the last few years Bro. Larry West has been the regular speaker on a daily radio program called GOOD NEWS and produced by World Radio and the White's Ferry Road Church of Christ in West Monroe, Louisiana, U.S.A. Although it is for only five minutes, it is very effective, dealing with the common problems of man, showing concern, and offering genuine solutions from God's word. This program is heard all over America and carried for the most part by the stations free of charge as a public service.

When asked for permission to print these short messages in Asia, Bro. West immediately gave his consent. While this printing was going on, we were also busy printing some of these sermons in India. Now we are reprinting this volume here in the U.S.A. and we hope to follow it up with other volumes. We are very grateful to Bro. West for allowing us to do this.

We commend these lessons to you and it is our prayer that you will find them to be personally helpful and profitable in your own life. It is also our request that you help us to share them with others for the good that they will do.

J. C. Choate
Church of Christ
131 Moulmein Road
Singapore 11
February 2, 1980

Foreword

Men have various thoughts about Christianity and what it means to be a Christian. Some think of it as a "straightjacket" existence which must operate within the framework of a long list of "thou shall nots." Others view it as a heart-felt experience which serves the dictates of the emotions. Many see it as a system they would like to embrace but don't because they don't think they can live it.

"What is a Christian?" is one of the most important questions that can be asked. One can't be a Christian without knowing the biblical answer to this question. The answer centers in a Person. That person is Jesus Christ. One can be a Confucianist without knowing Confucius. One can be a Mohammedan without knowing Mohammedan. One can be a Buddhist without knowing Buddha. But one cannot be a Christian without knowing Christ. This knowledge is the basis of all doctrines and works of the Christian faith.

Larry West, a dynamic speaker and conservative scholar of God's word, has written a great book that will bless every person who reads it. This is a book you can't read just one time and lay it down. You will find yourself, as I have, reading its simple, but powerful, messages over and over. This is a book you will want to give to friends and loved ones. It will be especially helpful to those who aren't Christians, as well as to those who are trying to answer the question: "What is a Christian?"

Dr. J.J. Turner, Dean
School of Biblical Studies

West Monroe, Louisiana 71291

July 9, 1979

Contents

The Poise of Jesus	1
Why Do I Need Jesus?	4
The Kind Of Person Jesus Was	7
How The Bible Came To Us	10
What Is Inspiration?	13
God Is Just	15
In God We Trust	18
You Can Know You Are Saved	21
Heaven Is A Gift	24
He Saved Your Life	27
Who Was Jesus	30
Jesus' Claim As God's Son	32
Jesus As Son In Jerusalem	35
Satan Tempts Jesus	38
Jesus Is Jehovah	41
Jesus Is God	44
Christ — The Radiance Of God's Glory	47
Jesus Sustains All Things By His Word	50
Christ, The One Through Whom God Made The Worlds	53
Jesus — Heir Of All Things	56
God Assumes Flesh	58
Number One: Man's Sin Problem	61
Jesus Died	64
The Necessity Of Jesus' Death	67
Salvation In The Blood	70
Jesus' Death Gave God Power To Save	73
He Took The Death Spot	76
Jesus Died On Purpose	79
Satan's Battleground	81
Jesus Was Buried	84
Number Two: Man's Grave Problem	87

Man Is Conscious After Death	90
The Body Of Jesus Was Resurrected	93
Jesus Was Raised From The Dead	96
The Resurrection Of Christ	99
The Ascended Christ	102
“Obey The Gospel”	104
Immersion Into Jesus’ Death	107
The Sin And Grave Problem Resolved	110
How Much Must A Man Change?	113
If We Do Something, How Is It Free?	116
Saving Faith	119
God Commands, Man Obeys	122
He Ran The Wrong Way	125
Success In Christ	128
He Is A Son	131
The Exclamation marks Of Christainity	134
Your Best Friend.	137
Give Yourself To Jesus	140
I Haven’t Even Seen Jesus	143
Respecting Authority In Religion	146
Christianity Is Udenominational	149
What Is The Church Of The Bible?	152
How Do I Join Your Church	155
The Organisation Of God’s Church	158
The Government Of The New Testament Church	161
What Is A Pastor?	164
Restoring The Lord’s Church	167
How Is One Saved?	170
The Day Of Assembly	173
What Bible Do You Use In The Church	176
Christianity Is A Living In A Bubble	179
The Deity Of The Holy Spirit	182
Helps For Bible Study	185

The Poise Of Jesus

He was what you need to be today. He had what you need to have today. He can help you in your problems today. I'm talking about the Jesus of the Bible. Let me show you what I mean.

Jesus had a fine balance of His faculties, He had a perfect equilibrium of His personality. And that's what you need today. We all do. We live and work every day in the midst of storms in a boisterous world, and we try desperately to find a kind of poise that will help us to act and react to various circumstances with the highest degree possible of maturity. Yet, the average person is one sided—he is unsymmetrical, he is unevenly developed.

What I mean is, if we are strong in one direction, we seem to be weak in the opposite direction. For example, if we are tremendously enthusiastic, it seems our enthusiasm pushes ahead until it becomes fantasy. If we are emotional, it often degenerates into hysteria. If we are imaginative, we are prone to become flighty and visionary. If we are practical and level-headed, we are always in danger of becoming even dull. If we have courage in great abundance, our courage may pass into recklessness. If we are original and unique, often we pass into egocentricity. If we are sympathetic, our sympathy often runs into sentimentalism. If we are pious, it seems our piety has a tendency to become sanctimonious. Every virtue, when pushed beyond its appointed limit, can actually become a vice; every grace that we have, when overdeveloped, becomes a disfiguration. Look at yourself. Is there not an extreme in each of us?

Yet, when we come to Jesus, we find ourselves in the presence of a man without a single flaw. He was enthusiastic, blazing with enthusiasm, but He never once became fanatical in anything. He was emotional, men could sense the throbbing of His heart, but He never became hysterical. Jesus was imaginative, seeing pictures in all of nature, but He was never flighty. He was practical, but never, never dull. He was courageous, but never reckless. He was prudent, but not a coward. Great streams of mercy flowed from His tender heart for those who needed sympathy, but at the same time, streams of lava flowed from the same heart to those who rebelled against God. He was deeply religious, in fact, the most profoundly religious man that ever turned His face toward God, but He never did slip into superstition. And because He was so well-rounded, and on every side so complete, men have never known where to class Him. Of what temperament was He? Well, He was so well-balanced, it's impossible to say. Every man coming to Him finds in Him what he needs. He had in Himself all of the virtues, and not one of them was overgrown.

Finally, when Jesus was carried before the High Priest by the crowd who wanted to crucify Him, the marvelous poise of Jesus dumbfounded that High Priest. Unable to do anything with Him, He sent Him to Pilate. Pilate questioned Him and is frightened by Him. That Jesus of Galilee, erect, calm, immovable said to him, "To this purpose was I born, and for this end came I into the world, to bear witness to the truth." In the three years of Jesus' public ministry, not one of His enemies was able to catch Him in His speech, and when at last that crucifying mob convicted Him, they had to do it with a trumped-up lie. Jesus could not be pushed into a hasty work. He was perfectly balanced, perfectly poised even under the pressure of the most

venomous attack. He stood erect, unmoved, unmovable.

That strong Jesus is the one with whom you can identify. Because of His life, you and I are able to face the same problems and with His help overcome them.

Why Do I Need Jesus?

“Why do you say I need Jesus? I have divorce problems, I am an alcoholic, and I never have enough money. Those are my problems and you come along and say I need Jesus. He wasn’t anything but an effeminate, pale, namby-pamby man, who walked about with a baby lamb in His arms, who eventually ended up as a dead man hanging on a stick. Listen. My problems are real and now and hard to work with. Why do you say I need Jesus?”

I’m Larry West with World Radio and I am convinced that, if what I have just said is your reaction to Jesus, then you simply don’t know Jesus as a person. Let me tell you something. The Jesus that can help you in your problems, the Jesus that lived in Palestine centuries ago was not the pale and anemic, namby-pamby Jesus we have too often pictured in our minds. Here was a man, a real man, who stepped into the temple in Jerusalem that had been turned into a public market, finding a bunch of people who would do anything to make a dollar. Here was a man who formed a scourge of thongs and began to drive out the animals these people were selling. He turned their tables over and coins scattered in every direction. Then He said, “Get those doves out of here.” And the people don’t laugh at Him—they move. He stands in the middle of the courtyard and defies anyone to carry anything through, and yet not a person sets foot in that temple. Why? It’s not because He was the Son of God. They didn’t believe in Him. Here was a man, and He was recognized as one who could carry out His threats. He wasn’t a “Mr. Universe,” but He was a man who was of strong will and determination to win. He

was courageous.

Now, let me tell you something. There are at least two kinds of courage. There is the kind that characterizes the split-second hero, the man who is on the battlefield and an unexpected situation arises, who, almost without thought, performs an act of heroism. He gets a medal of honor. But there is another kind of courage that is greater and that is the kind of courage that looks far down into the future and sees all the future disaster, all the agony and suffering, even the rejection that He will receive even though He did do something great, and yet that sets Himself resolutely to go to that end because that's what God wants, that's Jesus Christ. Here was a man who was a hero, a man of tremendous courage, but He was not the split-second kind. Jesus was a man Who knew what He was doing, and He can help you in your problems. I don't care what they are, He can still help you. Jesus was a man who, although He became lonely, although He was hurt because He knew there were those who did not love Him, although He could cry and laugh and get hungry and get tired—He was still a winner. The Bible says that He, even though He was the Son of God, was of the same nature as you and I are. The second chapter of the book of Hebrews says that. Now, that does not say that Jesus had a nature similar to ours; He was not just similar, He was the same. That same chapter says He was like we are in every respect. That is, He wasn't made like you physically in 50% of the total aspects of His character; He was 100% like you, all the way, in all points. Now that's why you can identify with Jesus. You see, it's hard for me to identify with Jesus. You see, it's hard for me to identify with a God walking around, but Jesus, though He was God, was man. And when I come to realize that Jesus was just like me, there's someone I can identify with, there's

someone that understands me—and that means that there is someone to whom I can give my allegiance.

So, you've got divorce problems; you've got a husband or a wife who doesn't love you any more, and that hurts, sure it does. But, Jesus was also one who loved people that didn't love Him back. When He was on that cross, as these people had nailed Him to that timber, as they walked by and wagged their heads in shame, as they spit upon Him, you know Jesus was hurt. They didn't love Him, to say the least. But He loved them. Even while they were doing it, He cried out, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." So, you've got problems. Jesus understands. He suffered them before you did. Yet, He was victor over them. He still prayed for their forgiveness. Present your problem as you may; Jesus is the one who was tempted in every respect as you have been tempted, but Jesus was without sin. He came out as a conqueror. And with His help, you can too.

The Kind Of Person Jesus Was

What Jesus looked like is not important. The importance is whether or not He can understand and help me now, today, in my real problems. And, do you know something? I am not the only one who recognizes it for me. That's why some characters in the Bible, such as John the Baptist, are described in some detail yet, the writers of Jesus did not say much about what He looked like, how He dressed, His height, His shape, or the quality of His voice. I have no doubt that this omission was because the power of Jesus was not to rest in how He looked, but in the depths of His person and character with which I can identify. No doubt, Jesus did not differ too much from the way other men of the day looked and sounded. Yet, He was something special, because He did have a different inner quality. According to the Bible, He was a man among men, yet, He became a servant of men. The Bible says, "He came not to be served, but to serve." And the people He knew, the people who saw Him, who listened to Him, knew He wanted to serve them. He cared for people, and they loved Him for it. He was concerned for people in His society who might have been labeled as "needy" people. As it is true, I suppose, in every society, it seems there is a kind of evil, dirty, repugnant reputation given to such needy people, really, only by those who are not so needy, and it was the more wealthy who criticized Jesus severely because He did associate with those who were in need. He was the one who sat at the table with a despised tax collector, a Federal man. He talked with, and at times, spoke well of a race of people called Samaritans, with whom the racist Jew had no dealing. He accepted a gift from a prostitute, despised by pious Jews, and was criticized

for it. Her tears wet His feet as He shared a meal with His host, a Jewish Pharisee, who raised objections because of the woman's past. Yet, Jesus, turning to her, said, "Your sins are forgiven." You see, Jesus did not conform to the stereotype of the religious leader of His day. He dared to break traditions. He dared to speak with His own authority. He refused to allow His life to be circumscribed by the petty, superficial restrictions of cold and ritualistic religion prevalent during the 1st Century. He cared for people, and they loved Him for it. It was this Jesus who said, "Let the children come to me," and when they came, they loved Him, as He loved them. Jesus was warm, He was intimate, and that kind of character stands out, not only during the 1st Century, but as the Bible records it, it stretches out now over 20 centuries later. Jesus lived where men lived. He shared their sorrows and their pain. He knew their anxieties, He knew their needs, He knew their wants, He knew their problems. That's why He can know you, and He can share in your sorrow, in your needs, in your wants, in your problems. He came to serve, not to be served, and He insists that, that kind of life for you is the best kind.

Listen carefully. If you want to be happy, if you want to be able to better handle your problems, I don't care whether they be divorce problems, financial problems, occupational problems—it doesn't matter, if you want to be able to better handle your problems, stop being so egotistical and self-centered, get yourself out of the picture, don't expect to be served all of the time as though the world owed you something—and be more like Jesus who came, not to be served, but to serve. Share yourself, give the best of yourself to others, look after their good, look after their needs, reach down deep and give your very best to the person who doesn't have what you have. It doesn't matter

what you look like, just like it didn't matter with Jesus. It doesn't matter what shape or form you have, just as it didn't matter with Jesus. It doesn't matter what your color is, what your voice sounds like, or anything else about your appearance, just as it didn't matter with Jesus. What matters is that you understand how Jesus understands you, and that as a result, as He has insisted to walk in His steps, you've got to believe that He knows the best way to live today. Share yourself, as He did, with others. When you can do that, you, like He, can live today victoriously. And, when you can see through walking in His steps that He had made your day victorious, then you can have through that experience just a glimpse of what He can do for you eternally. Jesus want to save you now and forever. But, He can save you forever only if you obey Him. He has some specific commands if you are going to get into Christ to live with Him forever.

How The Bible Came To Us

How did we get the Bible? You might be interested in knowing just how we got the Bible, and if we can know today whether or not the Bible we have is accurate with what was inspired by God 2,000 years ago. The original manuscripts of the Bible have all perished, but there are ways we can know for sure that we have the Bible that was inspired by God centuries ago. When the Apostles Paul wrote his books, he used parchment, John used papyri; both of these materials were extremely fragile and constant use soon made replacements necessary. Copies also were needed so the letters could be circulated to other churches. Even Paul encouraged such an exchange of letters. Well, until the invention of the printing press in 1450, all copying was done by hand and the copies that were made were called "manuscripts."

We do not know for certain that we possess even copies made directly from the original manuscripts. The oldest known manuscript is a tiny fragment of papyrus discovered in Egypt in 1920. It has parts of five verses from the book of John on it and is thought to be a part of a manuscript dating to within 30 or 40 years after the last apostle died. Most of the manuscripts that are now in existence date back no earlier than the fourth century when a better writing material began to be used. There are four major manuscripts plus thousands less important ones. Now, all of that would seem that it would be almost impossible for us to know for sure that the Bible we have today was the Bible people had in the first century. Yet, listen carefully. Respect for God's Word caused the people who copied the Scriptures by hand to work with exacting

care. These people who copied these Scriptures were called "scribes." Jewish scribes systematically counted the verses, the words and the letters of every book so that, when the copy had been finished, they could count them again and easily detect whether or not there had been an addition or an omission. Sometimes scribes worked alone or sometimes together, one person reading aloud while several men wrote from his dictation. Even though great care was taken, there would still be errors that occasionally crept into the text. Now, that might be disturbing but, you see, imperfect and conflicting as the manuscripts are, they still contain evidence by which the perfect original may be restored. By comparing numerous copies with each other, copies which were made independently of each other, many errors cancel out each other. So, that gives no cause for alarm. Most of the differences that have been found are in things like the form of words that really do not affect the meaning of a particular verse of scripture. For example, one manuscript said, "the king Herod," while another said, "Herod the king." So, you see errors are minimized.

Now, as there are almost 25 hundred different languages in the world, there is a constant need for these inspired books to be translated, so that people can understand what God insists they do to be saved. Of greatest interest to us are the English versions. Now, a translation is that which has been taken from the original languages of the Bible, the Hebrew and the Greek. If a book is translated from another translation, there are going to be errors made. It must be taken from the original language from ancient manuscripts if it is going to be more reliable. For years, the most widely used English translation was the King James. During recent days, there have been other translations used, some good, some, to tell it like it is, terrible.

There are many on the market today in modern English, some good, some bad. There is one book on the market today, a best seller, which is not a translation at all. It is rather a commentary on the Bible by one man. It is called "The Living Bible." It is not a translation of the Bible. If you read it, remember that. There is a New Testament on the market today in modern English, and I highly recommend it to you. It was translated from original languages by 15 highly qualified men from various religious backgrounds. It is called "The International Version."

What Is Inspiration?

“What do you mean, The Bible is inspired? And how can you prove it?” You know, that’s a good question. I was talking to a friend of mine not long ago, trying to persuade him to become a Christian, and he said that his main problem was understanding what is meant by the Bible being inspired and how it could be proven. He said that all his life he had heard that the Bible was inspired, whatever that meant, but his question was, “Am I just to accept that because someone else told me, or is there some way I can see it proven?” You know, his question just might be your question, so listen carefully.

The word inspiration comes from two Greek words when put together means, “God breathed.” In other words, the word itself insists that whatever it is identified with has had its origin in the mouth of God. That means, that certain words are the very words of God. God breathed them. Now, this business of inspiration refers to the process in which God uses a human being to convey his words to other men either by speaking them or writing them, yet it is God Himself who provides the words to be used by such men. For example, the Bible says, and I quote, “Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoken from God.” (End quote). Now, that’s what the Bible claims, that it, the Bible, contains the words of God. The logical question that follows is, “How can you know those claims are true? Any book can say it’s inspired by God, but where is the proof?” Now that’s a good question because, you see, as the Bible claims to be inspired by God Himself, that Book must either be accepted for what it claims to be or it must be denounced as an evil book of errors. There is no

middle ground.

What is the proof? All right, listen carefully. One thing that proves the Bible to be inspired by God, as it claims to be, is the fact that all prophecies were to be fulfilled, have been fulfilled, and their fulfillments stand as an indisputable fact of history. In other words, Moses, almost fifteen hundred years before Christ came into the world, prophesied that Jesus would come in Deuteronomy 18. David, a thousand years before Christ was crucified, described in detail the incident of Jesus' crucifixion. Isaiah, seven hundred years before Christ, describes in detail certain events about the birth of Jesus. Other prophets, such as Hosea, Micah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, hundreds of years before Jesus actually lived on the earth, prophesied certain events of Jesus' life, which were exactly fulfilled in Jesus' life. Now, as the Bible records these prophecies, attested to by numerous manuscripts in their archaeological discoveries agree, Bible prophecies and their fulfillments prove inspiration.

Now, that's just one way the Bible is proved to be inspired. Another way is that the miracles it records prove inspiration. In fact, that's why the Bible recorded them. The Bible says that it's message was declared as God bore witness of it by signs and wonders and various miracles. In other words, miracles are the very credentials of the Bible. In other words, one of the two purposes of miracles was to confirm the Bible as being God's Word; the other was to confirm Jesus as being the Son of God. Now, a miracle is an event so extraordinary, they could not deny what they saw. And what they saw, being supernatural and extraordinary, proved to them that the one who performed it was inspired by the God who created all of them.

God Is Just

God is just. Now, what does that mean? Well, the Bible teaches that God is holy and just and righteous. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil and to look on sin. Because He is a just judge, a holy, a sin-hating God, then it makes sense to understand that He must punish everything that is wrong. He must punish sin. God's law declares that our sins must be punished. Why, the Bible says in the Old Testament book of Exodus that God will by no means clear the guilty. There is no doubt about it. God will certainly punish all sin. And when I say all, I mean A-L-L, all. Imagine an orchestra playing in concert when suddenly one instrument is out of tune. The conductor would not eliminate the entire orchestra, but He would have to put the bad instrument out. Spiritually, you and I are out of tune with God. He is righteous; we are unrighteous. He is perfect; we are imperfect. God is sinless; we are sinful. As it was necessary to cast out the discordant instrument for the orchestra to be in harmony, it is necessary for the One, Jesus Christ, in perfect harmony with God Himself, to cast man out. Now, God cannot exist with sin. That's because God is Just. Imagine for a moment that you are called before a judge along with two other persons charged with the same crime. The judge asks you, "Guilty or not guilty?" And you answer, "Guilty, your honor." He then says, "I fine you one thousand dollars." Well, you pay the fine and you are seated in the court room. The second person then is questioned, "Guilty, or not guilty?" And he says, "Guilty, sir." Then, the judge said, "I notice that you have the same name as an old friend of mine," and he calls him by name. The man then says, "Yes sir, he is my brother." The judge then says, "Well, he is one

of my best friends. I am not going to fine you, but I am going to warn you not to do this again." Well, there you sit. And you don't understand. The judge fined you a thousand dollars for doing what your friend did who wasn't fined at all. Well, the third person is questioned, "Guilty, or not guilty?" He says, "Guilty, your honor." Then, the judge says, "Son, just looking at you I can tell you are a very lovable person. Because I love you, I've decided not to fine you." There you still sit. By this time, you are fit to be tied—there isn't any justice in this at all. You paid a substantial fine for doing what the other two were permitted to go scot-free for doing. You complain to the judge that he is crooked—and he would be. He would not be a just judge at all. But, listen carefully. God, the Creator of the universe, is just. Now, there's not really much comfort in that, is there? If God were only just, everyone of us would be condemned. But you see, God has a dual nature. God is not only just, but God is loving and merciful. Although He must punish sin, and I say that with emphasis—He must punish sin because otherwise He would not be just—although He must punish sin, He loves us and He doesn't *want* to punish us. Now, if He were only loving, then all of us would go to Heaven, including Hitler, Nero and the devil himself. Now, that wouldn't be just, would it? So, God is just and must punish sin, but He is loving and merciful, and does not want to punish us. In effect then, there is a problem created for God, which He resolved in Jesus Christ, His Son.

Listen carefully. If you were guilty of only one—and you as a human being are guilty of far more than that—but if you were guilty of only one sin, you stand condemned before the just God. And when you stand before the judgment you are not going to be crying out for justice—you will be crying out for mercy. And

God's mercy has been provided in His Son, Jesus. God's justice demands death, and in His love for you, He didn't want you to die, so He sent His Son to die for you, insisting that if Jesus is going to pay your debt, you must get into His death and that is in the watery grave of baptism.

In God We Trust

“In God we trust.” America was founded on the principle of, “In God we trust,” and those four words are stamped on every coin the United States mints. But, did you know that just believing that God exists, just believing that He sent His Son with enough power and authority to save every man from death, does not fully define the phrase, “In God we trust”? That’s right. Trusting God is more than just believing that He exists. Trusting God is more than just believing that Jesus has the power to save. Trusting God insists that the “we” mentioned in that phrase have totally committed ourselves to His care. That kind of commitment insists upon a change, a drastic change, in every person who wants to be saved.

A long time ago, when Jesus walked on this earth, there was a man who came to Him one day, wanting to know how to be saved. Jesus told him that becoming a Christian was such a drastic, life-changing experience that it was described as a new birth. This man, whose name was Nicodemus, didn’t understand what Jesus was talking about at first because he was thinking in terms of the physical birth. But, Jesus went on to say that He was talking about a spiritual birth—a rebirth required for one to be a Christian. He insisted that for there to be a rebirth, there must first be a death. An old person must die, so that a new person can be born. The old person is a person filled with the guilt of sin. And he must die in order that the new person can take his place, one whom God can give a new life to. Now, that makes sense doesn’t it?

You see, trusting God is a demonstrated thing. The

entire eleventh chapter of Hebrews in the Bible deals with the blessings of God upon persons who were obedient to His Word. The Apostle Paul tells us that the Gospel which he preached was that Christ died for our sins, He was buried, and He arose again (I Corinthians 15). And that's why the same Apostle Paul in Romans 6 spoke of a man's walking in a brand new life. Paul, there in that Romans 6 chapter, indicates that those who had experienced the new birth were those who had simply obeyed what Jesus, the One in Whom they had trusted as God's Son, told them to do. And as a result, they were freed from their sin. They were walking in a brand new life.

Now, an important question is this: "Where is it that the old man of sin is put to death so that a new birth into a new life is experienced?" Now, listen carefully. If we fail to understand the answer to that question, then it will not matter how much we pray, how well we perform, or how much we want to be saved—because if we failed to understand the answer, then we simply will not have put the old man of sin to death that we might experience this rebirth that Jesus insisted we must experience if we are going to be saved. The question again—"Where is it that the old man of sin is put to death so that a new birth into a new life is experienced?" Alright, listen carefully. In Ephesians 1, Paul mentions several things enjoyed by those people who are in Jesus Christ. One of those things he says is the forgiveness of sins through Christ's blood. Now get that. It is through the blood of Christ, shed in His death, that my sins are forgiven. Now, if I am going to have my sins forgiven through the blood of Christ, I must spiritually somehow get into the blood of Christ before it can do me any good. So, where is it that I get into the blood of Christ so that my sins might be forgiven through it? Well, I get into

the blood of Christ where it was shed. It was shed in the death of Christ, So, where is it that I get into the death of Christ, that I might get into the blood of Christ, where my sins will be forgiven? Listen carefully. The Bible does not leave us to wonder. In Romans 6, Paul says, "Do you not know that all of us that have been immersed—(baptized)—into Christ Jesus were immersed into His death?" That is how I get into the death of Christ, so that I might get into the blood of Christ, through which my sins are forgiven. He goes on to say, "We were buried therefore with Him by immersion into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in a brand new life." He says that the old self is crucified with Christ in the watery grave of immersion. There is where the old man of sin is put to death. It is then in the death of Christ that His blood washes away my sins, and I am reborn as I am raised up to walk in a brand new life. Read Romans 6, the first few verses. That's why Jesus had said to Nicodemus, you must be born again, born of water and spirit, in John 3. Now, listen carefully. If you fail to obey what Jesus insists you must do to put to death the old man of sin that you might experience the new birth, then you simply have not been born again.

You Can Know You Are Saved

If you were to die today, would you go to heaven or not? I have asked that question of many people, and now I am asking it of you. Maybe your answer is like so many others I have heard. "Why, you can't know if you are going to heaven. No one can really know it for sure." Well, it is true that many people don't know it—but it is possible to know for sure. In fact, this is one reason why the Bible was written. John said, referring to the Bible, "I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life." In other words, the Bible says that it is possible to definitely know whether or not you will go to heaven when you die. Think about that. Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could go to bed tonight and lay your head on your pillow, knowing for sure that if you don't wake up in your bedroom that you will awaken with Christ? The Bible says you can know with that kind of certainty.

The Apostle Paul had that kind of certainty. He knew he had eternal life. He said just before he died, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day." And then, listen carefully—Paul went ahead to say that not only was he sure that he would have it, but that others could be sure as well. Read II Timothy 4:7 and 8.

You know, every one of us in our world of uncertainty really want this kind of assurance. But, because we see so many things changing around us, sometimes we wonder if anything is for sure. And when someone

says, like I have just said, that you can know whether or not you will be saved, it is sometimes hard to believe. But, let's get back to the question. If you were to die today, would you go to heaven or not? The usual answer I get to that question is this: "Well, I've tried to live a good life, to love my neighbor and to keep the ten commandments. And, I visit the sick and I'm honest; I pay my debts, and I do my best to live by the golden rule." Well, listen carefully. Each of these things is commendable, because certainly every one of them is something that we all would be better off by doing. Our world would be a better place, too, if everyone did these things. If that is your answer, or if that answer makes sense to you, let me ask another question. Have you ever wondered how well all of us would have to do those things in order to make it to heaven? You see, to answer the question as to whether or not you would go to heaven when you die by pointing to all the good things that you do still does not give the assurance we are looking for. In other words, when I have asked people whether or not they know they are going to heaven when they die, they always, I have found, by pointing to their estimated good life, still answer my question by saying, "Well, I think I'm saved," or "I surely hope I'll go to heaven when I die." In other words, if we will really look at it, we will discover that no matter what we do, we cannot earn salvation.

You know, there are many people who have thought that heaven is something that has to be earned, something deserved, something that must be paid for. Of course, not with any paper currency that we use here, but with the currency of heaven, which they suppose to be good works, good morality, or piety. They have supposed that if they pile these things up somehow, someday, they might earn the right to go

into heaven. But many of these same people have discovered something that absolutely amazes them—that heaven is not something that you earn or that you deserve or that you pay for, but that, according to the Scriptures, it is absolutely free; it is a gift of God. To illustrate, visualize two sides of a great canyon one hundred feet wide. Imagine that every man and woman in this world is lined up on one side and wants to get to the other side to save himself from some impending danger. They will be lost if they don't make it to the other side. Well, they see that they cannot go to the right or left, because they cannot see the end of the canyon. Neither can they go down into it for they cannot see the bottom of the canyon. So, they must somehow get across it. So, they jump. But, it's one hundred feet across. The world's record broad jump is not quite thirty feet. Some jump twenty feet, others trying their best jump just ten feet, some who are crippled manage to only stumble over the edge. No one makes it on his own. All fall short of the mark and die. Now, he who could jump farther than the rest would still not be able to boast of what he has done, because he still ended up at the bottom of the canyon. In other words, he needs some help. Listen carefully. There is a gap just like that between man and God. We can try as hard as we can to jump that gap, but no man can. Man needs God's help.

Heaven Is A Gift

“I do my best to live by the Golden Rule. I try to live a good life, to love my neighbor and to keep the Ten Commandments. I am honest, I pay my debts. So, I would hope that God is pleased with me.” These statements typify the philosophy of many people who believe that Heaven is something that is earned, is deserved—that Heaven is something that man must pay for. Now, of course, I’m not talking about paper currency, but with the currency called good works, good moralities, piety, and that sort of thing. They have supposed that if they pile these things up that somehow, someday, they might earn the right to go into Heaven. But, let me tell you something. The Scriptures of the Bible teach that Heaven is something that cannot be earned, something that cannot be deserved or paid for with any kind of currency we have. According to the Scriptures, Heaven is absolutely free. Let me show you what I mean.

Visualize in your mind two sides of a great canyon 100 feet wide. Now, imagine that every man and woman in this world is lined up on one side of that canyon and desperately wants to get to the other side to save himself from impending danger. They understand they will be lost if they don’t make it to the other side. They cannot go to the right or to the left because they cannot see the end of the canyon. They cannot go down into the canyon itself because they cannot see the bottom of it. The only answer is to get across it. So, they jump. But, it’s 100 feet across to the other side. The world record broad jump is not quite 30 feet. Some jump 20 feet, others trying their best jump just 10 feet. Then, some who are crippled, manage only to stumble

over the edge. No one makes it on his own. All fall short of the mark, falling into the canyon and dying. Now, suppose that someone broke the world record and jumped 40 feet. His problem is that he is just 60 feet short and he still ends up in the bottom. So, he who would jump farther than the rest would not be able to be safe either. Now, listen carefully. There is a gap like that between man and God. And we can try as we might, but we cannot jump the gap. No man can. Some of us go to worship, some of us try to keep the Ten Commandments, we don't intentionally hurt anyone and we jump out there as far as possible. In fact, some take comfort in the fact that they are able to jump farther than others and they assume that maybe God will accept them, excusing their failures by simply saying, "Well, no one's perfect." But, if God did accept them, then God would have to lower His standard, His standard of perfection. Well, since no man can make it on his own, there must be another way across, or there is no way at all. That other way to Heaven must be provided by God Himself as a free gift. The old expression, "Nothing is free," according to the Bible is a lie because the greatest thing that man can ever need is free—and that is life eternal with God. God said through Paul in Romans 6 that the wages of sin is death. There is the canyon between man and God. Man, although today he pays his debts, he visits the sick, he tries to live by the Golden Rule, still remembers that yesterday he failed, he made a mistake before God. And the wage of that sin yesterday, God says, is death. So, man must pay that wage. No, no man is perfect, that is true. But it is those imperfections that he must pay for, and God says they must be paid for with death. So, man cannot earn his way to Heaven. The only wage he has earned is death. Yet, God said in that same passage, Romans 6, "But, the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ." In other words, that eternal life, found on the

other side of the canyon is provided by God as a free gift. Man cannot earn it. God gives it to him. Now, that raises some questions. How can it be free? Who gets it? Everyone? Listen carefully. No. Not everyone gets it. Christ said that there are only a few that find the way to life, with many going to destruction. But, if everyone doesn't get the gift of eternal life, who does? How can we know that we have it? Do we have to do something to get it? If so, how can we say that it is free? And you know, those are good questions.

He Saved Your Life

“He saved your life and He didn’t have to do it.” What if someone came to tell you that several years ago, though you didn’t know it, someone had saved your life and died doing it. That news would be staggering enough, but what if the person told you that the individual who did it had voluntarily done it, knowing he would die to save your life? Why, that news would almost be too much to accept. And you know something, when I tell a lot of people about a man who did voluntarily save their lives by giving His, they do refuse to accept it. That’s right. Maybe that’s what you have been doing when you hear the name Jesus Christ. Listen to me. Jesus did die that your life might be saved. And He voluntarily did it. He didn’t have to do it, but do you know what He did? The Bible says that Jesus, the Son of God, who is of the same nature as the Father, being God Himself—this Jesus, although He was equal with the Father, emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, and allowed Himself to be born in likeness of a human being. And being found in human form, do you know what He did? He humbled Himself even more by dying for you that your life might be spared. And, listen carefully. He didn’t just die, but He died the sadistic and cruel death of being crucified on a Roman cross. Now, the very fact that Jesus Christ died on that cross, in such a torturous and sadistic way, ought to show us several things. It ought to show us, first, how terrible that thing called sin really is. It also ought to show us how much God wanted to save our lives. He sent His own Son to die for us so that we wouldn’t have to do it ourselves. Listen carefully. God, being the merciful, kind, loving and gracious Heavenly Being that He is, if He could have found another way

by which you and I could have been saved from death, which is the penalty of our sins, then He would not have subjected His only Son to the tragedies of that cross. When Jesus died on the cross, it was God's only way of saving us from the consequences of our sins. You see, the Apostle Paul said in Romans 3 that everyone has sinned. He says later, in Romans 6, that the wages of those sins is death. That debt of death must be paid—no one can escape payday. Now, we can pay it, but it will take an eternity of death to do so. Or, someone else, someone who has the resources can pay it for us. Listen carefully. Jesus, God's Son, who with His own sinless life has therefore no debt of His own to pay, can pay yours for you. Why, the Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, said referring to Jesus, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." Listen: Jesus' death on the cross was the only choice God had to save you and me from the consequences of our sins. That Jesus made it possible for your life to be saved, and He didn't have to do it. It was because God loves you so much, He wanted to pay the price Himself as Jesus gave His life so that you wouldn't have to. And, in fact, Jesus and His Father wanted to do it so much, it *pleased* them to do so. That's what the Bible says in Isaiah 53:10. You know, I have talked with several people who have questioned God by saying, "If God knew man was going to sin, why did He create man in the first place?" And, you know, that's a good question. The only way I can answer it is just simply to compare it with parents of children. Two people, when they are joined together in marriage, decide they are going to have children. Before the baby is even conceived, parents naturally know that the baby, as it grows up, is going to make mistakes. The parents know that the day would possibly come when the parents

might have to save the child's life by even giving their own. Yet, the parents stand ready. Why, I would give my life any time for either one of my two children. And, I knew I would do it before they were even conceived. Why? Because I love them, and I loved them even before they were conceived. Although I didn't know them, I still loved them. In other words, it is all wrapped up in the context of love. God loved us even before He created us. And He was willing to give His life for us in the person of His Son, Jesus. And He was so ready to give His life, that when He did, it pleased Him to do so (Isaiah 53:10).

Jesus Christ came to save your life, and He didn't have to do it. Yet, did you know that everyone does not receive it? That's right. The Bible says that those who are saved are saved by grace through their faith in Jesus Christ. What kind of faith?

Who Was Jesus?

If Jesus was not who He said He was, He is a liar. But, if He is who He said He was, then every one of us has an awesome responsibility toward Him.. Think about it a moment.

Some people think Jesus was simply a man, a good man, one who was morally right, one who was almost perfect, in fact. They believe He had a good philosophy of life, He is one worth following to some degree—but He was just a man. Others suppose He might have been some angel, even some archangel who came down from heaven to teach us how to be better people. Yet, I want you to notice something. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. Now, if Jesus was not who He claimed to be, then Jesus is a liar. And if Jesus is a liar, He is certainly not a good man, and certainly not a good angel, if He were an angel. There are many people today who deny the Deity of Christ. That is, they deny Jesus being the Son of God. Yet, I want you to notice something. When Jesus was discussing His identity in John 8, He said to the people there, “Unless you believe I am He, you will die in your sins.” In other words, there were people even in the days of Jesus who did not believe in His identity. I mean, from the time He claimed the Sonship of God, up until His death on the cross, there were those who flatly denied He was who He claimed to be. While Jesus hung on that cross, those passing by laughed at Him. They said, “Come down from the cross and save yourself, if you are indeed the Son of God.” They said, “Did He trust in God? Let God rescue Him, if He wants Him—for He said He was God’s Son” (Matthew 27:40,43).

You know, sometimes we try to put people into a test tube in an effort to try to make them do what we think they ought to do. If they act according to our preconceived ideas, then they will receive our favor and our commendation. But, if they don't measure up, then we turn our thumbs down at them. More times than not, we are almost ready to do anybody that way. Some people do it with Jesus. If He doesn't measure up to their particular method of doing things, believe me then they turn thumbs down. That's what these people were doing as they saw Jesus hanging on the cross. They insisted that, if He truly were the Son of God, God would not allow Him to die on that cross. That seems logical at first glance, it seems like a natural reaction—that is, until you consider that these people had available to them the Old Testament Scriptures that prophesied that this very thing would happen. Read Isaiah 52. Did you know, in fact, that 24 events prophesied hundreds of years before Jesus' death, actually took place within a 72-hour period during Jesus' death, burial and resurrection? That's right! Jesus knew who He was! He knew that God was His Father! And He insists that, first, unless you know God is His Father, you will suffer eternally in your sins.

Jesus' Claim As God's Son

Some said He was, others said He wasn't. I'm talking about Jesus. Some said Jesus was God's Son. Others said He was not. Let me show you what I mean.

When Jesus hung on that cross 2000 years ago, crowds of people walked by Him shouting, "Come down from the cross and save yourself if you are indeed the Son of God." They went on to say, "Let God rescue Him, if He wants Him—for He said He was God's Son." Others shouted, "Come down from the cross. If we see that, we shall believe." Yet, there were others in Jesus' day who did believe He was the Son of God. One day a man named Phillip told another man, Nathaniel, "We have met the man spoken of by Moses in the law." He said, "It is Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth." When that man, Nathaniel, saw Him, he said to Jesus, "You are the Son of God." Another day, Peter announced, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." In other words, there were those in Jesus' day who did not believe He was the Son of God, but others said He was.

Now, you might have been led to believe that it doesn't really matter who Jesus is. I am astonished to find how many people there are who honestly believe it doesn't matter. May I insist to you, Jesus says it does. In fact, He built something on His true identity that will carry people into eternity. That's right. I'll tell you what that is in just a minute.

You see, Jesus made a definite claim, and He has insisted that every individual believe His claim to be true. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. He said such

things as, "You must not turn my Father's house into a market" (John 2:16). He said in another place, "I have come accredited by My Father" (John 5:43). Again He said, "I am revealing in words what I saw in my Father's presence," (John 8:39). He said things like, "There are many dwelling places in My Father's house" (John 14:2), "Anyone who loves me will heed what I say; then My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with Him" (John 14:23). After He had risen from the dead, He said to Mary, "I am ascending to My Father and to your Father, to My God and your God" (John 20:17). In other words, Jesus claimed to be God.

Now, please listen to me. Maybe you are not a very religious person, maybe you care nothing about God, nothing about Jesus—but let me tell you something. Jesus said unless you believe He is who He says He is, you will suffer eternally (John 8:24). Now, when a man makes such a statement as that, because of its power, does it not stand to reason that it justifies investigation on your part before you turn Him off completely? It does, to a wise person. Well, you might say, "All right, I believe that Jesus is the Son of God." Well, good for you. Believing in His identity is only the first step in being saved from God's wrath coming your way. But it is a first step.

Jesus knew it was a first step, and that's why he, one day, asked His friends who they believed He was. It was then that Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." When Jesus heard that, He said, "Upon that foundation I will build my church." Christ's church, the Bible says, is a body of saved people, saved by the Son of God. They are those people who have not only believed in the identity of Jesus, but who have placed their confidence in Jesus,

believing first He is who He says He is, God's own Son, and therefore the only one through whom they can be kept safe when God destroys those who rebel against Him. You see, some people believe that Jesus was just a good, moral person; others believe He was an angel from Heaven—but a weak, human being, or an angel who cannot save us from God's fury. That's why it is mandatory to first believe that Jesus is God's Son. And it is upon that understanding that Jesus has built His society of saved people.

Jesus As Son In Jerusalem

Who do you think you are? Sometimes we ask that of a person when he seems a little too presumptuous. Thousands have asked that same question of the Jesus of the Bible. Who do you think you are? Well, you might be asking, "Does it really matter? Does it matter who Jesus really is?" Well, quite frankly, Jesus Himself says it does. He says, in fact, unless we understand who He is, unless we believe with all our heart in Jesus' identity, we will experience an eternity of suffering; Jesus said in John 8 that unless we believe something about Jesus, we will, as the Bible says, die in our sins.

There were some in Bible times who did not understand who Jesus was. There were some in Matthew 12 who thought Jesus was simply the Prince of Devils, the son of Satan, if you please. Others thought He was John the Baptizer having come back to life, others thought He was the great prophet Elijah or Jeremiah or one of the other prophets. But Jesus insisted that every person understand who He really is.

The Bible says many things about Jesus concerning His identity. When Jesus on earth was just a boy of twelve years, the Bible says that His parents went to the religious city of Jerusalem, as they did every year to celebrate a religious day among Jewish people. It soon came time to return home, and the Bible says His parents started home, supposing Jesus was in the group with them. After travelling almost a day, they began to look for Jesus, going around to their relatives and acquaintances that had gone on the trip with them, asking if Jesus was with them. They looked and looked, and could not find Him. So, they did as any

parents would do, they began to backtrack. They returned to Jerusalem to see if they could find him. They spent three days looking for Him, somewhat frantically I suppose, and they finally found Him, the Bible says, at the very center, at the very heart of the Jewish religion. They found Him in the Temple itself. There He was, sitting right in the middle of teachers and scholars of the Jewish religion, listening to them, asking them questions and talking with them. And the Bible says that all these scholars that heard Jesus, this twelve year old boy, were amazed at His understanding and at His answers. Here was one, we might call at first glance, a child prodigy, a genius. The Bible says that when His parents saw Him, they were astonished. Now, the big question is, was this Jesus just a child genius, as astonishing as that might be in itself, or was He more than that? After looking for their son three days, wondering why He had failed to return home with them, His mother asked Him a question. And the answer this Jesus gave to His mother is the first indication Jesus ever gave a human being that He was more than a child genius, a child prodigy. His mother asked Him, "Why have you done us this way?" She said, "Your father and I have been looking for you." And here is what Jesus said as He answered them. He said, "Do you not know that I must be involved in my Father's business?" Now wait a minute. A logical response would be to say, "I thought His mother and His father, His parents, had been looking for Him three days." And then Jesus says He is in the Temple taking care of His Father's business. Undoubtedly, Jesus is referring to another Father, other than Joseph, the husband of Mary. She had just told Him that she and His father had been looking for him in great anxiety. But Jesus' gentle answer to her insists that His Father is God, and not the one about whom Mary had just referred, the one with whom she had looked for Jesus

three days.

Unlike any individual in the history of mankind, unlike the prophets, unlike the great lawgiver, Moses, unlike any angel who ever appeared to man—Jesus claimed to be the Son of God.

Satan Tempts Jesus

Some people don't believe as much as Satan does. I've talked to many people who deny that Jesus is the Son of God. Why, ole Satan Himself knows Who Jesus is, yet some people don't believe it themselves. Satan believes more than they do. Ministers of Satan himself fell down before Jesus and cried saying, "You are the Son of God." Read Mark 3:11. Yet, even though Satan knew who Jesus was, he, upon one occasion, tried to make Jesus doubt His own identity.

Did you know that just before Jesus began His campaign on earth, sometimes referred to as His ministry on earth, He journeyed into a lonely and desolate place, where the Bible says He was tempted of Satan, being there forty days. Even though ole Satan knew who Jesus was, he tempted Him by saying, "If you are the Son of God," then he says you ought to do certain things. Satan tried to tempt Jesus to demonstrate His identity by telling Him to satisfy His hunger, saying, "If you are the Son of God, command a stone that it might become bread" for you to eat. It is as though Satan were saying, "So you really think you are the Son of God. Are you sure that you are not suffering from a delusion? Don't you think you are dreaming? You're just a product of your own imagination. If you really are what you claim to be, the Son of God, then God will allow you to miraculously turn this rock into a piece of bread. Try it, you'll like it." Well, later ole Satan tried to tempt Him in another way. He said, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down off an extremely high place, because the Bible says that the angels will guard you from suffering." It is as though Satan were saying, "If you really are the Son of

God then demonstrate it by showing that your Father, God, will take care of you. He will if you really are.” In other words, Satan attacks Jesus and tries to cause Jesus to doubt His own identity. You know, the sure way to paralyze a man’s action is to make him doubt his direction. If Jesus had allowed Himself to doubt His being God’s Son, He could not have gone on. It’s the same way with every human being. When an individual has a goal in mind, something for which he is going to sacrifice everything, and someone makes him doubt the validity and the worthwhileness of that goal—if he succeeds, the person trying to achieve it will eventually be paralyzed and he will turn away from it and fail. If Satan had succeeded in convincing Jesus that He was not God’s Son, Jesus would have failed. You know, I have talked to many individuals, some who I think are honest about their convictions, who are so closed minded it is as though they were trying to tempt Jesus into doubting His own identity. The Bible says again and again that Jesus is God’s Son. Satan knew it, but He tried to make Jesus doubt it Himself.

I want you to notice something. If you’ll read Luke 4 of the New Testament, you will discover that not only was Satan trying to cast doubt in Jesus’ mind about Jesus’ own identity, but he was trying to get Jesus to lose His own self-control and express His sonship in a way that would have been against the very nature of God. Jesus had been out there forty days without eating. He was hungry. Here comes Satan, tempting Him to turn a rock into a piece of bread. Now, as God’s Son, having gone out there for the purpose of being tempted, do you think that Jesus was not ready for it? He knew that if He had turned that rock into a piece of bread, He knew that if He had worshipped Satan as Satan had tempted him to do, He

knew that if He had done that silly request Satan made of Him by casting Himself down so that angels would pick Him up—He knew that if He had done all that, He would have violated His own character as being God's Son, He would have failed His mission, He would have given no foundation for anybody's hope to be secured in Him, and He would have been as corrupt as Satan Himself. Jesus is God's Son, and when He faced Satan, He was ready for him. And although Jesus knew all the time who He was—the Son of God—He knew He didn't have to demonstrate it the way Satan wanted Him to.

You know, I'm afraid that many times many of my religious friends insist that if Jesus was who He claimed to be, and if He meant to really teach a certain thing, then he would have done it like this, or like this, etc. And they would try to replace the Wisdom of Jesus with their own. Listen to me. Jesus knew who He was. He knows what He commands and if we conjecture that He should have done it in another way, then we are claiming to be smarter than Jesus, the Son of God.

Jesus Is Jehovah

Some say Jesus is not God. There is a religious sect, widely known in our society today, it's people being known by their consistency of getting out and knocking on people's doors, trying to sell their religious magazines. These people boldly deny that Jesus is God, and they try to say that He is simply another created being. They claim that only the Father is Jehovah and that the name, "Jehovah," is exclusively His. But, I want you to notice something very carefully. If these people knock on your door and try to tell you that Jesus is not God, you need to be ready to show them why the Bible teaches that He is. Although the Bible teaches there are three Divine Beings, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, notice carefully that the Bible also teaches that the New Testament Jesus is the Old Testament Jehovah.

In Isaiah 40 of the Old Testament, the Bible says, "The voice of one that crieth, prepare ye in the wilderness the way of Jehovah. . .and the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed." Now, John the Baptizer was to prepare the way of Jesus; therefore, Jesus is Jehovah.

Notice something else. In Isaiah 44 of the Old Testament, God said, "I am Jehovah that maketh all things." In other words, Jehovah said He was creator of all things. But, according to the New Testament, in Colossians 1, the Bible says all things were created in Jesus; therefore, Jesus is Jehovah, the creator of all things.

All right, notice something else. In Isaiah 43 of the Old Testament, God said, "I, even I am Jehovah; and besides me there is no Savior." But, in Titus 2 of the

New Testament, the Bible says Jesus is Savior; therefore, Jesus is Jehovah.

The Bible is filled with example after example pointing out that Jesus is the Jehovah God. In Isaiah 43, the Bible says that Jehovah is your redeemer. Now, in Titus 2, the Bible says Jesus is your redeemer. Therefore, Jesus is Jehovah.

In Isaiah 44, Jehovah said, "I am the first and I am the last and besides me there is no God." In the New Testament, in Revelation 1, the Bible says Jesus is the first and the last. Therefore, Jesus is Jehovah.

In Isaiah 45 of the Old Testament, God said, "I am Jehovah, and there is none else, besides me there is no God." In John 1 of the New Testament, however, says that the Word which became flesh—and that's Jesus—was God. All right, the Bible says there is no God but Jehovah, but the Bible says Jesus is God. Therefore, Jesus is Jehovah.

In Exodus 3 of the Old Testament, the Bible says that God's name and memorial to all generations is, and I quote, "I am that I am." Yet, in the New Testament, in John 8, Jesus said, "Before Abraham was born, I am." All right, God is the I am of Exodus 3; but Jesus is the I am of John 8. Therefore, Jesus is God.

Now, all of these passages of Scripture, and there are many more, prove two things: No. 1—Jesus is Deity, that is, He is of the nature of God. His eternal nature is of the same substance as the Father and He has the same characteristics as God. No. 2—That the sacred name, "Jehovah," is applied to Jesus as well as to the Father.

Now, let me tell you something. The very foundation of Christianity is the Deity of Jesus. And when anyone tries to convince you that Jesus is not God, that person cannot be Christian. Jesus, in Matthew 16 of the New Testament, asked His close friends who they believed He was. It was then that Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of God." When Jesus heard that, He said upon that foundation He would build His church. Being the Son of God means that He must have been the same nature as God. And when you take away the Deity of Christ, you destroy the foundation upon which the whole Christian religion is secured. In fact, the Bible is so plain about Jesus being God that an individual needs help to deny it.

Jesus Is God

The Bible insists that Jesus is God. Yet, there is a religious sect in our society, known by most of us through their knocking on our doors trying to sell us their religious magazines, that teaches that Jesus is not God. One of their leaders, Judge J. F. Rutherford, in his book, *Reconciliation*, printed in 1928, said, and I quote, "The great Jehovah is the God. The Son. . . is a God. The name God is applied to mighty ones, even to angels and to magistrates. The name God is therefore properly applied to the Son because He is a mighty one. . . the names Jehovah, almighty God, and Most High are never in the Scriptures applied to Jesus, the Son of God. . . In truth when Jesus was on the earth He was a perfect man, nothing more and nothing less. . . Jesus was not God the Son." (End quote) Now, Mr. Rutherford has just said that Jesus was not God. He said that the name God is applied even to angels and to magistrates. Now, that is what Mr. Rutherford said. But, the Bible says in Isaiah 45 of the Old Testament, "I am Jehovah, and there is none else, besides me there is no God." In other words, the Bible insists that only Jehovah is God. But, the Bible also says in John 1 of the New Testament that the Word that became flesh—and that's Jesus—was God. Now, since there is no God but Jehovah, yet since Jesus is God—that means Jesus is Jehovah. In other words, there is one God, yet there are three persons in the Godhead. They are the Father, the Word that became flesh called Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. That means that no angel is a God—no magistrate is a God. Only Jehovah is the Godhead, which includes the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit.

In the Old Testament book of Isaiah, chapter 7, the Bible says, "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Emmanuel." Now, in Matthew 1 of the New Testament, that prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled in the miraculous birth of Jesus and that name, Emmanuel, applied to Jesus means, "God with us." Now notice carefully. Since Jesus Christ in the flesh was, "God with us," and there is no other God but Jehovah, it logically follows that Jesus Christ and Jehovah are one and the same. That is, Jesus is not some angel that could be referred to as a God. Jesus and Jehovah as the almighty God are one and the same. There are many passages of Scripture in the Bible that insist that Jesus is the mighty Jehovah. In Isaiah 9, for example, these words are written, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called wonderful, counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Listen carefully. There is no more powerful statement in all of the Bible attesting to the Deity of Jesus Christ than this prophecy of Isaiah. Jesus is described as, "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace." That term, "Mighty God," without a doubt declares the Deity of Christ. Jesus, in other words, is not a God, but He is the Almighty God. He is the only God there is. Yet, He is one of three persons in the Godhead.

You know, when a student of the Bible begins to study the nature of the Godhead, it is a deep subject. And, in reality, it is impossible for the finite mind of man to understand the infinite nature of God. Yet, the Bible does teach a certain truth, and every man must accept that truth by faith that God knows who He is and that God must be accepted by everyone of us as God has declared Himself to be.

I'm concerned that many of my good friends, who are members of a religious sect which denies the Deity of Christ, are in reality blaspheming Jehovah rather than promoting Him. If anyone comes to you and insists that Jesus is not God, be ready to point to Him these chapters and verses which undoubtedly affirm Jesus is Jehovah.

Christ — The Radiance Of God's Glory

Sunglasses—who needs them? Well, apparently a lot of people. There is a big business in sunglasses. There are all kinds of brands, all kinds of shapes, all kinds of colors. Sunglasses are made to shield our eyes from the brightness of the sun. So you remember when you were a child someone challenging you to focus your eyes directly upon the bright sun, as a test of endurance to see how long you could look at it? Why, the longer you looked at it, the more you began to squint, tears would come rolling down your cheeks, and finally you would have to look away because of the brightness of the sun. Oh, for a pair of sunglasses!

You know, Jesus Christ has been described as being the sunlight radiated from a magnificent ball of fire—God. That is, He is the reflected splendor, a light that emanates from a majestic, luminous body. You know, when you look up at that ball of fire in the sky, and try to look at it, what you are seeing is not the sun itself, but you are seeing the beams which flow from it. Jesus, God's Son, being of the same nature as God is the beams, the radiance of the Supreme Light—God. The Bible, in fact, teaches that Jesus is God Himself on earth. That's right! The Bible says, for example, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Later on it says that the Word was Jesus. That means that in the beginning was Jesus and Jesus was with God and Jesus was God. (John 1). There is just one God, yet there are three persons in the Godhead. They are the Father, the Word that became flesh, called Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

So, as Jesus is God on earth, no wonder the Bible says that Jesus is actually the radiance of His glory (Hebrews 1:3). That radiance simply insists that Jesus is deserving of praise, of applause, of honor. He has dignity, splendor, and glory. He is the dazzling light, the brightness somewhat akin to that gigantic ball of fire in the sky we call a sun. He is excellent, perfect, having attributes which belong only to God. If we can understand how it hurts to look directly into the rays of the sunlight that warms our earth because those rays are so bright, imagine the splendor and brightness of God's glory if it were to shine in its full splendor. Well, Jesus pictured as being that glorious, that splendid, that radiant. Yet, as Jesus, being God Himself on earth, clothed Himself in flesh, and showed Himself to people as He walked on the earth 2,000 years ago, He was, being clothed in that flesh, shielding their eyes from God's dazzling brightness, much like we are shielded when we wear sunglasses. Fantastic!

There was one time when Jesus, so to speak, removed the sunglasses and let the flesh-shield down for a few moments to allow the brightness of God's magnificence to shine through. Three of His friends saw it: Peter, James and John. The Bible says that Jesus' face did shine as the sun and His clothes became as white as the light. Imagine looking into a man's face and it being so bright it made tears run from your eyes. Fantastic! No wonder Jesus could say, "I am the light of the world."

According to the Bible, you and I were made in the image of God, made to give Him glory. But, when we rebelled against Him, we lost the radiance of our reflection of His image and produced in effect a darkness, darker than a moonless night. Yet, picture Jesus, the light of our dark world, begging for

individuals to open their eyes, to see Him, to recognize Him for who He is to accept what He can do, and to come to Him on His terms. I remember not long ago being in a boat, fishing about midnight, on a dark, mountain lake in British Columbia. After a couple of hours, my friend with whom I was fishing, started the boat and headed toward a small light on a distant shore, barely able to see anything between ourselves and that light. That light directed us home. Jesus is that light, being the radiance of God's glory in a dark world.

Jesus Sustains All Things By His Word

“Ten hut.” How many times have you heard that? You might have heard it countless times if you served in any kind of military operation. The sarge, by command, gets a response. Soldiers stand at attention. Later, he might command, “At ease.” When he does, the soldiers obey. Having authority, he commands and it is obeyed.

You know, the Bible pictures God doing the same thing to our physical universe. Have you ever wondered why solid objects, such as a chair, never melt and runs all over the place? I mean, after all, scientists say that in a solid object, molecules are constantly moving. Well, if there are so many moving things in a solid object, why doesn't the solid object move, and get all out of shape? In other words, have you wondered why things are able to hold themselves together? What is that force that holds all the moving parts together in a solid object? Even scientists are unable to give an answer. Yet, the Bible does give an answer. In that Bible book called Hebrews, the Bible says that Jesus Christ is the One who holds all things together—and get this: by the Word of His power. The idea is suggested that Jesus Christ commands and gets response; the response is that a chair stands on its four legs. Jesus holds all things together by His powerful word. In fact, He upholds or sustains everything, the entire universe. I mean, it is not just the earth, it is not only the rocks, the mountains, the seas, the animals, and even our bodies—but Jesus sounds a command, and all the universe, including all distant worlds, hold

together like glue. Now, the Bible says that Jesus is the One who issues that command.

Let me ask you something. How in the world can an individual do that who is not God Himself? He does it by His own words, by His own commands. A sergeant has authority in a military service to issue the command of attention and he will get it. By authority, Jesus is able to issue commands to hold that sergeant's body, that sergeant's clothing, that sergeant's earth upon which he is standing—holding it all together. And Jesus does it by a simple command. Fantastic. How could He do it and not be God? The Bible says in that Bible book called Psalms (33:9) that when God created our world, He simply just spoke, and it was done. Well, if the Bible says that God spoke and the world was created, yet Jesus is the One who upholds all things by the word of His power, isn't that just one more indication that Jesus is God? Sure it is.

You know, there are a lot of things in the Bible that we can learn. The Bible tells much about Jesus. The Bible tells, for example, about one day when Jesus was in a boat, crossing a body of water. While on his trip, He fell asleep. Meanwhile, a storm rose up and was so terrific that everyone in the boat was afraid. I mean, it was so terrible that the waves swept over and into the boat, about to sink it. Seeing their predicament, do you know what they did? They went to Jesus and woke Him up; and listen to what they said to Him. They said, "Lord, save us." (NIV) Jesus, seeing the situation, did something that only God could do. The Bible says that He got up, and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. If that Jesus is the One who sustains, who holds together every molecule, every fiber, every pull of gravity, everything that exists—if He can hold everything together by His

powerful word, no wonder He could simply command it, and the wind and the waves on that sea would obey Him. Think about what those men saw when the winds and the waves obeyed Jesus' commands. The Bible says they were amazed, and they asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey Him." (NIV). What kind of a man is this? This Man is also God.

Let me tell you something that is just as real as rain. One of these days there is going to be a disaster about to encompass you. I'm talking of the disaster of God's wrath. And you will go to Jesus, and will beg Him to do the same thing, "Lord, save me." And He will save you only if you have obeyed His specific command.

Christ, The One Through Whom God Made The Worlds

Where did you come from? That's a question often asked these days. Did you evolve from lower forms of life; or were you and—for that matter—everything else, created by God? School textbooks, television nature programs, magazine articles and such like are constantly giving themselves to the teaching of evolution of the species. In fact, more time is given to examination of the evolutionary theory than is given to a study of creation. Evolution insists that there were things already existing. Stuff, like two spinning clouds in space, like two-star-like objects almost colliding in their gravitational fields throwing off things we see now—stuff already existing is what evolutionists say was at the beginning. Of course, they cannot tell where that stuff originated itself, but they still hold to the theory. Others insist that there is a God who created this stuff, and then turned it over to the evolutionary process. Did you know that that is not a new theory at all? It is not one totally unique with our generation. That's right. Two thousand years ago, when the New Testament of the Bible was written, there were those who believed that there was an already existing "stuff" from which a God made the world. It was called Gnosticism. And it was in the face of that theory that the God who does exist insisted that God made this world, this universe, all galaxies out of nothing. And the Bible says that Jesus, the One who walked upon this globe, was actually the instrument through whom God created everything out of nothing. I'll tell you, that Jesus discussed in the Bible is the most important individual you'll ever hear about. I mean it. Let me

show you what I mean.

The Bible says that centuries ago God spoke to people through prophets at various times and in various ways, but He finally sent His Son, Jesus, to speak to all men (Hebrews 1:1-3). After the Bible introduces Jesus, one of the writers then says, "Let me tell you a little bit about this Jesus." And there are seven things he says, found in Hebrews 1. He said, first, He is the One who is going to inherit everything. He said He is the One who made the worlds. He is the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of God's person. Not only that, but this Jesus is sustaining everything in this world by the word of His power. The last few things He says about this Jesus is that Jesus purged our sins and then sat down on the right hand of the majesty in Heaven. I'll tell you, when someone says those seven things about anybody, that individual is the most important person we'll ever hear about.

Now, notice that the Bible says that it was through this Jesus that everything was made.

You know, the magnificence of God is so powerful it's hard for us to realize that when the splendor of the Grand Canyon was formed, when the distance between the earth and the moon was laid out, when the mighty power of Niagara Falls was thrown together, when the beauty of the Alps was painted, when the detailed intricate work of each snow flake was drawn—and when all these things were done, it's hard for us to realize that it didn't take much effort on the part of God. That's right. The Bible says that God just spoke and these things came into existence. "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made," says the Psalmist in Psalms 33. Now, notice something. In the New Testament, Jesus is referred to as the Word. John 1

says that in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. Later, the Bible says that the Word was Jesus. All right, if by the Word of God the Heavens were made, and the Word is Jesus, no wonder the Bible also says that by Jesus were all things created, things in heaven and things in the earth, things visible and invisible, thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities--that all things were created through Him (Colossians 1:15-17). It was through Jesus that God created the world (Hebrews 1:2). Jesus is the Word, the One through whom God spoke everything into existence. Fantastic!

Jesus — Heir Of All Things

How would you like to be heir to a fortune? During this past year, we have seen some heirs to vast fortunes. The famous Onassis died and left his family a fortune. Patty Hurst, despite her questionable involvements, has been referred to as an heiress of a vast fortune. The rich royalty of England has been on news broadcasts in recent months, as commentators have discussed each member of the family and their inherited status. So, there are those who inherit vast fortunes. How would you like to be one of them? How would you like for a member of your family to be one of them?

Well, I am pleased to announce that I have an older brother who is an heir to a greater fortune than Onassis ever thought he could have. Yes, that's true. In fact, the fortune is greater than Onassis and the Royalty of England put together. My older brother is an heir to that. You'd better believe I am proud of Him, and grateful to be a part of His family. Let me tell you about Him.

My older brother and I naturally have the same Father. Our Father is Jehovah God. Because I have been born into His family, born by being immersed in water, as God had commanded in John 3, I am therefore part of His family. My older brother is Jesus, and God has appointed Jesus to be heir of everything (Hebrews 1:2). Jesus Himself said that everything that belongs to the Father is His (John 16:15). Now, since everything belongs to Jesus, since He is heir to everything, let me show you how important it is to be a member of His family.

A long time ago, even before Jesus walked on the

earth, God promised that Jesus when He became a man, He would, as a man, inherit everything. In that Old Testament book called Psalms, (chapter 2), God pictures the situation, a situation that as you look around does exist. God pictures kings and rulers sitting down at a council table, assembled to discuss ways they can stand against God and the One who God would send. That's Jesus. As they sit there discussing what to do, in trying to destroy God and take away everything that is His, the Bible says that God sits in Heaven and laughs. Then He speaks to them in His wrath, and says that to spite what they try to do, God is going to have His way. God says that contrary to their wish of destroying God, God sends His Son as King, giving Him the nations as His—get this—as His inheritance. As an inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth are His possession. God's Son is Jesus. Jesus is the One who inherits the nations, the uttermost parts of the earth. That's my older brother, as both of us have the same Father.

You know, there are nations about us, atheistic nations, teaching their young people that there is no God. And they are, just as Psalms 2 describes, trying to do away with God. Yet, God says that in spite of their desire to get rid of Him. God will get His way. He has given everything to His Son, Jesus. Now, what does all of that mean? Well, it means, just as God insists in Psalms chapter 2, that we be wise and serve God with fear. God says, "Kiss the Son," meaning serve Him and don't rebel against Him. God says do that or you are going to die. Then He says, "Blessed are all they that take refuge in Him."

You know, even in our nation where we are teaching evolution of the species, cancelling God in all kinds of ways, we can be pictured as a nation rebelling against God and it will be destroyed. Yet, you as an individual can change that. Jesus as the King, the One who inherits everything, can also be your older brother.

God Assumes Flesh

God had to become man. That's right. But even then, He never stopped being God! (Col. 1:19). That's hard to understand, isn't it? There are two reasons why God had to become man. One is, He knew that was the only way He could acquaint Himself with us. Let me show you what I mean. The story is told of a father who one day, with his walking cane in his hand, took his young son for a walk. As they started down the road, the boy asked his father to let him have the cane. The father handed him that long, straight stick, and when he did, the boy began to play golf with the rocks alongside the road. With it, he would swipe the shrubs growing on the roadside, hit the tree, and do other things a young boy would do with a stick in his hands. Finally, the boy and his father came upon an ant hill, and the boy poked the ant hill with the stick; this immediately disturbed the ants and they began to scurry off in all directions. Well, this boy, who was tender-hearted, was surprised to see the ants run, and was disturbed because of what he had done. Looking into his father's face, and then back down to the ant hill, he said, "I ruined their little house. They can't get back into their little hole. I've just ruined their doorway. They are hurt, they are lost - what can I do?" He said to his father, "Tell them how sorry I am and how I wish I could help them." Well, the father, with an amused smile, put his arm around his boy and said, "I'm glad that you are concerned for these little creatures and I would gladly give them your message, but I can't. The only way I could is for me to have been born an ant so that I could speak to them in their language. You see, they cannot understand ours."

Well, that's the way it is with God. God allowed Himself to be born as a man in order to speak man's language. Now when I say language, I'm not talking about words. God had already spoken words to man throughout the Old testament of the Bible. He had already done that for thousands of years. But God became man in order to be exposed to what we are exposed to. By being tempted as a man, by suffering as a man, by overcoming as a man — He, as a man, communicates with us men. It's just like what the poor woman in London a few years ago said to a man who was visiting people in her neighborhood. She told him, "You say you care for us and are anxious about us, but it is a very easy thing for you, coming from your clean, quiet home. Why won't you come and bring your family and live in this place, exposing yourself to all of our problems, and then lift us up?" In other words, it is one thing to visit someone and tell him you want to help him and it's another to show him by moving into his neighborhood, to become like he is, to live like he does. Only when you do that can you communicate with him. Well, that's what Jesus, being God in the flesh, God in man, did when He became like us.

Now notice something. The Bible says that, when God became man, that man never ceased being God (Col. 2:9) In other words, the Bible says that Jesus is God (Heb. 1:8). Now, it is true that there are three persons in the Godhead — Jesus, the Father, and the Spirit (Matt. 3:13–17). But my point is that Jesus, according to the Scriptures, is divine. That means Jesus is God. So, God became flesh, a man, in order to communicate with us humans. Just as the small boy who destroyed the ant hill was unable to communicate with the ants because he wasn't an ant, God knew He had to become one of us, a man, in order to communicate with us. I mean, it's only because God became man,

in Jesus Christ, that I am able to identify with Him in the closest way.

But there is another reason, a more important one, why God had to become man, and that is, God had to become man to fight Satan on his own battleground. Satan's battleground is the flesh. You see, God's justice insists that, since man has sinned, man must die (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). And because God loves man, God became man (John 1:1–14). And since man sinned and man must die, God became man to pay our penalty (Heb. 9:28).

Number One: Man's Sin Problem

A guilty conscience—there's nothing more agonizing, I guess. I talked to a father just this week who told me that his son just can't forgive himself. Maybe you know the frustration—maybe you know what he's talking about. It's a strange thing how we think we can tell a lie and get away with it—and it's stranger yet to see how the more we tell the more we think we do. Getting away with things we know are illegal or immoral is a dream—a dream that the more calloused think they've achieved. But, you know, this business of guilt is as real as pollution, whether we're sensitive to it or not. The Bible is the most factual book on reality ever written. And what's real is that every single person who has ever lived—with the exception of Jesus Christ—is guilty of something. God has given us a moral law—a moral code of ethics—by which we're supposed to live. But, none of us do. You don't—I don't. We're supposed to but we don't. The Bible says that we are guilty (Rom. 3:10, 23). And the shocking thing about guilt is, that it brings a severe penalty. The penalty is that one of these days—unless this guilt is taken care of—people are going to be eternally separated from God (Rom. 6:23). And when I say people, I don't mean somebody we don't know, some nebulous, two-headed monster that lives in never-never-land. I'm talking about you and me. And what's so terrible about eternally separated from God is, to use a Bible term, it's like being in outer darkness (Matt. 8:12a), where “there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 8:12b), and the Bible uses terms like the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20; 20:10; 21:8) to describe in our understanding what being forever separated from God involves. Can you imagine sitting there in total

darkness, unable to see anybody or anything? You talk about isolation and loneliness. That's how the penalty is described when Jesus uses the term outer darkness. And he went on to say that there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Now, I've seen a lot of people cry, but there are only a few instances where I have seen people actually weep, where they can't control themselves and they cry out with agonizing bitterness. I never want to see people experience so much torture that they grind their teeth at each other, people who are in so much anguish, so much pain and misery they would actually express themselves in that kind of way. But, that's not all. That lake of fire? — Hmmm! Every horrible thing you can imagine is expressed in the Bible to identify to our understanding what being separated from God is like.

Now, maybe you're thinking I'm being a little over dramatic. I wish I were. But, that's exactly how the Bible describes hell. This business of guilt, the Bible calls sin, is responsible for our being separated from the God who made us (Isaiah 59:1-2). And unless this sin problem is taken care of, unless we are free from guilt, somehow forgiven by God, our future is worse than disastrous.

There are some who say—and maybe this is the way you feel about it—that God is such a loving God He's not going to punish anybody. Well, the Bible shouts the opposite. The Bible insists that God is so holy that he cannot allow sin into his presence. In God's judicial system, since man has sinned man must die. And man dying is not an unconscious state of slumber—it's a living death separated from God in a torturous hell. God is just, and God cannot violate His justice or He is not God. God cannot allow sin in His presence, meaning He cannot allow sinful man there.

But, you see, God has another side—God is love. And the love side of God has taken care of the justice side of God. God became man in Jesus and died for all men who will—get this—who will turn and die for God. And the Bible tells how to do that.

Jesus Died

Do you like a bargain? You know, a bargain is something of which the value exceeds the cost. In other words, you get more for your money. We all like a bargain. Let me tell you of the best bargain of all. It's the bargain of redemption. Let me show you what I mean.

God said a long time ago to a nation of people with which He was working very closely that the first one born out of all their flocks and herds was His. In other words, if it were a donkey, the owner was to break its neck because God had said that it was His. But, God said if the owner wanted to keep it, he was to redeem it, or buy it back, exchanging it with a less important animal, a lamb (Exodus 13:11–13). Now, that was a bargain. You see, the lamb was far less important than the valuable, working donkey. The donkey was a work animal, able to plow the fields and pull heavy loads. So, it was a bargain. The exchanging of the donkey with a lamb was adequate for God. But, not only did God insist that the first of all the flocks was His, He insisted that even the firstborn among people were His. But, instead of killing the sons and daughters of parents, offering them to God, God told parents to give Him five coins in the place of the children (Numbers 3:44–51). Now that's a bargain. Children are far more valuable than a few coins. The Bible calls that money "redemption money" (Numbers 3:49). In other words, the money was used to buy back the children so that the parents would not have to kill them, offering them to God. Well, that's the way God set it up. Those things were bargains.

Well, that's what God has done for obedient people

today. Here's what I mean. As God had insisted to that nation of people that a lamb was an adequate sacrifice to be presented in the place of a donkey, just as He had said that those five coins were adequate as a sacrifice to be given in place of precious children, God has presented an adequate sacrifice for you and me. You see, the Bible says that every man has been separated from God because of what the Bible call sin (Isaiah 59:1-2). And I'll tell you, when a person is separated from God, he is in real trouble. The Bible says that the person who is separated from God will experience all kinds of terror (II Thess. 1). The Bible says the wages of sin is death. And the Bible describes death not as being unconscious, but as being a conscious existence separated from God (Luke 16:19-31). But, the point is this. As every one of us deserves death, the Bible says that God prepared for us a sacrifice – the body of Jesus (Heb. 10:10). Christ in death has borne our griefs, He has carried our sorrows, He was stricken, He was smitten of God and was afflicted (Isaiah 53:4). In other words, Jesus as a man tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9), making an adequate sacrifice to God to buy you back. Now, that's a bargain. Jesus, who is God in man, died on the cross and is your redemption money. Or, may I say, at least He can be. Now, by that I mean that the Bible simply insists that Christ is the author of eternal salvation "to all who obey Him" (Heb. 5:8-9). You see, not everybody is going to be saved. Only those who obey Christ are going to be saved. It's just like those parents in the nation of Israel that God told must hand over the five coins for their son to be saved. If they did not obey God, if they did not make such a sacrifice, they could lose what was more precious to them. So it is with all of us today. If we do not obey God, Christ will not serve as our redemption money – our adequate sacrifice to pay back to God what we really owe. We owe a

great debt – the debt of being eternally separated from God in a conscious, living hell – but Christ on the cross can be your adequate redemption money, but only if you obey Him.

The Necessity Of Jesus' Death

“Jesus did not have to die to save man from his sins. God could have saved us another way.” I actually heard someone say that not long ago. He went on to say, “God had the power to save us from sin by any means which He might have chosen.” He said, “He could have saved man without Christ coming into the world. But He decided to do it otherwise.”

Listen carefully. Any individual who decides God could have saved us from the consequences of our sins, being death, any way He chose to so—yet He chose to send His Son to die the death on a cross—that individual must be saying, at the same time, that God is not merciful and kind, but that He is sadistic, full of hate and murder. If God could have saved His Son from dying on a cruel cross, yet He just chose to do so—yet that same God tells us to love one another—that God would be a hypocrite. Please let me tell you something very plainly: Jesus had to die to save man from the consequences of his own sins—to save man from eternal death.

To understand why Jesus had to die, an individual must first understand the justice of God. You see, justice is defined as reward or punishment given as deserved. The great prophets of the Bible—Isaiah, Micah, Amos and Hosea—all insist on Jehovah's demand for justice. So, God, to be true to Himself, so that He would not be a hypocrite, must insist the debt be paid. You see, God's justice demands that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). In other words, if an individual has sinned even once during his life, God's justice demands death. The Bible says, at the same

time, that everyone is guilty of sin. Read Isaiah 53. Adam and Eve in the beginning of creation sinned and their sin forced the justice of God to drive them out of the Garden of Eden, separating them from God, which is spiritual death. You see, the justice of God demands that the wages of sin is death, spiritual separation from Him. Do you know why? Because it is impossible for God to look favorably upon that which is sin (Habakkuk 1). John said that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. Therefore, if God is light, He must separate all darkness from Himself. Therefore, if one sins, which causes him to walk in darkness, then God's justice demands that the wage of that person's sin is separation from God. God cannot allow darkness to pollute His nature of light. Therefore, when a person sins, he is in spiritual darkness and the wages of that sin is eternal separation from God, death.

But, just as the wages of sin is death, the apostle Paul, one of God's messengers, said in Romans 6 that the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. In other words, the debt of sin must be paid, which is death; but, through God's mercy, He is ready to pay that debt for us.

I am concerned. There are too many people who honestly believe that the blood of Jesus has paid their debt for them. When in reality Jesus hasn't. What I mean is this. The escape of the consequences of our sins is through the blood of Jesus. Yet, to have the benefit of the saving blood of Jesus, we must spiritually touch that blood. It was shed in the death of Jesus, so, we touch it where it was shed—in the death of Christ. Now, where do we get into the death of Christ so that we might touch the blood of Christ through which our sins are forgiven? Well, the Bible says that one gets into the death of Christ when he is immersed in water

(Romans 6). That means one must be immersed to be saved because immersion is where the blood is.

Jesus had to die and any individual must die with Jesus if he is going to be saved.

Salvation In The Blood

“Why do you always talk about blood and death? No wonder the Christians I see are so sad and gloomy. All you talk about is blood and death.” Maybe that is your reaction to this business called Christianity. Yet, listen carefully: The only way to be really happy is to become a Christian. That’s right. You see, before any person can talk about things like life and happiness and peace and hope, he must first get this business of death out of the way. And that’s what Christianity, real Christianity, is all about. Let me show you what I mean.

Blood and death must be discussed and settled before a person can be happy and peaceful and have hope. You see, in the Old Testament of the Bible, when the nation of Israel was about to be freed from their slavery in Egypt, God had passed judgment upon all those who were in Egypt because of their rebellion against God. He told them in Exodus 12 that He was going to allow His fury to pass through the land and kill all the firstborn children in the land, both human and animal. He did, however, make exception and He promised to pass over the houses of those individuals who would carry out His command of going to their flocks of sheep, taking a male lamb with certain qualifications, killing it, and sprinkling its blood on the entire door casing of their home. If this was obeyed, the Lord promised that He would pass over that house and allow the firstborn child to live. That lamb was sacrificed for the firstborn child of that family. In other words, that lamb took the place of that child; that lamb died in the place of that child. Now, although it was not pleasant to kill a lamb, to take its

blood and sprinkle it on the door casing, each family, if they were going to find life and hope, trusted in God and were happy to do it for the safety of their first-born child.

Now in the New Testament of the Bible, in I Corinthians 5, Paul said that Christ is our passover lamb, sacrificed for us. John the baptizer introduced Jesus to the world, declaring Him to be the lamb of God come to take away the sin of the world. Just as the Old Testament passover lamb saved the Israelite children from the fury of God, only Jesus as our passover lamb can save us today from God's fury.

But, you see, it is necessary that the lamb be killed. Paul said in Romans 3 that all have sinned. He says later that the wages of our sin is death, which is eternal separation from God. Just as the Old Testament lamb took the place of that child, Jesus is ready to take the place of everyone, in that He died that we might not have to die ourselves. Jesus has **done** that for me and wants to do it for you. Now, **you can** pay that debt if you want to yourself, but it will take you an eternity to do so. Jesus has resources to pay it for you if you will allow Him. To allow Him means you must die with Christ. You see, God insists that the wages of sin is death. So, since you have sinned, and the Bible says all of us have sinned—since you have sinned, you must die. Now, you can die in Christ and allow Him to pay it. Nevertheless, you must die. Now, where do you die with Christ? Wait a minute. Have you noticed we are talking about dying? You had better believe it. Let's get this dying over with so that we can have hope for life. But, back to the question, Where do you die with Christ? You die where He was dead. You must get into His death and die with Him. And the Bible says in Romans 6:3 that you die with Christ when you are

buried in water. Now listen carefully. If you have never been buried in water, understanding that there you were dying with Christ after which you were saved, then you have not died with Christ and you are going to die out of Christ. In other words, you must be buried in water to be saved because the Bible says there is where you get into the death of Christ.

Jesus' Death Gave God Power To Save

“If God is so powerful, why did Jesus have to die.” That exact question was asked me by a man who telephoned me not long ago, and it's a good question. If God is so powerful, why did Jesus have to die? It is evident that God is powerful. Why, according to the first two chapters of Genesis, those chapters that tell that God created everything in existence, demonstrate God's power. If you will read those first two chapters of the Bible, you will find that what David said was true when he said in Psalms 33, “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all their host by the **breath** of his mouth.” Notice something: David gives you the idea that God is so powerful that He, with very little effort, **spoke** everything into existence. Now, the question again is, “If God is so **powerful**, why did Jesus have to die?” In other words, if God is so powerful, in that it took very little effort to create everything, why did He not just **speak** man's forgiveness, why did He not just, with very little effort, **speak** man into freedom? And you know, that's a good question. And the answer to that question is in two parts. No. 1, man is a rational being. That is, as he was created in God's image, he has the ability to reason, to think, to figure things out, to know the difference between right and wrong and to make a decision. He, like God, is a self-willed being. Now, man, being a self-willed being, willed himself to rebel against God, and as a result found himself in trouble. Now, found himself in trouble with what? Well, that brings us to the second part of the two-fold question. He found himself in trouble as a violator against the law of a just God. You

see, God must be true to Himself. Man was created to glorify God, and to do that, man must obey God. Now, since man is a self-willed being, he has chosen not to glorify God, but to act against God—and so, if God is going to be true to Himself, and since God has insisted man glorify God, yet man has acted against God's insistence—then God as a just God must punish man for his rebellion. That's why the Bible says in Romans 6 that the wages of man's sin is death. Now, the twofold answer I have just mentioned is this: Man has chosen to rebel against a just God, and the consequence of that rebellion is death, a death which is the eternal separation from God. Now, that places God in a real dilemma. God loves man. He does not want man to die. Yet, the debt of man's rebellion must be paid. So, let's go back to our original question. "If God is so powerful, why did Jesus have to die?" I'll tell you why he had to die. He had to die because man's debt of death must be paid. So, God, being not only a just God, but a loving God, paid man's debt of death.

The story is told, once there was a king who issued a decree that both eyes would be taken from anyone in his kingdom who was caught stealing. Soon after he sent out this decree a young man was caught and brought before the king. To his surprise, it was his own son. Deeply moved, the king gave one of his own eyes, and took one from his son. That satisfied the law of the king's justice. The king was just, the king was loving. The king was powerful, but to be true to his own justice, he had to abide by the law he had decreed.

God is powerful; yet He is true to Himself. The wage of man's sin against God is death. It must be paid. Yet, God wants to pay it for every man who will allow God to do so. That means that every man, if he is going to be saved by God, must share in the death of

Jesus. He shares in Jesus' death where Jesus says he must share in it. And that, the Bible says, is in the watery grave of immersion. If you have never been immersed in water, recognizing that you are getting into the death of Christ, then **you are not saved.** And that concerns me!

He Took The Death Spot

“He took the cold spot.” The story is told in a recent issue of Reader’s Digest. A dentist took his young son and daughter on a hike in the mountains, and before they could get to safety, a blizzard trapped them on the trail. They dug into the snow, covered themselves with a canvas tarp, and the doctor wrapped up his children in their bed rolls. The father laid his body across the coldest spot in order to keep his children warm. They were there for two days, and when the rescue team found them, the father was dead. He had taken the cold spot.

You know, when a man gives his life for someone else because he loves them, it shakes us to the core of our being. There is another man in history who gave His life for someone else—in fact He gave his life for you. He didn’t take the cold spot—he took the death spot. The Roman cross, centuries ago, was used to punish the criminal, for treason, desertion in the face of an enemy, robbery, piracy, assassination and sedition. Death on a cross was something dreaded by everyone. Here’s what would happen. Among the Romans, the individual to be crucified on a cross was usually scourged before being placed there. By scourging, I mean he was whipped with an instrument that had several straps on it, at the end of which there were tied pieces of glass or metal in order to tear the flesh of the man being whipped. This hastened the death of the one being crucified. What a terrible way to die. When the victim was placed on the cross, he was fastened to it in one or both of two ways. If he was tied, nothing further was done as he was left to die from starvation. Yet, if he was also nailed, stupefying drink was given

Him in order to deaden His agony. The one who was nailed had nails driven through each wrist or hand and through his feet. Usually, a tablet was placed under his feet in order to help him support some of his own weight.

When a victim suffered death by crucifixion, it was severe especially in hot climates. Inflammation of his wounds produced traumatic fever, aggravated by exposure to the sun and by the strained position of his body. With his arms stretched out and up, his lungs within the trunk of his body would be stretched so much and so long that it would be difficult for the victim to breath. So, the victim, pushing against the nails in his feet, would try to stand momentarily in order to get a breath of air; but, the pain in his feet would be so severe he would rapidly sink to the hanging position again, unable to breath. Usually, the wounds would swell around the rough nails and the torn and lacerated nerves would cause excruciating agony. Arteries of the head and stomach were surcharged with blood and a terrific throbbing headache would begin. The victim's mind would be confused and filled with anxiety and dread. The victim actually died a thousand deaths. Tetanus supervened and rigors of convulsions would tear at the wounds and add to the burden of pain—until finally, the victim's bodily forces were exhausted and he would sink to unconsciousness and finally to death.

The penalty of your's and my rebellion against God is an eternal separation from God in a living hell. Yet, God loves us. He loves us so much that the Bible says He prepared a body (Hebrews 10:5) to sacrifice, to pay our penalty. That body was Jesus, God's Son. Now, you talk about love—God loves us. Jesus loves us. Jesus took the death spot for you. He took it so that

you could come out of your grave sometime in the future. Yet if you are going to be saved from your grave and from hell, you've got to die with Jesus. There is only one way you can do that.

Jesus Died On Purpose

The blood of Jesus Christ was not spilt for forgiveness of our sins. That's right! The blood of Christ was not spilt, as though done by accident. Jesus did not lose His life—He gave it up. The death of Jesus was planned by God, even before the creation of the world (I Peter 1). When Jesus died, there was no mistake involved on the part of God, His death was no accident—God planned it. The apostle Peter, one of God's inspired messengers, said in the Bible, Acts, Chapter 2, referring to Jesus, "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross." In other words, God knew before hand and had determined ahead of time that Jesus would die. You know, the greatest monument to the stupidity of mob action occurred just outside the garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus was arrested. During that incident, the mob bound Jesus with ropes, they tied Him up. Listen. Jesus did not die on the cross because men overpowered Him. He did not go to the cross because He was bound by ropes. His blood was not **spilt** as though done by accident. Jesus did not lose His life; He gave it up. He submitted Himself to death as a part of the plan of God. He **poured** out His own blood **willingly**. He went to the cross because God so loved the world (John 3:16). Why, He Himself said in John 10, "I lay down my life. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again." You see, those ropes could not have held Jesus any more than the stones at the mouth of His grave. The mob could have not any more overtaken Him by force than could death itself. You see, to fulfill the pro-

phesies given hundreds of years before this time, planned by God, Jesus was as a sheep led to the slaughter (Isaiah 53); He willingly gave His life. The Bible says He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the cross.

But, listen carefully. Even though the blood of Jesus was not spilt as though done by accident—even though God had planned the death of Jesus, God still held those men guilty who killed Him. Why? Because these men had a choice, just as every person has a choice, and they chose to hate Jesus; in their hate, they proceeded to murder this Jesus. Yet, the beautiful part of the story is that even for them Jesus poured out His blood that through His blood they could have forgiveness of their sins. Listen carefully. Not only did He do it for those who were in the arresting mob, not only for Pilate, not only for the hundreds of consenting Jews, but He did it for you and me. God said hundreds of years ago in Isaiah 53 that “all we like sheep have gone astray.” In other words, we have rebelled against God and are guilty of sin. God says all of us are guilty (Romans 3). And the consequence of our guilt is eternal death (Romans 6). There is no way around it, the only payment for our sins is death. God knew that, yet, because He loves us, He does not want us to pay it ourselves. Now, one guilty person cannot pay the debt for another guilty person because he simply does not have enough resources to pay it. He has his own debt to pay. Yet, God has the resources. He sent His own Son, guilty of nothing, innocent in everything, whose resources are so valuable that He can pay the debt for every man. And that’s why Jesus had to die. That’s why Jesus’ death was no accident. God planned it—and when the time came, Jesus gave up His life.

Satan's Battleground

If you are going to fight a war, you've got to go where the enemy is. I've yet to see two nations go to war with one another without both nations getting together on some kind of battleground. That makes sense, doesn't it?

There is a war going on between God and Satan. "So what," a lot of people say. "Why should it matter to me if God and Satan are fighting." Maybe you have asked those questions. The answer is, it should matter to you because the war between heaven and hell is fought on the battleground of man. Male, female—man—that's you and me. Now, it becomes important—doesn't it?

God made man, and He made him in His own image in order that man might honor God. That's why he was made in His image. To give God honor, man must be given intellect, a knowledge between good and evil and a will to carry out his own choice. When he chooses good because he loves His maker, God, then he gives God honor. God is the author of good; Satan originated evil. Just as good and evil are opposites, God and Satan are opposites and are at war with one another. As long as man does the good, never violating the law of right, he is God's friend. But, when he violates that law one time, whether or not he wants to be, he is Satan's friend. He is the friend of either one, or the other, not both. As Satan's friend, he will one day experience God's wrath in an eternity of suffering. Satan likes that. Satan wants you and me to suffer because he hates us. Yet, even though we have chosen the evil, God still loves us. So, God went to war for us

against Satan. Yet, to go to war, there must be a mutual battleground. Man is Satan's battleground. So, if God was going to go to war for us, He had to become man to fight in Satan's territory. That's why the Bible says that God became flesh (John 1:14). And when he did, he staggered the world like no other individual could do. When God became Jesus, He was called Immanuel, meaning, "God with us." He was called "Jesus," meaning, "Jehovah is Salvation." He is called the Christ, meaning the anointed one of God. He is God in the flesh.

You know, there are a lot of religions today that tell you a lot of things about this Jesus. There are some who want to say that Jesus is not God. Yet, the Bible insists that He is. For example, in the Gospel of John, the Bible says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Fourteen verses later, the Bible says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." That Word that became flesh, the Bible says, is Jesus. That means that in the beginning was Jesus, and Jesus was with God, and Jesus was with God, and Jesus was God. Yet, God became flesh in Jesus. Now, why? In order to fight Satan in his own territory. Satan's battleground is the flesh, is man.

Now, think about this. What is the greatest enemy to life? Is it a bad cold? Is it the flu? Is it the amputation of an arm or leg? Even though those diseases are enemies of our bodies, they attack our bodies, they are enemies of our flesh—they are not the greatest enemy. The greatest enemy to life is death. So, in order to defeat the greatest enemy, God had to come to the battleground, in man's body. That's why the Bible says that God prepared a body—that's Jesus. Jesus died in the flesh, His body was placed into a

tomb, and then His body was raised up out of that tomb, conquering man's greatest enemy—death. And in so doing, He conquered Satan.

Now, if any individual wants to live after death in an existence where there are no problems, he must believe several things. He must believe that He is dead without Jesus, he must believe Jesus is God in the flesh, he must believe that Jesus died and was raised from the dead for him, and he must understand what the Bible says he must do to be saved in Jesus.

Jesus Was Buried

Do you honestly believe anybody could come back from the dead? I mean, really. It does sound rather bizarre, doesn't it? Yet, such a fantastic event is the foundation of Christianity.

There are a lot of people who don't believe it really happened. Oh, they say they believe the Bible—but it is rather difficult for them to believe the one called Jesus actually died. They may believe that He was seen by some after He was supposed to have died, but it's hard for them to believe that He actually died. To ask someone to believe that a man actually died and then came back from the dead is to ask him to believe something unusual, to say the least. So, as a result, there are many who insist that Jesus merely fainted on that cross, and then when He was removed, His friends took Him away and treated Him for His wounds, and afterwards He appeared to many people and claimed He had come back from the dead. Maybe that is what you believe. Maybe you say you believe the Bible, but at the same time it is hard for you to really believe that Jesus died and then came back to life again. Well, let me ask you something. How can an individual really believe the Bible and not believe the Bible? I mean, after all, the Bible says that Jesus died. Let me show you what I mean.

Everyone of the four writers who wrote about the event insists that Jesus, when He was taken down from the cross, was buried. In Matthew 27, the writer says that they took the body of Jesus and laid it in a tomb. They buried it. In Mark 15, Mark says they laid Jesus in a tomb. In Luke 23, Luke said they laid Jesus in a

tomb. John said in John 19 that they took away the body of Jesus, bound it as was the custom of Jews in that time in order to bury it, and they put it in a new grave. Every one of the writers of the Bible that wrote about the event said that Jesus was buried. Now, let me ask you something. What kind of an individual do you bury—why, you bury a dead one. What is it that you put into a grave? Do you put a man's clothes? Do you put his jewelry box there and then say, "Here lies John Jones?" Of course not. You put his body in the grave. The Bible insists that Jesus was dead—and they put His body in the ground. Jesus had said He would die (John 2:19-21; John 12:32,33). And He did just like He said He would. Jesus died. God knew there would be people who would not believe Jesus actually died, and one reason all four writers insist He did was to show people it was an undeniable fact. If you still do not believe it, consider this. If Jesus was not really dead, but had merely fainted, why didn't the soldiers, when they broke the legs of the other two men who were not dead, break Jesus' legs as it was their custom in order to hasten death? (John 19) Why didn't they? Because Jesus was already dead. Consider this. How did Jesus survive the spear that had been thrust into his side and right into his heart sac, the pericardium? He couldn't survive that. Jesus died.

Please listen. This business of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection is important for every individual that has ever lived. That's why I am talking to you. If you don't believe it, there is no way that you can ever have hope to live after death. What do you think you are going to do after you die? Go to sleep? Be unconscious? If you believe that, you've got a surprise coming. The Bible says, as it illustrates in places like Luke 16, that an individual, after he dies, is just as much alive as he ever was. You are not going to sleep when you die.

You are going to answer to God for what you've done in your life. That's why Jesus' death, burial and resurrection ought to be important to you. If you are going to enjoy a happy eternity, you've got to, first, believe what Jesus did. Then, you've got to obey what Jesus said. Doesn't that make sense?

Number Two: Man's Grave Problem

Death—it's something we all face. Marcus Aurelius once said that death is no respecter of persons whether you are king or peasant. He said, "the greatest oak must fall." And I guess he's right. Death—we ought to talk about it every once in a while. Understanding it I guess is what makes each day a little more valuable. Let's talk about it a minute and let's see if there's any answer to that problem—that problem of death—so that we can look forward to the future rather than dreading it.

You know why men die? Well, it's because—according to the Bible anyway—of a man named Adam. He's the first one God created; he's the first one who rebelled against God. The Bible says because he did, all men—that's you and me—look forward to death, to the grave. When Adam ate that forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3) he did something that had a direct effect upon the rest of us who have followed him. That ought to say something right there as to how powerful, to use a Bible word, "sin" is. The reality of death strikes us, you know, when someone in our family we love dies. Now, whether that be a mother or a father, a brother, a child—that person we love is dead—get this—because of one bite. There's no such thing as a little thing. Adam ate that forbidden fruit, rebelling against God, and the result is the rest of us look forward to the grave (I Corinthians 15:21, 22). But, before we jump on out and tear him apart limb to limb, the rest of us are none the less guilty. The Bible says all of us are in the same boat as far as being guilty is concerned (Romans 3:10, 23).

And, that's not the only boat we're all in. We have something else in common—we're all going to the grave. Now, that grave problem is frustrating, to say the least. Is there any way we can get out of it?

Well, the Bible answers that. The Bible says that a person must have his sin—problem taken care of before he can have his grave—problem answered. That is, he's got to have his sins forgiven by God before he can live with God. And he can get that forgiveness only when he, according to the Bible, dies with the Son of God (Ephesians 1:7). According to the Bible it's only the blood of Jesus that pays the penalty every man owes for breaking this moral law God has given to him. Of course, the blood of Jesus was shed in the death of Jesus. And that's why a man must die with Jesus where the blood was shed so that he might get his penalty paid. Now, the big question comes as to how that's done. Well, according to the Bible, a man dies with Jesus not just in his mind—sure, he's got to make up his mind what he's going to do—but he dies with Jesus, according to the Bible anyway, when he is—get this—buried with Jesus in a watery grave called baptism (Romans 6:3-6). Then, having his sins forgiven in the death of Jesus, that man can look forward to following Christ to heaven. In other words, a man has his sin—problem taken care of in the death of Jesus, in that watery grave. Then, and only then, can that person have his death problem, the grave, taken care of. You see, Jesus coming up out of his grave made it possible for the Christian to come up out of his. Jesus prepared the way.

You know, there are a lot of people who think that when they die they are just going to go to sleep, they'll become unconscious, they'll not be aware of anything. According to the Bible, though, death is simply

described as separation. And when a man dies not having his sin penalty paid in Christ, that man is going to be separated from God; and to be separated from God is to be hell. The Bible is the only window we can look through to see what the future holds. The Bible insists that if a man's death problem, his grave, is going to be conquered, he's first of all got to die with Christ—and then he looks forward to living with the God who made him.

Man Is Conscious After Death

“When a man dies, he’s just like Rover, he’s dead all over.” This is the philosophy of at least one religious sect in our society today, insisting that man, when he dies, is unconscious. Judge J. F. Rutherford, in his book, *Religion*, published in Brooklyn, New York, in 1940, on page 100 says, and I quote, “The Scriptures, without contradiction, show that the dead are unconscious, out of existence.” (End quote). You know, if the Scriptures did insist that the dead are unconscious, that the dead are out of existence, it would be most comforting. Who is it that wants to pay the consequences for his rebellion against God? Why, for a lot of people, living the way you want to live, mistreating people and being selfish and egotistical, not having to pay for any of those evil things, would be most inviting. Just go to sleep, and don’t worry about a thing. I imagine people like Nero and Hitler would love for that to be true.

Not long ago, a friend of mine, a mortician, told me that in his work there was only one thing that bothered him. He never enjoyed seeing the body dressed in a fine suit of clothes. Speaking of the entire man, he said, “That person is not going to a party.” He said, “He’s just going to sleep.” He said, “I’ve already made up my mind how I want to be dressed—and that’s in a pair of pajamas and a robe.” In other words, when a man dies, he is just like Rover, he is dead all over. He just goes to sleep.

Listen carefully. The Bible does teach that there is a part of man that does exist after physical death. In the original language of the New Testament of the

Bible, the scholars say that the word for soul is defined this way, "It differs from the body and is not dissolved by death." In other words, when a man dies he is not as dead as a dead dog—his soul is not dissolved by death, according to God's word. The Bible says that the soul and the body are distinguished from each other. They are different.

The most positive Biblical evidence concerning the existence of the soul following physical death is presented in the Lord's story of the rich man and Lazarus, according to Luke chapter 16. Read that story. You will find these facts: No. 1—Two men lived on the earth, a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. No. 2—Both of them died; Lazarus was taken into Abraham's bosom and the rich man was confined to Hades, where both of them were in a state of conscious existence. The story shows evidence that the body which was buried was different from that which went into the unseen world and was conscious. In other words, when a man dies, he is not as dead as a dead dog.

In the Old Testament, in the book of Ecclesiastes, notice these words: "The dust returned to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it." That tells that the body and the spirit are not the same. The body returns to the earth; but the spirit returneth to God. Now listen carefully. No where does the Bible say that the spirit of an animal returns to God. The spirit of man is certainly different from the spirit of an animal; one has continuous existence and the other is subject to non-existence.

If someone tries to tell you that when a man dies, he is unconscious, that he is out of existence, you show him in the Bible where the Bible says he is conscious. The idea that when a man dies, he will sleep

forever, is a comforting thought—especially for those who deny that man must pay the consequences of sin done in the body. According to the Bible, Romans chapter 2, God's righteous judgment will be revealed. The Bible says there that God will render to every man according to his works—for those who are factious and do not obey the truth, but obey wickedness, God said there will be wrath and fury. Paul said in Romans 6 that the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus.

The Body Of Jesus Was Resurrected

When someone rings your doorbell trying to sell you their religious newspapers or magazines, if you buy them and read them you will discover that, more than likely, there is an article dedicated to the teaching that when Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, it wasn't His body that was raised, rather He was raised as a Spirit Creature. There is a religious book in the libraries of many families across the country, entitled, "Let God Be True." On page 138 of that book, these words are written, and I quote, "The King Christ Jesus was put to death in the flesh and was resurrected as an invisible spirit creature." Maybe you have already read those words in that book. Or, maybe you have always believed that the body of Jesus was raised from the dead, but now, if you were asked to defend that belief, you might not know where to go in the Bible to do so. Well, listen carefully. In Luke 24 of the New Testament, after Jesus was resurrected, He walked into the group of His friends, and the Bible says, and I quote, "They were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit. And He said to them, 'Why are you troubled? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' " Then the Bible says that Jesus asked them, "Have you anything here to eat; and they gave Him a piece of broiled fish and He took it and ate it." Now listen carefully. These people with whom Jesus had walked after His resurrection thought they saw a spirit, yet Jesus insisted that He was not a spirit, but He was there standing before them, flesh and bone. In other words, His body was resurrected. His body became hungry, and He ate that broiled fish.

Now, that's not all the Bible has to say about Jesus' body being resurrected. In John 20, a man by the name of Thomas had heard the friends of Jesus talking about how they had seen Jesus, but Thomas insisted, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in His side, I will not believe." Well, eight days later, this group was together again in a house and Jesus came to them and He said to Thomas, who was in the group, "Put your finger here and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing." Now, let me ask you something. Who would be so foolish as to believe that Jesus invited Thomas to touch something that was intangible—that was just spirit? It's obvious that the body Jesus invited him to touch was that same body which had been crucified and laid in a tomb. Why, Jesus Himself said that His body would be raised. In John 2, while He was in Jerusalem, Jesus told some Jews, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." Well, the Jews thought He was talking about the gigantic building called the temple in Jerusalem and they said, "It has taken 46 years to build this temple, and you will raise it up in three days?" But the Bible says, and I quote, "But He spoke of the temple of His body." Then, the Bible goes on to say, "When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this; and they believed the Scriptures and the Word which Jesus had spoken." In other words, the body of Jesus was raised from the dead.

Now, you might be asking, "Well, what difference does it make, whether it was His body that was raised or whether He was raised as a spirit creature." And, you know, that's a good question. What difference does it make? Well, the difference it makes is that if

the body of Jesus was not raised from the dead, then the Bible is a lie, because the Bible insists that the body of Jesus was raised from the dead. Let me tell you something. I'll stand by the Bible any day of the week, over some religious magazine. If the Bible and the magazine conflict, one of them must be a lie, and I'll take my stand on God's Word, the Bible.

Jesus Was Raised From The Dead

That's the way it was – 2,000 years ago. A man died, and He came to life again. He said He would, and He did. I mean, while He was in the city of Jerusalem one day, while standing in the gigantic temple, He told some people, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19). Well, the Jews thought He was talking about the gigantic building in which they were all standing – saying that He would reconstruct that huge structure in three days. But the Bible says that He was in fact speaking of the temple of His body (John 2:21). He was saying that life would be taken out of His body, His body would be placed in a grave, but on the third day after that had been done, He would, with His body, come out of that grave. I mean, that body of His would be made to stand up again as He would be a resurrected man. And that's exactly the way it happened.

Each of the four biographers in the Bible records the events in the life of Christ – His death, His burial, and His resurrection. It was early on the morning of the third day, just after the Jewish Sabbath had closed, that some women who were friends of Jesus started toward His tomb with some spices to further prepare the body of Jesus. As they walked along, they wondered among themselves about who was going to remove that gigantic stone from the mouth of the tomb. Yet, it did not stop these women who loved that Divine Man (John 1:1–14), Jesus Christ. The women were led by one named Mary Magdalene, and they all approached the tomb of Jesus in the dim light of the early dawn. When they arrived, they saw that the huge stone was already rolled aside. Looking inside, they saw that the

body of Jesus was gone. There were two young men there whom the writers of the Bible indicate were angels, and they instructed these confused women to go and tell Jesus' friends that He had risen from the dead. Well, rushing back to where these friends were gathered, the women told of what they had seen. It was this Mary Magdalene who went straight to Peter who was with John, another friend of Jesus, and told him that Jesus was gone from His tomb. Well, the Bible says that Peter and John ran in their excitement to the tomb. Seeing what the women had seen they returned home, puzzled and confused. But Mary Magdalene, who evidently had returned to the tomb with them, remained to cry just outside the tomb. They all hadn't really believed yet that Jesus was raised from the dead. Standing outside that grave, Mary with tears streaming down her cheeks, was approached by a figure of a man stepping up behind her. He asked her why she was crying, and thinking he was just a gardener, she told Him that the body of Jesus, the friend she loved so much, was gone. And she told Him to please inform her where Jesus' body had been laid because she wanted to bring it back and lay it in the tomb once again. Well, that figure of a man was not the gardener. It was Jesus, the One who was dead and who had returned to life. Well, Jesus stilled Mary's sobs when He spoke one word to her. He called her by her name. He said, "Mary," and she knew Him instantly.

Now that's a pretty story, and it's a true story discussed in all the four gospels of the Bible – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. But do you know what it means to the average man? Do you know what it means to you and me? It means that a man was once dead and He has returned to life and is alive even to this day (Heb. 1:3). And He, as a man, makes it possible for other men to come out of their graves. Now that

means you and I can one day come out of ours. That's what Jesus' coming out of His tomb has to do with you and me. The Bible just simply says that He is the firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:29). Yet, listen carefully. The Bible says there is only one way that you can come out of your grave to live, and that is when you are in Christ. Christ came out of His grave. And if you are in Him, you will come out of the grave to "live."

The Resurrection Of Christ

Is it a “Ripley’s Believe it or Not” or not? There are a lot of things according to Mr. Ripley that are supposed to have really happened that are fantastic. There is an event recorded in history that is supposed to have happened that, according to many people, is just another story from Ripley’s Believe It or Not. I’m talking about the incident where a man is supposed to have come back from the dead. The Bible says it actually happened. The Bible says that the body of a man named Jesus was subjected to death, that it was put into a grave, and then that body came out of that grave, made to live. Do you believe it happened? I mean, really? A lot of people think it’s just another Ripley’s Believe It or Not.

Well, it’s important that you—and in fact every man—believe that it really did happen. It’s important to you because one day, this old globe spinning around in space will be destroyed, yet Jesus has made it possible for people, when they die, to go home with Him to a place called heaven. Now, the only way they can go there is first to get their debt paid that they owe as a result of rebelling against the God who made them. One of these days, you are going to die. Your body is going to be put into the ground, or in a vault somewhere—but it’s not going to stay there. It’s going to come out of that grave, and everyone of us is going to stand before God and be judged, each one of us individually, as to how we conducted ourselves before we died. Now, you might not believe that—*really* believe it—but if you don’t, you are already in trouble. The Bible, that volume of 66 books, validated to be truth because of it’s accurate statements in the

areas of science and medicine, of archaeology, of prophecy—-that Bible says that everyone of us will one day die, yet will another day rise from the tombs and will face God in judgment. You know, when something as devastating as that which I have just said —-when a book like the Bible claims that every person who lives, and has ever lived, is going to die and be raised from the dead to face his creator, having to answer for how he has conducted himself before he died—-when something that devastating is claimed by the Bible, whether you believe it or not, does it not stand to reason that you had better find out since the claim is made about you? The wise person will. Well, if you are the wise person, you will want to know what the Bible says about it.

You see, the Bible claims that every one of us has rebelled against God, rebelling against God's moral law of ethics. We do that when we lie, when we steal, when we commit adultery, when we do a thousand and one other things that is against the moral law of God. We are not ignorant that we do it. That's why we have pangs of a guilty conscience when we do something against that which we know is moral. There is a penalty of violating God's moral law. The Bible says it is an eternal separation from God in a living hell. Now, that's what we owe as a penalty for violating God's moral law. God is just, and He must carry out His law. Yet, God is also love. That's why God became flesh, that He might offer a sacrifice—-that is, that He might die for us to pay that penalty. Yet, if God in the flesh, Jesus Christ, remained dead, he would have been of no benefit to us, would He? So, after He died, He conquered death by coming out of that grave. In doing so, He led the way for every other person. Yet, certain conditions must be met if God allows us to follow Him through death to life. One of those conditions is to

believe that He did it. If you don't believe He did it, then there is no beginning, there is no foundation for you to secure a hope to be saved.

The Ascended Christ

Here's something to think about. Did you know there is a man in heaven? Have you ever thought about it? I have heard some talk about God as being "the man upstairs." Now, every time I have heard someone say that, it is said with no respect paid toward God. But there is a man in heaven, and He is God. Let me show you what I mean.

A young lady gave birth to a baby several hundred years ago and that in itself doesn't seem so unusual until you recognize that, that young lady was a virgin (Matt. 1:23). She had never known a man the way a wife knows her husband, and yet this young lady conceived and bore a son. How did such a thing happen? God overshadowed her and planted the seed in her womb, making God the Father of the baby. The boy's name was Jesus, who was God's Son, the divine man (Gal. 4:4). He lived as a man on this earth and one day found himself hanging on a Roman cross – a cross designed for a common criminal. He, as a man, was crucified as a man (Heb. 2:9–10), the son of Mary and the Son of God. The proof of his identity as being both God and man is in the fact that this Jesus was raised from the dead, even as a man (John 20), a divine man (Heb. 1:8). What does that have to do with you? God wants you to know that Jesus was raised from the dead as a man. That's why, in Luke 24, the Bible says that Jesus, after He came out of that grave, walked into a group of His friends, and when He did, "they were startled and frightened and supposed that they saw a spirit." Well, Jesus said to them, "Why are you troubled?" He said, "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit does not

have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” Then the Bible says that Jesus asked them, “Have you anything here to eat? And they gave him a piece of broiled fish and He took it and ate it” (Luke 24:41, 42). In other words, Jesus was a man, which proves that He with His body was resurrected. His body came out of that tomb. Now that’s exciting because the Bible insists that, since Jesus came out of His grave as a man He prepared the way for other men to come out of theirs (I Cor. 15:20–23). And Jesus, as a resurrected man, appeared to hundreds of people. I mean, he even appeared to over 500 at one time (I Cor. 15:6).

Jesus, who is the divine man, God in the flesh (Heb. 1:8), was still a man after He came out of His grave. And He, as a man, ascended into the heavens to sit at the right hand of His father (Heb. 1:3). I mean, those who were with Him when He ascended watched Him being taken up into the clouds (Acts 1:9). The Bible says they were looking at Him as he went up (Acts 1:10), watching Him – men watching a man. And where is He now? The Bible says that He is at the right hand of God (Heb. 1:3). And He is there in heaven sitting on that throne, not only as God, but as a man. Now, what’s the point of all this? The point is that we – that men – can know there is one in heaven who is like us. He is a man, able to understand all the problems that men have. Jesus can understand you, knowing what you are going through, knowing your problems, knowing your frustration, because He is man himself (Heb. 2:18). And He, as a man, does things for the Christian.

“Obey The Gospel”

“Stop, look, and listen.” That’s a slogan you’ve heard a long time. Here’s another one. “Say it with flowers.” There are all kinds of slogans that we hear, and they are meant for our hearing to help us remember a product or an idea. “It’s the real thing.” You’ve heard that one. Here’s another familiar slogan: “If you don’t take care of yourself, no one will.” I know you’ve heard that one. Well, some slogans are good; they help us remember fine products or good ideas. And, if a slogan has helped us to remember the best, then it has been successful for us.

But not only do they sell products such as the misunderstood soft drink, or the uncola; not only do they sell us ideas such as “love makes the world go round,” but there are also slogans that attach a person to God. That’s right. Maybe you’ve heard this one: “Is Jesus your personal Savior?” That’s a good one, because Jesus, God’s Son, has come to be the Savior of every person. Well, there is another slogan about the same subject – this one used in the Bible; that is, well, it’s more than just a slogan – it expresses what a person must do to have Jesus as his personal Savior. It consists of only three words. It goes this way: “Obey the gospel.” Now that’s simple enough, isn’t it? Those three words are found in II Thessalonians 1:7–9 of the Bible. That slogan is found in the midst of a pretty important discussion. The apostle Paul wrote them. Let me tell you what he was talking about when he wrote them. He was telling some people that Jesus, God’s Son, would one day be revealed from heaven in blazing fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God and (get this) who do not – here it is –

obey the gospel of Jesus. He said that those who do not obey the gospel will be punished with everlasting destruction. So, to obey the gospel is pretty important, isn't it? The Bible says that those who don't obey the gospel will be punished forever. So, "obey the gospel" is an important slogan but, more than a slogan, it's a necessary response, isn't it?

Well, you might ask, "How do you obey the gospel – what is the gospel?" I mean, after all, you've got to know what it is before you can obey it.

The word "gospel" simply means good news. Well, what's the good news a person must obey? I mean, there is a lot of good news. What was this apostle Paul talking about? Well, he said that individuals are to obey the gospel of Jesus. That's the good news of Jesus. What's the good news of Jesus? Well, Paul said in another place, I Corinthians 15, that the good news of Jesus is His death, His burial and His resurrection. And he said that it was by this good news that individuals are saved from the eternal destruction he talked about. That is, people are saved from God's destruction upon them only through the death, the burial and the resurrection of God's Son, Jesus. Well, if the good news of Jesus is His death, burial and resurrection, how can a person obey that good news? That is, how can a person obey the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus? It's for sure he's got to because the Bible says that if he doesn't, he will be destroyed. You know, a lot of people say that all you have to do is just believe that Jesus died, was buried and was resurrected. But that's not what the Bible says is all you have to do. The Bible says that, unless we obey the gospel – obey the death, the burial and resurrection of Jesus – unless we do it, we are going to be destroyed. Well, how do we do it? Do we literally go back two thousand years and several thousand miles and jump into the death, and burial

and resurrection of Jesus? Impossible! That's why the same apostle Paul says in Romans 6 that we obey a form of the teaching. What's the form? Well, in the same chapter, Romans 6, Paul says that an individual obeys the gospel -- he gets into the death of Jesus when he is immersed in water, appealing to Jesus to save him. When he does that, he is buried with Christ, and then, he is resurrected with Christ. There is where he "obeys the gospel." That's what the Bible says. And it's easy to understand, isn't it?

Immersion Into Jesus' Death

I've talked a lot about being immersed in water for salvation. And if you have ever heard me, you might be saying now, "That's the understatement of the year." I've had several people accuse me of insisting that water saves, and that if God had insisted immersion in water was necessary for salvation, then He should have simply said so. With that reaction, there has come to me the reminder that the Bible says simply that **whoever calls** on the name of the Lord shall be saved—that, in fact, the Bible says it twice, once in Acts 2, and the other time in Romans 10. All right, let me admit you have a point. The Bible does say that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, but let me ask you a question about that statement: How does God insist we call on the name of the Lord to be saved? Have you ever thought about it? The Bible does say how. It not only says to do it, but it says **how** to do it. All right, think about it just a moment while I mention something else.

Just for examination purposes, let's just suppose that God does not insist upon immersion in water for salvation, and let me ask this question: If God wanted to insist upon immersion being necessary for salvation, how do you think you should state it so that there would be no misunderstanding about it? Well, someone might say, "If God were going to insist upon immersion for salvation, then He simply should have said, 'you must be immersed.'" Listen carefully. God did say it. That's right. In John, Chapter 3, Jesus said the very words, "You must be born again—born of water and the spirit." All right, someone else might say, "Well, if God were going to insist that a person be

immersed for salvation, He should have said, 'Be immersed and you will be saved.' " Well, listen again—He did say exactly that. Jesus said in Mark 16, "He that believeth and is immersed shall be saved." Well, here comes someone else who says, "Why don't you just forget talking about immersion and let's just talk about Jesus." All right, let's do that, but let's do it the way the Bible says to do it. According to Acts 8, a man from Ethiopia had been to Jerusalem to worship God and was returning in his chariot to his own home country. Another man, by the name of Philip, was sent to this man and, as he approached the chariot, he saw that the Ethiopian was reading from the Old Testament. This Ethiopian was confused in his reading and did not understand that he was reading a prophecy concerning Jesus. So, the Ethiopian asked Philip about what he was reading, and the Bible says that Philip opened his mouth and began at the same scripture—get this—preached unto him Jesus. Now, notice what happened. The next verse, and I mean the very next verse, says, "As they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, 'see, here is water: what hinders me to be immersed?' " Now, the Bible says that Philip preached unto him Jesus, and as a result, the Ethiopian eunuch wanted to be immersed. Now, why? Simply because you cannot talk about Jesus without talking about immersion.

You see, immersion in water enables a person to touch the death of Jesus, the death which was necessary for man's salvation. Jesus was the only man, because He was also God who died and was raised again to stay alive. That's why every individual, if he is going to live after death, must get into the death of Christ. And he does so in the watery grave of immersion.

Now, I said a moment ago that, not only does the

Bible insist that you call upon the name of the Lord to be saved, but it insists how you call upon the name of the Lord to be saved. In Acts 22 of the Bible, a man by the name of Ananias came to Saul and told him, “Arise and be immersed and wash away your sins”—now get this—“calling on the name of the Lord.” In other words, one calls on the name of the Lord **by being** immersed in water into Jesus’ death to be raised with Jesus to walk a brand new life.

The Sin And Grave Problem Resolved

Well, how would you like to be without a problem? No, I'm not trying to sell the rainbow. It's a little ironic, though, that a man can have problems and not have them—at the same time.

You know, if we were to take all our problems and categorize them—really, we'd have only three categories to put them in. Just three. We have, first, what the Bible calls a problem with sin. Now, I know that's a Bible word, but even though we don't use it so much today it's still real. Sin is the transgression of God's moral law. That is, when we sin it means we break God's moral law we live under. That sin problem is real, it's devastating, it's expensive. But, we have another problem—we're all going to the grave. Now, that's a problem. And we wonder as to whether or not we're going to ever get out of that grave. The third problem you and I have is what I like to call our life problem—that is, our heartaches, our challenges, our frustrations, all our problems of just daily living. We need someone to understand, someone to cheer us on and tell us that we can make it through those problems. Yes, our problems are many, but they can be categorized in just three areas—one is sin, two is the grave, and three is life.

Well, I'm convinced that all three of these problems can be taken care of in Jesus Christ. I mean, that the Son of God can make us problem free. But, our sin problem, our grave, and our life problem must be taken care of in that exact, one, two, three order. In other words, our sin problem has to be dealt with first, then our grave problem. And after those two are taken care of, we can know for sure, based upon the Bible,

that Jesus is the one who understands our problems concerning life.

Let's talk about solving the first two first. Jesus Christ died on a Roman cross 2,000 years ago for the purpose of taking care of our sin problem today. Only God can do something like that. Guilty people are made innocent because of Jesus on the cross. You see, in God's judicial system, since man has sinned against God man must pay the penalty. That's why God became man in order to pay man's penalty. There has to be a death (Hebrews 9:15-17), the death of a man. Jesus as a man, the God of man, died on the cross. Yet, the only way a man can allow Jesus on the cross to mean anything to him in his relationship with God is to get himself into the same circumstance as Jesus's death. Now, by that I mean that according to the Bible it is only through the blood of Jesus that a man's sins can be forgiven (Ephesians 1:7). And since the blood was shed in Jesus death, any man who wants forgiveness in the blood must get into the circumstance. Now, that word circumstance may be a little hard to understand, but maybe this will shed a little light. Detergent will clean a pair of dirty socks only when the two get together. In the like figure, the blood of Jesus will cleanse—that is, will forgive a person of his sins—only when the two get together. A man has got to believe that and act upon it in a faith response. And the faith response is this: since the blood, the cleanser, was shed in the death of Jesus and man who wants forgiveness must also get into the death of Jesus that he by faith might touch the blood, the cleanser, to have forgiveness of sins. And, according to the Bible, the way any man gets into the death of Jesus is by being immersed in water into Jesus death. That's in fact what the Bible says. It reads this way: "We who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death." It goes on,

“we were buried therefore with Him through baptism into death” (Romans 6:3-6).

The Bible says it another way. It says that if persons do not, and I quote, “obey the gospel,” they will be eternally destroyed (II Thessalonians 1:7-9). And the Bible says the rudiments of the gospel is the death, burial, resurrection of Jesus (I Corinthians 15:1-4). So, a person must obey the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. And he does it by being buried with Christ in a watery grave (Romans 6). There’s where his sin problem is taken care of and he can look forward to having his grave problem answered.

How Much Must A Man Change?

How much must a man change if he is going to become a Christian? You know, it would be funny if it weren't so serious how people in our society reach out with one hand for security that Christ offers, and with the other hand they hold on to the selfish, materialistic influences they want to practice—and they are the most miserable people in the world. In reality, they want to do what they want to do and they want God to bless it. But, the Bible says that a man must change, and he must hold on to Christ with both hands, giving himself as, the Bible terms it, a living sacrifice. That the Bible insists that a man must change cannot be denied, but there are many people who are asking, "How much of a change must a man make if he is going to become a Christian?" Maybe that is what you have asked. Well, some people have tried to answer it by going out of their way occasionally to be nice to somebody, by saying a kind word, by donating some money to a charity organization—in other words, by doing something good, once in awhile. But, is that enough?

Well, let's suppose that a man has a lemon tree in his back yard. He doesn't like lemons; they are too sour. But, he does like oranges, and he says, referring to the tree, "I wish this were an orange tree." So, he decides to go out and get some oranges. He strips the lemons from the tree and scotch tapes oranges on to it. Then he steps back to admire his orange tree. But, is it an orange tree? Of course not. Soon, the oranges will shrivel and fall, and more lemons will appear on the tree. The kind of tree is still the same. Now, so it is with man. A man may become dissatisfied with all of

the sour fruits in his life and he may determine to change. But, it takes more than just changing one's speech, one's habits and customs to be a Christian. The person must be changed. And, there is still the matter of those old sins charged against him yesterday. Some people want to forget those old sins, and they want to overlook the sins they have committed today. A lot of people want to get to Heaven on a "C" average. But, the passing grade with God is a sinless "A+". God insists on sinlessness. Paul in the New Testament of the Bible said, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them" (Galatians 3:10). James, another Bible writer, put it this way, "Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it" (James 2:10). In other words, one doesn't have to break every law in God's book to become a spiritual criminal, just like one doesn't have to break every law in the country to have the police wanting him as an outlaw.

Martin Luther said a long time ago that the most damnable heresy that ever plagued the mind of man was the idea that somehow man could make himself good enough to deserve to live with a holy God. Listen carefully. You wouldn't scramble eggs for breakfast with nine good eggs and three rotten eggs and serve it to company and expect it to be acceptable. Well, even less can we serve up our lives to God having more good things in them than bad things and expect God to accept them. So, if anyone is going to be in Heaven, there must be some entirely different way of getting there. The Bible, of course, says that there will be people in Heaven, but they will be few in number, but even these few will be a great many—so many that no man can number. In other words, in spite of the fact that many may say it is impossible for them to change their entire lives, there are great numbers who have and

who will. And if they can do it, you can do it. Now, don't get me wrong. Even those who live today as Christians, those people who have given themselves as a living sacrifice to God, who have totally committed themselves to Him through Christ—even those people find sin in their life. In fact, it was John who was writing to Christians in I John 1, who said, "If we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar." But the point is, when a person wants to become a Christian, he is voluntarily giving up old practices, old thoughts which have made him God's enemy, and he is simply saying to the God who made him, "Lord, I want to be yours, I want to serve you, you are the greatest good in my life, and I know that you can save me. I want your character to be my character. Though I will fail, I do so in the path of serving you, not rebelling against you." Listen carefully. When a person says all that, he is one step closer to becoming a Christian.

So, to answer the question, "How much must a man change if he is going to become a Christian," the best answer I can give you is that he must become a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). When he does that, naturally having first been buried with Christ in His death which the Bible says is through immersion in water, then God will continually forgive him in the blood of Christ for everything that he does that is wrong.

If We Do Something, How Is It Free?

“You made a mess of things.” Sometimes a mother says that to a child, but God has said the same thing to man. According to God’s Word, the Bible, man has made a colossal mess of everything he has put his hands on. There are wars, murders, adulteries, riots, crime, envy and hate. And all of these things are the result of—of something we have tried to ignore in our society: sin. That word—S-I-N—sin infects the human race. The Bible says, “There is none righteous, no not one, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” The Bible says, “There is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.” It also says, “We have turned everyone to his own way.” The Bible teaches that every man has sinned. Man may call it a sickness, a weakness, or the result of ignorance—but God calls it a sin, a rebellion against Him. In fact, Jesus, God’s Son, said that not only when someone does something wrong in the sight of God is it a sin, but even *thinking* it, is, as far as God is concerned, a sin. In His great Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “You have heard it said, ‘Whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment,’ but I say unto you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.” Jesus also said, “You have heard that it was said, ‘you shall not commit adultery.’ But I say unto you that whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already with her in his heart.” In other words, it is not only a sin to *do* something, but it is a sin to *think* about it. Now, get this. According to the Bible, there are also sins of omission, which are those things which we should have done but didn’t—such as, failing to love one another, to pray or to read the Bible, or to

provide for someone in need. The Bible says that this is the reason that none of us can earn his way to Heaven. Man is in too big of a mess. No matter how good he may have acted or thought today, he cannot erase yesterday's mistakes. The only thing he has earned is death. That's what the Bible says in Romans 6:23.

I've talked to many people who think that they are pretty good people in the sight of God, and they depend upon their goodness to get them into Heaven. But, let me show you what kind of a mess man has gotten himself into. Have you ever wondered how many times a day the average man sins? Would it be as many as five times, or even a hundred? John Calvin once said, "No one knows the one-hundredth part of the sin that clings to his soul." I suppose that is true because we forget the unpleasant things, so we forget much of our sin. Well, since it is impossible to pick an average number of how many times we sin per day, let's be conservative and say that we sin only three times a day. If we sinned no more than three times a day in thought or deed or even by omitting things we should have done, why I would say we would be extremely good. But, even if we were this good, do you realize that we would still be guilty of over 1,000 sins in a year? That's right. In 20 years that would be 20,000 violations of God's law against us. Now, think what would happen to a criminal who stood in a human court with 20,000 criminal acts on his record. Suppose he were to say to the judge, "Judge, I'm a law abiding citizen. I made a few mistakes in my life, but who hasn't." Why, the judge would probably answer, "Man, with a list of crimes like this, you are an outlaw." In other words, man has made a mess of things. And in his mess, he is in a serious predicament. His predicament is that man cannot save himself.

Now, listen carefully. If man is going to get out of his mess, there must be a drastic change in his life. In other words, his entire character, his whole person must change directions. He must start over again with a new life. Now, there is a difference between assuming some Christ-like attributes, and becoming Christ-like in character. Some people compare themselves to another person only to make themselves look good. But, when a person gives himself to Christ, totally, he looks to Jesus as being the only good. And, he depends upon Christ to help him reflect the goodness that only Christ is.

Man has made a colossal mess of things. And he needs a Savior. You are a human being, you are a sinner. You have made a colossal mess of things. You are lost. You cannot earn your way to Heaven, yet there is still a way to get there.

Saving Faith

Is everyone going to be saved by Christ? You know, that's a good question. I have talked with many people who honestly believe that as long as a person is a good moral person, who tries to live by the Golden Rule, and tries to keep the Ten Commandments, then he is going to be saved by Christ. But, listen very carefully. The Bible says the contrary. It is not everybody who is going to be saved. Jesus Himself said so in Matthew 7:21. The Bible insists that those who are saved are saved by grace through faith. In other words, the Bible says that faith in Christ is the key that opens the door to Heaven. Now, you can have a key ring with a lot of keys on it. They all look like keys, but if you go to the front door of my house and you try all of these keys but the right one, none of them will open that door. The right key to Heaven is faith—saving faith. Nothing else in the world will open the door. Now, the big question is, "What is faith?" What is saving faith? Well, first, let me tell you what saving faith is not. Some of the keys on a key ring are very similar. In fact, it might not be at that first glance one would be able to say which key fits which door. It's the same way with saving faith. Sometimes, we mistake saving faith with simply believing certain historical facts—for example, that Jesus lived and died and rose again. Why, even the devil believes these facts. But that kind of faith is not what we are talking about. Saving faith is not simply believing certain historical facts about Jesus' identity. Though believing those things is necessary, they are by all means not all a person needs to believe.

Another misconception concerning faith happens

when one turns to God in trust in times of physical needs. Why, I know you have had problems, and possibly you have taken them to the Lord, trusting Him to provide. A lot of people do. Most of us have trusted in God for our health, for our food, for a safe journey, for our children, and other things. So, we have a faith that is more than just believing some facts about Jesus. The faith that I am talking about actually trusts in the Lord for some things. But, listen carefully. Even this is not saving faith. Saving faith has to do with salvation of the soul. Many people trust in the Lord for physical blessings, but to get right down to what they trust for eternal salvation, they trust in themselves. They try to live a good life, they try to keep the Ten Commandments, they try to live by the Golden Rule, feeling that surely the Lord would permit them to be saved. But, listen carefully. This is trusting in one's self for eternal life; it is not trusting in the Lord. Saving faith is trusting in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation. It means resting upon Christ and what He has done rather than upon us and what we have done to get to Heaven. In other words, faith is not really faith unless an individual's complete trust is involved.

Let me show you what I mean. In the year 1860, there was a man by the name of Blondin who walked a thousand-foot tightrope 160 feet up in the air over Niagara Falls. He would frequently ask people, "Do you believe I can carry someone with me as I safely walk that rope?" And the crowd watching him would answer, "Yes." Then, he would invite a volunteer out of the crowd to go with him. But, no one accepted the invitation. Why? They believed the facts about him; they believed he could even do what he asked them to trust him to do, to take someone with him across that tightrope to the other side. But, they didn't put their trust in him to go with him. They wouldn't commit

themselves. They wouldn't risk their lives. In other words, it's one thing to believe certain facts about a man. It's one thing to believe that he can do certain things that someone else couldn't do. But, it's entirely another thing to put one's trust in him, to commit oneself to his care. I know a Doctor who, according to his credentials, I believe is a Doctor. I believe he can help people. But, let me tell you something. I don't trust him enough to put my health in his care. Saving faith insists upon total commitment to Jesus Christ. It's more than just believing that He is the Son of God. It's more than believing He did come to save men from their sins. It is the willingness to submit oneself to Him, to do what He tells you to do that you might be saved.

God Commands, Man Obeys

“If you love me, why do you ignore me?” This is one of the major problems between husbands and wives. The husband says he loves his wife, but he constantly ignores her. Now, let me ask you something. Do you think a husband really loves his wife if he ignores her needs, and her requests? No—and that’s because love always responds to the other person. And that love is often measured by the response or lack of response given. Now, let me tell you something. It’s the same way in man’s relationship with God. I have talked with a lot of people who say they love God, but they simply refuse to obey what God asks. They are ignoring God. They say they love Him, but they ignore Him. Let me tell you the way God works. God commands, man obeys God, and God blesses man for his obedience. Yet, when God commands and man disobeys God, then God curses man for his disobedience. Listen. The Bible says that if a man has faith in God to save him, then God sees that faith when the man obeys God’s commands. The blind man who came to Jesus to be healed of his blindness was told by Christ to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. When the man had gone and washed, just like Jesus had told him to do, he then and only then was healed of his blindness. In the Old Testament book of the Bible, in II Kings 5, God healed a man who was a leper, whose name was Naaman, but only when Naaman had completely obeyed what God had told him to do, and that was to dip himself seven times in the Jordan River. You see, God sees our faith when we obey His commands. It was Jesus, the Son of God, who Himself said, “If you love me, obey my commandments.” In other words, if you love me, by all means don’t ignore

me. But in fact, obey My commands.

You know, I've talked with a lot of people who say that if you teach that immersion in water is necessary for salvation, then you are teaching salvation by works. Listen carefully. If there is any work involved, it's not in immersion in water. What I mean is this: Jesus also insists that one must repent or he will perish. Now, repentance simply means to change your way of living. Now listen—for a lot of people, repentance is a lot of work. I have a dear friend who is an alcoholic, and he knows that to become a Christian he must get on the wagon and change his way of life. Now he understands that repenting involves a lot of work. It physically and mentally hurts for him to repent. Now let me ask you—if he gets on the wagon, and puts that bottle up, and eventually becomes a Christian, would he have the right to say that since repentance in this case was a lot of work that he earned his salvation? Of course not. The Bible tells that if a man wants to become a Christian, would he have the right to say that since repentance is something he does; confessing with his lips is something he does; yet, his being immersed in water is something someone else does to him. If there is any work involved, the work is in his repenting, the work is in his confessing Jesus with his own lips, but it most certainly would not be in his immersion because that is something someone else does to him. Listen. God has commanded, "Repent or perish." (Luke 13:3) If man obeys God, God will bless him. God commands, "You must be born again—born of water and spirit" (John 3). "Believe and be immersed and ye shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). If man obeys God, God will bless him. In no way are these things working for your salvation. Obeying God in each of these things is simply demonstrating the love you say you have for Him in doing what He commands. The Bible says in Romans 10 that

belief is made *unto* righteousness and confessing Jesus is made *unto* salvation. Now, that word *unto* is important. It signifies that a person is coming close to the state of righteousness in salvation. But there are only two places in all of God's Word that teach how a man gets *into* Jesus, where he will have salvation. One place is found in Romans 6, where Paul says a man is immersed in water into Jesus Christ. The other place is Paul's statement in Galatians 3, where he says the same thing. If you are immersed into Jesus Christ, you have there put Him on. That's what the Bible says.

He Ran The Wrong Way

One of the most startling plays in football history occurred during the Rose Bowl Game of 1929. Roy Riegels, an excellent player on the California team, grabbed a Georgia Tech fumble, was spun about in line of scrimmage, then headed for his own goal line 75 yards away. The roar of the crowd was so loud that he could not hear his team mates shouting at him. But, finally, one of his own team mates caught him less than a yard away from his own goal. Well, California had to kick, but it was blocked by the Tech team. California fell on the ball, but only to give Tech two points for a safety. Georgia Tech won the game all because Roy Riegels ran the wrong way.

There are a lot of people running, and like Roy Riegels, think they are running the right way, but will one day find out they lost the game. Listen carefully. According to many people, if you belong to a religion, you are alright. You have nothing to worry about. You will be saved. But, the Bible emphatically denies that. Just having a religion will never save you. Religion is not what saves you. There were some people in the Bible who were religious people, but found out that just being religious was not enough. In the book of Acts, for example, the people you read about there were religious people. Why, these people were Jews, devout men out of every nation, the Bible says. They had assembled themselves at the religious capitol city of Jerusalem, to observe the religious holiday called Pentecost. But, although they were religious, they found out their religion would not save them. Later on in that same book of Acts, there was an Ethiopian man who was very religious, as he had himself come to

Jerusalem to worship. On his way home, the scene opens with him reading the sacred writings of his religion. If you read about him you will find out that he was not only religious, but he was very sincere about his religion. But, he was to find out that just being religious was not enough. Although he was running, he was running in the wrong direction. Listen carefully. Just as a football player hungers to run with the ball, every human being on the face of God's earth has a basic craving, a hunger for religion. And God made us that way. But that hunger He placed in us was not put there that we might just conjure up our own philosophy of religion to satisfy our hunger for it, believing that we can be saved by it. This basic spiritual hunger that God has given to us was designed that we might turn to Him who created us, that we might drop to our knees and cry out, "Oh God, help me." Then, as man expresses his hunger, God, who is the only one who can satisfy his hunger, does not leave him empty. But, God shows His love for us in that while we were sinners, Christ, His Son, died for us. Therefore, we are able to be justified by His blood and we shall be saved by Christ from God's wrath, being God's enemies because of sin, and we can be brought back into the intimacy of God. In other words, Jesus Christ, God's Son, is the Savior of every man.

Now, I have many denominational friends who insist they believe that about Jesus, but what they are doing about it evidences that they are running in the wrong direction, and if they are not careful, they'll lose the whole ball game. What I mean is, they also say that it doesn't matter what one does to be saved, as long as he believes in Jesus. Now that statement is running in the wrong direction, because Jesus Himself denies that philosophy. He said, "If you love me, you will obey my commandments." And knowing that there

will be those who want to be saved, but who refuse to obey Him, Jesus again said, "Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father." So, you see, it does matter what you believe, just as it does matter what you do. If you say it doesn't matter, just as long as you are honest and sincere about it, you are running in the wrong direction.

Others I have talk to evidenced their running in the wrong direction when they say, "It doesn't matter what church you belong to, as long as you are faithful to its doctrine." Listen carefully. God's Word flatly denies that philosophy. In the book of Ephesians, God says that the church is the body and that there is *one* body. Now get this. If the church is the body, and there is only one body, then that means that there is only one church. When Jesus walked on the earth, He told His disciples He was going to build His church. He did not say churches. Jesus, when He was praying to His Father just before He was crucified, prayed that all of His disciples would be one, not that they would be divided, but that they would be just as Paul said in I Corinthians 1, that they be united in the same mind and same judgment. So, you see, it does matter what church you belong to. And the Lord's New Testament church has some definite identification marks.

Success In Christ

Well, now—did you ever hear of Harry Houdini? He was, I suppose, the greatest, the most renowned escape artist that ever lived. There was no trick he could not do or duplicate. While he was building his reputation as an escape artist, he used a stunt in order to get publicity. Here is what he would do. He would visit the local jail in any city, and he would ask the jailer to chain him with everything the jailer wanted to use. I mean, jailers would use manacles and straitjackets, chains and locks, everything they could find to secure Harry Houdini. Then, they would lock him in the cell. Usually, Harry Houdini would free himself and beat the jailer back to his office before the jailer had time to hang up his hat. There was one time, though, that Houdini was almost baffled. During one of his tours in Scotland, he visited an old jail with antique locks on the doors. He fully expected to be out in just minutes—seconds. The jailer bound him securely inside the cell with chains. He did just about what every other jailer did in trying to chain him securely. Well, the chains were no problem for Houdini. He got out of them in a few seconds. But, when he came to the cell door, he found there a lock that would not yield. Houdini used everything he knew. He worked to the point of exhaustion trying to unlock that door. He worked and worked. He was almost willing to admit himself licked, when all of a sudden he leaned against the door to catch his breath—and when he did, the door creaked, it swung open. That catty old jailer hadn't even locked the door. The world's greatest trickster had himself been tricked.

You know, that story is really a modern-day

parable. There are a lot of us who consider that we are wizards in success. We're convinced we have all the answers. We can face almost every challenge. We have the key. Then, we're surprised to find ourselves fretting and fuming when it comes to trying to open the door of happiness, contentment—peace, real peace. And we haven't yet discovered that the problem is the fact that the door to happiness, the one that leads to inner peace—hasn't even been locked at all. There's no trick to being happy. Of course, I'm convinced that the greatest happiness is found in serving Jesus Christ. There's something about serving Jesus that gives you hope, purpose in life, a reason for living. And it's not something that's accidental, something that people just happen upon, something that would work for one person but wouldn't work for another. Serving Jesus Christ, I am convinced, will give every person the kind of happiness he really wants. Every one of us is sort of locked in a jail, without hope—when, all of a sudden, Jesus comes along and He unlocks the door. Yet, He hands us a message inside that cell, telling us He has unlocked the door, insisting that, if we'll only walk through it, we can be free. We can be happy, we can enjoy peace, contentment, we can have hope—and all that gives us the real reason for living. There is no trick to being happy. Being happy is just simply trusting Jesus. And when we trust Jesus, that means we're going to do what He tells us to do.

You know, there are a lot of people these days who have grabbed up that instruction manual and have convinced many of us that the manual is too hard to understand. The one says that the door is over on the far side of the cell. Another one says that it's over here. One says that you can only get through the door by beating your head against the bars. Another says you don't have to do anything to get through the door

—all you have to do is just believe it's there. And all of them have ignored the instruction manual given to them. Do you get the picture? Every one of us is in a jail cell. Jesus unlocked the door. He gave us a manual telling us where the door is and what we must do to walk through it. Naturally, if we don't do exactly what He insists, there is no way we can enjoy the freedom, the happiness, the contentment on the outside. It is only when we obey Jesus that we can enjoy it.

He Is A Son

During World War II Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., was waiting in an airport for a plane. A sailor stepped up to a ticket window and asked for a seat on the same plane, explaining, "I want to see my mother; and I ain't got much time." The indifferent young thing at the ticket window was not impressed. She said, "There is a war going on, you know." At this point General Roosevelt stepped to the window and told the ticket lady to give the sailor his seat. A friend who was with the general spoke his surprise. "Teddy, aren't you in a hurry, too?" "It's a matter of rank," he said. "I'm only a general; this young man is a son."

You know, being a general is being someone important—but being a son, well—that's something special. That son of that mother was far more important to her than General Theodore Roosevelt could ever have been.

Actually, Jesus was the same way. Throughout history, God had prophets, priests—He had kings to serve Him. He had given them particular responsibilities to carry out. The prophets were sent to take messages to various nations of people. Priests were also sent for a special work by God. Kings—they were sent by God to rule over nations. There were even those God sent who were not actually human beings. These were angels. But, notice something. None of these claimed to be more than an angel or a human being. They were, so to speak, messenger boys, appointed by God to do a certain work. Each one was of no more importance to God than the other. Then, all of a sudden, there came an individual in history who was different. He wasn't

just a prophet, just a priest, just a king. He wasn't an angel. He wasn't just a general. He was a son. I mean, the Bible says that He was the Son of God. I mean, the Bible makes no reservations in insisting that Jesus is actually God's Son, a claim that no other person in the Bible ever made.

Do you know what it means to actually believe that Jesus is God's Son? Well, just the fact that He claimed to be the Son of God ought to show us that what He claimed to be was something more important than any other man who ever existed. Just ask any normal mother how important her son is as compared with the other children who play in the neighborhood. Why, he's the one who came right out of her womb. He is a part of her. She carried him for nine months before he was born. She walked right through that doorway of what might be called death, to bring him out to life. He is the one who is going to inherit what she has. Just ask any normal mother how important her son is to her.

You know, there are certain things that accompany sonship—especially when God refers to His Son, Jesus. The Bible says that Jesus, as God's Son, is the one who God has made heir of everything. As a son, He is to possess everything that exists. Yet, God says something about Jesus that shows exactly who Jesus is and that he is the son of God. The Bible says in Hebrews 1 that it is through Jesus that God made the ages, the worlds. He is the radiance of the glory of God and is the exact representation of His essence. The Bible says that Jesus is now carrying all things by the word of His power. No other individual in all of history has been described in such a way.

Let me ask you something. How could Jesus not be

God, Son of His Father, and still be described as the son through whom God made the world? How could He not be deity, God, and not be the radiance of God's glory, the exact representation of God's being? How could He not be God and be able still to hold everything together on this planet? As God's Son, Jesus is God.

Yet, the Scriptures describe the Son of God as having done something that is staggering. The Bible says that Jesus made purification for sin. How did he do that? He died on a cross. A son died on a cross. God's son died on the cross. God sent Him to do that because God loves you. Staggering, isn't it?

The Exclamation Marks Of Christianity

Well, not long ago a lady took a typewriter home from the store in order to give it a trial. But, within a few days she returned it because she said it didn't have an exclamation mark. And she just couldn't type without exclamation marks. Of course, it didn't take the salesman long to show her how to make one out of the apostrophe and period—but, out of this little incident is a parable about life. Life, too, must have its exclamation marks. We've got to have them. There have got to be those days that end where we feel that something has happened real good. There have got to be those times where we know that reality has slapped us in the face. Maybe it's forgiveness, or joy, or peace. Maybe it's the knowledge that someone is spending himself in a cause that is bigger than himself. One that will last longer than himself, one that is worth more than himself. Anyway, I believe these things are only found in Jesus Christ. And they are reached only by wholehearted surrender to Him. Let me show you what I mean.

•Dr. James Dobson, Associate Clinical Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Southern California School of Medicine has written an excellent book entitled, *What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women*. He discusses having devised a ten-item questionnaire given to women in his counselling in trying to find out the sources of their depression. Believe it or not, he learned that the major source of depression among women results from low self-esteem. In other words, they feel inadequate. And, it's no wonder. After sitting alone in a house during quiet

afternoons, wondering why the telephone doesn't ring, she begins to wonder why she has no real friends. Wanting someone to talk to, wanting to know where her talents are, wanting to be prettier—it's all low self-esteem. Now, I said that, that's what he discussed about women. He later said that he would not want to give the impression that low self-esteem is exclusively a feminine characteristic. Many men feel the same way. It threatens the entire human family. It affects the children, the adolescent, the elderly—everybody. It is true what the old proverb says, "No one can stand the awful knowledge that he is not needed." Everyone needs to be needed. We need those moments where we are touched by the impact of what real love is all about. We need to be touched in the moment where a child looks to us to wipe the tears from his eye. We need that someone who calls us just because he wanted to say hi to his pal. We need those special exclamation marks. Yet, more than that, we need somehow to lose ourselves in a cause that is bigger than ourselves, that will last longer than ourselves, one that is more valuable than just me. I guess that is obvious when we see soldiers anxious to go to war, when we see men and women running for some political office, even when we see agitators making bomb threats—everyone needs an exclamation mark. He wants to lose himself in something bigger than himself.

Well, it's just like I said at the beginning. I'm convinced that the most worthwhile cause—in fact, the only worthwhile cause for someone to get himself lost in is in the cause of Jesus Christ. I think you would too, if you ever tried it—really tried it. The Christian, even though that term has been used loosely in our society—the Christian is only that person who has lost himself in the person of Jesus Christ. The Bible says that the Christian is the one who is supposed to

offer himself as a living sacrifice.

You know, there are a lot of people who call themselves Christians who never enjoy an exclamation mark in their religion. They might go to mass or to some church service once a year or twice a year, once a month. But, they never experience the joy they are supposed to enjoy. Well, that is simply because they might have only tasted enough not to want it, much like my little boy who only stuck his tongue to a piece of watermelon. He got only enough to think he didn't want any more. But he never chewed it up to get the full burst of the flavor. A lot of people are like that in regard to Christianity. It's only when a person offers his entire self; it's only when he loses himself in the cause that he can enjoy the exclamation mark.

Your Best Friend

Who is your best friend? It may be your husband or your wife. It may be the fellow you work with. It may be your beautician. It might be a fellow student at school. Let's say your best friend is Jerry. He's 30 years old, blond, married, and has two children. You know something about his past, and most of those things you know about him you have not tried to prove, though they could be, but you believe they are true because he has told you about them. And, because he told you they were true, you accepted without question. Well, let me ask you something. Is it because you know his name, how old he is, what color his hair is, whether or not he is married and has children—is it because you know certain facts about that person that you feel he is your best friend? Or is there something else involved? In other words, really, it's not because you know the facts about him that you count him as your best friend, for you know the facts about a lot of people, but it's actually because you trust him with your confidences, you believe he has your best interest at heart, you are assured that when you are happy, he is happy because you are happy—when you are sad, he is sad because you are sad. Other things besides facts make him your best friend. Oh, believing the facts is part of it, but there is more to it than that. Believing the facts is the first step in his becoming your best friend, but it must proceed to a deeper level if he is truly to become your best friend.

It's the same way with the Jesus of the Bible. If you only believe certain facts about Jesus, that He lived almost 2000 years ago in the Bible land east of the Mediterranean Sea, if you believe the fact that He was

actually the Son of God, even that He died and was resurrected from the dead just as He said He would be —if you believe those facts about Him, it does not necessarily mean that He is going to affect your life. I know some people who believe those facts about Jesus, and honestly are convinced that because they believe those facts that this Jesus will save them from what they think might come, being God's fury as He destroys the world. But may I insist that even though believing the facts about Jesus is the first step, it is only the first step. Your best friend did not become your best friend just on the basis of facts you believed about him. Jesus will never become your Savior just on the basis of facts you believe about Him.

The Bible talks about a five letter word necessary for you to be saved from the definite wrath of God that will one day come. That five letter word is called faith. Yet faith, as it starts with one believing certain facts about Jesus, is more than that. Faith is trusting in Jesus. Now, when you trust in someone, that means you will act on that trust even if it means personal sacrifice. In other words, when you tell a person he is your best friend, that you trust him, that means you are ready to do things for him. There is no true trust without responding to the request of the other person. The genuineness of your faith is tested by whether or not you are willing to act, to venture out. To say that you trust is not enough. You must act. Those are the things that faith is made of.

That's not hard to understand. We live every day like that. You believe certain things about your automobile, but you also trust in that automobile, based upon some facts, to carry you safely to your destination.

The Jesus of the Bible makes a unique claim, one

that no one else in all history has ever made. He claims to be God's own Son. And He claims not just to be God's Son, He claims to be God's only Son. He says that though no one else has ever seen God, He—as God's only Son—has seen Him; and in fact, He came to the earth to make God known (John 1:18). Now, if you are going to rely upon Jesus, to trust in Him, you cannot do that without first believing the facts. You see, when you believe the facts, one being that He is God's Son, then you have a foundation upon which you can believe that He can do anything to help you out of the greatest trouble you will ever find yourself in. The Bible says that as God's Son, Jesus rose from the dead, and in doing so, in fact, proved He was God's Son (Romans 1:3). Now, if Jesus rose from the dead, then He made available a way of escape for every man. If He did it, He knocked a hole in that grave you are headed for. But you have got to believe the facts before you can trust Him.

Give Yourself To Jesus

“Give yourself to Jesus.” What in the world does that mean? I’ve heard it, you’ve heard it, time and time again, “Give yourself to Jesus.” But, while we have heard it so many times, yet, as there have been so many interpretations given, the instructions have become a summons to a detached and impersonal intellectual exercise. Listen very carefully. As we live here on this North American continent in an era of mental and moral freedom, we have problems understanding what it means to be responsible to some *thing* or some *one* else. In fact, during the latter part of the 1960’s, we heard increasing cries for freedom without responsibilities. Revolutions on college campuses in the name of freedom with the destruction of property took place; sexual revolution which has come to be called, “sexual freedom,” is taking place where the abuse of one’s own body and someone else’s body takes place; drug abuse, which includes alcohol, which results in the destruction of people’s lives—all of these practices in the quest for freedom demand freedom without responsibilities and, in fact, is not freedom at all. Freedom without responsibilities is not freedom! And we can’t understand that. And we have trouble, therefore, understanding the phrase, “Give yourself to Jesus,” because that insists upon responsibility.

What does it mean to give your life to someone else? Well, some nations in the past found their people giving their lives to Hitler. They lived Hitler, they saluted Hitler, they ate Hitler, they slept Hitler, they bore babies for Hitler, they fought for Hitler, they died for Hitler. Some people in the past have given themselves to a particular regime, some have given them-

selves to their country—they all understand what it means to give themselves to another. And yet, sometimes we have a hard time understanding what it means to give ourselves to Christ. Yet, Jesus insists upon it. He said one day, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” He said, “Whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.” Did you get that? Jesus said that the only way a man could save his life was to give it completely to Jesus. That means that people are not called upon merely to decide whether or not they are going to do so based upon the merits of Jesus’ teachings. It does not mean they are summoned to any detached and impersonal intellectual exercise. It means people are confronted with a real, live person, who insists, “Give yourself to me.” Have you ever read the book called *Fox’s Book of Martyrs*? It is a book written in the late 1500’s by a man who researched what happened during the early centuries after Christ lived on the earth. Mr. Fox discusses how hundreds of people gave themselves to Jesus and, as a result, suffered all kinds of tragedies and even martyrdom. They recognized that Jesus was worth more than their civil liberties, than their human rights, than their personal problems. They recognized that Jesus would one day vindicate their cause and that they, through Him, would live victoriously after death.

Please listen to me. I know you are busy, I know you’ve got family problems—but 50 years from now, will it matter? No, because there is something more important, something that will last longer than time itself. That something important is whether or not you, right now, decide you are going to give yourself to Jesus, eat Jesus, sleep Jesus, bear children for Jesus, fight for Jesus, die for Jesus. It matters whether or not

you are going to change your life style and place Jesus as your Lord. Now listen carefully. If you are going to give yourself to Jesus, it means you must obey whatever He says you must do. If you are going to give yourself to Jesus, you must obey His commands. To get into Christ, the Bible, which includes the words of Jesus Himself, insists, "Repent or perish," Luke 13. It insists to confess Jesus as your Lord in Romans 10. It insists you must be immersed in water that you might become a Christian (Galations 3:21).

I Haven't Even Seen Jesus

“Why should I give myself to Jesus—I haven't even seen Him, I can't, therefore, know Him—He's a man who lived two thousand years ago, why should He be important to me?”

You know, those are good questions. Sometimes we ask them concerning Jesus, but we never ask them regarding other men. There are men and women in our past who are always important to us. In the history of our own nation, men and women who fought for the freedoms we enjoy today are important to us. Yet, all over the world today's people put ancient people in seats of highest importance in their lives. Plato, Buddha and many other religious and philosophical thinkers of ancient times are extremely important to various people of the world today, as they were important to disciples of theirs during the times they lived. In somewhat the same way, the twelve apostles of Christ became companions of Jesus. They were attracted to Him by what He taught and, also, by what He, through the power of God, was able to do. They were the ones who saw Jesus heal a sick man, raise the dead, feed thousands of people out of a few loaves and fishes. They were the ones who saw Him perform all kinds of miracles. Before long, it became apparent that He was not just another teacher of wise maxims; neither was He just another guide in areas of abstruse thought. Here was someone who spoke with authority. Furthermore, they saw to their amazement that even the elements of nature responded to His command. Then, there came also a time in their experience of learning when they perceived that loyalty to Jesus gave them a certain hope for things after they died. Just

how that could be, perhaps, was not clear to them, but it was sufficiently obvious enough to insist that Peter give Jesus the supreme place in his life. It was Peter who one time said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." Maybe Peter didn't understand exactly what he was saying at the time he said it like he did after He saw Jesus resurrected from the dead, but at the same time, it was Peter, and many others, who actually knew Jesus, who saw Him perform miracles, who heard His teaching, who proved by His miracles that what He said was true, and who could, therefore, it seems, more readily give themselves to the tangible Jesus who was real, and now and down to earth.

No, you and I have not seen Jesus in the flesh. Yet, it is possible that this same Jesus can become as real, as alive, as necessary in my life today as He was in Peter's life. That's right. It is possible to have a person-to-person relationship with Jesus today. That's why Paul, for example, spoke of that relationship when he wrote to those who were Christians, saying that they were the ones who were (quote) "in Christ." (No I haven't seen Jesus with my eyes, but I don't have to.) Through God's revealed Word, the Bible, I can see with my eyeballs all I need to see concerning the real Jesus who walked and talked and lived and died for me.

Please listen carefully. There are five things that are the most important in your life. If they are not now, they will be one day. No. 1: Jesus, the Son of God, lived. You can refuse to believe it, if you want, but there is more historical evidence that there was a Jesus who lived, the Son of God, than there is evidence that Winston Churchill ever lived. No. 2: That Jesus died

for your sins against God. No. 3: That Jesus is risen from the dead and is alive today. No. 4: You will meet Him in judgment. Some people think only death and taxes are inevitable, but that is not true. You will meet Jesus in the judgment, and whether you live for Him or against Him will determine eternal happiness or eternal punishment. No. 5: You need to obey whatever He tells you to do. And here's what He tells you to do: Repent of your sins (Luke 13:3). That means, decide to change your way of life and give yourself to Him. That means that you are going to do whatever He says, which is, for one thing, to be immersed in water that you might become a Christian. Please listen to me. To be immersed in water is simply obeying what Jesus insists. In it you do not earn salvation. Salvation is a gift in Christ. Yet, to receive the gift, Jesus Himself says you must be born of water and Spirit. No, I don't understand it all either, but I don't have to. If you and I are going to become a Christian, we must experience that new birth where Jesus will give it, and that's in the watery grave of baptism, according to Galatians 3, I Peter 3, Romans 6 and Acts 2.

Respecting Authority In Religion

Do you know why we find so many churches and religious groups today? It is because, as a whole, we have not respected authority in religion. Who does have the authority to tell us what to believe? If we can, first, answer that question---and if we can, second, respect His authority, we will no longer be divided, there will not be numerous churches, numerous religious groups, but there will be just as the Bible demands ---there will be one church in our society and in every society in every era of time. But, before we can respect the authority in religion, we have got to know who has the authority. All right, the Bible, God's revelation to man, does not leave us to wonder. Listen carefully. The Bible says that God has highly exalted Jesus to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. That's what the Bible says in Philippians 2. The Bible says again that one day Jesus was talking to some people, and beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning Himself, and that was, the Bible says, that in every thing Jesus might have the supremacy. The Bible says that in the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He made the universe. The Son, Jesus, is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful word. The Bible says that after Jesus had provided purification for sins, He

sat down at the right hand of the majesty in Heaven. God's word says that although Jesus was a Son, He learned obedience from what He suffered, and once made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him. In other words, all these scriptures found in the books of Philippians, Luke, Colossians and Hebrews, reflect that Jesus Christ is the authority in religion. All prophecy points to Him, it revolves around Him, it centers in Him. Practically one-third of all scripture is prophecy about Jesus. He is above all in prophecy. He is on every page of prophecy, in expression or symbol, in psalm or proverb. He is like a golden thread winding its way through the garment. Jesus Christ, God's Son, is every man's authority in religion.

Now, listen carefully. I know many people who try to hold on to Jesus, but give up the Bible. They may not admit they are giving up the Bible, but in talking to many of them, I have found that they had much rather lay the Bible aside and talk about their own personal, mysterious experience with Jesus. Listen, you simply cannot hold on to Jesus and give up the Bible. Jesus, the Bible says, is the Word (John 1). Jesus said that all scriptures tell of Him (John 5). In other words, faith in Jesus as God's Son is inseparable from faith in the scripture. Someone has described the Bible in this way, and I quote, " 'Someone is coming' summarizes the Old Testament; 'Someone has come' tells the gospel story; 'Someone is coming again' is the theme of the New Testament writers, beginning with the book of Acts and continuing through John's revelation." (End quote). I don't know of a better summary of the Bible. Jesus is the One who can save our souls. Jesus Himself said in John 14, "No man cometh unto the Father but by me."

Now, all of these passages insist that Jesus is the authority in religion. Yet Jesus cannot be separated from the scriptures, from the Bible. I know too many people, honest and sincere people, who honestly believe they are holding on to Jesus but who have never yet showed their respect for Jesus because they have not yet obeyed what Jesus has asked them to do. Listen very carefully. Jesus died for you. Yet Jesus says through the Bible that you must get into His death before you can be raised with Him to live again. And if you don't get into His death, then you simply will not be raised to walk with Him in that new life.

Christianity Is Udenominational

“Why should I change? I’ve been doing it that way for years.” You know, tradition often becomes the standard by which we measure what is best and what is right. It does not mean that it is the best way to do it. For example, did you know that many years ago, when an individual would get sick, those who were trying to help felt it best to bleed the sickness from his body. In other words, they would cut the individual and squeeze the blood from his body, honestly believing they were getting rid of the disease infecting his body. Well, in recent years, however, doctors learned that blood is extremely vital. Even in some cases, additional blood is given to help the patient overcome his sickness. Now, just because the majority believed it was best to bleed a person to get rid of his sickness, just because it was traditional, was it the best and right way? Of course not. Yet, as you can well imagine, during the transition of convincing people that blood was necessary instead of harmful, there were individuals who insisted, “Why should we change? We’ve been doing it that way for years.”

You know, there are a lot of areas of life in which we have allowed tradition to guide us. Instead of really thinking for ourselves, we have allowed habit to dictate to us, what, in reality, others have believed was right. Religious traditions caused many people not to think, to examine the Bible to find out whether these traditions are what God has wanted. Because religious traditions have been so powerful, many people do not examine the scriptures. They insist, “Why should I change? I’ve been doing it a certain way for years.” Well, did you know that Jesus Christ, God’s Son, said

that many people would bind themselves to religious traditions—religious traditions not given by God. That's right. In Matthew 15 of the Bible, Jesus said to some men that their religious tradition attacked God's word. And He went on to say that to practice such man-made doctrines is worthless.

I've said all that to insist that there may be some religious traditions you are practicing that are attacking God's Word, and that is more dangerous than playing with nitroglycerine. God curses those who attack His Word. It doesn't matter how long some traditions have been practiced—one year or a thousand years—if these religious traditions attack God's Word, God curses it and those who practice it.

Let me suggest one of them to you. There is a tradition, man-made, that views the church of the Bible as being composed of many different religious groups, each one permitted by God to teach different religious doctrines. Each group is called, by tradition, a denomination. A denominational church is, therefore, distinguished from all other denominations by its peculiar doctrine. And, like tradition, it is supposed that all denominational groups compose what is called "The Church of Christ." But, listen carefully. Even though that is traditional, that is not what the Bible teaches. It may be tradition to believe it, but it is not Biblical truth. That makes it a lie. Listen to what the Bible says about division, about denominationalism. In John 17, Jesus was praying to His Father, and He said, first of all, referring to His apostles, "I do not pray for these only, but," He said, "also for those who believe in Me through their words, that they may all be one; even as You, Father, art in Me and I in You." Now, does that sound like division? Jesus prayed that all those who would follow Him would be one. If they are one, they

cannot be different. They must be one in what they believe and in what they practice. That same thing was taught by Paul in Ephesians 4 of the New Testament, when he said, "There is one body." What is the body? Well, Paul had already said what the body was in chapter one. He said that the church is the body. Now, wait a minute. If the church is the body, and there is only one body, what does the Bible teach? It teaches that there is only one church.

What Is The Church Of The Bible?

“What is the church of the Bible? There are so many churches; are all of them Bible churches? If not, which one is the right one?” You know, that is a good question asked me not long ago—one that ought to be asked more often by people who ought to be interested. Well, to answer it, the church that the Bible speaks of, the church that Jesus promised to build in Matthew 16, and did build in Acts 2 of the Bible, is one that is extremely distinctive in its identity. The Bible describes it explicitly, in detail. In our world where there are many churches, many religious groups, the Bible says there is only one church of God. Now, that’s a hard saying, isn’t it? But, that’s what the Bible says. In Ephesians 4:4, God says there is one body. What is the body? He said in chapter 1 that the body is the church. Alright, if there is only one body, and the body is the church, that means that God says there is only one church. If you will continue to read the New Testament, you will discover that God describes that one church in detail. What is it? Alright, listen carefully.

The Bible pictures the church of Jesus Christ, not as a denomination, but as a united group of people, united in the same mind and in the same judgement (I Corinthians 1:10). It consists of people who have been saved by Jesus Christ. That means, that the church does not save—Jesus saves. You see, according to the New Testament Book of Acts, chapter 2, when one is saved by Jesus, the Lord adds him to His church. That means that a person does not join a denomination, but, when an individual obeys what Jesus Himself says in order to be saved, the last verse of Acts 2 says that the Lord adds that individual to the Lord’s church. You see, the

Bible says that it is Jesus' blood that was shed to forgive us of our sins (Matthew 26:28). That means that the church to whom God adds people is, therefore, a body of people who have been forgiven, saved by the blood of Christ. That means that the Bible says nothing about an individual first being saved and later joining a denomination of his choice. According to the last verse of Acts 2, one does not join a denomination. He is added to the Lord's church as he has truly been saved by the blood of Christ.

Now, as the church of Jesus Christ is not a denomination, it cannot be one church in a whole group of churches, all of which have been defined as the universal church of Christ. It is not a part of the whole. The Bible insists that Christ's one church is the whole. You see, denominationalism says that each denomination is a part of the whole. That's not what the Bible says the church of Christ is. It is the entirety in itself. It is the entire body of believers in Christ whose faith and practice are patterned after the New Testament teachings. You see, by its very design, the church of Jesus Christ cannot be a denomination. Now, it is true, the Bible says that the church exists in various localities. That is, there are congregations of the church, congregations of Christians in particular cities. For example, the apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, he wrote to the churches of Galatia—but these are congregations of the Lord's church, each one being of the same mind and same judgement. In other words, they all agree, as their doctrines are founded upon the New Testament of the Bible. If ever they disagree and begin to practice traditions not found in God's Word, then they are guilty of denominating themselves and God will curse them.

Please listen carefully. You and I desperately need

to be united together in the single body of Jesus Christ, in His church. Very humbly, I insist that the only way you and I can be of the same mind and of the same judgement, the only way we can be members of the one church of Jesus Christ is for us to put aside all traditions, all extra books such as manuals, disciplines, confessions of faith, and take the Bible and it only as our guide. You see, for you and me to be members of the New Testament church, we must find the blueprint of the New Testament church—and that's the New Testament.

How Do I Join Your Church?

“How do I join your church?” I’ve been asked that question a number of times. Do you know why? Because people like what they see. That’s right. They see a church that consists of a body of people who genuinely love one another. They see a spirit of sharing, a spirit of concern, a group of people with a common goal of giving themselves to Christ on His terms. They like what they see. So, when I am asked the question as to how an individual joins my church, I must clarify two things. One is, it’s not really my church, and the other is, no one can join it. Now, here’s what I mean.

The church to which I belong has the same identification marks described in the Bible. One of these identification marks is to recognize that it’s not my church at all. You see, Jesus Christ Himself was the One who said in Matthew 16 that He was going to build *His* church. That means it cannot be *my* church. In Acts 20 of the Bible, Paul said that this church of the Bible is the church of the Lord. He said again in I Corinthians 1 that it is God’s church. In Romans 16, He said it’s Christ’s church. In Ephesians 4 he says it’s Christ’s body. In other words, it’s not mine at all, it belongs to Him Who purchased it with His own blood (Acts 20:28). That really gives indication as to why it is such a happy church, such a peaceful church, such a church of love—it’s God’s church.

How does one join it? Well, one doesn’t. What I mean is, since it is God’s church, God says that when a person is saved by Christ, God automatically adds him to His church. How many times have you heard someone say that after you are saved, you ought to

join the church of your choice? It sounds pretty good, but the Bible teaches that that's impossible. The Bible says that when a person is truly saved by Christ, God automatically adds that saved person to His Own church.

You see, there are actually two sides of salvation. There is the Lord's side, His love, His grace, His mercy as expressed in the cross of His Son Jesus, and His church, to which the Bible says, God adds people when they are saved. The other side is man's side, his faith, his trust, and his obedience to the person of Jesus Christ. God does His part and Jesus saves only when man does his part in obeying the commands of God. In other words, the New Testament tells a person to believe in Christ as the Saviour. It tells him to trust God to do the saving only when he, as an individual, does what he has been commanded by God for salvation. You see, Christ saves a man only when the man obeys Christ. So, let's re-phrase that original question. The original question was, "How do I join your church?" Let's re-phrase it and ask, "How do I become a member of Christ's church?" That sounds much better, doesn't it? All right, here's how.

In the New Testament book of Acts, God tells people what they must do to be saved, so that He in turn will add them to His church. In fact, in every case of conversion in the Book of Acts, the exact same requirements were delivered by God, they were believed by those who heard them, and they were obeyed. And when people obeyed them, God added them to His church. What were the requirements? Well, in the second chapter of Acts, people heard, they repented and were immersed in water to be saved. In the eighth chapter they heard, believed and were immersed. Also in Acts 8, another person believed, and was immersed.

In Acts 8, another person believed, he confessed and was immersed. In the ninth chapter, an individual heard and was immersed in water. In the tenth chapter, they heard, they believed and were immersed. In the sixteenth chapter, these people heard and were immersed. Again in the sixteenth chapter, another individual believed and was immersed. In the eighteenth chapter, these people heard, believed and were immersed. Now, putting all nine conversions together, the Bible teaches that God's required terms for membership in His church is that we must hear the good news of Jesus, believe it, repent of our sins, confess Jesus to be God's Son, and, as you noticed in every single case, we learn we must be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins.

The Organization Of God's Church

“Who started your church? Who is it's founder? Who is it's president?” Those are common questions asked in regard to the originators and heads of various denominations. Some churches have their headquarters in places like St. Louis, Chicago, New York, Salt Lake City, Rome and other cities. Different people are mentioned as being the founders and heads of various religious organizations. Usually the organizational structure of various denominational groups is complex, involved and usually a lot of red tape. Yet, if you were to ask these questions about the church of the Bible, you might be surprised to find that its organizational structure is simple and uncomplicated, though it is designed to efficiently and sufficiently accomplish every phase of her work.

Beginning at the very top of its organizational structure, the head of the church of the Bible, and, by the way, there is only one head of the Bible's church—that head is Jesus Christ. Read Ephesians 1, the last two verses. In chapter 5 of Ephesians, God said the very words, and I quote, “Christ is the head of the church.” Listen carefully. Any religious organization that exalts a man to be head over that particular denomination, that church cannot be the church of the Bible. Do you know why? Because Christ is the only and absolute head of the church of the Bible. You see, as the church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1, the last two verses), the head is Christ—there is only one head. Just as no body ever has two heads, neither does the church as a body have two heads. By Christ's own words in Matthew 28, He has all authority. And when someone has all authority, that means that there is no

authority left for anyone else to possess. Jesus said He had all, A-L-L, all authority. That authority of Christ was revealed to the church in the written word of the New Testament. Any religious organization that wishes to be the New Testament church must, therefore, follow only the written authority of its head, Jesus Christ, and that written authority is the New Testament.

Now, since Christ is its only head, the headquarters is where the head is. Since Christ is in heaven (according to Acts chapter 2), then the church's headquarters is in heaven. That means that each congregation of the Bible's church is, so to speak, self-governed, each responsible only to Jesus Christ, as He is the head. That means that the Lord's church has no national headquarters, State government, president, chief bishop or secretary. Each congregation of the Lord's church is responsible in itself to its head, Jesus Christ.

Yet, notice something carefully. God has insisted that each local congregation of the one church of the Bible be governed in its work and worship by men qualified. These men are known as elders or bishops, they are known as pastors, and in every congregation the Bible says there are always more than one. That's right. They are not the authority, but rather they lead the congregation in carrying out the authority of Christ. Now, by various names given to their work in the New Testament, we understand their kind of work better. Elders are older men—that's obvious. They are overseeing as guardians and superintendents of the work, they are shepherds of the flock. They are pastors, which, according to the New Testament, does not necessarily mean they are always preachers. According to the qualifications of pastors the New Testament gives in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1, all

preachers cannot be pastors. That's right. There is an important difference between a preacher and a pastor. The New Testament gives no qualifications for evangelists and preachers, but it does give important qualifications for pastors, such as being the husband of one wife and having believing children. And, according to the New Testament, preachers, like the rest of the members, work under the oversight of these pastors.

Also in the organization of the New Testament church, there are deacons and members, having their own specific responsibilities, working under the pastors.

The Government Of The New Testament Church

“Your church is so unorganized, I can’t see how you can make it operate. Yet, all of you teach the same thing. How do you do it?” That’s what a friend of mine said to me not long ago as he wondered why churches of Christ had no board of directors. It is true that denominations have organizational governments that demand headquarters to be found in the cities like St. Louis, New York City, Salt Lake City, and Rome, Italy. Yet, the church of which I am a member has the same identification marks as the church described in the Bible. One of those marks is that its governmental organizations is so simple that a lot of people question it. Because most people are accustomed to the highly complex system of church government where one bishop or president or director rules over a cluster of churches, they often cannot understand how the Bible can insist that the church of the Bible is to exist as an independent body of people. That is, it is to have no rule over other local churches. The Bible says that God’s church is limited to the boundaries of its own membership. That is, God insists that the church of the Bible is to be locally governed, subject only to Jesus Christ, who is now sitting at the right hand of His Father in Heaven.

You see, in the New Testament book of Acts, the apostle Paul spoke to a group of elders, pastors, of God’s church, the church of the Bible, located in the town of Ephesus. There he tells them their responsibilities to God’s church. The Bible says he called to him the elders of the church. Because these men were

from the same congregation, the Bible shows there is to be more than one pastor in that church. Paul told them that God had made these men guardians over that church, telling them they are to feed the church of the Lord which He had obtained with His own blood. In other words, Paul said these pastors, these elders, were to oversee or superintend or guard that congregation. Peter stated in I Peter 5 that pastors of the local church are to exercise oversight, and he says, not lording over it like a ruler but, he says, making themselves examples to the members of the church. Now, notice something. In every case in the New Testament, the Bible insists there is always a plurality of pastors in each congregation of the Lord's church. There was a plurality of pastors in each of the churches at Iconium, Derbe and Lystra, as they had been appointed by Paul and Barnabas in Acts 14. There were several in the church at Jerusalem, according to Acts 15. The church at Ephesus had a plural number of pastors, Acts chapter 20. The letter that Paul wrote to the church at Philippi is addressed to the saints with their bishops and deacons (Phillippians 1). The church at Thessalonica had a number of elders over the church (I Thessalonians 5). That means, every local congregation of the New Testament church is supposed to have more than one pastor. The plurality of elders in each local church is God's plan for His churches throughout time. Now, as each congregation has a plurality of pastors which oversee and guide the church, the boundary of their authority is limited to only the membership of each church. The Bible teaches no such thing as a board of directors or headquarters in any town. Christ is the head of the church, according to Ephesians 5. Therefore, the pastors of a local congregation answer to Christ, not to a board of directors whose headquarters is in any city.

My friend had mentioned to me that he could not understand how we could be governmentally organized without a board of directors—yet he also mentioned that he found it strange that we all taught the same thing. Do you know why? Because churches of Christ take the Bible and the Bible only as their authority. God is not the author of confusion. Man, following his own traditions and desires, confuses things. If we could just take our manuals, disciplines, our confessions of faith—if we could take all of our extra little books in religion and lay them aside, ceasing to follow them, and if we would take the Bible alone as our rule of faith and practice, then all of us could be united in the same mind and the same church of the Bible.

What Is A Pastor?

Are you a member of a church? If you are, let me ask you something. Is there an individual at your church who calls himself a pastor or maybe a chief bishop? He might be the one who preaches or he might be the chief administrator in various ceremonies.

Now, let me ask you something else. Did you know that a young single man cannot be the pastor of the church of the Bible? That's right. As far as the church of the Bible is concerned, God has insisted that its work and worship be overseen by a special group—not just one—but a group of qualified men for this special task. According to the New Testament, they are known as pastors, elders, bishops. All three names are given to the same office, each one identifying more plainly what the man is to be like. In other words, a pastor is an elder, he is a bishop. Now, if the pastor is an elder, that simply means that he must be an older man. As a bishop, he is an overseer, meaning, he guards or superintends activities of the church. 'Pastor' simply means shepherd, one who takes care of the church. Now, these men, God says, have to measure up to certain qualifications mentioned in the New Testament if they are going to be pastors. The very fact that a kindred word to the same office, elder, means older, makes it obvious from the start that a young man cannot be the pastor of the Lord's New Testament church. But, he has more qualifications than just being an older man. In I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 of the New Testament, the apostle Paul says that men who are appointed as pastors must—and that's a demanding word—they must be qualified with certain requirements Paul mentions in those two chapters. Listen

carefully to what they are. There are negative qualifications and positive qualifications. Listen to the negative ones. God says, through Paul, that the man must be without reproach. That is, he ought to allow nothing to be justly accused of him. He is not guilty. Paul says he must not be a brawler. That is, he is not a drunk and he is not abusive. Then, he is not a striker; that is, he is not a bruiser, ready with a slap for someone's cheek. He is not contentious or quarrelsome. He has no great love for money that would lead him to become dishonest. He is not a newcomer; that is, he is not a newly converted Christian. He does not become soon angry. That is, he is not hot-headed, always having a chip on his shoulder. He is self-willed, one who wishes to have his own way regardless of the wishes of others. Those are the negative qualifications. Now, listen to the positive ones. God says he must be the husband of one wife. That is, no single individual can be the pastor of the New Testament church. He must be a married man. If he is an elder, that means he must be an older married man. Then, he must be a sober-minded man, he possesses common sense. He must be orderly and well arranged. He must be modest, living a well-ordered life. He is to be given to hospitality, generous to guests. He must be apt to teach, which includes being both an able teacher and one who is willing to do it. He must be gentle, one who rules his own house, one who has a good reputation from those outside the church, he must be a self-controlled, a lover of those things that are good and he must be a man of fair judgment. Also—and get this—he must have children that believe. Now, according to the apostle Paul, a young, single individual who calls himself the pastor of the church cannot be the pastor of the New Testament church.

Now, get this. If that man calls himself a chief

bishop, he is calling himself something that the Bible speaks nothing about. He is adding to God's Word, and if he does that, according to the last verses of Revelation, he will be cursed. The Bible says nothing about a man serving as a chief bishop. According to the Bible, these men are simply bishops, elders, pastors, and the Bible says there are always more than one in a single congregation of the New Testament church.

God has given certain qualifications for pastors, bishops, in the New Testament church. If we are going to establish a New Testament church, then its governmental organization must consist of qualified men appointed to the office and work of the pastorship. If they are not qualified, that church cannot be the Lord's church.

Restoring The Lord's Church

Anyone for building a new church? We might have some takers, because new and different denominations are springing up all over the country like clover in a green meadow. I have a better idea. Instead of building a new church, why don't we just restore the old one? That is, why don't we restore the church of the Bible? You know, it is possible. If we can find the original blueprint, we can restore the original church. And, we do have the original blueprint. That original blueprint of the New Testament church is the New Testament church in the New Testament.

You know, there are some basic questions that must be asked if we are going to restore anything. I mean questions like who, what, when, where, and how. For example, we've got to ask, "Who started the church? What is the name it is to be called? What are the names to be given the members? How is the church to be organized and who are to be in the governing positions? Who is the authority to demand rules and regulations? What is the rule book? What are we going to do in our meetings? And then, what is the purpose of its existence, anyway?" Those are good questions. Those are necessary questions if we are going to restore the church of the Bible.

All right, listen carefully. The Bible reveals the blueprint of the church. And if we are going to restore the New Testament church, that church discussed in the Bible, then we must follow in detail the blueprint the Bible reveals to restore it.

Starting at the top, the head of the New Testament

church, the One who started it, is Jesus Christ. Paul said in Ephesians one that God has made Christ head over all things to the church. There is no other head but Christ. And He lives in Heaven, not Rome, not New York City nor Chicago. Christ is the head of the church of the Bible.

The rule book is the New Testament itself, and no other. Paul demanded in II Timothy 3 that all scripture is inspired by God and can make a man of God perfect. The scriptures can thoroughly furnish him with all he needs in the church of the Bible. The scriptures are, therefore, the rule book that we must follow in the church of the Bible. And that excludes any other book, such as a prayer book, a manual, a discipline, a confession of faith. The Bible alone must be followed.

Now, the rule book insists that the organization of the New Testament church consists only of elders, if they are qualified according to Titus 1 and I Timothy 3; it consists of deacons (I Timothy 3) and members. Everyone is in subjection to the elders, as the elders are subject only to Christ, the head of the church.

All right, what are we going to call the church? Are we going to give the Lord's church a name after a man who tried to follow Christ? Or, are we going to give the Lord's church the Lord's name? Well, we must call the church what the Bible calls the church. In passages of scriptures the Bible says it is referred to as the Church of God, the body of Christ, the Church of Christ or the Bride of Christ. Those who are members of the New Testament Church, the Bible says are called disciples, saints, brethren, children and Christians. They are not called anything else.

Now, what is the church going to do in its meetings? Well, the Bible says that we sing, we pray, we teach one another from the rule book (the Bible), we participate in the Lord's Supper, remembering the death of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, and it is permissible to contribute to the financial support of the church.

Finally, what is the purpose of its existence, anyway? Well, according to Matthew 5 and II Timothy 2 and other passages, the Bible says that the purpose of the existence of the church is to save souls.

Now, listen carefully. Any church that cannot point to chapter and verse to support its identification marks, cannot be the church of the Bible. You see, if we are going to restore the New Testament church, then we must take the New Testament as our guide book. Common sense tells us that.

How Is One Saved?

How were you saved? I've asked that question to many people during the past year and the answer I have received, generally speaking, is this: "I simply asked the Lord to come into my heart, to forgive me of my sins. He did and now I am saved." That seems like a pretty good answer, but did you know that is not the way the Bible teaches a person is saved? That's right. The Bible does not teach that a person can simply mentally ask the Lord to come into His heart and assume that when he does he is immediately saved. No where does the Bible even discuss the remotest possibility of a man walking down the street and all of a sudden miraculously receiving salvation. The Bible tells how an individual is saved, all right, but none of these ways are discussed anywhere in the pages of God's Word. Now, please listen carefully. If we are going to receive real salvation from God, then we must accept it on His authoritative terms of giving it as revealed in His own Word, the Bible. After all, *He* is the one Who is giving it. Shouldn't we accept *His terms* of giving it? All right, how does the Bible insist a man receive salvation? Well, listen carefully.

It was Jesus who said in John 3, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him." Obviously, Jesus here insists that there is more to accepting Christ than just mentally receiving Him into one's heart. Jesus insists on obedience. He said, "He who does not obey the Son shall not see life."

You know, sometimes we think God contradicts Himself because He said through Paul in Romans 10

that whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. And, in the minds of many people, calling upon the name of the Lord is simply mentally accepting Christ for salvation as opposed to what Jesus said that one must obey the Son for salvation. Listen carefully. God does not contradict Himself. When He says in Romans 10 that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved, He also says how an individual calls upon the name of the Lord. So many times, we want to speak for the Lord instead of allowing Him to qualify His own statements. I know individuals today who, though sincere as they may be, want to interpret that verse by saying that one calls upon the name of the Lord by simply giving mental acceptance to Christ. But, the very same apostle Paul who said, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," tells how we call upon the name of the Lord. Read Acts 22:16. He says there that by obeying Christ's commands we call on the name of the Lord. He tells in that chapter of His own conversion. Listen to what happened to Paul. He was travelling to a city called Damascus when Jesus stopped him on the road telling him who He was and that Paul was to go into the city of Damascus and wait there where he would be told what he must do to be saved. The Lord left him blind on that road, and he had to be led by the hand into the city. When he arrived, Paul prayed and confessed his sins for three days, but notice something: the scriptures teach that Paul still was not free of his sins. He had not as yet called upon the name of the Lord the way the Lord was going to tell him. The Bible says that a man by the name of Ananias went to him, sent by the Lord, and told him how to call upon the name of the Lord. Listen to what Ananias told him in verse 16. Ananias said, "Why do you wait? Arise and be immersed and wash away your sins— now get this—calling on the name of the Lord." In other words, Paul was to

demonstrate his faith in obedience to Christ, not tarrying, but immediately arising and being immersed to wash away his sins, and Ananias said that in doing so he would be calling on the name of the Lord. And, as Jesus said he must, Paul obeyed, and when he did, he received salvation.

Listen carefully. Have you, in faith, not questioned God's commands but have instead obeyed them? Remember, the Bible is God's authority, and He is the One who gives salvation upon His own terms. And the Bible tells you to call upon the name of the Lord by being immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38).

The Day Of Assembly

Some say we ought to worship on Sunday; others say we ought to worship on Saturday. What's the difference? Does it really matter? Well, that's a good question. I have received numerous pieces of literature in the mail which insist that Christians ought to worship on the seventh day of the week, on our Saturday, which is the Sabbath day of the Old Testament. More and more people are beginning to worship on Saturday, believing they are doing so correctly in the Christian age. Are they correct? Well, listen closely. First, understand that the terms, "Saturday" and "Sunday," are not Bible terms. They are calendar words. What we need to know is what the New Testament teaches concerning which day of the week Christians are to assemble as the New Testament church to worship God. Are they to worship on Saturday, the seventh day of the week, our Sunday? The only way we can know is to go to the Bible to see what it insists upon.

According to Exodus 20 of the Old Testament of the Bible, the law which included the Sabbath commandment was made only with the nation of Israel. That's right. Israel was commanded to keep the Sabbath or seventh day holy because they had been delivered from Egyptian slavery (Deuteronomy 5). In giving them the Sabbath day to keep holy, God used the same day upon which He had rested after He had created all things (Genesis 2). But, notice something. The Sabbath-keeping commandment was not given until God had given unto Moses all of His laws, referred to as the Ten Commandments, at Mt. Sinai in Exodus 20. According to Exodus 31, the Sabbath was a sign

only between God and the nation of Israel, not all nations. That means that the Ten Commandments, which includes the Sabbath-keeping commandment, referred to in the New Testament as the handwriting of ordinances—that was completely done away with. Read Colossians 2:14. The Sabbath—keeping commandment, which was a part of the Ten Commandments, is therefore no longer binding today. Even the Old Testament prophet, Hosea, said that the command to keep the Sabbath, with other Jewish observances, would cease when the other nations of the world would also become people of God (Hosea 2). Paul said in Galatians 4 of the New Testament that those who want to be justified by the Ten Commandments are people who do not need Christ—in fact, they are cut off from Christ and are fallen from God's grace (Galatians 4 and 5). So, you see, we are not bound by God to keep the seventh day holy, the Sabbath.

All right, if we are not to keep the Sabbath Day, the seventh day of the week—if we are not to worship God in an assembly on our Saturday, then when are Christians to assemble together to worship? Well, the Bible tells us. It says there is another day in the week that is very important. In Mark 16, Jesus Christ arose from the dead on the first day of the week. It was on the first day of the week that He was declared to be the Son of God, according to Romans 1. Between His resurrection and the ascension back to the Father, Jesus met with His disciples on the first day of the week, in fact, several times, John 20. The Day of Pentecost was on the first day of the week (Leviticus 23). That means that all events in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost when the church was established, took place on the first day of the week. It was on that day that the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles and they began their mission of converting people to Christ (Acts 2). It

was also in Acts 2, on the Day of Pentecost, the first day of the week, that the first gospel sermon proclaiming Jesus as the Christ was preached. Three thousand people were converted to Christ that day, who were added to the Lord's church—all on that first day of the week. According to Acts 20, the church of the New Testament assembled on the first day of the week to participate in the Lord's Supper and to worship God in an assembly. Now, notice several new things that the New Testament introduces. The New Testament says there is a new will of God (Hebrews 8). There is a new institution, the church; there is a new set of commandments (I Corinthians 11). There is a new feast, the Lord's Supper; there is a new day—the first day of the week. There is a new word to express the new day, which is, and I quote, "The Lord's Day" (Revelation 1). All these happened on the first day of the week.

What Bible Do You Use In The Church?

Which Bible is the right Bible to use? That might seem a rather unusual question to ask, but it is a necessary one. It's necessary because, you see, there are Bibles on the market today that are not really Bibles at all. They are commentaries on the Bible. Oh, they are divided into chapters and verses, they do read like the Bible, but they are not true Bibles. They are commentaries. There is an important difference between a commentary and a translation of the true Bible. Let me describe to you what a translation is. A translation, if it is going to be accurate and beneficial to those who read it, should be translated from the original Greek and Hebrew languages to our English languages. Only they can produce the same concepts in our minds that were produced in the minds of those who lived in history and read it in their own original languages.

There is, for example, a paraphrased Bible on the market today that calls itself, The Living Bible. Yet, it is not a Bible at all. It is a paraphrase, a commentary, and not a translation. Mr. Kenneth Taylor, president of his own publishing company, Tyndale House, published The Living Bible paraphrase in 1971. Mr. Taylor said he began his project so his children, now numbering 10, could better understand the Bible. He began the task 14 days earlier while commuting on the Chicago and Northwestern Railway. He has sold far more than two million copies of his paraphrased Bible. Now, listen carefully. This Living Bible Paraphrase is not a Bible at all. It's just another commentary that paraphrases and re-phrases the Bible. Sometimes these

books are helpful, but they must be watched extremely closely because of error. Mr. Taylor himself admits in his introduction that there are dangers in paraphrases as well as values. He says, and I quote, "Whenever the author's exact words are not translated from the original language, there is a possibility that the translator, however honest, may be giving the English reader something that the original writer did not mean to say" (End Quote). So, Mr. Taylor even recognizes problems in his own commentary called, "The Living Bible Paraphrase."

Now, listen carefully. The only way you and I can truly be New Testament Christians, the kind described in the Bible, is for us to be sure that the Bible we study from is truly God's Word. There are some serious objections to this Living Bible Paraphrase because of the fact that it was not translated out of the original languages. For example, the erroneous doctrine of original sin is taught in the book. The paraphrased book says in Psalms 51, verse 5, and I quote, "I was born a sinner, yes, from the moment my mother conceived me." The paraphrased Bible says in Ephesians 2, verse 3, and I quote, "We started out bad, being born with evil natures, and were under God's anger just like everyone else." Listen carefully. Those statements in The Living Bible Paraphrase do not agree with the original language of the Bible. They are false statements. There are also problems in The Living Bible Paraphrase about the time an individual becomes a Christian. The Living Bible Paraphrase quotes Romans 4:12 this way, "Abraham found favor with God by faith alone." That's not what the original language said. Those are only samples of what The Living Bible Paraphrase mistranslates.

Listen very carefully. Because The Living Bible

Paraphrase is growing so popular, I want you to be aware, as you may own one, of the danger of thinking it is actually a Bible, God's Word. But, it is only a commentary on God's Word. This book is not reliable enough. It has the possibility of leading people into error. It is popular because it is written in modern English. But it is dangerous because it is not a translation. Listen closely. There is a translation, written in modern English, I highly recommend to you. It is the **NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE**. Another good translation is the **NEW INTERNATIONAL BIBLE**.

Christianity Is Living In A Bubble

Little David lives in a bubble. He is three years old, and he lives inside a plastic bubble at the Texas Medical Center in Houston. He suffers from a disease known as "severe combined immune deficiency." In other words, his body has no immune defenses against disease. Even bacteria that most persons can easily throw off could kill him.

David is three years old. He has never known a mother's kiss or the touch of a bare human hand. He breathes filtered air, he eats sterile food, he plays with sterile toys, and he has been cuddled only by hands wearing black rubber gloves extended through the wall of his bubble. He has lived behind plastic and glass ever since he was born, and there is no medical certainty that he will ever live anywhere else.

You know, it's tragic to think of a little boy having to live in a bubble like that, and our immediate reaction to such a child is sorrow, because we ourselves wouldn't want to live in a bubble. You know, a lot of people think about Christianity in much the same way. It's like living in a bubble. You can't express yourself, you can't enjoy yourself. Christianity, some have told me, tells me I've got to do some things I don't want to do, and I can't do some things I do want to do. It's like wearing a bridle, it's like living in a straitjacket, it's like being locked in a house, it's like living in a bubble.

A lot of people see Christianity as just another religion in a long list of religions of the world. And, you can take your pick. If the gurus don't interest you, and if horoscopes bore you, then you might like to get into

some of the meditation types of religion that are now being introduced. But, while you are looking, there is still one religious possibility that needs to be spotlighted in the thinking of a lot of people, and that is the religious possibility that has Jesus Christ of Nazareth at its center. A lot of people see Him just as a strict teacher, who, when he lived on the earth, gathered a few loyal followers. And they stayed mostly in their own little bubble, aloof from anyone else. If that's your thinking, then you have been watching too much television, you've been reading too many fiction books, and you have been allowing someone else to do too much of your thinking for you. You haven't investigated the Bible, that volume of books that discusses this Jesus of Nazareth, and that system called "Christianity."

Listen carefully. The historical Jehovah of the Bible, whose religion, if you please, is older than any in existence, including Hinduism, Animism, Spiritism, and polytheism — Jehovah God insists that every human being is subject to a law of morality that he understands, and yet every human being has violated that law; Romans, chapter 1. He insists that He is just, and He cannot violate His justice, but must punish the law-breaker, and that punishment is death—and I didn't say annihilation—I said a death in a living hell. Yet, this Jehovah God of all creation insists that He is also loving, and He sent His Son to pay that penalty for every human being. He has prophesied that Son throughout history, since Genesis 3 of the Bible. Psalms 2 said He would be the Son of God, that He would come from a certain family line, Genesis 12. His name, the time of His coming, and certain events during His stay on earth were all prophesied hundreds of years before He actually came. He came that He might pay that debt of death for every human being who rebelled

against God and His law. The Bible portrays that this Jesus of Nazareth was not an ineffective little leader, who came to influential power for a few days and gathered a few followers, but the Bible insists that this Jesus was the man who made the foundations of the Roman Empire shake, and has since influenced the entire world for two thousand years. This Jesus, the Son of the Most High God, insists on a certain style of life—first, demanding that you die in His death in the form of a water burial, that you, with Him, might be resurrected to walk in this new style of living. Once you have done that, and only after you have done that, He insists that you act like the son or daughter of God that you are; treating your neighbor as yourself, and worshipping Him on His terms.

Now let me tell you something. You can call it a bubble if you like, but this Jesus insists that, if you are not with Him, you are against Him, and He will destroy those who are not with Him. Listen carefully. I want to be with Jesus. If it means getting in His bubble, I want in it, because I know He will destroy those who are outside of it. And I'll be the happiest person in the world in it.

The Deity Of The Holy Spirit

What is the Holy Spirit? There is a religious sect among us today, one whose members are extremely busy knocking on our doors in various neighborhoods around the country, who teach that the Holy Spirit is not God. According to one of their leaders, Judge J. F. Rutherford, in his book, *Reconciliation*, pages 115 and 116, they teach, and I quote, "The Holy Spirit is not a person; the Holy Spirit is only the holy power of Jehovah God."

To understand the Godhead is a lifetime task by an average student of the Bible and, in reality, the finite mind of man cannot understand the infinite nature of God. Yet, God's Word, the Bible, does insist upon a truth concerning God's nature, and even though you and I might not understand it, we must accept it by faith. The truth, according to the Bible, is that the Holy Spirit is a person of the Godhead. And when one of these people knocks on your door, trying to tell you that the Holy Spirit is not God, you need to be ready to show them where the Bible says that He is. So, listen carefully.

The Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit is not just a force, He is not a thing, He is not a glorified, "It." He is indeed a person in the Godhead, one of the three, and He is, therefore, of the same substance as the Father and the Son. If you know anything about languages, you will quickly see that the Holy Spirit is designated in the masculine gender of the Greek language. In John 16, the Bible says the Spirit is a He. In John 14, the Bible says the Spirit teaches and speaks ---"He shall teach you all things." In John 16, Jesus

said concerning the Holy Spirit, "What things soever He shall hear, these He shall speak." In Ephesians 4 of the New Testament, the Bible says that the Holy Spirit can be grieved. In Romans 8, the Bible says that the Holy Spirit has a mind: "He that searcheth the heart knoweth what is the mind of the spirit."

Now, as we have seen that the Holy Spirit is referred to as a person, the Bible also insists that the person of the Holy Spirit is God. For example, in Acts chapter 5 of the New Testament, a man by the name of Ananias had been dishonest, he had lied. And Peter, as he rebuked Ananias for his lying, said, "Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" Then he said, "You have not lied to men, but to God." You see, lying against the Holy Spirit in one verse is said in the next verse to be lying against God. The conclusion is inescapable: the Holy Spirit and God are one in the same.

Now, listen carefully. There are certain attributes given to God that are also given to the Holy Spirit. God is referred to as all-powerful, all-present (that is, He is everywhere), and that He knows everything. These same attributes are given to the Holy Spirit. For example, Micah in the Old Testament said, "But as for me, I am full of power by the spirit of Jehovah." He is all-powerful. Concerning His being everywhere, David in the Old Testament said, "Where shall I go from thy spirit?" He said, "If I ascend up into Heaven thou art there. If I make my bed in Sheol, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." So, the Holy Spirit of God is everywhere. Finally, the Bible says that, not only is the Spirit all-powerful, not only is He everywhere but He knows everything. The

Apostle Paul in the New Testament said that the Spirit knew all things in I Corinthians 2.

So, you see, all these characteristics point to the Holy Spirit as being a Divine person, one of three members of the Godhead. I'm concerned. Studying the Godhead is a deep subject, but because your door may have already been knocked upon, or it will be knocked upon, you need to know these things that the Bible teaches so that you can bring to light the blasphemous doctrine being taught that the Holy Spirit is not God.

Helps For Bible Study

"I don't know how to study the Bible. I read the Bible but I don't get a thing out of it." You know, that's a popular complaint against the Bible. A lot of people, in fact, do not study the Bible at all because they don't know how. Maybe they tried to once or twice, but when they did, they didn't get anything out of it. Then, that attitude is helped by the divided religious world, where there are so many churches and so many so-called interpretations of the Bible. Maybe that's why you haven't studied the Bible. Maybe I can give you some suggestions to help you know how.

There are many versions of the Bible, and when I say "version," I mean a translation from original languages. There are versions like the King James, the American Standard, the Revised Standard, and there is a new one on the market, an excellent version called "The New International Version." Now, if you want to understand a particular passage more clearly, compare the different versions as you study.

Now, there are other books that can help you study the Bible. There is a book called "a concordance." A concordance lists key words in the Bible along with the places where those words are found. In other words, if I knew the verse, "For God so loved the world," but I didn't know where to find it, a concordance can help me do just that. To find it, I take a key word in that verse, such as "loved," and I look it up in a concordance. There I will find it used several times in the Bible, but as I keep looking, I'll find the rest of the sentence that goes with it: "For God so loved the world." Beside it I'll find the passage

where it is found, John 3:16. A concordance can help you in many ways. One way is that it can help you study all the Bible says on a given subject by referring you to each place in the Bible where that subject is mentioned.

There is another book that can help you in your study. It is a Bible dictionary. One of the most frequently given reasons for difficulty in Bible study is the failure to know the meanings of certain words. Listen carefully. There is little excuse for this to stand in the way of anyone who really wants to understand the Bible, because there are some excellent Bible dictionaries available. Now, a Bible dictionary is not trying to give you today's meaning of a particular word. A Bible dictionary is designed to give you the meaning of the word when it was written, to help you better understand what the Lord meant when He wrote that word two thousand years ago.

There are other books available to help you in your study, called "commentaries." These books are just exactly what they are described to be: commentaries. They comment on verses of the Bible. A commentary is an explanation by one or more persons of the meaning of the Bible or some portion of it. Now, none of these books I have mentioned are inspired, by all means, including the commentaries. Commentaries can be helpful, yet they can tell you something that is not true. So, if you are going to read a commentary on a particular verse, you need to be careful to understand that it is only a commentary by an uninspired person. Yet, he can be very helpful in his comments on that verse. A commentary is always to be secondary to the Bible. May I emphasize, always begin a study of the Bible alone. Some people study only the commentaries; that's tragic. That is a lazy and highly dangerous

practice. A study of the Bible itself is always the most important.

Other books that can help you in your study are books on Bible geography. Bible lands and customs are strange to most of us and this unfamiliarity hinders our understanding and often makes the Bible seem unreal. There are books on Bible geography that will help you understand cities, mountains, rivers, lakes and countries. Books on the customs of Bible times help us to know something of the home life, of the political situations, of occupations, of dress and education of the people during Bible times. Books on ancient history provide information about people in the nations around Bible peoples.

You see, there are a lot of books to help you study the Bible. Yet, I want you to notice something carefully. Regardless of the value of these various books, remember that all of them are secondary and must not replace your own personal, prayerful contact with the Book itself.

J.C. CHOATE PUBLICATIONS

Christian Evidences

- The Fall of Unbelief**, Roger E. Dickson, Cloth, \$12.00.
Evolution in the Light of Scripture, Science and Sense, Basil Overton,
Cloth, \$6.00.

Inspirational Reading

- The Death of Abel**, Solomon Gessner, Cloth, \$5.00.

Missionary Books

- Mother of Eighty**, Dena Korfker, Cloth, \$3.00.
First Steps in Faith, Betty Burton Choate, Third Edition, Cloth, \$5.00.
Missionary, Know Thyself, Bert Perry, Cloth, \$3.00.
The Great Commission and You, John Waddey, Paper, \$2.00.
Ready, Set, Gospel, Peggy Simpson, Paper, \$1.00.
Journey With Joy, a Study Course, Louanna M. Bawcom, Paper, \$1.00.
God Answers His Mail, Glover Shipp, Cloth, \$3.00.
Dear Ones, Betty Burton Choate, Cloth, \$5.00.
A Man With World Vision (Barney Dallas Morehead), George Gurganus
and Dan G. Garringer, Cloth, \$3.00.
Fire in My Bones, Great Missionary Themes of the Bible, Vol. 1, Glover
Shipp, Cloth, \$6.00.
Grouped in Groups, a Practical Approach to World Evangelism, Roger E.
Dickson, Cloth, \$4.00.
The Dew Breakers, Dow Merritt, Cloth, \$8.00.
Let Us Go Again, J.C. and Betty Choate, Cloth, \$5.00.

Order from
J.C. CHOATE PUBLICATIONS
Burton Drive
Winona, Mississippi 38967
Phone (601) 283-1192