

THE ANCIENT GOSPEL

THE VOICE OF TRUTH RADIO SERMONS SERIES

by

JOHN STACY

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INTRODUCTION

Bro. John Stacy of the U.S.A. has made two trips to India to preach the gospel of Christ and I am sure that he will be coming again in the years to come. We welcome his coming for this purpose.

With a strong desire to proclaim God's will to the people of India, knowing that we had some weekly broadcasts, Bro. Stacy volunteered to prepare a supply of taped sermons to supplement the programs already being aired. We accepted his offer and his sermons can presently be heard over the country.

A total of twenty-three sermons were taped and the majority of them were in the form of a series. That is, one topic was often continued for two or three broadcasts. The material then for this book served as a basis for those sermons.

You will note that Bro. Stacy deals with some of the basic foundations of pure New Testament Christianity. He exalts God's will and condemns the teachings of men. I am sure that you will be greatly benefitted from the things that he has to say.

Bro. Stacy is a unique preacher with a unique style of preaching. We appreciate his work and we thank him for

helping us with the Lord's cause in India. I am certain that when I say that that I am not only speaking for myself, but that I am also speaking for the Lord's church in this country, and for many of you who may have heard the radio sermons and those of you who are reading these lessons.

J.C. Choate
Church of Christ
New Delhi
March 8, 1981

YOUR ATTENTION PLEASE!

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ALL ARE ENCOURAGED TO LISTEN

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Lesson 1

THE VIRGIN BIRTH OF CHRIST

In Isaiah 7:14 the Prophet wrote, "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." Matthew 1:23 quotes this verse and applies it to Jesus' birth. The virgin birth has to be one of the cornerstone facts of Christianity. The claims of Christianity are nothing without it. "The virgin birth" is the correct and only term to use with respects to the birth of Jesus as contained in Matthew and Luke. "Immaculate Conception" is too confused to be of much value; "supernatural or miraculous birth" is not clear as to the process of the birth; "supernatural or miraculous conception" is equally unsatisfactory; the only clear statement that is sufficiently definite and clear is "virgin birth".

The accounts of the virgin birth are given with inspired delicacy and reserve, yet with such definiteness and clearness as to leave no doubt as to the facts recorded. The genealogy of Jesus reveals him to be the son of David; the virgin birth reveals him to be the Son of God. The records as given by Matthew and Luke are either true or false; there is no middle ground. The accounts are true records of the facts, or they are purely a story of invention.

Believers in the divinity of Christ believe the accounts to be true; those who do not believe in the virgin birth do not believe the accounts to be true; those who do not believe in the virgin birth do not believe the records given by inspiration. (II Timothy 3:16, 17; II Peter 1:20-21). If the virgin birth is not true, then Jesus was just an ordinary man. So much depends on the virgin birth, that to reject it is to reject the divinity of Jesus and his power to save!

The first objection urged against the virgin birth is that it is against the laws of nature. This objection has but little weight; how do we know that it was against the laws of nature? True, it did not follow the ordinary line of nature but that does not prove that it was against the laws of nature! May it not have been the only way for "divinity" to become "humanity?" No event like this had ever occurred before this and no event like this has occurred since. How do we know but that it was the natural way for divinity to become humanity? No one can answer this, therefore, no one can determine that the virgin birth was against the laws of nature.

The second objection to the virgin birth says that, one human parent does not guarantee sinlessness. This objection admits only one human parent, but claims that this would not guarantee a perfect sinless character. It is claimed that Jesus could contract sin from one as well as two parents. Sin is not inherited; sinful nature is not inherited; sins are not transmitted from parent to a child. God has repeatedly declared that sin is not inherited, neither is it transmitted from parent to child. (See Deuteronomy 24:16; II Kings 14:6; Ezekiel 18:20).

The third argument to consider is that the New Testa-

ment is silent on the virgin birth except in the records of Matthew and Luke. This is the famous "ex silentio." It is true that Matthew and Luke are the only writers of the Testament that give this account, but their accounts agree. Many other events which are accepted are recorded by only one or two writers of the New Testament. Yet, there are other inferences to the virgin birth in the New Testament. (See Romans 8:3; Galatians 4:4; Philippians 2:5-8).

The fourth objection is that the whole story has been invented by the disciples of Jesus. Either it was true or it was invented, there is no other alternative. It was prophesied long before the disciples of Jesus. In Genesis 3:15 God said, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head. And thou shalt bruise his heel." Here we see Jesus is the seed of woman and not man. (Galatians 3:16; 4:4).

Fifthly, many object to the virgin birth because Joseph and Mary are called the parents of Jesus. It is noted that four times the record speaks of Joseph and Mary as his parents. (See Luke 2:27, 33, 41, 43). One time the record gives Mary as referring to Joseph as the father of Jesus. (Luke 2:48). In reply to this, it is contended that Jesus corrected her for her fault in Luke 2:49. The word "father" in this verse is the heavenly father. However, if Jesus had called Joseph and Mary his parents, it would have showed (a) respect to Joseph as the husband of Mary, (b) proper respect to his mother, (c) and that Joseph was his legal parent.

Sixthly, it is argued that the early church did not accept the virgin birth. This is an assertion. There is no proof that the early church did not accept the accounts

as given by Matthew and Luke. The writings of Ignatius and Justin Martyr show that some in the church did not accept the entire record as given by Matthew and Luke. Not until the eighteenth century Strauss and Renan denied the virgin birth and others followed their example.

Seventh, modern scholarship denied the virgin birth some modern scholars may reject it, but all moderns do not reject it; Christian scholarship accepts it as recorded by Matthew and Luke. Suppose modern scholarship accepts it as recorded by Matthew and Luke. Suppose modern scholarship did reject it, what would that prove? Scholarship cannot save anyone. The world by its wisdom does not know God and cannot know him. (Matthew 11:25-27; I Corinthians 1:20-25).

The reasons for accepting the virgin birth far outweigh any of the objections that may be urged against it. The record of it is a part of the New Testament; it has always been a part of it; not a single manuscript of the New Testament omits the account of the virgin birth. Some parts of the New Testament (Mark 16:12-20, John 8:1-11; Acts 8:37) have been disputed, but not the record of the virgin birth. We accept the testimony of Matthew and Luke on other things, why not on this? When Matthew says that the birth of Jesus was "in this wise" (Mt. 1:18) it seems that he means to record the facts of a birth that was different from other books in the genealogy. The date of Jesus' birth, Herod's reign, the public Census, the taxation, which are mentioned in connection with the virgin birth are admitted. Why admit some of the facts of the account and not all of the facts?

The sinlessness of Jesus implies the virgin birth.

(John 8:46). If he had been born in the ordinary way, we would not expect him to be sinless. He would be subject to sin and death as the others in the human race. He gave up his life for the sins of the world. He did not have to die. (John 10:17-18). An absolutely holy human being in the midst of sinful humanity seems to have been impossible. Nothing is impossible for God. (Genesis 18:14). That includes the virgin birth.

The deity of Jesus is involved in the virgin birth. A denial of it robs Jesus of his divinity. Luke declares that he should be called "the Son of God." (Luke 1:35). This marks him as a divine product. "Son of God," and "the Son of the Highest" are titles of the relationship to the Father in a unique way. If the virgin birth is denied, Jesus is no more than an average, normal, man. Paul wrote that God declared him to be the Son of God by his resurrection. (Romans 1:4).

The very fact that Matthew in Mathew 1:23 quotes Isaish 7:14 and translates the Hebrew term "alma", meaning "virgin or young maid" by the word "parthenos" which means exclusively "virgin," proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that Matthew knew of this prophecy. He understood it as God would have us all to understand, that Jesus' birth was a "virgin birth."

Lesson 2

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

The resurrection of Jesus is either a gigantic, fanatical, hoax or it is the supreme fact of history. If it is true, then men cannot fail to adjust their lives to its implications without suffering an eternal loss. If it is not true, if Christ is not risen, then Christianity is all fraud, foisted on the world by liars or at best, by deluded simpletons. This was the conclusion of Paul in I Corinthians 15:14,15, which says, "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not."

Thus, the issue is: Is the resurrection true or false? Well, what evidence can we use to reach a true conclusion? Certainly we must consult written testimony. What writings give us the resurrection story? The primary documents are the written testimonies of six witnesses. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, and Peter. They are supported by the testimony of the whole church.

Modern research has made progress in determining the date and authorship of these written records. In the nineteenth century a member of the unbelievers equipped with

considerable scholarship, went to great lengths to prove that the gospels were written in the middle of the second century A. D. (or about a hundred years after the events), when legend and imagination could have distorted the facts. Yet, the written accounts of Christ's life were recorded at an extraordinarily early date as we now know.

Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, gives a detailed list of several resurrection appearances. In verse 5 of chapter 15, Christ appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. In verse 6 he was seen by above five hundred brethren at once. In verse 7, he was seen of James, then of all the apostles, and lastly of Paul. There is scarcely a scholar who has doubted the genuineness of I Corinthians; its date is generally accepted as about 56 A.D. To the Corinthians the apostle writes he had previously given his readers this information orally (Perhaps in A. D. 49) and that he also had "received" it presumably by those who were apostles before him. (Galatians 1:18,19). This may take us back to A. D. 40, within about ten years of the crucifixion.

Mark, in his gospel, precedes his account of the resurrection appearances by the story of the empty tomb. (Mk. 16: 1-8). Some believe that an Aramaic version was in existence as early as A. D. 44.

Luke's gospel adds substantially to our knowledge of the visit to the tomb and the subsequent appearances; and provides the fullest account of the early apostolic preaching. The third gospel and the Acts of the Apostles have been widely accepted as the genuine composition of Luke, "the beloved physican." (Colossians 4:14). Sir William

Ramsay and others have shown that Luke was minutely accurate as a historian.

These three accounts were selected because unbiased critics cannot disregard these disciples's accounts, from the standpoint of authorship or date. But we must not forget the written accounts of Matthew, John and Peter because these men also wrote authoritative documents.

What about this evidence? It is extremely early. Much of it dates back to the very first decade of the Christian era. Thus, the evidence is contemporary and must, at least, be accepted as the substantial record of eye witnesses.

A number of attempts have been made to refute the resurrection doctrine. There are explanations as to what happened to the body of Jesus. First, they say that Jesus' body was stolen by his disciples. It was a theory that was put forth by the chief priests of the Jews into the mouths of the soldiers who guarded the tomb. (Matthew 28:12-15). This theory assumes that the soldiers slept on duty, that they could testify what happened while they were asleep. It assumes that the disciples took time to remove Jesus' linen burial shroud and layed it in one place. Then they removed his head cloth, laying it in another place in the tomb.

The second theory is the swoon theory.. This idea says that Jesus never really died. He only fainted and then reviving told that he had been raised from the dead. Such a theory assumes that Jesus stayed alive after a six hour ordeal in an upright position, after a soldier's spear thrust into his side and after three days sealed in a tomb. This theory assumes that the wounded, bleeding Jesus,

without nourishment, revived after three days, removed his burial shroud and head band, moved a very great stone, eluded guards, and walked on pierced feet, some fifteen miles to Emmaus.

Thirdly, some say his body was stolen. If this were true, Christianity would have received a mortal wound if those enemies had only produced the corpse.

Fourthly, there is the hallucination theory which says that Jesus' disciples experienced a hallucination. They wanted to see Jesus so badly that they thought they did. On the contrary, however, his disciples did not expect to see Jesus again and did not believe the resurrection story when they first heard it. They were the first skeptics. (Mark 16:14).

A person in a doubting mood is no subject to become a victim of a hallucination. Moreover, if the disciples were victims of such an imagination, several facts are unexplained. An hallucination does not explain the empty tomb, nor the eating of bread and fish by Jesus at the lakeside, nor why 500 people would have the same illusion, nor how 3,000 people could have been made believers in less than two months, nor why, though the, imaginative appearances of Jesus' body ceased.

Fifthly, there is the mental resurrection theory that Jesus' body stayed dead but that his disciples kept Jesus in mind and lived according to his teachings and therefore to them Jesus was still living. In this way they could speak of Jesus' being raised to live on in the heart of men: in other words the resurrection was purely mental. However, this theory fails to explain the empty tomb and it fails to explain the sudden change of the discouraged disciples to confident

martyrs for Christ, testifying that they had handled the risen Jesus. (I John 1;1-2). Let us read the resurrection story found in Luke 24:1-34. "Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behind, two men stood by them in shining garments; And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen, remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words; And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them' which told things unto the apostles. And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. Then arose Peter, and ran unto the sepulchre; and stooping down, he beheld the linen clothes laid by themselves, and departed, wondering in himself at that which was come to pass. And, behold two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlong, And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them, But their eyes were holden that they should

not know him. And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another as ye walk, and are sad? And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazereth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre: And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And

their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." There are at least eight lines of evidence that leads to the conclusion that Jesus arose from the dead.

First, there is the open tomb. How was the great stone that sealed the tomb removed? The Romans did not open the tomb, for they were stationed there to see that it was not opened. The Jews did not open the tomb for it was they—who requested that the sepulchre be made sure against intruders, The disciples did not open the tomb, for they could not have overcome the guard, nor were they of that disposition. But the tomb was opened. How? An angel of God rolled away the stone. (Matthew 28:2).

Secondly, there is the vacated tomb. How the tomb became empty is another important matter to consider. The Roman guards would not have any motive to remove the body. The Jews wanted to make sure the body stayed in the tomb. (Matthew 27:64). The disciples could not have eluded the guards. If Jesus did not rise of his own divine power and walk out of the tomb, the vacated tomb still is an unsolved mystery.

Thirdly, the shroud which is a fine linen grave cloth bought by a rich man, was left in the tomb. If grave robbers took the body, they would have wanted this expensive linen. If the disciples by chance managed to

by pass the guards, to roll away the stone, and stole the body, one cannot imagine why they took the time to remove the shroud. If Jesus did not deliberately remove and fold the shroud, then why was it left separate and rolled up. This remains an unanswered problem.

Fourthly, there were eye witnesses to the resurrection. The apostles testified after Jesus' resurrection that they both ate and drank with him, that they saw him with their own eyes, that they heard him speak, and that they handled him. (I John 1:1-2). But if they deliberately concocted a falsehood, their reward was hurting consciences, reproaches, beatings, and death. Truly, they would have been liars. Yet, it appears that they were neither dishonest or deceived. Thus, their testimony as eye-witnesses is weighty evidence. (II Peter 1:16).

Fifth, there is the credibility of the New Testament. Let us now consider I Corinthians 15:1-8. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also as of one born out of due time." The written documents

composing the New Testament are accepted as the most reliable books of history, testifying to the bodily resurrection and cannot be lightly considered. If the resurrection is a farce, how these twenty-seven books came to command such confidence is an unanswered question.

Sixthly, there is the existence of Christianity to be reckoned with. If the resurrection of Jesus was actual, then the birth and growth of Christianity are easily explained. But if its leader remained a corpse, it is strange why millions of people accepted a religion, the only one of its kind, based on the resurrection of Jesus' body from the tomb. Without the resurrection there could be no Christianity.

Seventh, there was the headband which was not lying with the shroud, but rolled up and in a place to itself in the vacated tomb. (John 20:7). It was not hastily thrown, but was folded together. Whoever removed it was in no hurry and was orderly. Grave robbers would not have taken the time to remove and fold it. If Jesus didn't do it, who did?

In conclusion, we would certainly have to turn to the influence of Jesus as proof of his resurrection. Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning, he shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of schools, he spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since; and produced such effects which lie beyond the reach of poet or orator; without writing a single line, he set more pens in motion and furnished themes for more sermons, orations,

discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise, than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times.

Let us close this study with a look at some of Peter's sermon on Pentecost. "Ye men of Isreal, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you as ye yourselves also know; him being delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hands of lawless men did crucify and slay; whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that it should be holden of him, for David saith concerning him, I beheld the Lord always before my face; for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore, my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh shall dwell in hope: because thou wilt not leave my soul unto Hades, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption. He forseeing this spake of the resurrection of Christ. This Jesus did God raise up; of whom we are all witnesses. Let all the house of Isreal know assuredly that God hath made this same Jesus whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ this Jesus whom ye have crucified. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto them, men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter answered and said unto them, repent ye, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins: and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. They therefore that gladly received his word were baptized, and there were added unto them in that day, about three thousand souls. And they were praising God and having favor with all the people, and the Lord added to the church daily, such as should be saved." (Acts 2:22-27, 31-32, 36-38, 41,47).

Lesson 3

GOD'S PLAN FOR UNITY

In the last few decades we have witnessed the so called "Ecumenical Movement." A great deal was said and some action taken towards the now recognized need for religious unity. A few hundred years after the establishment of the New Testament church, Roman Catholicism arose. Catholicism was a perversion of simple Biblical Christianity. Several hundred years later, Martin Luther led a revolt against Catholicism. Regretably, instead of trying to restore New Testament Christianity, Luther sought to reform a church that was as stated earlier, a perversion of the original church of Christ. Thus, Luther's efforts added more denominations to the Catholic denomination and the church that Jesus built could not be recognized because of this great division.

Division has continued down to the twentieth century, as men live in open rebellion to God's word. Men have allowed human creeds and dogmas to keep them from being the people that Christ prayed for them to be. In John 17:20-21 Jesus prayed, "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they may all be one, Father as thou art in me, and I in thee, that they all may be one in us, that

world may believe that thou didst send me." See also Matthew 15:8-9.

Men meet all over the world to devise plans for religious unity. How tragic it is that men have overlooked and down right ignored God's platform for religious unity found in Ephesians 4:4-6. Paul wrote, "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all and in all."

First, note that the Bible teaches that there is but ONE BODY. What is that one body? Paul in Colossians 1:18 said, "And he (Christ) is the head of the body, the Church." The religious world says that there are many bodies. The Bible says there is one ! Which view will you hold to?

Secondly, the Bible teaches that there is ONE SPIRIT. This is the Holy Spirit, who is God. The Holy Spirit gives life to the Spiritual body of Christ, as the Spirit gives life to the physical body. Romans 8:2 says, "For the law of the Spirit of life hath made me free from the law of sin and death."

Thirdly, there is ONE HOPE. This hope is centered upon receiving eternal life. Paul spoke of the hope of eternal life in Titus 1:2. Hope is the anchor of our souls. (Hebrews 6:19).

In the fourth place, we have ONE LORD. He is Lord of Lords. (Revelation 17:14). There is no other Lord or head of Christ's church. Popes, Patriarchs, and Presidents, and all other forms of church government are not authorized by the Bible.

The fifth one is the ONE FAITH. Jude 3 says that we are to contend earnestly for the faith that was once

and for all delivered unto the saints. The religious world speaks of many faiths. The Bible speaks of one faith. Who will you believe? What will you believe and practice?

Sixthly, the Bible teaches us that there is ONE BAPTISM. The one baptism has but one mode, immersion. The word baptism means to immerse, dip, plunge, and overwhelm. In Colossians 2:12 Paul wrote that the Colossians had been buried with Christ in baptism. There is but one candidate for baptism. He must be a believer in Christ. (Mark 16:16). He must repent. (Acts 2:38). He must confess his faith in Christ's deity. (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10). There is but one purpose for baptism. It is for the remission or washing away of sins. (Acts 2:38; 22:16).

Finally, there is ONE GOD AND FATHER. Christianity is a monotheistic religion. That is, it serves only one God. Paul said there is but one God in I Timothy 2:5. In I Corinthians 8:5-6 he wrote, "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many and lords many), unto us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things..."

This, good reader, is God's plan for religious unity. Now that you know about it, won't you work with us in churches of Christ, as we seek to teach and maintain it? Contact the nearest church of Christ in your nation, city, or community for more information.

Lesson 4

DENOMINATIONALISM AND NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY COMPARED

In the world of Christianity there are many different denominations. They exist, separate and apart from each other. They have their own distinctive names, dogmas, creeds, and practices. Each claims to be fully following Jesus. Each claims that its church is right.

The existence of hundreds of denominations is confusing to the sincere non-Christian who would like to know the God of Christianity. Others see the divided state of Christianity and are discouraged. They do not know what is right but they know that division is wrong. Many have concluded that they would rather be infidels than to be engaged in a hypocritical, contradictory, unscriptural religion professed by sectarian denominationalism. Many honest souls would like to know if God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit approve of denominationalism. Let us now compare denominationalism to the Bible and we will answer that question.

Denominationalism advocates the existence of many churches. The Bible says there is one body. (Ephesians 4:4). What is the one body? Colossians 1:8 tells us that

Christ is head of the body, the church. Though there are many members there is but one body. (Romans 12:4). We are all baptized into one body. (I Corinthians 12:1). Christians are called into one body. (Colossians 3:15).

Denominationalism allows mere uninspired men to be founders of the various churches. They are proud of men like John Wesley, Joseph Smith, John Knox, John Calvin Charles Russell, and others. Yet, Jesus in Matthew 16:18 said, "Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Jesus built the one church through the Apostles. (Ephesians 2:19-20).

Men in the religious world add their creeds to the Bible. A creed book is an uninspired book which tells what the particular denomination believes. Yet, all we really need is the Bible. It is self sufficient. He will be judged by truth. (Romans 2:2). Truth is the word of God. (John 17:17). If we believe and practice any other gospel than that given by the Apostles, we will be accursed. (Galatians 1:6-9).

Church membership is not essential in denominational circles. The Bible teaches us that Jesus is the Saviour of the body. The body is the church. (Ephesians 5:23; 1:22-23). Christ loved the church so much that he gave himself up for it. (Ephesians 5:25). If the church is not essential for salvation, then Jesus is saving something of little value. Would Jesus shed his blood for that which plays no role in the eternal redemption of the souls of mankind? Reconciliation to God comes in the one body or church. This is the sphere or realm of salvation. (Ephesians 2:16). The church is also called the kingdom in the Bible. Paul wrote, "Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up

the kingdom unto God, even the Father.” (I Corinthians 15:24). We must be in the kingdom if we would enter into the presence of the Father. Jesus said, “Except a man be born of the water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5). Thus those who are born again are members of the kingdom. Those who are members of the kingdom are to be delivered by Jesus into the presence of God.

Denominationalism advocates the existence of many faiths. Paul in Ephesians 4:5 said, there is one faith! Jude the third verse tells us to contend earnestly for **THE FAITH**, which was once and for all delivered unto the saints. Paul in Philippians 1:27 tells us that we are to strive for “the faith.”

Join the church of your choice is a very popular religious idea. Yet, no where in the Bible do we read of anyone joining the church of his choice. In Acts 2:41 Luke wrote, “They therefore that gladly received his word were baptized, and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls.” In Acts 2:47 we are told that Christians were praising God and having favour with all the people. “The Lord added to the church daily, such as should be saved.” “Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.” (Acts 5:14). When will the religious world ever reach the place when they will declare, let us be added to the church of the Lord’s choice?

Very often we hear people praying to God and saying, “Father, we thank thee for the many different churches.” But our Lord prayed, “Father, neither for these only do I pray, but for them also which shall believe on me through

their word, that they all may be one 'Father' as thou art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John 17:20-21). Many in our world do not believe in the Christian God because of divisions among those who follow Christ! When Paul said, the churches of Christ salute you, he was not talking about denominational churches. (Romans 16:16). He was talking of the same churches that were scattered throughout the Roman world. There were no denominations in Bible times.

Wearing any religious name is okay with the denominational world. Peter wrote, "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but rather, let him glorify God in that name." (I Peter 4:16). There is no other name under heaven whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:12). The wearing of the names of denominational founders and denominational doctrines robs God of the glory that he alone deserves.

Finally, denominationalism says that there are many baptisms. They say that you can sprinkle, pour, or immerse. They also argue for Holy Spirit baptism. Yet, Paul declared, there is one baptism. (Ephesians 4:5). In Acts 2:1-4 the Apostles receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This was in 33 A.D. In 43 A.D. Cornelius and his family received Holy Spirit baptism. Twenty years later in 63 A.D. Paul writes in Ephesians 4:5 that there is one baptism! The one baptism is water baptism for the remission of sins. It is also immersion. (Acts 8:36-38; 2:38).

In conclusion, these points of comparison are enough to convince truth loving, God fearing souls, that modern day denominationalism is unscriptural and sinful. The wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23).

Lesson 5

THE EXISTENCE OF DENOMINATIONALISM AND ITS FRUITS

Why do denominations exist? I am sure that many have asked this question throughout the centuries. It deserves an answer. I ask you to consider three reasons.

First, the Devil is obviously trying to divide and conquer. Satan knows what Jesus taught in Matthew 12:25, "...every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; every city or house divided against itself cannot stand." How does Satan do this? He blinds the minds of the unbelievers from the light of the gospel. (II Corinthians 4:4). He steals the word of God out of the hearts of men, so that they will not believe and be saved. (Luke 8:12). Satan also stays busy sowing tares or bad seed among the wheat. He is the primary source of all false teaching. (Matthew 12:39). Satan transforms himself into an angel of light and his ministers are ministers of seeming righteousness. He is a master of deceit. (II Corinthians 11:14-15). Yes, good reader, in the later times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and the doctrines of demons. (I Timothy 4:1).

Secondly, denominationalism exists because of a lack of respect for Jesus and the all sufficiency of his word.

• Jesus said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." (John 14:15). Again the Master declared, "If any man love me, he will keep my words." In John 12:48 the Redeemer taught us, "He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that shall judge him, the words that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last days." We will be Judged by Christ's teachings. Jesus taught that there shall be one shepherd (Christ) and there shall be one flock (church). (John 10:16). Do we love Jesus enough to unite into one body or church? Through out the Bible (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18-19), God has warned that man should not add to or take away from the word of God. We simply must learn not to go beyond that which is written. (I Corinthians 4:6). Denominationalism violates these Bible warnings.

Thirdly, denominationalism exists because the will of man has been exalted above the will of God! Jesus taught his disciples to pray, not my will but thine be done, when he said, "thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10). Christ practiced what he preached. While in the garden Jesus agonized in prayer before going to the cross. In Luke 22:42 he cried out to the Father, not my will but thine be done. Jesus condemned the religious leaders of his day by asking, Why do ye transgress the commandments of God with your tradition? (Matthew 15:3). They had exalted human opinion over God's will! Christ told them that they made void the word of God with their traditions. (Mark 7:13).

Finally, denominationalism exists because men have been willing to compromise the truth for the sake of keeping the peace. Rather than compromising the truth,

God's people are to defend it. Paul was set for the defense of the gospel. (Philippians 1:16). Timothy was told by Paul not to allow men to teach another doctrine. (I Timothy 1:3). Christians are to war a good warfare and fight the good fight of faith. (I Timothy 1:18; 6:12). Paul spent his life in defense of the gospel. When his life was drawing to an end, he declared, "I have fought a good fight." (II Timothy 4:6-7). Christians are peacemakers. (Matthew 5:9). But we do not want peace at the price of compromising Bible truth!

Look at the fruits of denominationalism. Christ said, "By their fruits, ye shall know them." (Matthew 7:20). Lets take a look at six bitter fruits of religious division.

Denominationalism ignores Christ's prayer for unity. "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they may all be one, Father, as thou art in me and I in thee, that they all may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou didst send me." (John 17:20-21).

Secondly, denominationalism ignores Paul's teaching and plea for unity. In Ephesians 4:3-6 Paul taught, "Let us give diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, for there is one body and one Spirit, even as ye were called in one hope for your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, in all, and through all." Note Paul's plea. "Now I beseech you brethren, by the name our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same things, and that there be no division among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (I Corinthians 1:10).

In the third place sectarianism ignores the example of the unity of the first century church. Acts 4:32 states, "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul..."

Ill will in the home is another fruit of division. Husband and wife are often separated because of religious differences. Parents and children are often at odds with each other because they are members of differing religious bodies. Paul said that God is not the author of confusion. That is so true. (I Corinthians 14:33). The confusion in many families today is tragic. Anyone knows this could not be pleasing to God.

A fifth bitter fruit of denominationalism is a failure to evangelize the world. Jesus in Mark 16:15-16 said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." Winning the world to Jesus is hampered by denominational groups that are warring among themselves. They spend so much time stealing each other's members, that they have utterly failed to evangelize the world in this present generation. Paul and the early Christians did not have these problems. The world of their day heard Christ in one generation. (Colossians 1:23).

Finally, one of the bitterest fruits of division among the ranks of those who profess to follow Christ is infidelity. Men like Marx, Engels, Lenin, Voltaire, Ingersol, Darwin, were not rejecting Christianity. They rebelled against denominationalism which was a perverted form of pure, simple, primitive, New Testament Christianity! Denominationalism does not present a true picture of Christianity.

Lesson 6

WHAT SHALL YOU DO WITH JESUS ?

In Matthew 27:22 Pilate asked, "What then shall I do with Jesus, which is called the Christ?" Pilate asked one of the most soul searching questions in human history. The time had come in the life of Pilate to do something with Jesus. This is a question that no responsible person can escape! If one does the wrong thing with Jesus, his life will be without meaning, purpose, and hope. He will lose his very soul. He will be doomed and damned in a Devil's hell. If one does the right thing with Jesus, his life will have meaning, purpose, and hope. His life will be characterized by happiness and joy. He will have someone to believe in and something to hold on to in the great storms of life. Heaven will be his everlasting home. I ask you today, what are you doing with Jesus, who is called the Christ?

What are you doing, first of all, with the person of Christ? What kind of a person is Jesus? He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, thus saith the Lord, which is and which was, and which is to come the almighty. (Revelation 1:8). Thus, Jesus is an eternal being. He has no beginning and no ending. He is all powerful.

Christ is also the bread of life. (John 6:48). Jesus said; "Work not for bread which perisheth, for bread which endureth unto everlasting life." (John 6:27). Jesus is the bread upon which our souls are to feast, if we are to live forever with him. We partake of him, when we partake of the word of God. Jesus said, "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Luke 4:4).

Jesus was called the Christ by Peter in Matthew 16:16. The word "Christ" is the Greek form of the Hebrew word, "Messiah." It means, "the anointed one." Under the Old Testament system three kinds of men were anointed with oil as they were put into office. They were prophets, priests, and kings. Being the Christ, Jesus is our Prophet, Priest, and King. (Deuteronomy 18:15; Hebrews 4:15; Revelation 17:14).

Christ is deliverer. (Romans 11:26). He has come to this earth to deliver us out of this present evil world. (Galatians 1:4). This deliverance includes being redeemed from the slavery and the consequences of our sins.

Jesus is everlasting Father. (Isaiah 9:7). That is, he is Father of eternity. He is controller of eternity. He is provider in eternity. Christ is also possessor of eternity. Christ will control our eternity as judge of the world. (II Corinthians 5:10). That Christ will meet our needs in eternity can be seen in Revelation 7:14-17.

Our Lord is a foundation. (I Corinthians 3:11). The church is built upon the foundation of Christ. Matthew 16:18 teaches that the church is built on the bedrock of Jesus' divinity. Christ is the chief cornerstone. (Ephesians 2:19-20). Individual Christians must build upon the

foundation of Christ and his word. (Matthew 7:24-25).

Jesus is God. He is deity or divinity. John wrote, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Lord was with God. And the Word was God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:1,14). The prophet Isaiah calls him Mighty God. (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Christ is Immanuel, which is being interpreted God with us. (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23). Yes, Jesus was God in the flesh, dwelling among men for some thirty-three years!

John the Baptist called Jesus the Lamb of God that cometh to take away the sins of the world. (John 1:29). Yes, Jesus was the spotless lamb offered on the cross as a sacrifice to take away our sins.

Saviour, that which Christ is. He is the Saviour of the whole world. (John 4:42). The word Saviour means, a deliverer, and one who preserves. He is the way. (John 14:6). Yes, the way to the Father. The way out of sin and death. He is the way to heaven and eternal peace. He will deliver the kingdom into the presence of the Father at the end of the world. (I Corinthians 15:24).

Wonderful is a word used to describe Jesus by the prophet Isaiah. (Isaiah 9:7). The word wonderful means, "to separate, distinguish, amaze through miracles, full of wonders." Truly the miracles of Jesus evoke wonder, awe, and amazement. Jesus had a wonderful pre-existence, birth, life, death, resurrection, and will have a wonderful second coming.

In the second place, what are you doing with Christ's

plan of salvation? An angel told Joseph that he should call the child Jesus, for it is he that shall save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21). Christ is the captain of our salvation. (Hebrews 2:10). He is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. (Hebrew 5:8-9). Christ said, "The Son of man is come to seek and save that which is lost." (Luke 19:10). What does the Saviour of the world (John 4:42) require of us to be saved?

In John 8:24 Jesus said "except ye believe that I am he ye shall die in your sins." We must believe that he is the Son of God. (Matthew 16:16). We must believe that he is both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:36). Paul wrote in Romans 10:9, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." "He that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16)

Christ also wants us to turn away from our sins in repentance. He said, except ye repent, ye shall indeed likewise perish. (Luke 13:3). In Luke's account of the great commission Jesus said, and that repentance and remission of sins be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:47) Peter wrote, the Lord is not slack concerning his promises, as some men count slackness, but is longsuffering to us-wards not willing that any should perish, but that all should come unto repentance. (II Pet. 3:9).

The Lord wants us to confess him before men. In Matthew 10:32-33 Christ said, "Therefore, whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven, but whosoever shall deny me

before men, him also will I deny before my Father who is in heaven." In Mark 8:38 we learn, "whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in his glory and all the holy angels with him." Paul wrote, "For if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:9-10).

Finally, Jesus requires each man to be baptized. By baptism, we mean immersion in water. The Bible is as silent as a tomb about infant baptism and baptism that is administered by sprinkling or pouring. Christ said that we are to be baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..." (Mark 16:16). "Except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5).

Those who meet these requirements will find that there are other requirements to meet if they are to remain saved. They are to be faithful unto death. (Revelation 2:10). They are to overcome if they are to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God. (Revelation 2:7). White robes and a promise that our names will not be blotted out of the book of life, await those who are victorious over sin, Satan, and self. (Revelation 3:5).

In the third place, what are you doing with the church of Christ? Paul said, "the churches of Christ salute you in Romans 16:16. The church of Christ was built by Christ

and not a mere man. Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Mark 16:18). Denominational churches are built by uninspired men. When we talk about the church of Christ, we are talking about the church for which Jesus shed his blood. Paul told the Elders at Ephesus that Christ shed his blood for the church. (Acts 20:28). Christ gave himself up for us. (Ephesians 5:25). Christ is the Saviour of the body. The body is the church. (Ephesians 5:23; 1:22-23). Christ did not shed his blood for any man—made denomination. Most all denominational leaders will agree to this. The church of Christ rests upon Christ as its foundation. It does not rest on the apostle Peter. I Corinthians 3:11 says, "For other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Christ is the chief cornerstone of this foundation. (Ephesians (2:19-20). No denominational church on earth can make this claim. Jesus is also the only head of the church in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18; Colossians 1:18). The New Testament church of Christ is not headed by a Pope, Patriarch, or President.

Are you a member of this church? Peter gave the terms of entrance in Acts 2:38 which says, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." "They therefore that gladly received his word were baptized, and there were added unto them in that day, about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:41). What were these new converts added to? The Lord added them to his church. (Acts 2:47) This was the church of Christ that you read about in your Bible!

Finally, let it be observed that all men will do something with Christ. All men will either accept or reject Christ. Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me, he that gathereth not scattereth abroad." (Matthew 12:30). In John 12:48 the Lord taught, "He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my sayings hath one that shall judge him; the words that I have spoken, the same will judge him in the last day." (John 12:48). All men will either confess or deny Christ, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him also will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him also will I deny before my Father who is in heaven." All men are either going to allow Jesus to come into their hearts or they will keep him out. Revelation 3:20 says, "Behold I stand and the door and knock, if any man hear my voice and open unto me, I will come in unto him and sup with him and he with me." Humanity will either serve Christ or mammon. Mammon is riches or the things of the world. Christ said, "No man can serve two masters for he will either hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24). All men will either get into Christ or remain out of Christ. Paul wrote, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ, did put on Christ." When you put on your clothes, you got into your clothes. When we put on Christ, we get into Christ. Our Lord taught, "I am the vine and ye are the branches, if a man abide in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me, ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered, and men cast them into

the fire and they are burned.” (John 15:5-6). Surely these verses show us how important it is to be in Christ. If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away and behold all things are become new. (II Corinthians 5:17).

It might be interesting to take a survey and see what others did with Christ. Judas betrayed Christ and hung himself. (Matthew 26:3-5). Peter denied Christ three times. (Matthew 26:74). Pilate tried to be neutral. He said that he was innocent of the blood of this righteous man. Yet, at this very hour the blood of Jesus is on his head and on his hands. (Mt 27:24). “He came to his own and his own received him not.” (John 1:11). The Jews by and large rejected Christ. But thank God there were some who knew how to do the right thing with Jesus. Philip went down to Samaria and proclaimed unto them Jesus. When they believed the good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of the Lord Jesus, they were baptized both men and women. (Acts 8:5,12). This same Philip preached the gospel to an Ethiopian. “Philip opened his mouth and beginning at that same scripture and preached unto him Jesus. As they went on their way, the eunuch said, see here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized? Philip answered, if thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, and the eunuch saw him no more, for he went on his way rejoicing.”

(Acts 8:35-39). Stephen, James, and Antipas died for Christ. (Acts 7:59,12:2; Revelation 2:13). Paul lived for Christ. (Philippians 1:20).

Julian the Apostate was a Roman Emperor. He once obeyed the gospel and then fell away from the faith. To wash away the waters of baptism, he was baptized in the blood of an animal. To cleanse his hands from the Communion or Lord's Supper, he struck his hands into the intestines of an animal. He spent the rest of his life writing against Jesus. While dying on the battlefield, he cried out, "O lonely Galilean, thou art victorious."

You cannot fight Jesus and win. Will you not then do something with Jesus? Do the right thing. Obey Christ as did the Samaritans and the Ethiopian eunuch.

Lesson 7

THE ANCIENT GOSPEL

It is quite obvious that the modern day denominational gospel is not sufficient to save the souls of the lost. It is inadequate to make life abundant. In I Corinthians 2:5, Paul told the Corinthians, "Your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." That is good advice to those who are all wrapped up in the man made doctrines of denominationalism. We desperately need to get back to the ancient gospel that will unite all who believes in Christ.

The ancient gospel would have us first of all cast aside the creeds that have been formulated in the synods, conventions, assemblies, and councils of uninspired men. It would have us cast aside all religious names that have their origin in the mind of man and not in the book of God. The ancient gospel would have us cast away the non-Biblical forms of church government found in denominationalism. It would have us cast aside all the conflicting and contradictory plans of salvation that are the result of mortal and finite man, trying to better the scheme of redemption given by the immortal and infinite God of the Bible.

The ancient gospel would have us to build on the firm

foundation of God and his eternal word. We cannot base our soul's salvation on the doctrines of uninspired men. Solomon said that man was not to lean on his own understanding. Rather, man was to trust in God with all his heart. (Proverbs 3:5). The wise man also told us that there are ways that seem right unto man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death. (Proverbs 14:11). Jeremiah wrote, "It is not within man that walketh to direct his own footsteps." (Jeremiah 10:23). Paul shows us the utter folly of following man in Romans 3:10-12 which says, "There is none righteous, no not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

The ancient gospel would have us build on the firm foundation of God and the Bible. Paul wrote, "For other foundation can no man lay, than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Christ is the chief cornerstone in the foundation. (Ephesians 2:20). We need to know that the firm foundation of God standeth. (II Timothy 2:19). In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught, "Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man who built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded on a rock. And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof." (Matthew 7:24-27).

Secondly, the ancient gospel will unite all believers in Christ by having as our creed book the Bible alone, Throughout the Bible God has warned man not to add to or take away from the word of God. Deuteronomy 4:2 says, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God." Proverbs 30:6 states, "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee and thou be found a liar." Paul told the Corinthians not to go beyond that which was written. (I Corinthians 4:6). In Galatians 1:8-9 we are told, "But though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed." Jude the third verse tells us to contend earnestly for the faith that was once and for all delivered unto the saints. "The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul." (Psalm 19:7). "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my pathway." (Psalm 119:105). "The opening of thy word giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple." (Psalm 119:130). "Man shall not live on bread alone but on every word [that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4). Good reader, the Bible should be the only book to tell people what we believe. It should be our only standard of authority. Can we improve on the Bible? Not hardly!

In the third place, the ancient gospel would have us wear the name of Christian only. "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." (Acts 11:26). Agrippa said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to become a Christian."

(Acts 26:28). Peter wrote, "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but rather let him glorify God in that name." (I Peter 4:16). The name Christian is the new name spoken of by Isaiah some eight hundred years before the coming of Christ and the establishment of the church. (Isaiah 62:2). This is the name by which God's people should be called. It is a name that all of Christendom can unite on. This of course is a name to be worn by individuals. Collectively Christians are known as the Kingdom of Heaven. (Matthew 3:2). We are also the Kingdom of God. (Matthew 6:33). Christians make up the Church of God. (I Corinthians 1:2). Paul described God's people as Churches of Christ in Romans 16:16. Collectively we are the Kingdom of God and Christ. (Ephesians 5:5).

Notice that these names or descriptive phrases honor and glorify God and Christ. They do not glorify man or man-made doctrines. We cannot improve on these divine names and phrases.

In the fourth point of this lesson, the ancient gospel would have us lay aside all traditions that are equally binding with the word of God. Jesus said, "Ye make void the word of God because of your traditions. Ye hypocrites well did Isaiah prophesy of you, this people honoreth me with their lips but their hearts are from me, and in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines, the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:8-9). In Mark 7:8 Jesus again declared, "Ye leave the commandments of God and hold fast to the traditions of men." We must obey God rather than men. (Acts 5:29). One of the most dangerous trends today is to get away from creed books and to incorporate denominational creeds into the new so-called translations

of the Bible.

The ancient gospel in the fifth place would have us exchange the pompous and ceremonial worship for worship that is in spirit and in truth. "God is a Spirit and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24). Worship in spirit and in truth consists of five simple acts. We must pray and sing. I Corinthians 14:15 says, "I will sing with the spirit and the understanding and I will pray with the spirit and with the understanding also." We must give of our means. I Corinthians 16:1-2 says, "As I gave order unto the churches of Galatia, even so do ye; upon the first day of the week, let each one of you lay by him in store, as he hath prospered, that there be no collections when I come." Christians do not tithe. They simply give as they prosper. They put their money into the church treasury on Sunday. Acts 20:7 says, "Upon the first day of the week the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight." From this verse we see that Christians partook of the Lord's Supper for communion each Sunday. They also worshipped God by studying the word of God together. See also Acts 2:42. New Testament worship is simply beautiful and beautifully simple.

The ancient gospel would have us to know that God's plan for church government is much more workable than anything devised by man. There should be no Popes, Presidents, Patriarchs, Archbishops, Cardinals, Apostles, Clergy, or laity. Many denominations have a Pastor and a Board of Deacons to run the church. None of this is found in the Bible.

Christ is the only head of the church in heaven and on earth. In Colossians 1:18 Paul wrote, "He (Christ) is the head of the body, the church." Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18). He is the Lord of lords and King of kings. (Revelation 17:14).

Each local church in Bible times was autonomous. Each church recognized the universal headship of Christ. Each church was also governed by elders. Paul and Barnabas retraced the steps of their first missionary journey. Acts 14:23 states, "They ordained elders in every church..." Titus was told to ordain elders in every city. (Titus 1:5). These elders (Acts 20:17) were also called bishops. (Acts 20:28). These bishops or elders were also known as shepherds or pastors. Their qualifications are found in first Timothy three and Titus chapter one. The denominational world uses the word pastor to refer to the preacher. In the ancient gospel it was used to refer to elders.

Serving under the elders were the deacons. Paul addressed his letter to the Bishops and Deacons at Philippi. (Philippians 1:1). Qualifications for deacons are found in First Timothy, chapter three.

Serving under the elders and with the deacons are evangelists. Timothy was told to do the work of an evangelist, fulfilling his ministry. (II Timothy 4:5).

Thus, the church is headed by Christ. It is governed by elders. It is served by deacons and evangelists. Along with them are of course the members.

Finally, the ancient gospel would have us lay aside the conflicting and contradictory plans of salvation and unite on the plain and simple principles in the gospels and exam-

ples found in Acts of the Apostles.

Jesus gave us the principles of salvation in the Gospels. In Matthew 28:19 Christ declared, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost." Mark 16:15-16 says, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." Luke's account states that repentance and remission of sins is to be preached in his name beginning at Jersuaem. (Luke 24:47).

The example of the conversion of the Philippian jailor is a good example of how these principles were put into practice. It is found in Acts 16:30-34. "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? They said, believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved and thy house. And they spake unto him the word of the Lord with all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes and was baptized, he and all his immediately. And when he had brought them up into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced greatly with all that were in his house."

Would you like to be a Christian like those in the Bible? Then obey the ancient gospel. You will become what they became and be added to the very same church.

Lesson 8

CHRISTIANS ONLY

The fact that you can be a Christian only sounds rather strange. In 1982, you can be a member of the New Testament church. Sound impossible? In a religiously divided Christendom characterized by conflicting doctrines, hatred, and animosity these statements are almost unbelievable. They sound like they are just too good to be true!

Who then are those who seek to be Christians only? Who are those who claim to be members of the church of Christ that you can find in your own Bible?

First of all, in a collective sense they are called churches. Paul said, "The churches of Christ salute you..." (Romans 16:19). This phrase is neither denominational or inter-denominational. They are the "church" in Acts 2:47. Paul calls these people the "church of God" in I Corinthians 1:2. Daniel calls them the "kingdom" that shall never be destroyed. (Daniel 2:44). These people make up the "kingdom of God and Christ" in Ephesians 5:5. Collectively they are the "church of the Firstborn" who are enrolled in heaven. (Hebrews 12:23). These Christians only are the "body" of Christ which is the church. (Colossians 1:18). They make up the "house of God" which is

the church of the living God. (I Timothy 3:15).

We can read in the Bible of congregations but not the Congregational church. Disciples are mentioned in the Bible but not the Disciples of Christ church. Christians are found in the scripture but not the Christian church. We read of Presbyters but not the Presbyterian church. You can read of baptized believers but not the Baptist church. The Bible teaches method and order but not the Methodist church. Pentecost appears in the Bible but not Pentecostal churches. Men quake and tremble but there was no Quaker church. The word church is used in a universal or Catholic sense. Yet, one never reads about the Catholic church in the Bible.

Well, maybe you are saying that you believe that I am going to say that you can read of my church in the Bible. I do not have a church but Christ does! Did you ever wonder what happened to the church that Jesus built? Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church..." (Matthew 16:18). What became of that institution that is so radically different from the hundreds of man-made denominations that sprang up hundreds of years later? Though it may be difficult to imagine that church is very much alive and well in 1982. The good news is that you can be a member of that same church today!

Secondly, Christians only must be understood from an individual standpoint. Individually, they are called disciples. John 15:8 says, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit and so shall ye be my disciples." A disciple is a follower or learner. Christians only are just that, they are Christians. "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." (Acts 11:26). The word Christ-

ian means, "One who belongs to and pertains to Christ." It means, one who is of Christ." Individually Christians are "brethern." (Galatians 6:1). They are "children." (Romans 8:17). Christians are also "holy and royal priests." (I Peter 2:5,9). Paul wrote the Roman letter to the "saints" that are in Rome. Christians are "saints." The word saint means, "a holy one." "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us that we should be called the sons of God. Christians then are "sons." (I John 3:1).

Thirdly, Christians only are a people who recognize Christ and his word as the only authority in matters pertaining to religion. Christ has all authority in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18). If one rejects Christ and his word, he will be judged by Christ and his word at the end of time. (John 12:28). Christ is the head of the church. (Colossians 1:18). He is the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings. (Revelation 17:14).

The denominational world turns to the church as its authority. Yet, the church is made up of uninspired men. Jeremiah 10:23 says that man does not know how to direct his own footsteps. Others turn to conventions, synods, and assemblies for authority. In other words, the decisions that they make are law in the various denominations. Many turn to their creeds, discipline, books, and books of catechism. But Jesus said, "In vain do they worship me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. This is what these books contain! (Matthew 15:8-9).

The early Christians continued steadfastly in the Apostle doctrine. (Acts 2:42). We must do the same. The Apostle's doctrine of Christ. The doctrine of Christ is the doctrine of the Father. (Matthew 10:40).

Finally, how does one become a Christian only? How does one enter the New Testament church? In Acts 18:8 Luke wrote, "Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized." These same Corinthians were baptized into one body or the church. (I Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 1:18). When those on Pentecost obeyed the gospel, they obeyed the Apostolic commands to repent and be baptized (immersed in water). As a result, their sins were remitted. They received the gift of the Holy Ghost and they were added by the Lord to the church. If you will do the same thing, you will become what they become. You will also be added by the Lord to the same church. (Acts 2:38, 41-47).

Lesson 9

PREACHING JESUS

Many people in the denominational world say, "Preach Jesus and leave the church out of it." Some in the Lord's church tell the preachers to stand behind the cross and preach Jesus and him crucified. The New Testament shows that preaching Christ was the theme of Apostolic preaching. "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." (I Corinthians 1:18). In I Corinthians 1:23 Paul wrote, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness." I Corinthians 2:2 states, "For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Again, Paul in II Corinthians 4:4 wrote, "For we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake."

Our text shows us what is involved in preaching Jesus. "Philip went down to Samaria and preaches unto them Jesus. When they believed Philip preaching the good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women." (Acts 8:5,12). Preaching Jesus includes preaching on the church-kingdom. It includes teaching on the

name or authority of Christ. Somewhere in the process of preaching Jesus the subject of baptism must come up. Why? We shall see as we examine now our text.

First of all, notice that the word "kingdom" appears many times in the scripture. John the Baptist and Jesus preached, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:2;4:17). Jesus taught, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God..." (Matthew 6:33). Christ taught the value of the kingdom in these famous words. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field: which when a man hath found, he hideth, and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who when he hath found the one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and brought it." Christ shows us that the kingdom and church are the same thing in Matthew 16:18-19 which, says, "Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." The Colossian church was translated out of darkness and into the kingdom of the Son of his love. (Colossians 1:13). John declared that he was in the kingdom. (Revelation 1:9).

What is the good news about the kingdom? The good news is that the kingdom or church is the saved. On Pentecost, Peter preached, "Repent ye, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost ... They therefore that gladly received his word, were bapt-

ized, and there were added unto them in that day, about three thousand souls." Then Luke writes that they were, "Praising God and having favor with all the people, and the Lord added unto the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:38,41,47). Thus, when one is saved he is added by the Lord to the church. The church is not the saviour but it is the saved. If you are in the church you are saved. If you are saved you are in the church!

It is good news to know that if you are in the church you are in the body, which is the church. (Colossians 1:18). To be in the church or body is the same thing as being in Christ. Paul told us, "If any man be in the Christ, he is a new creature, behold old things are passed away and all things are become new." (II Corinthians 5:17). All spiritual blessings are in Christ. (Ephesians 1:3). Salvation, access to the blood of Christ, and his grace, are found in Christ. (Ephesians 1:7). Reconciliation takes place in Christ. (Ephesians 2:16). Eternal life is in Christ. (I John 5:11). Those who die in the Lord will be blessed. (Revelation 14:13). Are you in Christ? Are you in the church or body?

Secondly, preaching Christ involves the preaching of the name of Jesus. What is the good news about his name? His name stands for his authority. God the Father said, "this is my beloved Son, hear ye him." (Matthew 17:5). Why should we listen to Christ? He has all authority in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18). John 5:27 says that the Father has, "...given him authority to execute judgment." We must submit to Christ's authority if we are to be saved. Christ is the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. (Hebrews 5:8-9). If

Christ has all authority that means that we can overcome sin, Satan, and death. (John 8:34, 36; John 3:8; Hebrews 2:14; Revelation 1:17-18).

The name of Christ also stands for his character. His character was sinless. He once asked, "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" (John 8:46). Has any other human being ever dared to ask such a question? No! He did no sin; neither was there guile found in his mouth. (I Peter 2:12; I John 3:5). Christians are those who strive to imitate Jesus. (I Corinthians 11:1).

The name of Christ stands for his majesty. The word majesty means, "greatness, honor, and glory." In I Timothy 6:15-16 Paul declared, "...who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; ...who only hath immortality, dwelling in light which no man can approach thereunto, whom no man hath seen; nor can see; to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen." Paul again wrote, "Now unto the King, eternal, immortal; invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory, forever and ever." (I Timothy 1:17). Yes, Jesus is worthy of all honor and glory we can give him. In II Peter 1:16 Peter wrote, that they were eyewitnesses of his majesty: Truly, Jesus is the most majestic figure in human history.

The name of Christ also stands for his power. Thank God his power works in us. (Ephesians 3:20-21). Paul said; "I can do all things through Christ which strengthen me. (Philippians 4:13). Through the power of Christ the universe was created. (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16-17), Christ is almighty. Revelation 1:8 says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord which is and was and is to come, the almighty."

Finally, the name of Christ stands for his rank. He is the head of the body which is the church. (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). He is the Lord of lords and King of kings as we noted previously. (Revelation 14:17). He is indeed the Supreme Being in this universe. God the Father gave him all power of authority in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18).

In the third place, we learn that preaching Christ includes the plan of salvation. The very step that so many people leave out today (baptism) is the step that Philip and the Apostles put in! Notice also Philip as he preaches to the Ethiopian eunuch. Acts 8:35—39 says, "And Philip opened his mouth and beginning at the same scripture preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest; with all thine heart thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water both Philip and the eunuch: and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing."

Baptism is essential to salvation. (Mark 16:16). Baptism is a part of the new birth. It puts one into the kingdom of God. (John 3:5). Baptism is necessary for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38). Baptism is a command (Acts 10:48). In baptism sins are washed away. (Acts 22:16). Baptism puts us into the death of Christ, where his blood was shed. (Romans 6:3-6). Baptism puts us into Christ.

**(Galatians 3:27). To be in Christ is to be a new creature.
(II Corinthians 5:17). Baptism saves us. (I Peter 3:21).**

**People were baptized immediately as they responded
to the gospel. (Act 2:41; 16:33; 18:8; 11:5).**

**Are you in the Kingdom ? Have you submitted to the
a authority of Christ? Have you been baptized (immersed)
into Christ's spiritual body ?**

Lesson 10

FALLING IN LOVE WITH JESUS

If you were to ask me to define the word Christian, I would say that a Christian is someone who has fallen in love with Jesus. A Christian is someone who has married Christ. Paul wrote, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye are made dead to the law through the body of Christ, that ye should be married unto another, that ye might bring forth fruit unto God." (Romans 7:4). Again Paul wrote, "For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy : for I espoused you to one husband that I may present you a chaste virgin unto Christ." (II Corinthians 11:2).

Are you in love with Christ ? Do you know him better than any other person? Does he mean more to you than anyone or anything? Please consider the following thoughts that will enable you to know if you are in love with Christ.

First of all, in Matthew 22:37-38 Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment."

We must love God with all our hearts. That is, God must be loved with our emotions. Christ declared, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

(Matthew 5:4). Romans 12:9 says that we are to abhor evil. We are to be fervent in spirit serving the Lord. (Romans 12:11). Christians are to rejoice in hope. (Romans 12:12). Mourning, abhorring, fervent, and rejoicing are words full of emotion. We must love God with these and other emotions.

We must love God with all our souls. The word soul refers to our lives and our spirits. Christ taught, "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that looseth his life for my sake shall find it." (Matthew 10:39). God is a Spirit and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24). Paul said, we must pray and sing with the spirit and with the understanding. (I Corinthians 14:15). We love God when our spirits worship him and when our lives are dedicated to his service.

Finally, we must love God with all our mind or intellect. We would do well to imitate the noble Bereans, who searched the scriptures daily. (Acts 17:11). They used their minds to determine whether or not Paul taught them the truth. We must study to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (II Timothy 2:15). When we study God's word, apply God's word, and preach the word of God to the lost, we are loving God with our minds. Paul said, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs." (Colossians 3:16).

Secondly, if we love Jesus we will keep his commandments. In John 14:15 Jesus said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." In John 14:23 the Saviour

declared, "...if a man love me, he will keep my words..."

Christians are commanded to love their enemies, neighbors, and brethren. (Matthew 5:44; 22:39; John 13:34-35).

They are also commanded to preach the gospel to the world. Jesus said, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded them, and lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world." (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16).

God's people are commanded to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. (Matthew 6:33). The kingdom is the church and righteousness is God's will revealed in the New Testament.

The disciples of Christ are commanded to lay not up for themselves treasures on earth but rather, they are to lay up spiritual treasures in heaven. (Matthew 6:19-21).

Christians are expected to suffer for Christ. "Strive to enter in by the narrow gate, for many I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." The word strive means, "to agonize, wrestle, or struggle." The Christian life will bring suffering. Paul told Timothy, "They that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer presecution." (II Timothy 3:11).

Christians are also commanded to prepare for the second coming of Christ. Matthew 24:44 says, "Therefore, be ye also ready, for in an hour that ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

Finally, Christians were commanded to believe in Christ. (John 8:24). They were commanded to repent. (Luke 13:3).

They were commanded to confess the sweet name of Jesus. (Matthew 10:32-33). They were commanded to be baptized into the name of the Sacred Three. (Matthew 28:19).

Many people believe that these and other commandments are too hard to keep. Not so! John worte, "For this is the love of God, that ye keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." (I John 5:3).

Thirdly, why should we love Jesus? We should love Christ because he died for us. The prophet Isaiah foretold Christ's death for man. "For he shall grow before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground: he hath no form nor comliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs and hath carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But 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. All we are like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53: 2-6).

We should love Christ because he died to save us. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man one might even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were still yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then being justified by his blood, we shall

be saved from wrath through him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God by the death of his Son, much more then shall we be saved by his life." (Romans 5:6-19).

Christ Jesus should be the object of our love because he gives us hope. We have hope of living with him forever. In John 14:1-3 Christ declared, "Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am, there ye may be also." This hope of heaven is an anchor to our souls. (Hebrews 6:19).

Our Lord should be adored by us because of the power he has made available to Christians. Paul, in Ephesians 3:20 wrote, "Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to his power that worketh in us." God's power works in and through us. Again Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Philippians 4:13).

Finally, we should love Christ because he is our Friend. He has been tempted in all points such as we, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15). Christ was the God-man. He was the man-God. Therefore, he understands what it is like to be human. What a friend we have in Jesus. He is a friend that will stand by us in death. David declared, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me." (Psm. 23:4). In John 11:25 Christ taught, "I am

the resurrection and the life. He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." Our Lord will also stand by us in judgment. Revelation 3:5 says, "He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garmets, and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life; but I will confess his name before my Father and his angels."

If we fail to love Christ and his word, we will be building our lives on a sandy foundation that will crumble in the midst of the storm of life. (Matthew 7:24-27). Those who do not love Christ and his word will be judged by Christ and his word. (John 12:48). Those who do not love Christ are living under a curse. (I Corinthians 16:22). Christians who leave their first love will pay a terrible price. (Revelation 2:4-5).

Lesson 11

THE POWER OF THE CROSS

At 5:30 A.M. on July 16, 1945 a light brighter than a thousand suns flashed above the desert sands of New Mexico. One scientist cried out, "My God, we have created hell!" The first atomic bomb had been exploded.

On August 6, 1945 an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan. One third of its population was killed or injured. Three days later in Nagasaki, Japan a second atomic bomb was dropped. One half of the people were killed or injured.

The world was shocked at these events. They were horrified at the power of man. Now of course we have the hydrogen and neutron bombs. We have then nuclear weapons that are far more powerful than the atomic bomb. Man now possesses enough power to destroy all life from the face of the earth. The superpowers will not use this awesome power because they fear the ultimate consequences.

I want you to know that there is a power on earth even greater than these. It is the cross of Christ! Paul in I Corinthians 1 : 18 said, "For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us who are saved, it is the power of God." Let us now look at the power of

the cross.

First of all, there is power in the cross to direct our attention to Jesus. Jesus in John 12:32 declared, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto myself". When we see Christ, we see the following:

We see the Christ who became the son of man that we might become the sons of God. Paul describes Christ taking the robe of human flesh in Philippians 2:7—8, "...taking upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, even the death of the cross." Because Christ became man, Paul could write, "And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint—heirs with Christ." (Romans 8:17). John said, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God." (I John 3:1).

Christ became poor that we might become rich. II Corinthians 8:9 states, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich." Yes, because of Christ, we can lay up for ourselves spiritual treasures in heaven. (Matthew 6:19-21). The cross made it all possible.

The cross is able to direct our attention to the Christ who became the man of sorrows that we might become men and women of joy. We are told to rejoice in the Lord always. Evermore are Christians to rejoice. (Isaiah 53:3; Philippians 4:4; I Thessalonians 5:16). With great joy Christians have drawn water out of the well of salvation. (Isaiah 12:3).

The cross directs our attention upon the Christ who

came to earth that we might go to heaven. John 14:1-3 says, "Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me. For in my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will bring you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

My friends, we need desperately to keep our eye on the Christ of the cross. Paul in Hebrews 12:1-3 wrote, "... let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus who is the author and the perfecter of our salvation; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross despising shame, and hath set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such gainsaying of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."

In the second place, the cross has the power to divide. Consider now Luke 23:39-43. "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him saying, if thou be the Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering and said, dost thou not even fear God, seeing that thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly: for we receive the due reward for our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus answered and said unto him, verily I say unto thee, today thou shalt be with me in paradise." In this text the cross is dividing one man from another. At the cross we see a clear cut line of distinction between the saved and the lost.

Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me..."

(Matthew 12:30). Either we submit to the cross and partake of all its wonderful benefits, or we reject the cross and suffer the everlasting consequences! Christ taught us that no man can serve two masters. (Matthew 6:24).

Thirdly, there is power in the cross to damn. Jesus said, "...he that believeth not shall be demand." (Mark 16:16). Christ has the power to damn the soul of men because he has all power in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18). Hear the Son of God. "Fear not him that is able to kill the body but is not able to kill the soul. But rather fear him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." (Matthew 10:28). Because of Christ's death upon the cross and his resurrection from the dead, he has been given power over all life. He has power over the world of the dead. He has power that he will exercise on the day of judgment. (Revelation 1:17-18; Hebrews 2:14; Matthew 25:31-46).

Finally, in the fourth place let us learn that there is power in the cross to deliver. In Romans 11:26 Paul quotes the prophet Isaiah, "There shall come out of Zion the deliverer." Christ has come into the world to deliver us from this present evil world. (Galatians 1:4). He delivers us out of darkness. (Colossians 1:13). Christ will come one day to deliver us into the presence of the Father. "Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver the kingdom unto God, even the Father." (I Corinthians 15:24). Jesus said, "...no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6). Christ will deliver men of every tribe, people, tongue, and nation into the everlasting presence of our God. (Revelation 5:9).

The cross is the most powerful thing on earth. Will

you submit to it? Will you accept the pardon that it provides by submitting yourself to Jesus' plan of salvation?

Jesus said, "Except a man believe that I am he (the Son of God), he shall die in his sins." (John 8:24). Jesus said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all indeed likewise perish." (Luke 13:3). The Lord said, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him also will I confess before my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 10:32). The Saviour declared, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. . ." (Mark 16:16).

The cross can either be a means of salvation or damnation. The decision is up to you.