

# Chapter One

## The Gospels

### **INTRODUCTION.**

This study will include a section on each of the four gospels, but will concentrate on the overall message of Jesus Christ as revealed in a composite way from these four different perspectives.

The word 'gospel' is never used in the New Testament as a book. It always means 'good news' and is derived from two Anglo Saxon words "God" (good) and "spell" (story or tidings). Really there is only one gospel, recorded for us by four different writers. The good news is that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" - JOHN 3:16.

This message comes through clearly in each of these four books. While there are many things mentioned of Jesus in only one or another of these records, yet all four concentrate in detail on the crucifixion and resurrection - and Jesus said that this was the reason He came into the world - JOHN 12:27. He is the only man in history who was born to die.

None of these books is really a biography of Jesus. Each writer gives a few details and then keeps the cross central to his record. John said that if all the things Jesus did were recorded, the world could not contain the books. JOHN 21:25.

Matthew, Mark and Luke are called "Synoptic" gospels because they all take the same general outline of Jesus' life and ministry. (Synoptic comes from Greek words meaning "taking the same view"). John is called a "Didactic " gospel which means "a teaching or instructing style". John's emphasis is much more on the actual doctrine of Christ than the other three gospels.

There are definite reasons for the writing of four gospels rather than just one biography:

### **Different Aspects of Jesus Christ.**

**1.** The main reason is to show the different aspects of Jesus life and ministry.

Matthew presents Him as KING.  
Mark presents Him as SERVANT.  
Luke presents His HUMANITY.  
John presents His DEITY.

These four aspects actually sum up the message of the four gospels.

Other parts of scripture also show these four perspectives. and were actually prophecies of the Coming Messiah.

In the Banners of the 12 tribes of Israel, the four leading tribes line up with the message of the Gospels.

Judah's banner featured a LION.  
Ephraim's banner featured an OX.  
Reuben's banner featured a MAN.  
Dan's banner featured an EAGLE.

These same features are seen in Ezekiel's vision of the four faced beings. EZEK. 1:10

They correspond with the gospels as follows:

JUDAH	LION		MATTHEW	KING	
EPHRAIM		OX		MARK	SERVANT
RUEBEN	MAN		LUKE		HUMANITY
DAN		EAGLE		JOHN	DEITY

This fourfold revelation of Jesus and His work is seen in the construction of the Tabernacle. The Outer Gate, which gave entrance to the courtyard where the Brazen Altar - a type of the Cross, dominated the scene, was hung on four pillars. The view of Jesus' redemptive work at Calvary is brought to us by four "pillars of the Church".

To show that this is not taking the analogy too far, we further observe that the second entrance into the Tabernacle, which opened the way into the greater revelation of God, i.e. the Holy Place, was suspended on five pillars. The Epistles of the New Testament are built on the foundation of the Gospels and take us to a greater revelation of the purpose of the Cross of Christ. There were five authors of the Epistles!

Paul, Peter, John, James and Jude.

Jesus is also seen in these four books in the ministering role of prophet, priest, king and God summing up all the needs of mankind in one Messiah.

- Matthew - King - the Government of God
- Mark - Prophet - God's servant - emphasis on miraculous
- Luke - Priest - Ministering to people's needs
- John - God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.

**2.** Another reason for there being four gospels is the nationalities of the people they were written for in the first place.

- Matthew was the Gospel to the Jews.
- Mark was written with the Romans in mind.
- Luke was written with appeal to Greeks.
- John was primarily teaching for Believers.

All these Gospels were written or compiled within the generation following Pentecost by "eyewitnesses" of Jesus Christ.

# Chapter Two

## Matthew

### **AUTHOR.**

Matthew - also called Levi - a former publican or tax collector. MATT. 9:9, MARK. 2:13. He writes from the aspect of the Teacher.

### **MESSAGE OF MATTHEW.**

The main theme of Matthew is centred on the Kingdom of God and its King and to show that Jesus of Nazareth was the Kingly Messiah of Jewish prophecy.

This is seen in two ways:

- a. The words Kingdom or Kingdom of Heaven or Son of David occur 94 times in the book.
- b. The genealogy of Jesus is traced back to Abraham in three distinct sections - MATT. 1.
  - To Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, to establish Jesus as a Jew and the fulfillment of Genesis 17:6 - "Kings shall come out of thee".
  - To David, to establish Jesus' claim as heir to David's throne.
  - To the fall of the Jewish royal line at the Babylonian Captivity. This established the vacancy of the throne.

(Each of these three sections was fourteen generations = 42. The factors of 42 are 7 and 6. 7 is the number of perfection and 6 is the number of man. Even in His genealogies we see Jesus as the Perfect Man.)

NOTE - When the wise men came seeking Jesus, they did not ask for He who was born "Saviour of the World" but for He who was born "King of the Jews".

### **KEY WORD OF MATTHEW.**

"Fulfilled" - occurs 12 times and every time it is a reference to the prophecies of the Old-Testament coming to pass. 1:22, 2:15, 17, 23, :17, 12:17, 13:35, 21:4, 26:54, 56, 27:9, Other references are made to things fulfilled in Christ at least 60 times.

### **KEY VERSE:**

MATTHEW 27:37 - "And set-up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS".

### **REFERENCES EXCLUSIVE TO MATTHEW.**

- a. The Royal Genealogy - 1:1-17
- b. The visit of the Wise Men - 2:1
- c. The Flight into Egypt - 2:13-14

- d. The Slaughter of the Children - 2:16
- e. Jesus' return to Nazareth - 2:19-23
- f. The Sermon on the Mount - chapters 5-7
- g. Peter walking on Water - 14:28-31
- h. Jesus' detailed denunciation of Pharisees - chapter 23
- i. Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver - 26:15, 27:3-10
- j. Pilate's wife's dream - 27:19
- k. Appearance of resurrected saints - 27:52
- l. The soldiers on watch at tomb - 27:64-66
- m. The earthquake - 28:2
- n. The Bribing of the soldiers - 28:12-13
- o. The Great Commission - 28:19-20

**MIRACLES EXCLUSIVE TO MATTHEW.**

- a. Two blind men healed - 9:28-30
- b. Money from the fish - 17:24-27

**PARABLES EXCLUSIVE TO MATTHEW.**

- a. The Tares - 13:24
- b. The Hidden Treasure - 13:44
- c. The Goodly Pearl - 13:45
- d. The fish in the Net - 13:47
- e. The Unmerciful Servant - 13:23
- f. The Labourers in the vineyard - 20:1-6
- g. The two sons - 21:28-32
- h. The Marriage of the King's Son - 22:1-14
- i. The Ten Virgins - 25:1-13
- j. The Talents - 25:14-30
- k. The Sheep and Goats - 25:31-46

Matthew begins with the establishing of Jesus as the promised Messiah, heir to David's, throne, who shall save His people from their sins. It ends with the King commanding His gospel to be preached to all the world. The Jewish Messiah becomes the Universal Lord.

Only in the Gospel of Matthew do we find any reference to the entity Jesus would bring about to include both Jews and Gentile in unity the Church. MATT. 16:13-19. The word "church" comes from the Greek word "ecclesia" which means "called out". This is the first mention of this new concept of both Jew and Gentile being called out of their respective heritages into another relationship with God. For this reason the Great Commission includes "all nations".

# Chapter Three

## Mark

### **AUTHOR.**

John Mark, son of one of the Mary's of the New Testament was inspired to record this section of scripture. He was a nephew of Barnabas and went with him and Paul on at least one missionary journey which he did not finish. Paul and Barnabas disagreed over him and parted company - Note ACTS 12:12, COL. 4:10, and ACTS 15:36-41. He was probably converted through the preaching of Peter- 1 PET. 5:13. (Paul claimed both Timothy and Titus to be his sons in the faith - 1 TIM. 1:2, and TITUS 1:4). In any case he was known to be a close disciple of Peter. The Early Church leaders such as Clement of Alexandria and Justin Martyr claim that this gospel was actually authorized by Peter and that Mark was the scribe. The referred to it as the Gospel according to St. Peter. Peter's energetic and abrupt style is easily seen in the book which clearly shows the perspective of the Evangelist. As (already) noted this gospel was written with appeal to the Romans and the emphasis is on deeds rather than doctrines. Very few Old Testament quotations are used and Jewish words and customs are explained (7:3-4, 11). Latin words are used often. Almost everything in this book is recorded in other gospels but from differing points of view.

### **MESSAGE OF MARK.**

The main theme of this book is that Christ has come as the "Servant of the Lord".

It is the only one of the Gospels which includes no genealogy for Jesus. A servant did not have a lineage or heritage recorded, but free-men took great pride in theirs. Jesus came "despised and rejected of men"- IS. 53:3, "and was made of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a servant" PHIL. 2:7.

The whole of this book is one of activity - the life of the servant In the space of a few chapters, 19 miracles are recorded. Eight show His power over disease - 1:31,41,2:3-12, 3:1-5, 5:25, 7:32, 8:23, 10:46. Five show His power over nature 4:39, 6:41, 49, 8:8-9, 11:13-14. Four reveal His power over demons - 1:25,5:1-13, 7:25-30, 9:26. Two manifest His power over death - 5:42, 16:9.

He came to serve, and the theme of this book shows His overwhelming compassion for the needs of the people. Note - MARK 10:45.

### **KEY WORD.**

"Straightway" and similar words such as "forthwith" or "immediately" show the response of the servant. Instant obedience to the will of God.

### **KEY VERSE:**

MARK 10:45 "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many".

## **THE DISPUTED 16th CHAPTER.**

Many of those who deny the power of God have attempted to show that the last half of this chapter should not be included in the scripture. The main complaint is that the verses 9-20 do not appear in some Greek manuscripts of Mark. However, there are over 4200 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. At least 618 of these manuscripts contain the gospels, and only 2 do not have these last verses of Mark 16. To be consistent, if Mark 16 is left out, many other passages of the Bible would have to be too.

The most clear proof of Mark 16's authenticity is that the signs spoken of by the Lord - particularly that of casting out devils, speaking with tongues and healing the sick are all emphasized in other scriptures. As for divine protection against snakes and deadly poison - Paul was delivered from this very thing - ACTS. 28:3-6.

# Chapter Four

## Luke

### **AUTHOR AND REASON FOR THE BOOK**

Luke was probably a Greek - thought to be a native of Antioch in Syria. He is first mentioned in the Bible in Acts 16:10 as a companion of Paul.

He wrote this book as a personal letter to a friend named Theophilus - 1:3. Many others had written their accounts of Jesus' life, some of them spurious - 1:1. Luke felt the need to set the record straight since he had a perfect understanding of all things from the very beginning. His gospel, written from the standpoint of a historian was designed to give a certainty of faith in Christ. 1:4.

### **MESSAGE OF LIFE.**

The whole of this gospel emphasizes the true and total humanity of Jesus. He became one with us in all things except our sin, and on the cross He took even that.

The genealogy given in chapter 3:23-38 is quite different from that of Matthew 1. That was traced through His foster father to establish his right to the throne of David. Luke's record which traces his line from his mother, also goes back to David, but then proceeds all the way to Adam to show Jesus' identification with the whole human race.

While none of the gospels is complete in itself, Luke gives the most comprehensive coverage of Jesus' whole life. Particular attention is paid to the Incarnation - the taking on of humanity by the Eternal Word - second person of the Godhead. Chapters 1-2.

### **KEY WORD:**

"Son of Man".

### **KEY VERSE:**

LUKE 19:10 "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

### **SECTIONS EXCLUSIVE TO LUKE.**

38 sections of Luke's gospel are not recorded elsewhere in the other gospels, including Gabriel's visit to Zacharias and Mary, the Birth of John the Baptist and of Jesus, the visit of the Shepherds, Jesus' presentation in the Temple and the words of Simeon and Anna - all found in chapters 1-2.

His visit to the Temple at 12 years of age (2:41), His sermon and Rejection at Nazareth (4:18), the draught of fishes (5:4-9), the widow of Nain's son raised to life (7:12-16). Many parables and almost all of chapters 10-18 do not appear elsewhere.

Luke also records the healing of Malchus' ear (22:50-51) and Jesus' resurrection, and his appearance to Peter 24:34;

Luke begins with heaven coming to humanity, and ends with humanity going to heaven.

# Chapter Five

## John

### **AUTHOR.**

He was John the brother of James and son of Zebedee and Salome. He does not mention his own name in this gospel, seeking to draw all attention to Christ. He writes from the perspectives of a witness to the truth. 1 JOHN 1:2. This gospel was written later than the others to counteract false teachings about Jesus. Some were denying that He was really God.

### **UNIQUENESS OF JOHN.**

This gospel is quite different from the other three. Only seven incidents are found in Matthew, Mark and Luke - John the Baptist word concerning Christ, the feeding of 5000, walking on the sea, the Last Supper, Jesus' anointing at Bethany, His death, and His resurrection. All other parts of John are unique to this gospel

### **KEY WORD.**

"Believe". This word occurs 100 times in John, which is more than in all the other Gospels, Acts, Romans and Galatians combined.

### **KEY VERSES:**

JOHN 3:16 and JOHN 20:31.

### **MESSAGE OF JOHN.**

Its definite message is that Jesus is God's son and that salvation is only possible by believing in Him.

The Deity of Christ (His being God) is testified to all the way through this book.

The book begins like Genesis - "In the beginning" and immediately establishes Jesus' eternal nature. He was not created and never began. He always was with the Father. He did not receive life. Life is in Him. 1:1-4. Because of this, Eternal life is open to all who receive Him by faith.

**a.** There are seven (perfect number) declarations of Jesus' Deity by people in this Gospel.

- i) John the Baptist - 1:34
- ii) Nathaniel - 1:49
- iii) Peter - 6:69
- iv) Martha - 11:27
- v) Thomas - 20:28
- vi) John - 20:31
- vii) Jesus - 10:36

**b.** On eight (number of resurrection) other occasions, Jesus claims to be the "I AM". This was distinctively and exclusively the name for God in the Old Testament. Note EX. 3:14.

- i) I AM the Bread of Life - 6:35
- ii) I AM the Light of the World - 8:12
- iii) Before Abraham was I AM - 8:58
- iv) I AM the good Shepherd - 10:11 v, I AM the resurrection and the Life - 11:25
- vi) I AM the way, the truth and the Life - 14:6
- vii) I AM the true vine - 15:1
- viii) I AM ("he" is not in scripture) - 18:8

**c.** Over half of this book is given to the events and words of Jesus during His last days. John's main emphasis is on the bringing about of Eternal Life through faith in the Son of God. Chapters 13-17 all occurred in the Upper Room during the Last Supper and were spoken only to His disciples.

**d.** There are eight miracles recorded in this gospel (only two are recorded elsewhere).

- i) Water into wine - 2:1-11
- ii) Healing Nobleman's Son - 4:46-54
- iii) Healing of Impotent Man - 5:1-14
- iv) Feeding the 5000 - 6:1-24
- v) Walking on water - 6:15-21
- vi) Healing of Blind Man - 9:1-41
- vii) Raising of Lazarus - 11:1-57
- viii) Second draught of fishes - 21:3-14

Those miracles are declared by John to be "signs" - 20:30-31. All of them have teaching significance for us.

All of them show the power of Jesus' word. Every one except the walking on water was a spoken miracle.

All of these miracles revealed his glory. Note 2:11, 3:2, 6:14.

**e.** John's gospel shows Jesus' total commitment to the redemption of mankind - 12:27.

Note His sermon to Nicodemus (Chap. 3), the message to the Woman of Samaria (chap. 4), His message to the Pharisees (chap. 5:17-47), His message to the multitudes (6:26-65).

All these emphasize spiritual salvation, not merely the message of physical needs. While the key word is "believe", another two words which figure very prominently and show this burden of Jesus to redeem man are "Eternal Life".

## **THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE GOSPELS.**

### **1. HIS PRE-EXISTENCE.**

His birth was not His beginning, for He always was. It was but the beginning of His humanity. JOHN 1:1-4, 1:14, 18, 3:13, 8:58.

### **2. HIS INCARNATION.**

The virgin birth is denied by unbelieving theologians, but it is absolutely basic to the Gospel. If Jesus was not virgin born, He was but one of us in our sin, and could never have been our redeemer. If the Bible is false at this point, it is false everywhere. The fact is that God took

upon Himself flesh and lived amongst us. The Life of the Eternal Word (JOHN 1:1) was planted in the womb of Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit. LUKE 1:30-38, JOHN 1:14, MATT. 1:20. By the Incarnation, He became one with us in our Humanity.

### **3. HIS DEITY.**

While truly human, He never ceased at the same time to be truly God. He laid aside the glory of His Godhead, but not His Godnature. PHIL. 2:6-8. He was and is God - MATT. 1:23. LUKE 1:32 and 35. 43, 2:11, JOHN 8:58, JOHN 1:10,14.

### **4. HIS SINLESS LIFE.**

He lived on earth for 33 years and never once committed sin and thus qualified to become our perfect substitute and sacrifice. He defeated Satan in the Temptation - MATT. 4:1-11, LUKE 4:1-3. (Adam and Eve failed in the same principles). No-one could accuse him of sin. JOHN 8:46. The Father testified of His holiness - LUKE 3:22, MATT. 17:5. Many others testified to His righteousness - LUKE 23:41, ~7, 5:8, MATT. 27:4 and 24.

### **5. HIS REDEMPTIVE SACRIFICE.- MATT. 27, MARK 15, LUKE 23, JOHN 19.**

As previously stated, He was born to die. MATT. 1:21, JOHN 12:27, MATT. 16:21. All of the prophecies of the Old Testament relating to man's redemption climaxed at the Cross of Calvary. Though it was the foulest deed ever done in mankind's history, it brought us cleansing from our sin. LUKE 24:46-47, JOHN 1:29. MATT. 26:28 and JOHN 3:16.

### **6. HIS RESURRECTION - MATT. 28, MARK 16, LUKE 24, JOHN 20**

If the grave could have claimed Him, it would have been apparent that He was no different to the rest of sinful mankind. The sting of death is sin. 1 COR. 15:56. His resurrection proved His righteousness and made our redemption valid.

### **7. HIS ASCENSION - MARK 16:19, LUKE 24:51**

The Gospels begin with the declaration that God has come to earth to redeem the human race. MATT. 1:21-23. The gospel record concludes with the account of Jesus' ascension to heaven - mission accomplished. The human race, His own race now, is redeemed. Satan, sin, death and hell are conquered. This is the "Good News".

**JESUS IS LORD!**

# Chapter Six

## The Book of Acts

### INTRODUCTION

#### The Name of the Book

The Book is commonly called the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. This is not really correct, for they are the Acts of the Holy Spirit in co-operation with the Church. ACTS 5:34. This is an explanation of Mark 16:20, which declares that the disciples went everywhere preaching the word, and the Lord worked with them, confirming the word with signs following. ACTS 1:1 tells us that the Gospels are the record of all that Jesus BE.G.AN to do and to teach. The Book of Acts is the record of what He CONTINUED to do through the Holy Spirit and His disciples. The Book of Acts is the only New Testament book without any formal or logical conclusion. In fact, it is an open book. The Holy Spirit and believers have been adding chapters of similar nature to the original 28 right through the history of the Church. This is particularly so in modern time.

#### The Author of Acts.

Luke, the physician, was inspired of the Lord to record these events and truths. He had written the Gospel of Luke as a letter to his acquaintance, Theophilus, setting in order the details of Jesus' life. The Book of Acts is his second letter to this person and is a sequel to his gospel. Note LUKE. 1:1-4, ACTS 1:1-2.

#### The Theme of Acts.

Luke records that the apostles and disciples emphasized the Lordship of Jesus Christ with particular reference to His resurrection from the dead. Mention is made in Chapter 1:3 of 'many infallible proofs' of His victory over death. The main point of their sermons, and the proof of His Messiahship rests upon the fact that death could not hold Him. ACTS 2:24. For this reason, Peter insisted that the replacement for Judas would have to be one who was a witness of the Resurrection. Note ACTS 1:21, 2:24,31,32, 3:15,26, 4:2,10,33 5:30, 10:40, 13:30,33,34,37, 17:18,31-32, 24:21, 26:8.

#### Divisions of the Book.

- a. Personalities.
  - i) Peter, chaps 1- 12,
  - ii) Paul, chaps 13-28
- b. Nationalities.
  - i) Jews, chaps 1- 13:45
  - ii) Gentiles, chaps 13:46 - chap 28
- c. Locations.
  - i) Jerusalem, chap 1- 7,
  - ii) Samaria, chap 8, uttermost Parts, chap 13-28, thus fulfilling the word of Jesus in ACTS 1:8.

### **THREE KEYS TO THE BOOK OF ACTS**

It is without doubt that the Early Christians were supremely successful in being able to establish a faith and order of spiritual service which triumphed despite a totally hostile environment. Neither the bigotry of Judaism, the intellectualism of the Greeks or the military might of Rome had any impact on the "Early Church" during the record of the Book of Acts. Rather, the message the disciples preached overcame all obstacles so that it was said 'these who have turned the world upside down have come here also.' ACTS 17:6. However, this success was not accidental, neither can it be entirely explained by God's sovereignty. There was a definite reason for this success. In fact, it is a threefold reason.

#### **1. The Holy Spirit.**

The Baptism which the 120 men and women received in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost is the basis for the rest of this book. Without this experience, Acts would never have been written. This endowment of power which Jesus had promised them (JN 14:12, LK. 24:49, ACTS 1:5,8) actually brought them into a new dimension where it was just as though Jesus were along side everyone of them in the flesh. The power of the Holy Spirit anointing them in the same way as Jesus was anointed ACTS 10:38) is the key to the miraculous, the change in their witness and the rapid growth of the Church.

**a)** The miraculous was promised by Jesus in John 14:12 as a direct fruit of the outpouring of the Spirit. Notice that Jesus said, "BECAUSE I go to my Father". ACTS 2:33 explains what happened when He did ascend to the Father. Jesus performed no miracle until He received the Holy Spirit's endowment. The miracles which the disciples had performed prior to Pentecost were due to the explicitly delegated authority of Christ, and restricted to the few to whom He personally gave it. LUKE 19:1, 10:1,9. After Pentecost, they were endowed to meet every need they confronted in their own ministry.

**b)** This experience of power totally changed them from fearful men hiding in a locked room to fearless men who would boldly preach in the centre of the city and declare that the Chief Priests had murdered the Messiah.

**c)** The rapid growth of the Church was produced by the universal outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Every believer received the scene empowering as the Apostles and demonstrated the life and power of Jesus. The world was not able to withstand the impact of Apostles, elders, deacons, laymen and women, young and old, all demonstrating beyond argument that Jesus was indeed risen from the dead. The Baptism with the Holy Spirit produced the supernatural element which the antagonists could not dispute or suppress. ACTS 4:13-14, 16. The key verse to the whole of the book of Acts is 1:8. Note the following scriptures which indicate the place the Holy Spirit had in the lives of these early believers. 2:4,17,18,38, 4:8,31, 5:3,32, 6:3,4, 7:55, 8:15,17, 9:17,31, 10:19,44-47, 11:15-16,24, 13:2,4,52, 15:8,28, 16:6, 19:2, 6, 20:23,28, 21:11, 28:25.

#### **2. The Word of God.**

Even a brief glance through the book will indicate that these men placed great importance on the Word of God. Their sermons were practically all quotations from the Old Testament scriptures or the Words of Jesus. They did not lean on experience alone but answered every query with a reference to the Word of God, instead of leaning on logic or rationalism. Note ACTS 2:16,29-30 4:24-28, 11:15-16, 13:40-41, 15:15-17, 18:28, 28:25-28.

The Christians took the Word of God at face value and had implicit faith in it. They found the Old Testament scriptures totally applicable to the New Testament situation, and they acted in accordance with the provisions and promises of the Word. We do not find them

compromising or explaining away the promises of God. Note ACTS 4:31, 6:7,4, 8:4, 11:24, 19:20.

They found that the speaking of this divine, creative Word which is the equivalent of the person of Christ, produced the same results as the former manifestations of the Word. In GEN. 1, God SAID, and that spoken Word brought order out of earthly chaos. In the Gospels, there is the record of the Son of God who is the Word, (JN 1:1) speaking life and order into the chaos of human experience. Sickness was replaced with health, death fled at His command, demons were cast out and ruined lives made whole. So in the ministry of the Early Church, the spoken Word of God had a prominent and powerful place.

### **3. The Name of Jesus.**

The disciples used Jesus' Name as their authority. He had given the use of His Name to all that believed in Him. MK 16:17, MATT. 18:20, JN. 14:13-14, 15:16, 16:23-24. The use of Jesus' Name was not some magical formula or mysterious practice. Behind the Name is the authority of the person. The use of His Name in performing miracles is a further proof of His resurrection. The authority of the greatest men on earth does not last one moment beyond their death.

Yet demons, sickness and circumstances still respond to a command in the Name of Jesus. Peter and John declared that there was no mysterious reason for the healing of the lame man at the Gate Beautiful (ACTS 3). Simple faith in the authority of Jesus' name was the whole answer. It was not even their own personalities or holiness that had effected the miracle - just the Name of Jesus. Modern Christians tend to look for something more complicated and self satisfying. But the testimony of the Book of Acts is explicit.... There is unlimited authority in the Name of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit was the motive power, the Word of God their platform, and the Name of Jesus, their weapon.

## **II PRECIS OF THE EARLY CHURCH**

**1.** The Book of Acts is a book of Foundational Principles. Almost everything which is included elsewhere in the scriptures is either explained or demonstrated here. It is really more than an account of the acts of certain apostles. It is really the inspired account of the development of the Church, and as such is the seedbed and example to the Church of the last days. In Acts we notice many firsts. The first Christian sermons, the first Baptisms in the Spirit and the first record of speaking in tongues, the first miracles distinct from Jesus' physical presence, the first Christian converts, the first persecutions, the first deacons, additions to apostolic ranks and appointment of elders, in fact the first organization of the Church. There is the first discipline meted out, the first Gentiles in the Church, and the first use of the name 'Christian'. We see the establishing of Ministry Gifts, the first martyrs, the first Missionaries, and the first Church Conference.

**2.** Throughout the Book we note the gradual development of various functions. Much of it was not planned in advance, but grew out of need or the circumstances they were forced into. They could not in many cases refer back to the Judaistic system, as there was often very little in common, though they did receive consistent revelation of the Old Testament scriptures as they related to their needs, and they also remembered the words of Jesus which gave light on their problems. However, there were many occasions when they had to seek the leading of the Holy Spirit to develop in the right lines.

**a)** They soon discovered that Preaching was the God appointed way of distributing the Word

of God. The Gospel is not subject to debate or argument, it is a declaration of Divine truth that can never be apologized for or made acceptable to either religion or logic. Paul discovered this on Mars' Hill in Athens (ACTS 17).

**b)** Early in the Church's life there was the experiment in Communal Living. This is seen to be a temporary measure, no doubt adopted because of the many believers from outlying districts who remained in Jerusalem. The practice did not continue for long, neither was it repeated in the record of the Early Church. In 1 THESS. 3:10-12 Paul recommends that everyone has a responsibility to provide for his own need and that of his family. Note 1 TIM. 5:8. There has to be a flexibility in the structure of the Church to meet a circumstance as it arises, and also to discontinue the practice when it no longer is necessary.

**c)** Discipline was forced on the Church through the hypocrisy of Ananais and Sapphira. (ACTS 5). The Church thus gradually discovered the authority to deal with the unruly. Though these were the only ones who were struck dead, Paul urged the Corinthian assembly to deliver an immoral member to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, and others from time to time were excommunicated from fellowship. It is essential to present a united front, and a pure testimony. Peter rebuked Simon Magus (ACTS 8) and Paul exercised judgement over an adversary (ACTS 13). The concept which does not include an emphasis on discipline is not love as some think it to be, but weakness and an abrogation of our responsibility to the Lord and His Church.

**d)** Appointment of Elders was never commanded by Jesus. It is a ministry in the Church which developed out of need. (ACTS 6) Progress brings its problems! Contention between the Jews and Hellenists (those who were Greek proselytes or Greek speakers) over the distribution of food to their respective widows resulted in 7 men being chosen to release the Apostles for the more necessary prayer and ministry of the Word. Most Commentators believe that 6 of the elders chosen were Grecian. The congregation with real grace trusted them to look after the Hebrew widows as well as their own. This was the first exercise in spiritual maturity.

**e)** Ministry Gifts are given by Jesus Christ to His Church to build it up and strengthen it for its task of ministering for Him. The Book of Acts sees the gradual development of various types of Ministries. The apostles are seen in differing activities throughout the Book. In chapter 6, Stephen, one of the Elders, develops into a ministry much broader than he was originally chosen for. ACTS 8 shows us Philip going from an Elder's duty to the ministry of an Evangelist. In ACTS 13, we notice prophets and Teachers in the Antioch assembly. Many of these men were not chosen or appointed to their eventual ministries, but it is obvious that their 'gift' made way for them. The Church recognized men who were chosen of the Lord, and was urged to beware of those who just wanted the pre-eminence for themselves.

**f)** Church Government in the form of Ordained Ministry was instituted by Jesus when He chose the 12 apostles. MK 3:15 However, in Acts this facility comes into sharper focus as we see these men administering the Church, establishing local assemblies, appointing elders and deacons, training younger ministers and conducting a Bible School. In Acts we also notice that there are new apostles, increasing the ranks of the original 12.

At least 10 more are mentioned in the New Testament. Note ACTS 1:26, 14:14 and ROM. 16:7 as examples. In Acts 15 the various assemblies which had total local autonomy conferred on the issue of Circumcision and keeping the Jewish Law. The apostles and elders gathered in Jerusalem to seek an answer to the question, and in a pattern for Church Conferences ever since were able to say, 'It seems good to the Holy Ghost, and to us.' ACTS 15:28. It was at this Conference that the deathblow was dealt to the system of Jewish

observances.

**g)** Up until this time, the Church was in a Transitional State. It was still very Jewish in concept, vision and practice. Many of the Christians were still zealous observers of the Laws of Commandments and ordinances. Note ACTS 21:20. For the most part, they worshipped on both Saturday, as the Jewish Sabbath, and on Sunday as a Commemoration of the Resurrection of Jesus.

Through the ministry of Paul, (the apostle to the Gentiles), the Church gradually became filled with non-Jews, and thus changed in character from a Jewish sect to a universal church. These Gentiles had no consciousness of Jewish observances and were encouraged not to adopt them. Acts 15:28-29. Paul's epistle to the Galatians is mainly for this purpose.

**h)** Had it not been for the Persecution which arose about the time of Stephen's death, the Church would have no doubt remained obscure, and confined largely to Israel. Now, the disciples fled from Jerusalem, and began speaking about Jesus, the Messiah wherever they went. This persecution was in the direct providence of God, as it established the Church in many centres and laid the foundation for future Missionary activity.

Thus a zeal to evangelize the regions beyond gripped the Church after their prejudice had been broken down by the Conversion and Baptism in the Holy Spirit of Cornelius' household, and the resulting or accompanying revelation to Peter that the Gentiles could be saved. The Book of Acts tells us only of the Missionary journeys of Paul and his assistants. However, history records that all of the apostles and many of the early believers went into every country they could reach, establishing churches as they went. In many cases, they laid the foundations of these new assemblies with their own blood and became martyrs for their Lord.

### **3. PERSONALITIES**

**a)** Peter. The impetuous apostle was chosen of the Lord to provide leadership in the initial stages of the Church's growth. He is not recognized as the head of the church, however, and in the later stages of the Book he fades from view. He did not usurp authority over the other apostles or over churches. He is not the primary speaker at the Council in Jerusalem (ACTS 15) that James is. He also was not considered infallible. After the events in Cornelius' house Peter had to give an adequate explanation of the events before the others would believe it or receive the Gentiles as fellow Christians. Paul also rebuked Peter for partiality on one occasion. GAL. 2:11-14.

Despite this, he is without doubt the first spokesman of the Church, having preached the sermon on the Day of Pentecost. Jesus gave to him the Keys of the Kingdom. MATT. 16:19. It was his sermon that opened the Kingdom to the Jews. It was Peter that was used to open the Kingdom to the Gentiles in ACTS 10. It should be noted that Peter and John were the instruments in that first mighty miracle of the healing of the cripple at the Gate Beautiful (ACTS 3). Again, it was Peter and John who were involved in the Samaritans' reception of the Holy Spirit, (ACTS 8). Peter was the first of the apostles to raise the dead.

**b)** Paul. After Acts 13, it is Paul who commands the attention of the reader. In Acts chapter 9, we read of his conversion near Damascus whilst on his way to destroy the church. Following this, the former Pharisee, and student of Gamaliel did not immediately go into the ministry, but spent 3 years in the deserts of Arabia seeking God and fellowshiping at Damascus before he went to Jerusalem to meet the Apostles. From here, he went home to Tarsus, where it is believed he stayed as long as 7 years before Barnabas went and took him

to Antioch to assist in the work there. From this time on, Antioch becomes an important centre in the Early Church. It was here that the disciples were first called Christians.

All three of Paul's missionary journeys started from this point. Chapters 13-21 records the events of these Missionary activities, whilst the rest of the book deals largely with Paul's imprisonment in Jerusalem, Ceasarea and Rome. More than any of the other Apostles, he received revelation for the Church. It was because of this that he had a thorn in the flesh. 2 COR. 12:7. He started many Gentile churches, established them in the faith, appointed elders to the oversight of them, confirmed them in the faith by return visits and prayed over them without ceasing. He was able to tell his converts-to-Christ to follow him as he followed Jesus. Without doubt, Paul is the most outstanding personality in the history of the Church, besides the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **4. MAIN MANIFESTATION OF THE MIRACULOUS.**

Jesus promised that the believers would do the miracles which He had done, and even greater ones. This is true of the Book of Acts. They saw the lame walk, many diseases healed, and demons cast out. They experienced miraculous releases from prison, numerous angelic visitations, visions, and performed Divine judgement. The sick were healed when Peter's shadow passed over them, and when handkerchiefs from Paul's body were laid upon them, they were healed and evil spirits left. The dead were raised, and even a deadly viper had no power over Paul on the island of Malta. The Early Church throbbed with supernatural vitality, and the miraculous was the rule rather than the exception.

#### **5. SERMONS.**

The Book of Acts contains many classic sermons and discourses. Much of the sermon material is quotation or interpretation of Old Testament scripture.

- a) Peter's first sermon - Acts 2:14-20
- b) Peter's second sermon- Acts 3:12-36
- c) Stephen's sermon - Acts 7:2-53
- d) Peter's third sermon - Acts 10:34-43
- e) Paul's first sermon - Acts 13:16-41
- f) Paul's second sermon - Acts 14:18-31

Add to these the various discourses by Peter, Paul, James, etc. and the Book is filled with valuable teaching and not just history.

### **IV. PATTERNS FOR THE CHURCH**

#### **1. Pentecostal Experience.**

It is essential for every believer to have his or her own personal Baptism with the Holy Spirit. The pattern of the Book of Acts is that this was not for the apostles only or for the church in Jerusalem, but for all Christians. Throughout the Book, other local churches are introduced to this experience of the power of God. Cornelius' household, Samaria, Saul at Damascus and Ephesus are notable examples. The Bible evidence is always speaking in other tongues. Can we dare suggest an alternative? ACTS 2:4, 10:46, 19:6, 9:17, 1 COR. 14:18.

#### **2. Establishing Assemblies.**

Samaria is a classic example of breaking into the devil's territory with the message of the

Gospel. There must be a demonstration of the miraculous. This assembly at Samaria was begun by the power of God, not argument as clever oratory. Once the demon powers ruled the people, having gained ascendancy by the occultism of Simon Magus. Now they were cast out and Philip was able to teach the people the things concerning the Kingdom of God. Many outstanding miracles of healing took place. This gained the attention of the city. Another facet of this assembly's beginning is the co-operation between the various ministries. Philip does not try to do it all alone. Peter and John come in to assist the believers into the Baptism of the Spirit.

### **3. Local Church Ministry.**

Antioch is the pattern for a local church. Here the assembly enjoys multiple ministry. Barnabas is the Pastor or Apostle in charge. He goes and gets Paul to assist him. Also in the assembly there are certain prophets and Teachers. It become a centre of outreach, with the various ministries coming and going.

### **4. Missions.**

Paul's Missionary tours are surely the way the Lord intended the Church's foreign activity to be conducted. Here there is no vast organizational program and the building of Mission station complexes. In these heathen countries, Paul works on the indigenous principle. Establishing churches with their own local elders and moving on to the next centre. He returns to confirm them in the faith and watch over them. But he does not hold them in a tight grip or suppress their latent talents or abilities. He allows the Holy Spirit to develop them in the way only He can.

The Book of Acts is a pattern for continuing church life. It is not just an interesting history of unusual men inspired and empowered in a way that is remote and unavailable to the Church of today. Every local congregation should see the manifestation of the miraculous follow the preaching of Jesus Christ. They should experience God-ordained Ministries and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Twentieth Century should, must and will see an intensifying of the Ministry of Jesus and the 'greater things' which He promised to the believers.

We are called not to be organizers of Christian thought, but demonstrators of the power of God in the way of the Early Church. The Book of Acts is essentially the declaration that ordinary men and women may without recourse to human skills, experience the manifestation of Deity in and through their lives... thus giving all the glory to God.

# Chapter Seven

## Romans

This is the first of the Epistles to be studied in this Bible Panorama. There are 21 Epistles altogether, 14 of them written by Paul, 1 by James, 1 by Jude, 2 by Peter and 3 by John.

Although Romans is not chronologically the first to be written it is fitting that it follows the Book of Acts as the first "teaching book" of the New Testament. It brings our salvation experience, the basis of our relationship with God, into clearer focus than any other book in the Bible. Its primary purpose is to establish the truth and the means of salvation for the whole human race. While other epistles deal with aspects of our new life in Christ, Romans concentrates on the fact of salvation.

### **AUTHOR.**

Paul (1:1-7) - written at Corinth between 58-60 AD, while he was a resident in the house of Gaius. The epistle was taken to Rome by Phoebe. Tertius was Paul's scribe for this epistle (16:22).

### **PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE.**

Evidently it was written to the group of disciples at Rome who had grown spontaneously into a church as a result of the introduction of Roman Jews and proselytes to the gospel on the Day of Pentecost. ACTS 2:10. Apparently Priscilla and Aquila, Roman Jews, were active in this church and had returned to Rome by the time Paul wrote his epistle. ACTS 18:2. ROM. 16:3.

The purpose was to establish the truth of Salvation as universal, not the exclusive preserve of the Jews, but as a "gift" by grace alone, not the reward for good works.

Paul intended to visit Rome and confirm these disciples in their faith, ROM. 1:10-15.

### **KEY VERSE.**

Romans 1:16-17 "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth: to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written. The Just shall live by faith."

### **KEY WORD.**

Justification.

### **MESSAGE OF THE EPISTLE.**

Romans contains the answer to the universal question found in the Book of Job 9:2 - "how can a man be justified with God."

Paul begins by showing the utter depravity of the human race generally. Though mankind had been exposed to the fact of God's existence and authority, they refused to acknowledge Him and became apostate and reprobate in their minds. The human race descended in

ante-diluvian days (before the flood) into such bestiality that it was destroyed with the exception of one righteous family. After the flood, even with the evil doers being purged out, the descendants of Noah soon turned again to the sins of previous generations, proving the total depravity of the whole race - ROMANS 1:18-32.

God then chose one nation - the Jews, to be especially His - a light to the rest of the world, an example of righteousness. He gave them the Law and covenants and sent them prophets and teachers, blessed them, fulfilled His promises to them, disciplined them. But this nation also proved perverse, demonstrating that all the world, Jew and Gentile alike were guilty before God. ROM. 3:9-23.

"There is none righteous, no not one" - verse 10. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" - verse 23

As a result, the universal effects of the Fall of Man into sin - i.e. the disobedience of Adam and Eve, is established beyond question. Many were made sinners by one man's disobedience - ROM 5:19. The Poison of sin and bias towards disobedience runs in our veins. It is an inescapable part of the heredity of the human race. Consequently, there is no-one that can be justified by his own works, because he is already tainted by sin.

God's purpose, however, is not to merely point out humanity's fault. Christ came not to condemn the world, but to save it. JN. 3:17. The Epistle of Romans concentrates on the answer, rather than the problem. "How can a man be justified with God?"

Praise God, through Jesus Christ. Though all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, yet we are freely justified by His grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. ROM. 3:23-24. Anyone who "believes" in Jesus (throws their entire weight upon Him, trusts Him totally for salvation) is justified.

This means that everything Jesus Christ has done has been credited to our account. His righteousness is ours.

It is a gift, it is by grace. Faith in God's promise to save us makes it real without the keeping of the former Jewish laws. Now such things as circumcision and observing the Sabbath and special feasts, etc., are no longer valid. Relationship with God is on the basis of imputed righteousness - that which is placed in our account because we believe in Christ for salvation-even though we do not deserve it.

That righteousness is the ability to come into the presence of God without fear or condemnation.

That justification, which can be loosely explained by a play on the word, - "JUST - IF - I'D" never sinned, is declared by this Epistle to come to us through a variety of means.

### **MESSAGE OF THE EPISTLE.**

- a) by grace through redemption - 3:24
- b) by faith - 3:28
- c) by the Resurrection of Jesus - 4:25
- d) by Jesus' blood - 5:9

Although there is both God's part - the redemption and resurrection of Christ, and man's part faith, yet we must never think that our justification - our right standing with God can be earned. "How can a man be justified with God?" - Not by works, but by grace alone. Martin Luther, as a young monk, discovered this great truth when crawling up the steps of a Roman

Catholic cathedral doing penance for his sins. In the midst of this exercise of condemnation, the revelation of Romans 1:17 flashed into his heart. "The just shall live by faith". He arose from his bleeding knees to trust Christ for his justification, and so mighty was the impact of this soul delivering revelation to him that the Protestant Reformation was the result.

## **CONTENTS OF ROMANS.**

The first part of this epistle is Doctrinal - Chapters 1-11 emphasize in teaching form what God has done for us.

Chapters 12-16 are practical and concentrate on what we are to do for God as a result of what He has done for us.

Chapter 1 - Introduction and declaration of the depravity of mankind generally.

Chapter 2 - Failure of Israel to live up to their God-given privileges.

Chapter 3 - Conclusion of the whole human race under sin, that all may be redeemed together.

Chapter 4 - Abraham's faith an example of how God justifies the ungodly by faith and not by works.

Chapter 5 - Adam and Jesus revealed as the 2 Federal Heads of the human race. - All are included in sin through Adam. All can reign in life by Jesus Christ. He is the beginning of a new creation.

Chapter 6 - Baptism, essential to a victorious life in God, and then a continuous expression of that faith - knowing - reckoning - yielding. v. 9,11,13. Those three words are the secrets of continuous overcoming. Knowing, is having the revelation of God's gift of salvation in your heart. Reckoning, is confessing regularly that you are saved and freed from sin. Yielding, is allowing God to live through you.

Chapter 7 - The struggle that occurs when the Christian life is lived in the strength of self. Notice the number of times "I" occurs in this chapter - 38 times. The Spirit is not mentioned once.

Chapter 8 - One of the most powerful chapters in the whole Bible. The revelation of our identification with Jesus. His life is ours. His victory is ours. We are joint heirs with him. Notice the contrast to chapter 7. The Holy Spirit is referred to 19 times and "I" is only seen twice. This chapter begins with "no condemnation" and ends with "no separation".

Chapters 9 -11- Israel's future destiny. God isn't finished with them yet. Chapter 10 emphasizes the way of salvation. verses 8-10.

Chapter 12 - The Motivational Gifts that God has given to each member of His body. There is a place for all of us and a task that will be fulfilled best by our particular talents.

Chapter 13 - Obedience to Civil authorities.

Chapter 14 - Warnings against using our freedom in the Lord to stumble weaker saints.

Chapters 15 -16 - Explanations of Paul's ministry and greetings to the Saints in Rome.

The Epistle to the Romans is one of the single most important parts of the Bible and should be read regularly.

# Chapter Eight

## First & Second Corinthians

### **BACKGROUND.**

These two epistles were written by the Apostle Paul to the church which he had founded some years before. He has spent 18 months in Corinth (ACTS 18) and a good assembly resulted from his ministry there.

However, while he was at Ephesus, troubles began to arise in the Corinthian Church, which made it necessary for him to visit them again. 2 COR. 12:14 and 13:1 speak of a third visit, which means that besides his visit to found the assembly, he had been there again prior to his writing the second epistle. He also wrote another epistle, which we do not have. 1 COR. 5:9. 1st Corinthians is actually the second epistle and 2nd Corinthians - the third letter Paul wrote them about abuses and disorders in the Church. The epistles which are included in the Bible were written about 59 and 60 AD

## **1 CORINTHIANS**

### **THEME.**

Christian life and conduct. The life style of believers is incompatible with the ungodly. The world's values and practices have no place in the Church. If allowed to enter, earthly philosophies and sinful habits will destroy the church. It's members who indulge in the sins of the world will not inherit the Kingdom of God. 1 COR. 6:9-10.

### **REASONS FOR THIS EPISTLE.**

Paul took the opportunity to set the record straight about everything that was wrong in this church. It is incredible how far from the truth they had wandered in just 3 years, and their condition is a constant warning to modern churches to live godly in Christ Jesus, and to avoid the following errors found in the Church at Corinth.

### **1. DIVISIONS. 1:10-4:21**

The Greeks were famous for their political system. The home of Democracy, or rule of the people, developed its government representatives out of debate, argument or oratory. The most successful in these contests had the favour of the people. However, what is done in the world is not necessarily what God wants in His church.

The Corinthian Christians had developed a party spirit, with some holding to Paul, others to Apollos, some to Peter, while others claimed exclusive access to Christ.

Paul declares that any wisdom the various preachers have is not of human cleverness, but by the Spirit of God - 1:27-29 and 2:9-13. He declares that the Church at Corinth is immature and carnal because of the envying, strife, and divisions among them. 3:1-4. Giving vent to a popularity cult is not only immature, but is very close to idolatry - putting men before God. The ministers of Christ are all part of a team of planters and waterers and are nothing in themselves. Only God causes the fruit to grow 1 COR. 3:5-9.

In fact, a great responsibility is on the preacher to build principles of Divine life on the

foundation of Jesus Christ which is laid in the life of every Believer. He will face a special trial in the world to come, to determine how he had used his calling and to evaluate his reward. 3:10-17.

If any minister defiles the temple of God - (the local church in this context) God will destroy him. The ministry is a solemn responsibility. Note HEB. 5:4 and 1 COR. 4:1-16.

Taking these things into consideration, people who show preference and a party spirit towards the ministers of Jesus Christ place them in open temptation and lay a snare for their feet.

There is no place for any division in the body of Christ. The will of God is for us to be so perfectly joined together that we all speak the same thing and we are of the same mind. 1:10.

## **2. IMMORALITY. Chapter 5.**

Corinth was a centre of gross immorality where the worship of the idol Venus was supported by the vilest sexual behaviour. To Paul's sorrow, he learns that this wickedness has been also found in the church.

Paul demanded that the church meet together to deal with this incestuous situation. Apparently the man was not repentant or amenable to instruction, so the drastic step was to be taken by the whole church of delivering the sinning member to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, in order that his spirit may be saved - that he may repent as a result of the troubles that would come on him. 5:4-5. In 2 Cor. 2:4-7, Paul suggests that the church take back this man who has apparently come to repentance.

He went further than just this public act of ex-communication by requiring that no-one in the assembly fellowship with any brother who was a fornicator or idolater, or drunkard, etc. 5:11. Note 6:9-20. Immoral behaviour has no place in the Church of Jesus Christ and must be dealt with.

## **3. LITIGATION. Chapter 6.**

There is very clear teaching here from the errors of the Corinthian Church that believers are not permitted to go to the law court against other believers. Any such dispute ought to be settled in and by the church.

The saints are destined to judge angels and have the authority to deal with arguments between believers. Paul says it is better to be defrauded than to win a case in earthly litigation against a brother.

## **4. MARRIAGE. Chapter 7.**

Due to confusion over the responsibilities of marriage partners to each other, the attitudes of believing wives to their unbelieving husbands, and a misunderstanding about the validity of marriage at all, made some straight counselling necessary in answer to the questions of the Church. 1 COR. 7:1.

### **a) Husbands and Wives. 7-1-6**

Marriage partners do not have the right to deprive each other of sexual satisfaction. Their bodies belong to each other. Paul declares that withholding of this marriage relationship is:

- i. Defrauding the partner of their due. - 7:5
- ii. Putting the other partner in the way of temptation 7:5
- iii. Only allowable by consent for the purpose of prayer and fasting without distraction.

### **b) Separation and Divorce. 7:10-17**

This is a subject we cannot deal with fully here. However there is clear guidance of what to do in the case of a believer who has an unbelieving partner.

If the unbeliever is happy to continue in the marriage, the believer must not leave. On the other hand, if the unbeliever leaves or breaks the marriage, the brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases, and is entitled to live separated or divorced, though generally according to 7:11 they should then remain unmarried.

### **c) The Validity of Marriage. 7:29 -10**

This question arose because of the thoughts that the Second Coming of the Lord was near at hand and it wasn't a good idea to get married - Paul was a confirmed bachelor and gave his own advice, but clearly said that this wasn't inspired of the Lord. 1 COR. 7:25. While he thought people would be better able to give themselves to the Lord without distraction, he admitted that this capacity was a special gift. 7:7 24. Anyone who marries has not sinned. 7:28.

## **5. STUMBLING OTHERS. Chapter 8 and 10:23-33**

Some believers had discovered that they were delivered from their fears and superstitions about idols, and that they were able to eat meat offered to idols without it affecting them. Paul declared that while he recognised this was so, their very liberty could become a stumbling block to other weaker Christians, and in this case the stronger believer ought to consider the weaker. We are responsible for those we stumble.

## **6. SUBMISSION OF WOMEN. Chapter 11:1-6**

There is an emphasis here on the place of women in assemblies. In the Jewish congregations, no woman was permitted to take part, but in Christian assemblies the women are permitted to both pray and prophesy (including inspired preaching) in public gatherings. 11:5.

However because of the debasing and perversion of womanhood in Corinthian society, very clear distinctions were drawn between male and female roles, especially relating to women's submission. This chapter declares that there must be a difference between male and female appearance. To signify the difference God has put between the sexes, and to symbolise the headship of the man as delegated authority under God. That sign is long hair for a woman and short hair for a man. 11:14-15. This is not to suggest that a woman's hair should never be cut, but it should be different to a man's, clearly feminine, and a covering. Though not fully understood, this matter is vital enough to involve the spirit world. 1 COR. 11:10. Most likely, the meaning of this verse is that a woman not submitted to her husband is not covered and therefore a prey to the evil angels - who themselves refused submission to God.

## **7. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMUNION. 11:17-34**

The feast of communion - called the "Lord's Supper" (11:20) is not to be taken lightly. This sacrament given by Jesus himself - LUKE 22:15-20, was being abused. Cliques had developed in the taking of communion. The more well off were bringing a veritable feast

with them and sharing it with their friends, while others less fortunate would not have much to eat. For this reason, Paul commanded that the main eating be done at home and not at the time of communion. 11:34.

He condemned these divisions, and declared that eating and drinking of the sacrament in an unworthy manner could induce sickness and even death (verse 29-30). No doubt, part of this rebuke included the divisions among the church. They were not "discerning the Lord's body" - His Church. It also means that anyone eating or drinking of the "communion elements" with known unconfessed sin in his life is eating damnation to himself. Verse 27 and 29.

## **8. SPIRITUAL GIFTS. Chapters 12-14.**

The clearest teaching in the Bible on the subject of the supernatural Gifts of the Holy Spirit is found in these three chapters. But once again, positive truth is developed because of the errors of the Corinthian Church in the matter of Spiritual Gifts. These were:

a) The idea that some people with certain gifts of the Spirit were more important than others. Paul corrects this by using the analogy of the human body, showing that even the insignificant and less comely parts are necessary. 12:14-27.

b) That all members should possess all gifts - 12:28-31.

c) That only the power of God was necessary. Paul corrects this false idea in Chapter 13 by showing that any gift used without love - the fruit of the Spirit, is valueless. There must be a perfect balance between the 9 gifts of the Spirit and the 9 fruits of the Spirit.

d) A wrong understanding of the place of the Gift of Tongues. Without the Gift of Interpretation it is of no value in the public meeting. However, speaking in tongues in private prayer is of vital importance at any time. If there is no interpreter in the public meetings, the manifestation of vocal gifts must be restricted to prophecy, so it can be understood by all. Note 14:1-19. Edification is the key to public ministry. The church must be blessed and not merely the individual. 14:15,12.

e) An unnecessary number of confirmatory messages in the gifts of tongues and interpretation, or prophecy. When the Spirit inspires an utterance, many people in the meeting who are in tune with Him could respond or verify what has been prophesied or interpreted by either speaking in tongues or prophesying themselves. Paul declares that the spirit of the speaker is under his control. verse 32. The Holy Spirit never takes over and cancels any man's free will. For the sake of the meeting, only two or at the most three messages on any one theme are necessary. Should the Lord inspire an utterance on a new theme, then that also needs only one or two confirmations. Note 1 COR. 14:27-33 compare 2 COR. 13:1.

## **9. THE RESURRECTION. Chapter 15.**

False teachers had come into the church declaring that there was no resurrection and that Christ was only raised in a "spiritual sense" - (modern Jehovah's witness teaching).

Paul declares that the resurrection of Christ and the church is both physical and necessary to salvation. If Jesus didn't rise, we are believing in a hoax and our faith is vain. 1 COR. 15:14-17.

The Church at Corinth was filled with problems, yet Paul addresses it as the "Church of God which is at Corinth". He did not turn his back on it, but sought to adjust it by the teaching of the word and the exercising of his authority as their spiritual father. Few people have ever understood the investment God has made in His Church. Though often failing, weak and in error, He intends to perfect it and bring it to glory.

## 2 CORINTHIANS

This epistle followed 1 Corinthians about a year later, and is for the most part a vindication of Paul's ministry among them, and his apostleship. However, there are a number of subjects which are covered here in some detail.

Paul does not directly refer to the problems which he raised in the first epistle (except that the excommunicated brother be forgiven and received into the Church again - (2 COR. 2:4-10), so it can be assumed that these errors have been rectified.

### **SIGNIFICANT SUBJECTS IN 2 CORINTHIANS.**

#### **1. LIFE AFTER DEATH. Chapter 5:1-9**

Paul teaches that the righteous dead go immediately into the presence of the Lord - 5:8 and 6. There is no such thing as "soul sleep". - Note 5:1.

#### **2. THE JUDGEMENT SEAT OF CHRIST. Chapter 5:10-11.**

In 1 Corinthians reference is made to this evaluation of the activities of the ministers of the gospel. 1 COR. 3:8-17. Now Paul declares that everyone will appear before the Judgement seat to receive rewards or loss for the deeds done here on earth. This is not to determine salvation, but rather the place to be held in the Kingdom of God and the rewards to be received. NOTE Luke 19:11-27.

#### **3. SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD. Chapter 6:14 to 7:1**

No doubt because of their previous weakness in this area, strong teaching is given to show that believers must leave the world behind when they come to Christ. There is no longer any basis of fellowship there.

#### **4. THE MINISTRY OF GIVING. Chapter 9:6-15.**

Some of the clearest teaching on giving in faith, as the source of abundant supply, is seen here. God is no man's debtor. Anything given in faith - especially to meet the needs of the less fortunate will be like seed sown in the fields. It will return a harvest much greater than that which was given. Note verse 8. It is the will of God for His people to have sufficient in all things, so that they can bless others as well.

#### **5. PAUL'S THORN IN THE FLESH. Chapter 12:7.**

Many people have asserted that Paul was sick and this was the "thorn in the flesh" which God refused to heal. This is then suggested to be the reason or excuse why many today are not healed.

That this is not so can easily be seen from the scripture itself. Paul clearly says that the reason for his thorn in the flesh was the "abundance of revelation" he had received. How many people could claim this also - verses 7 and 1.

Then Paul says that this thorn was the "messenger of Satan to buffet him". What was this messenger of Satan? In verse 11 he says that because the Lord told him that His strength was made perfect in Paul's weakness, he would therefore glory in his infirmities. However, these infirmities are not sickness. Chapter 11:23-30 reveals what they were. The activities of a "buffeting evil spirit" sent to persecute him and keep him humble. Paul was the greatest teacher and apostle in the early Church, and the Lord sent special tribulation to keep him from being exalted above measure. Verse 17.

These books of 1 & 2 Corinthians are a veritable fountain of truth on many of the most common areas of difficulty in Church life. They not only show up the problems, but the power of the anointed Word spoken in apostolic authority to correct abusers and set things in order.

# Chapter Nine

## Galatians

### **BACKGROUND.**

This epistle was addressed to the churches of Galatia, an area of Asia Minor. Apparently they were in close proximity or in close fellowship, for they are all included in the exhortation of the letter. There is no indication which cities were involved. It seems as though they were churches which Paul had begun himself, and it is likely that the churches of Lystra, Derbe and Iconium were included.

Paul was the author of this epistle, which was written from prison in Rome.

### **MESSAGE OF GALATIANS.**

#### **A. KEEPING JEWISH LAWS.**

The message of the book is also its reason for being written. The Galatian Christians had been deluded by false teachers (1:7) into believing that the keeping of the law was necessary to salvation. Paul had been followed by persecuting Judaizers, men determined to make the Gentile converts keep the Jewish laws. They were depicted as the children of Hagar, who despised the "child of promise". It is still so today. They that are carnal always persecute those of the spirit - GAL. 4:22-31.

This epistle has been called the "Magna Carta" of the Church because of its strong declaration of freedom from the Jewish system, and of a totally new relationship to God through Jesus Christ alone. Nowhere else is the doctrine of Justification by faith so emphatically set forth.

Paul declares that while the Law was valid in the past, it now had no further value because:

- a.** It had no redeeming power, but could only condemn. GALATIANS 3:10-14 and 21.
- b.** It was an interim measure instituted after the promise of Salvation to Abraham, and was not meant to annul that first covenant. GAL. 3:15-18
- c.** It's main purpose was to be a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. GAL. 3:24
  - i) The law continually pointed out the sins of the people - as a schoolmaster - 3:19.
- d.** If it was still in operation, Christ has died in vain. 2:21

#### **B. THE CHURCH IS CALLED TO LIBERTY**

Paul declares that the obligation to keep the Jewish laws is bondage, but the church is called to liberty - 5:1. Externalism keeping of special days, observing religious rituals -has an insidious power to enslave a believer in spiritual pride, thinking he is special and elite because of his religious observances.

This is probably a greater danger than the actual bondage to keep up the full gamut of ritual or satisfying a religious God.

The believer who has been enslaved again in this type of bondage is likened to the slave son of the bondwoman of Sarah. Those who are trusting in Christ alone are likened to Isaac the freeborn son - 4:21-31.

This deliverance from the law was very clearly spelled out to the Church as a whole at the Conference of Jerusalem - ACTS 15. The Jewish laws were declared to be non-applicable to the Gentile converts and to be a burden (ACTS 15:28).

Paul calls the laws a yoke of bondage (GAL. 5:1) and urges the backsliding Galatians to stand fast in the liberty of Jesus Christ. Our relationship with God is only by faith and cannot be earned by religious duties or observances.

This liberty is not freedom from any restraint or licence to do anything at all. It is freedom from the second hand knowledge of God. Under the dispensation of Law He could only be known through methods and techniques. Through Christ, God is known in a direct heart relationship. We no longer have to go through someone or something else. Our freedom is to know that we are justified through Jesus Christ and welcome in the Father's presence.

### **C. A NEW LAW IN OUR HEART.**

The new liberty is not the freedom to do as we want - rather it is a relationship with God which is maintained by the impulse of the Holy Spirit. This new law of the Spirit working in us enables us to choose the things pleasing to God and to reject behaviour which is contrary to His nature.

- Note GALATIANS 5:13-26. The fruit of the Spirit is actually the character of Christ revealed in us.

## **SIGNIFICANT THEMES IN GALATIANS.**

### **1. IDENTIFICATION.**

The central message of Galatians and indeed of the whole Bible is located in its clearest revelation in chapter 2:16-21. This is the message that the Christian life is not a new code of conduct or rules of religion to replace the Jewish laws, but it is in fact Christ Himself actually living within the believer. The secret of redemption is brought out here. The work of Salvation at the cross and resurrection was not merely some transaction Jesus performed for us. We were actually there. When he died, we died. Our evil nature was slain with Christ at Calvary. When He was buried, we were too, and when He rose again from the dead, we also were raised to live a totally new kind of life with Christ living in us. Hallelujah (ROM.6:4)

The believer who grasps this fantastic truth is never going to have a problem in gaining the victory over sin and habits of the old life.

### **2. REVELATION KNOWLEDGE.**

Paul declares that he got his gospel by revelation and was not taught it by men. 1:11-12,16,2:2.

All that men can impart is information. Only God can give revelation.

This is the basis for understanding the gospel of Christ. It is a mystery which can only be grasped by revelation knowledge - the illumination brought by the Spirit of God to the human heart. No-one can know the reality of our Identification with Jesus without revelation

from God.

### **3. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS BY FAITH ALONE.**

As in Romans 4, Abraham is again quoted as the example, or receiving righteousness by faith and not by works. GAL. 3:6-29 Note verse 6.

### **4. REDEMPTION FROM THE CURSE. GAL. 3:13-14.**

In His redeeming work at the cross, Jesus not only dealt with our sin and evil natures, but with the fruit of mankind's sin the curse of the law. This curse is found in Deuteronomy 28 and included an awesome list of diseases and punishments which would come upon the disobedient. They include: Barrenness Broken homes, Confusion, Captivity, Defeat, Disaster, Disease, Emotional Distress, Failure, Fear, Poverty, Sorrow, Untimely death.

Sickness and distress and poverty are no longer our heritage in Christ. We are not only free from the law, but free from its curse as well

### **5. GLORY ONLY IN THE CROSS.**

Religious observances which had trapped the Galatian Christians again serves only to exalt the flesh and puff up the mind to pride. Paul declares that neither the keeping of these rituals or the abstaining from them amounts to anything. The only thing God is interested in us is the "new creation" (6:15). Paul demands that we glory only in the cross and not in those things we have done or not done. (6:14)

Chapter 6:7-9 declares that whatsoever a man sows that shall he reap. If he sows to the flesh with its evil works (5:19-21) or to the carnality of religious pride, he will reap corruption. If he sows to the Spirit and glories only in the cross, he will reap everlasting life.

### **KEY VERSE**

GALATIANS 2:20-21. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life I live by the faith of the Son of God. who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

# Chapter Ten

## Ephesians

### **BACKGROUND.**

Paul was the founder of this assembly in the city of Ephesus. The original group of about 12 men were previously followers of John the Baptist - ACTS 19:3.

Paul had made a visit to Ephesus sometime previously and although he debated with the Jews in the synagogue, it seems that he did not meet these 12 men until his second visit, when the assembly was actually established. ACTS 18:19-21 and 19:1-12.

On this occasion, he pastored the church there for 3 years (ACT20:31). Throughout all that area of Asia Minor, the gospel was preached to everyone in that period and God performed many mighty miracles through Paul. ACTS 19:1-19.

Ephesus was a famous centre for occult practices and idol worship of the goddess Diana. There was such a revival in the city that many brought their occult books and burned them publicly - see ACTS 19:17-20.

On his last trip to Jerusalem, Paul called the elders of the Ephesian church to his ship and gave them a strong charge to carefully oversee the flock of God. ACTS 20:17-38.

### **AUTHOR.**

This epistle was written by Paul about 10 years after he established the church. He was in prison at Rome at the time of writing.

### **MAIN THEME OF EPHESIANS.**

#### **THE CHURCH.**

Paul wrote two epistles on Justification by faith - Romans and Galatians. He also wrote two epistles on the theme of the church - Ephesians and Colossians.

Ephesians concentrates on the formation of the body of Christ, it's unity and destiny, while Colossians emphasises the headship of Christ over His body - the Church.

#### **A. The Mystery of the Church.**

The revelation of the Church as the Body of Christ and God's new instrument in the earth had been hidden from man's understanding until it was revealed to Paul. (No doubt it falls into the scope of revelation, for which he received his thorn in the flesh - II COR. 12:7, EPH. 3:3).

Paul prayed for the Ephesian Christians to receive the "Spirit of revelation" to grasp this great truth. EPH. 1:16-23. Modern day Christians need to pray for this same revelation to see the Church as God sees it.

It is not weak. God is using the church here and now to demonstrate His wisdom and power to every Satanic force. EPHESIANS 3:9-11.

#### **B. The Body of Christ.**

This phrase is often used without a real understanding of its full significance. The church - the Body of Christ - is the equivalent of Christ Himself. It is the fullness of Him. EPH. 1:23. The mystical body of Christ, composed of believers from every nation, is the vehicle for His expression, the same as His physical body was when he was on earth. The physical body was for him to suffer and die in. The mystical body is for Him to be glorified in. The church is identified with Jesus her Lord - not only in His death, burial and resurrection as noted in Romans 6:4 and GAL. 2:20-21, but also in His ascension. The Church is seated in heavenly places with Christ - reigning in life by Him and exercising all of His authority and power in this age of grace - EPH. 2:5-6.

### **C. The Unity of the Church.**

This is a key teaching in the Epistle. Many times the word "together" occurs - 1:10, 2:5,6,21,22. The word "one" further emphasises the unity of the Body of Christ. One new man (2:15) one body (2:16), one Spirit (2:18), one hope (4:4), one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God (4:5-6).

There had been a tendency for the Jewish Christians to keep separate from the Gentile believers. Paul shows in this epistle that the division between Israel and the Gentiles is gone forever. In Christ there is now only "one new man the Church (2:11-22). Note. EPH. 4:13.

### **D. Examples of the Church.**

**a)** A Body (1:23). Many members, but one unified whole, as a human body is. Every part in a body is necessary and has a vital and unique function. So every member of the Body of Christ supplies something which others need. EPH 4:16.

**b)** A Temple (2:21). This is a reference to the Old Testament Tabernacle and Temples which were the places of God's dwelling place with His people. Today God dwells in His Temple (the Church) (2:22). Note ACTS 7:48.

**c)** A Bride (5:25-32). This is the ultimate in relationship and is the goal that God has set for us. He intends to perfect the Church and unite her to Himself for all eternity in an indissoluble union.

A Body grows, a Temple is built, and a Bride is prepared. All three examples speak of a continuing work to bring the church to fulfilment

### **KEY PHRASE**

"in Christ Jesus" EPH. 1:1,6,7,12 13, 2:6,10,13, 2:21,22, 4:21.

### **KEY VERSES**

EPH. 4:13 - note also 1:22-23 and 5:30.

### **OTHER SIGNIFICANT THEMES IN EPHESIANS.\**

#### **1. CONTINUOUS VICTORY.**

Watchman Nee, the great teacher of the Chinese church, wrote a beautiful book on Ephesians called "Sit, Walk, Stand". It is one of the best commentaries on the epistle and is well worthwhile studying. His theme is that our relationship with Christ is first one of being

"seated" with Him in heavenly places - knowing our union and authority with Him. (2:5-6) The next stage is to work that out in practical life - this is our "walk" - EPH. 4:1. The whole of this chapter and most of chapter 5 and 6 deal with our new behaviour. The final stage is victory over Satan. This is accomplished by "standing" our ground on the work that Jesus has done for us and refusing to give way to Satan's wiles and attacks (6:11).

## **2. MINISTRY GIFTS. (EPH. 4:9-12)**

This is the only place in the Bible where the five ministry gifts to the Church are clearly mentioned. 1 COR. 12:28 lists apostles, prophets and teachers but does not include pastors or evangelists.

These are gifts, not to individuals, but to the church as a whole so that the members of the church can be perfected for the work of ministering both for and unto God. Each of these ministries is different and has an unique ability to develop the people of God in various ways. All five are needed to develop a fully mature church.

## **3. FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS.**

Strong teaching on the relationship between husband and wife and parents and children is given in chapters 5:21-6:4. Wives must be submissive to their husbands as they would be unto the Lord (5:22), because the husband is the head of the wife. Husbands must love their wives as they do themselves. (This is a command! This shows us that love is not a feeling, but an act of the will.)

Children must honour and obey their parents. The promise for this submission is a long life and good health (6:2-3).

Fathers are not permitted to provoke their children to wrath but to bring them up and nurture them in the Lord as they would a delicate plant (6:4).

## **4. SPIRITUAL WARFARE. (6:10-18)**

Special teaching is given on how to deal with Satan. The inspired counsel is to take the whole armour of God in order to effectively combat the dark demonic forces who work in the lives of foolish people and seek to disturb and wreck the work of God (6:12). We need to see beyond the flesh and blood and perceive what is motivating that person to act against God's work.

The armour mentioned here is significant in all its parts and applies to the believer taking specific action to protect each part of his spiritual life.

There are seven distinct pieces of equipment listed for our warfare .

### **a. The Girdle of Truth. (6:14)**

The girdle served 2 functions besides protecting the loins. It braced the rest of the armour and carrier<sup>3</sup> weapons such as daggers etc.

It is the truth which makes us free, JOHN 8:32, and forms the basis for our victory over Satan holding all our armour together. Our weapons are also connected to the truth Satan is a liar (JN. 8:44). The truth will finally overthrow him.

### **b. The Breastplate of Righteousness. (6:14)**

The breastplate protected all the vital organs - heart, lungs, etc. Maintaining the righteousness of Christ in us by holy will give Satan no opportunity to penetrate and disable our life support functions.

### **c. Gospel Shoes. (6:15)**

The best protection is to be on the offensive. Part of our armour includes a life of witnessing the gospel to others. People who get involved in soul winning rarely get disabled and crippled by Satan in their Christian walk. A strong public witness builds the strongest Christian life.

### **d. Shield of Faith.**

The shield is a defensive implement designed to stop attacks before they get to you.

The Bible says in HEBREWS 11:6 that without faith it is impossible to please God. A negative attitude or a life of fear will allow Satan free access through your defences.

But bold aggressive faith and a strong positive attitude of trust in Jesus' victory and His power in you quench all Satan's attacks before they even reach you personally.

### **e. Helmet of Salvation. (6:17)**

The helmet is to protect the head which holds the mind. This is a vital area to protect from Satan. Almost all his temptations come through the mind.

Salvation means wholeness. A mind that is healed from its past sinful attitudes and has become the mind of Christ in us is one covered by Salvation. Note ROMANS 12:2, 8:6, and 1 CORINTHIANS 2:16.

### **f. The Sword of the Spirit.**

This is the only weapon actually listed with the armour, but no armour would be complete without one. We are not called to retreat into a defensive posture, but to take the initiative in aggressive warfare - and pull down Satan's strongholds. 2 COR. 10:1-5.

This sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. Notice how many times Jesus resisted Satan by the use of the scriptures. MATT. 4:1-11. Notice also HEBREWS 4:12 and REV. 12:11

### **g. Praying in the Spirit. (6:18)**

This is not generally listed as part of the armour, yet it is included in the same passage. Praying in other tongues, and especially intercession for each other, is a vital part of our total protection and warfare against Satan.

Since God is today working to perfect His Church and make ready the Bride for the coming of the Lord, Ephesians is a very relevant book for us to study constantly.

# Chapter Ten

## Philippians

### **BACKGROUND.**

Paul - the author of this epistle was also the founder of the Church at Philippi - the first church in Europe. ACTS 16 contains the record of its amazing beginning.

At the time of writing, Paul had been in prison in Rome for almost two years and had been blessed by the generous giving of the Philippian believers. PHIL. 4:18. He writes to commend them for their giving, but also teaches them on some vital aspects of spiritual life. There is not one quotation from the Old Testament in this epistle, but it is full of revelation, particularly about the person of Jesus Christ.

### **SIGNIFICANT THEMES IN PHILIPPIANS.**

#### **1. UNITY.**

Apparently dissension had begun to surface in this assembly, and it seems that two women were involved in a dispute over position or recognition for their work. This church had been founded out of a ladies prayer meeting (ACTS 16:13-15) and women continued to have a leading role in the affairs there. Paul does not directly mention this, but all through the epistle he strongly emphasises unity - note the number of times he says "you all". However, in the last chapter (4:2) Paul urges the two ladies to be of the same mind in the Lord. This was the commandment he gave to the whole assembly (1:27-2:4).

#### **2. REJOICING.**

The word "joy" or rejoicing is found in every chapter and the key word of the book is "rejoice", occurring 14 times.

Paul refers to rejoicing in prayer (1:4), rejoicing in the gospel (1:18), rejoicing in fellowship (2:1-2), rejoicing in sacrifices for Christ (2:17-18), rejoicing in the Lord (3:1), rejoicing at the care shown by the church (4:10). He was well able to encourage them in this aspect of spiritual victory, for they of all people knew that these were no empty exhortations. They would have heard of how both he and Silas had rejoiced and sung praises to God in prison in Philippi, and how that their miraculous release was a contributing factor in the establishment of their assembly. ACTS 16. (Paul sums up this exhortation to them in 4:4, "Rejoice and again I say,) rejoice."

#### **3. THE MIND.**

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul was inspired to instruct the believers to keep their minds covered with the protection of salvation. In this epistle, he mentions the mind in every chapter (1:27, 2:2,3,5, 3:15,19, 4:2,7).

In the context of the disunity that had begun to develop in Philippi, Paul urges them to realise the place of the mind in allowing seeds of bitterness and dissension to grow. The mind is the battlefield for all that happens in our spiritual lives, and if Satan can win in the mind, he will control all.

#### **4. THE SPIRIT.**

There are only three references to the Spirit in this epistle, but each of them is important.

1. Supply of the Spirit. (1:19) Who can manage in this new life without a full vessel of the oil of God's Spirit? e.g. MATT. 25:1-12. Paul is depending on this anointing to carry him through difficult times.

b. Fellowship of the Spirit. (2:1) He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. This is the basis of our unity. If we are all joined to God, we are all joined to each other.

c. Worship in the Spirit. (3:3). Some Judaizers had been active in Philippi as in other assemblies seeking to have the Gentile believers keep the Jewish law and be circumcised. Paul declares that those who worship God in the Spirit...are those who have truly cut off the flesh. God is a spirit and must be worshipped in the Spirit and not by carnal rituals. JOHN 4:24.

#### **5. THE KENOSIS OF CHRIST JESUS. (2:5-11)**

Kenosis is a Greek word which means "draining out" or "self emptying". In this passage of scripture we have one of the most graphic accounts of the Deity and Humanity of Jesus. He was and is God, but for the purpose of our redemption, he laid aside His equality with the Father and became a servant submissive to death and shame. Because of this "self emptying" He has been highly exalted again in (JOHN 17:5) and has received the name Lord Jesus Christ (2:9-11, ACTS 2:36), at which every knee must bow.

This account of Christ's voluntary humility is given an example (2:5) to the two factions in the Philippian assembly to humble themselves. Paul follows this up in chapter 3 by declaring that all his own prestige had been discarded as refuse when he received the revelation of Christ (3:4-11).

#### **6. GIVING.**

Finally, Paul commended them for their generosity to the ministers of God and declares that this is the basis upon which God can supply all their own needs. their giving was a seed of faith which would open the doors of God's supply to them (4:15-19).

**KEY VERSE.** - PHILIPPIANS 3:8-10

# Chapter Eleven

## Colossians

### **BACKGROUND.**

This epistle was written by Paul to the church at Colossae, a city of Phrygia near Laodicea (4:15-16). Apparently the church there was founded by Epaphras (1:7-8 and 4:12), who was a fellow prisoner of Paul's in Rome - PHILEMON verse 23.

### **REASON FOR THE EPISTLE.**

### **HERESY.**

Very serious false teaching had developed in this church, which needed to be rooted out.

The Gnostic ideas of some Eastern countries - notably Persia - became mixed up with Jewish, Christian, and Greek Ascetic teaching, together with angel worship.

The main thrust of this confusion was to assert that: all matter is evil and only God is good. There can be no joining of these two. (Modern Christian Science teaching). In bridging the gap between mankind and Himself, God sent forth various beings each with a slight decrease in holiness until Jesus appeared who was so impoverished in His Divinity that He could have contact with man.

The first effect of this heresy is to deny the Deity of Jesus Christ.

### **1. CHRIST'S DEITY.**

In this epistle, Paul spares no effort to assert the total and absolute Deity of Christ.

He is shown to be equal with the Father, the actual image of the invisible God (1:15) is declared to be the Creator of all things. (1:16)

Christ is before all things and by Him they exist (1:7)

He is the Head of the Church (1:18).

All the fullness of the Godhead is manifested in Him (1:19)

He is the only means of man's reconciliation with God (1:20)

He is the fulfilment of the "mystery of God's plan - Christ in us the hope of Glory" (1:26-27).

### **2. SPOILED BY PHILOSOPHY (2:8)**

The false teachers who had come in - (note "man" 2:8 and 2:18) had established their own human ideas on the necessity for "new ritualism" - worship of angels - ascetism or rigid self denial and voluntary and bizarre humility (penance), establishing special holy days, traditions, and food laws (2:16-23). Paul declares that adopting these philosophies will "spoil" them and ruin their faith in Christ. In fact, they will think they don't need Him if they establish another system of religion which will satisfy their carnal minds with religious rituals.

### **3. CHRIST'S VICTORY OVER SATAN**

As with every false cult and heresy, the error affected the believers' faith in Jesus' redeeming work on Calvary.

Paul very clearly asserts that when Jesus died on the Cross, He not only dealt with our sin (2:13-14), but He also broke Satan' power and the authority of all his demonic forces, and because of this we should never allow ourselves to be taken captive again to religious rituals. (2:15-20). Subjection to any type of religious ritual is flesh elevating and allows Satan to work in deception.

The rest of the epistle re-iterates what has been taught in Ephesians on family relationships (3:18-21) and exhortations to live holy lives separated from the world, and showing a good testimony for Christ(4:5-6).

#### **KEY VERSE.**

COLOSSIANS 2:8 "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ".

# Chapter Twelve

## 1 and 2 Thessalonians

### **BACKGROUND.**

The Apostles Paul and Silas (Silvanus) had been responsible for the founding of this assembly in the city of Thessalonica in Macedonia, north of Greece.

In the space of one month, a large and strong church had been established (ACTS 17:1-9), and although Paul and his associates left because of intense persecution, the church remained a great witness to Christ throughout the whole area of Macedonia and Greece. 1 THESS. 1:7.

This growth in Christ continued despite the persecution which continued against the church. Paul was concerned for them and sent Timothy from Athens to go and comfort and strengthen them, when he couldn't return himself. 2:18, 3:1-5

On his return, Timothy reported that the church, though persecuted, was in good condition.

## **1 THESSALONIANS**

### **REASON FOR 1 THESSALONIANS**

**1.** Despite their spiritual health, certain erroneous ideas regarding the second coming of Christ had developed.

Paul wrote to them regarding these errors which can be summed up as follows:

**a.** Some were overcome with sorrow, thinking that believing loved ones who had died would not have any part in Christ's return. 4:13,18. Paul corrects this and explains that the Lord has revealed to him (4:15 - "by the word of the Lord") that believers who have died before Jesus comes will be resurrected first, and then together with the still living believers they will be "raptured" - caught up to meet the Lord in the air. (1 THESS. 4:14-18) This had not previously been revealed in scripture.

**b.** Because some Thessalonian Christians expected Christ to return at any moment, they had ceased working - Paul encouraged them to continue to be well occupied. (4:11-12)

**2.** In order that they would not now become complacent in the light of this new revelation, Paul exhorts them to keep aware of the coming of the Lord which will be sudden "like a thief in the night", when it does come.

These two epistles to the Thessalonians cover some of the most relevant teaching in the New Testament for modern day believer, because of our proximity to that glorious day.

There are 318 references to the Second Coming in the New Testament, but some of the clearest teaching on it is in these two epistles.

## **THEME OF 1 THESSALONIANS.**

The Coming of the Lord for His people.

KEY VERSE - 1 THESS. 4:16-17 "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

## **CONTENTS OF THE BOOK.**

The whole book is centred around the return of Christ and each chapter, except chapter 5, concludes with a reference to this event. The epistle can be divided as follows:

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ:

- a) An Inspiration to New Converts - chapter 1
- b) An Encouragement to Faithful Servants - chapter 2
- c) The Believer's Purifying Hope - chapters 3-4:12
- d) A Comfort for the Bereaved - chapter 4:13-18
- e) Motivation for Careless Believers - chapter 5.

# **2 THESSALONIANS**

## **REASON FOR 2 THESSALONIANS.**

1. This epistle was written by Paul very soon after the first. It was reported to him that someone had forged a letter and message from him to the Thessalonians (2 THESS. 2:2-3) telling them that the Lord had come mystically and that they were already in the Tribulation.

Paul gives clear teaching that that period of time will not occur until after the manifestation of the "man of sin" the Antichrist. 2 THESS. 2:3-12.

But before this evil one can be fully revealed, the force which is holding him back will be taken out of the way. (2:6-8) This is the Spirit-filled church. The Bible says we are the salt of the earth. When this restraining influence is removed from the earth in the rapture, then unbridled wickedness will prevail.

Pre-Tribulation rapture of the Church is very clear in these two epistles, especially in 2 THESS. 2 and 1 THESS. 1:10 and 5:9. God has not appointed the church to wrath, but to salvation.

2. Paul seeks to encourage these persecuted believers, who because of the intensity of their trouble were easily persuaded that they were in the Great Tribulation, by showing them that when the Lord does come they will be partakers with Him in the judgement against the ungodly and that the Lord Himself will be glorified and admired in them. 2 THESS. 1:4-10.

3. Paul gives a further rebuke to those who had quit working. It is now apparent that these lazy people were only using the teaching of the imminent coming of the Lord as an excuse for their idleness. The church is warned that these are disorderly brethren and not to be associated with. 2 THESS. 3:6-15.

## **THEME OF 2 THESSALONIANS.**

The Coming of the Lord with His People.

2 THESSALONIANS 1:7-8. "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

# Chapter Thirteen

## 1 & 2 Timothy

### **BACKGROUND.**

The apostle Paul wrote these epistles to young Timothy who had been his disciple and was now pastor of the church in Ephesus (1 TIM. 1:3), which Paul had founded. Timothy was probably converted as a youth during Paul's first visit to Lystra (ACTS 14), and on Paul's second visit to Lystra (ACTS 16) the young man left with the apostle for a life in the ministry.

Apparently, this pastorate at Ephesus had been difficult for Timothy (2 TIM. 1:4) due to his very timid nature and physical weakness - 1 TIM. 5:23 and 2 TIM. 1:5-7.

These two epistles and the one to Titus are unique among Paul's writings in that they are the only ones addressed to particular persons and not churches. The three are called "Pastoral Epistles" because of their emphasis on life in the ministry, and the instructions to the young pastors on how to care for their churches. Timothy had a godly home and although his father was a gentile of whom nothing is known, it is clear that both his mother and grandmother, Eunice and Lois had a profound godly effect on his young life. ACTS 16 and 2 TIM. 1:5.

1 Timothy was written during the time Paul was released from Prison in Rome. After this, he was arrested again and isolated from his friends. 2 TIM. 1:16-17. 2 Timothy - the last words recorded by this great apostle, were written during his second imprisonment just prior to his execution (2 TIM. 4:6).

### **REASON FOR 1 & 2 TIMOTHY.**

These epistles are instructions to a young pastor on Church order, doctrine, discipline and the personal conduct of a minister. No doubt they were written to encourage Timothy because of his timidity, youth and inexperience. 1 TIM. 3:15, 4:12 & 2 TIM. 2:15.

## **1 TIMOTHY**

### **MAIN THEMES.**

#### **1. SOUND DOCTRINES. Chapter 1**

Almost all of Paul's ministry was involved in either establishing churches or correcting errors in life and teaching. In this chapter Paul makes a strong emphasis on good doctrine. Wrong believing does not tend to right living. He mentions those that have "swerved aside" - 1:6, or have put aside the truth and have made shipwrecks of their faith, 1:19.

Since it is the first emphasis in Paul's Pastoral epistles, we cannot stress the importance of true doctrine too much.

Note 1:4, which counsels against getting involved in peripheral and irrelevant subjects. This warning occurs many times in these letters.

Through these epistles, Paul continually refers to the need for solid scriptural teaching as a basis for right living and true faith. 1 TIM. 4:1-2, 7, 12-13, 16,6:20-21, 2 TIM. 1:13, 2:15-18

2:23, 4:10, 14-17, 4:2-3.

## **2. THE MINISTRY OF MEDIATION. Chapter 2-1-8**

Second in his exhortations on how to lead a church is the ministry of prayer. It takes more than good doctrine - a relationship with God is essential.

Numerous responsibilities in prayer are listed here, including praying for Government and civil leaders. This is a ministry of mediating between God and men, and this is the reason for the inclusion of Jesus' ministry as a mediator as an example in this section. 2:4-6

Lifting up of the hands is commanded as a necessary sign of total surrender to God in this ministry. 2:8

## **3. THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH. Chapter 2:9-15**

Many churches experience problems in this area and Paul gives very clear teaching on the subject, not only in this epistle, but in other references as well.

A woman must never usurp authority. Yet a ministry and opportunity to be used of God is not denied her. If she is under the authority of her husband and pastor, or if single her father and pastor (2:12), and if she conducts herself in modesty and holiness (2:10), she can preach, pray, prophesy, etc in public meetings. 1 COR. 11:5.

The reason for the prohibition against a woman teaching in this passage (1 TIM. 2:12) can only be understood in the context of verse 11 - "learn in silence". It was the custom in the churches for men to interrupt the speaker if they did not understand or even to disagree with him publicly. However, this privilege was not granted to the women because it would bring them into open conflict with men and not submission. The key is "learning - not teaching". Note also 1 COR. 14:34-35. Once again, the silence is related to asking. Women were not permitted to "ask questions" in the public gathering and thus interrupt the service but to ask their husbands at home.

This principle of submission and deference by Christian women to the man both in the home and the church is of vital importance, but it doesn't mean that a woman cannot take any part. As long as she is appointed to the task by the leaders or the assembly, she is in submission, and is not "usurping authority", 1 TIM. 2:12, and can exercise a great ministry in God.

## **4. QUALIFICATIONS FOR OVERSIGHT. Chapter 3**

Both the bishop (pastor and elder) and the deacon is required to qualify for these positions in the church. They are not popularity appointments but must first be earned. 3:6,10,13. The qualifications are similar and it goes without saying that all the things required of a deacon are automatically expected of a man with a higher responsibility.

a. Bishop,(pastor and elder) - 3:1-7

i. Be blameless in conduct. 5:7, 6:14

ii. Be monogamous, not a polygamist, but he could be single as Paul was.  
1 COR. 9:5

- iii. Vigilant - This means temperate, self-controlled and a diligent worker.
- iv. Sober - of a sound mind, discreet
- v. of good behaviour
- vi. Given to hospitality (Gr. philoxenos), a lover of strangers.
- vii. Able to teach - A pastor or elder must also have the teaching gift of Ephesians 4:11
- viii. Not given to wine.
- ix. Not a striker - not quarrelsome or short-tempered or vindictive
- x. Not money hungry, but patient
- xi. Not a brawler - a man of peace.
- xii. Not covetous - not a man who will use his office as a means of personal gain.
- xiii. Ruling his house well - the home is a microcosm of the church. If he is not successful at home he will not be in the house of God.
- xiv. Not an inexperienced person or new convert. Satan gets advantage of him through his ineptness or pride of his position.
- xv. Have a good report from unbelievers - i.e. business dealings and neighbourhood.

The Ministry of a bishop (overseer of the assembly) is a high and holy calling and not to be lightly taken - note HEB. 5:4.

b. The Qualifications for a deacon are almost as high, showing the great importance placed by God on this part of Church life.

- i. Grave - worthy of respect.
- ii. Honest - in word and deed.
- iii. Not double-tongued - liars or truth twisting
- iv. Not given to winebibbing.
- v. Not greedy for money and resorting to questionable means to get it.
- vi. Have the secret of exercising faith but having a clear conscience about any methods they use to demonstrate it. i.e. not drawing attention to themselves.
- vii. Let them be proved first. This is the same as not being a novice. A man should not be appointed a deacon if he is a recent convert.
- viii. Their wives must also qualify - not being gossips, but worthy of respect, of sound mind, discreet and faithful. (In the Greek, this word for wives can also be taken for women and in this sense applies to deaconesses).
- ix. The deacons must be monogamous - husbands of one wife.
- x. They also must rule their own house well. Keep their children in subjection.

Using the office of a deacon well will often cause God to promote that man to greater responsibility (3:13).

This chapter is perhaps the central teaching of these two epistles (3:15) - if the man of God conducts himself well it is likely that the flock will follow his example.

### **5 . PROPHECY OF THE END TIME. Chapter 4:1-8**

Paul prophesied of our day, listing the conditions which would exist associated with the church. This is a picture of some of the false cults which exist today. These false teachings, whether on celibacy, food, laws, legends or fictitious such as Mormonism (4:7) etc are really inspired by seducing evil spirits in order to confuse people about the truth. (4:1)

Paul declares that believers and especially ministers must really concentrate on keeping themselves spiritually fit by:

- a. expressing disapproval of all false teachings;
- b. training oneself towards godliness.

### **6. ADVICE OF PRACTICAL THINGS. Chapters 5 and 6**

Paul now teaches young Timothy how to conduct himself towards the elderly folk, widows, young women, the other elders of the church, his own health, and those that sin in the church.

He then gives instruction on how servants ought to behave towards their masters, the foolishness of being snared by riches, and he urges Timothy to flee from all these temptations and fight the good fight of faith - 6:11-12 and 20.

**KEY VERSE** - 1 TIMOTHY 3:15 "but if I tarry long, that you may know how you ought to behave yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth ."

## Chapter Fourteen **2 TIMOTHY**

This last epistle written by Paul is a moving account of the privileges and responsibilities of a minister and shows Paul, now an aged man, lonely, but satisfied, that he had fulfilled the will of God and was ready to go to be with His Lord (4:6-8)

### **CHAPTER ONE.**

This is largely an account of Paul's own ministry and an exhortation to Timothy not to be afraid - verse 7 compare verse 4, but to stir up the power of the Holy Spirit within him (verse 6).

### **CHAPTER TWO.**

Paul gives a number of illustrations of the work of a man of God.

- a) A Soldier (2:3-4) - This is used to illustrate the hard training and single-minded devotion to the Lord's cause that is necessary.
- b) An Athlete (2:5) - Any man running in the race for the prize (masteries) must

keep to the rules.

c) A Farmer (2:6) - The gospel must first work for us before we can give it to others.

d) Various Vessels (2:20-21) - The emphasis here is on being prepared and useful to the Master of the House - a vessel unto honour and not a mediocre one which will be disapproved.

Paul, in the context of these illustrations urges Timothy to study and so prepare himself for God's work. There are others around who cause confusion by their bad interpretations of the Bible or false teachings and they actually overthrow some people's faith. 2:14-18.

The plan is for Timothy to teach other faithful men what he has learned from Paul and they in turn are to teach others (2:2).

### **CHAPTER THREE.**

This is a re-iteration of 1 TIMOTHY 4 where Paul warned Timothy of false cults and seducing spirits. Once again he says that these are last day signs.

All of these terrible character traits will be found in religious people, who have a form of godliness, but no power in their lives. (verses 1-13)

The only answer to this situation is the word of God (v 14-17). The inspired word will make a man of God complete and proficient, well fitted, and thoroughly equipped for every good work.

### **CHAPTER FOUR.**

The exhortation to not only know the word, but to preach it, follows on for the reason that in the last days, people will not want to hear the truth, but will be content with fables.

The epistle and the ministry of Paul ends with his bold assertion of his faith in Jesus and love for the brethren.

### **KEY WORD.**

"Ashamed". There is a strong motivation in this epistle to excel and not be disapproved by the Lord. Paul says, "don't be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord or His saints" (1:8). "I am not ashamed to suffer for Christ" (1:12). "Onesiphorus was not ashamed of my imprisonment" (1:16), "be a workman that needs not to be ashamed" (2:15).

### **KEY VERSE.**

2 TIMOTHY 2:15 "Study to show yourself approved unto God, a worker that needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

# Chapter Fifteen

## Titus

### **BACKGROUND.**

This pastoral epistle was written by Paul to Titus, one of Paul's early converts. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem after their first missionary journey. (GAL. 2:1) He was a Gentile - GAL. 2:3. Apparently Titus was a man of good ability and wisdom. Paul sent him on the delicate mission to the Corinthians, 2 COR 2:13, 7:6-7, and then left him to pastor the church at Crete, and put things in order (TITUS 1:5), even though Paul realised that the Cretians were difficult people. TITUS 1:12-13. Later on he was in Rome during Paul's imprisonment. 2 TIM. 4:10.

### **REASON FOR THE EPISTLE.**

Titus is very similar to 1 Timothy in that the reason for writing is to instruct the new pastor in the best ways to lead his church, and reach out to every city of Crete (1:5). The emphasis is also the same - Church order, sound doctrines, and discipline in the church.

### **CONTENTS OF TITUS.**

#### **CHAPTER ONE - CHURCH ORDER.**

This section centres around:

- a.** The qualifications of Bishops or elders (compare v. 5 & 7 - these terms are interchangeable), 1:5-9. These qualifications are almost the same as listed in Timothy, with a strong emphasis on the ability of the elder to be able to teach sound doctrine in such a way that error would be corrected.
- b.** The necessity for false teachers, whose motive is money, to be exposed and counteracted. 1:10-12. There were a number of the false teachers who had infiltrated the Cretian assembly's house meetings (1:11).
- c.** Consistent Christian living (1:12-16). The Cretians were notorious for their undisciplined and fleshly ways. Paul exhorts Titus to make a special effort in this respect and not to settle for less than true holiness by excusing their behaviour as a national characteristic. In Christ we are only "the new creation".

#### **CHAPTER TWO - CHURCH DOCTRINE.**

- a.** Here special mention is made of the elderly, and the young men and women. It is clearly pointed out that sound doctrine is not just the facts that are believed, but the way they are lived out (2:1-5).

Paul then exhorts Titus to make his own personal life a pattern for believers to follow (2:1-8).

- b.** The duties of servants is also stressed. While slavery as such is no longer with us, these exhortations to honesty and faithfulness in service are relative to a Christian employee's relationship with his employer.

The Second Coming of Christ is the motivation for this emphasis on holy living (2:9-15).

### **CHAPTER THREE - CHURCH WORK.**

This section gives instructions on obedience to civil authorities (3:1-3), a declaration of our redemption in Christ (3:5-7), an exhortation to good works (verse 8), and to avoid foolish questions (verse 9). Dealing with rebellious members is strongly mentioned (verses 10-11).

This epistle to Titus is mainly concerned with the local church becoming a beautiful testimony to Jesus Christ .

**a.** To achieve this, it is necessary to develop Christian character by setting the church in order through appointments of qualified leaders, specifying inter-personal relationships and teaching sound doctrine.

**b.** It is also necessary to counteract error by exposing false teachers (1:10-11), rebuking hypocrisy and sin (1:13-16) and excommunicating rebellious members (3:10-11).

The epistle emphasises Christian works and is designed to meet the practical questions of every day life.

#### **KEY VERSE.**

TITUS 2:7-8 "In all things showing yourself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say to you."

# Chapter Sixteen

## Philemon

### **BACKGROUND.**

This is the only "private" letter of Paul's in existence. It was written to Philemon, a wealthy member of the church at Colossae.

It concerns a runaway slave of Philemon, Onesimus, who had apparently stolen money from his master and absconded to Rome. Somehow this slave had come under Paul's influence and had been converted.

Onesimus was then returned to Philemon, together with this letter, in the company of Tychicus, who was going there to deliver the Epistle to the Colossian assembly. (COL. 4:9).

### **THEME OF PHILEMON.**

The epistle concerns three things:

- a. Forgiveness by the aggrieved master.
- b. Restitution by the sinning servant.

Both these elements are essential to a healthy relationship in the local church, of which both these men would now be members.

- c. The ability of another brother (in this case - Paul) to intercede or mediate to bring peace between the other two.

### **KEY VERSE.**

PHILEMON verse 6. In this verse Paul gives Philemon the key to forgiving Onesimus. If he thinks he cannot forgive, Paul urges him to acknowledge the life of Christ which is in him. This will enable him to communicate his love and forgiveness by faith to Onesimus who is now not a rebellious servant, but a penitent brother (v 16).

There is no situation in life we cannot succeed in - especially the often thorny area of interpersonal relationships, if we will acknowledge - confess, every good thing in us by Christ Jesus.

# Chapter Seventeen

## Hebrews

This Epistle is the most challenging, as far as study is concerned, of all the books of the New Testament. To adequately cover it many lessons would be needed. For the purpose of this study programme, however, the coverage will be limited to a very brief precis. However, it is worthy of much study, and this is highly recommended. Many of the very important questions of our Christian faith are dealt with in Hebrews.

### **AUTHOR.**

Nowhere in the Epistle is the author's name alluded to. Some commentators believe that Apollos or Barnabas may have written it. The style however is Paul's and many Bible Students believe that Paul wrote to the scattered Hebrew believers about 64 AD. It was certainly written prior to the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD as the writer refers to it as still existing.

### **REASON FOR THE EPISTLE**

The Hebrew believers were undergoing extreme persecution from their fellow Jews. They were ostracised from their synagogues and all of the benefits contiguous with this - similar to a modern social welfare programme.

They were feeling like giving up their new found faith in Christ and going back to Judaism.

Some of the Early Church historians indicate that originally this letter was attached to the Epistle to the Galatians, which also deals with going back to the Law.

Paul stirs them up to renewed faith by urging them not to let things slip (HEB. 2:1), reminding them that the reward is for those who endure to the end (3:6), exposing the deceitfulness of sin and unbelief (3:13 and 4:13), showing them that there had been immaturity (5:12), slackness (6:12), a wrong approach to God (10:22), and a misunderstanding of the importance of fellowship (10:25).

Because of all this, some are inclined to go back (10:38-39).

Paul attempts to get their eyes off the visible to the invisible (12:18-29) and to establish their faith in Christ, who as God is better than angels and men.

### **KEY PHRASES.**

There are a number of words which are emphasised throughout this epistle. i.e. Perfect, Heavenly, Eternal, Sat Down, Once, etc. However, the word which sums up this Book more than any other is "Better", and this is in fact the Theme of the epistle. It occurs 13 times - 1:4, 6:9, 7:7,19,22, 8:6, 9:23, 10:34, 11:16,35,40, 12:24. Everything in Christ is better than under the previous Jewish law - there is a better hope, a better covenant, better promises, and better sacrifices.

### **KEY VERSE.**

HEBREWS 4:14-16 "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high

priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of your infirmities; but was in all points tempted like all we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. "

However, the book abounds in key statements which are also able to sum up the theme of the book, e.g. 6:1-3, 11:6,etc.

### **OUTLINE OF THE EPISTLE.**

It is possible to break the book into a number of outlines.

### **COMPARISONS WITH JESUS CHRIST.**

1.
  - a. He is Greater than the prophets. 1:1-3
  - b. He is Greater than the angels. 1:4-2:18
  - c. He is Greater than Moses. chapter 3
  - d. He is Greater than Joshua. 4:1-13
  - e. He is Greater than Aaronic Priests. 4:14-10:18
  - f. Because of His Greatness, we are inspired to go on to perfection. 10:19-13:25
2.
  - a. Superiority of the Person of Christ. 1-4:13
  - b. Superiority of the Priesthood of Christ. 4:14-10:18
  - c. Superiority of the Life in Christ. 10:19-13:20
3.
  - a. Christ the Son. chapters 1-3
  - b. Christ the Priest. chapters 4-7
  - c. Christ's Covenant. chapters 8-10
  - d. Christ's Kingdom. chapters 11-13

### **MAIN TEACHING OF HEBREWS.**

Paul once and for all declares the Jewish laws and rituals to be finished. They were imperfect and unable to bring men to salvation (7:11, 28). He goes on to declare the absolute glory of the Son of God, establishing His Deity (1:1-10) and His perfect humanity (2:14-18), His sinless life (7:26) and the efficacy of His blood alone to cleanse us from sin (10:1,4,14).

Actually. it is this emphasis on the change of priesthood and the means of dealing with sin that becomes the key theme of Hebrews.

Paul is seeking to sustain the Jewish Christians and to wean them away from their dependence on the old rituals which are now valueless because their fulfilment has come. Christ, the perfect sacrifice for sin and the perfect High Priest, is here and the shadows and types of the Old Testament are no longer necessary. (10:1, 9:8).

Jesus has performed His sacrificial redemptive work on earth and through His death He had delivered the captives of sin and Satan. (2:14-15). Now He has become our High Priest of the Order of Melchisedec (5:6). He is the only mediator of a better Covenant (7:22, 8:6) and today is in the presence of God the Father, interceding for us (7:25, 2:17-18, 4:14-16).

1. He is able to exercise this powerful present ministry because of His endless life (7:24). This is the significance of the Melchisedec Priesthood. Unlike the previous Aaronic Priesthood which had to be continually renewed as the priests died, the new Priesthood never passes away, for it is founded on Eternal Life. Melchisedec was the Priest of Jerusalem to whom Abraham paid tithes (7:1-10). It is believed that this person was a Pre-Incarnation

appearance of the Eternal Word (JOHN 1:1). HEBREWS 7:2 says He was without father and mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days or end of life. This appearance was to establish the Melchisedec Priesthood as an Eternal one belonging to God and not to mere man. Jesus in His humanity perfectly kept the law and offered Himself as our sacrifice for sin and received as the perfect Man what had been His as the pre-incarnate God. JOHN 17:5.

2. The second significant thing about the Melchisedec Priesthood is that it produces perfection instead of imperfection, which was the only thing possible under the Aaronic Priesthood HEBREWS 10:1-4. But through Jesus Christ, our new High Priest our sins are taken away forever. He is now able to perfect us totally (10:10, 14-17, 7:11-19) because the problem of past sin is dealt with (6:1).

## **OTHER THEMES IN HEBREWS.**

### **1. ANGELS ARE MINISTERING SPIRITS TO THE SAINTS.**

God has sent forth these mighty angelic creatures to protect us and assist us. Although you cannot recognise them, they are around us more often than we realise. HEB. 13:2

### **2. THE POWER OF FAITH.**

Jesus is the Apostle and High Priest of our Faith Confession. 3:1. The word "profession" is incorrectly translated and should read confession: 'It means to "say again what God has said". Our confession should never be different from God's Word. Jesus our High Priest cannot receive any blemished offerings such as negative confessions. HEBREWS 11 is the great faith chapter of the Bible, listing the heroes of faith and showing the impossible odds they triumphed over through simply believing in God and taking Him at His Word. HEB. 3:12-4:11 is a very clear warning of the negative power of unbelief. Israel could have triumphed if only they had trusted in God's ability to take them into Canaan and overthrow their enemies. Instead, their lack of trust became sin and caused them to miss the purposes of God for them.

### **3. FOUNDATION.**

HEBREWS 6:1-3 declares that there are certain foundations in our Christian life which must be laid before we can go on to perfection. However, once they are laid we should not be relaying them again and again. These foundations are:

- a. Repentance
- b. Faith
- c. The doctrine of Baptism in water and in the Holy Spirit (The word is baptisms - plural)
- d. The doctrine of Laying on of Hands.
- e. Resurrection from the dead.
- f. Eternal judgement.

### **4. FALLING FROM GRACE.**

The theory of Eternal security is dealt with in this Epistle. Paul teaches in HEBREWS 6:4-8 and 10:26-31 that it is possible to fall away from the grace of God and be lost. It is a false doctrine which teaches that once saved a person is always saved regardless of their behaviour. HEB. 10: 39 says that it is possible to draw back into perdition. We are called to

holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. HEB.12:14

## **5. TITHING.**

The returning of the first tenth of our income to God as a recognition of His Lordship is upheld in chapter 7:4-9. It is not part of the Law, and therefore has not been done away with or changed. It existed long before the law, and is part of the Melchisedec Priesthood. It is a principle with God that is to last as long as this age lasts. The first part of all we have belongs to God.

## **6. GOD'S DEALINGS WITH HIS CHILDREN.**

Chapter 12:1-11 shows us that sometimes God's dealings with us are not pleasant but are necessary for the production of true character. If we refuse His dealings, it proves that we are not true sons (verse 7), and if God did not deal with us at all it would show that He was not our father. Chastising is a sign of His love for us.

Hebrews is a most inspiring book. Since it is almost totally relative to the to the present ministry of Jesus, every Christian should read and re-read it until the revelation of our approach to God and acceptance at His throne through the High Priestly ministry of Jesus Christ is clearly received.

# Chapter Eighteen

## James

### **BACKGROUND.**

The Epistle of James is considered to be the first book written in the New Testament after Matthew's, being written about AD 45 to the Jewish Christians who were scattered throughout the earth (1:1).

The epistle is almost Old Testament in its emphasis. There are only 2 references to Christ (1:1, 2:1). There is no mention of the gospel, or the incarnation, life, death and resurrection or ascension of Jesus, although his second coming is referred to (5:7). There is no mention that redemption has been accomplished or that the promised Messiah has actually come. These things are obviously taken for granted as being already believed by the Jews to whom he wrote.

The Epistle has however many references to the Sermon on the Mount in the gospel of Matthew and quotations from it. e.g. JAMES 1:1 with MATT. 7:24-26, 4:11-12 with MATT. 7:1.

Martin Luther considered this Epistle lightly - calling it the "epistle of straw" - and he relegated it to the back of his Bible because it seemed to him to cast aspersion on the great doctrine of Justification by faith which had so changed his life.

Some commentators have said that James wrote this book in reaction to Paul's epistles and emphasis on justification by faith. However, this could not be so since the Book of James was written before Paul ever wrote anything, and even before he was in active ministry at Antioch.

There is no conflict in this book with other parts of scripture. It simply brings a much needed balance to the emphasis many people would wrongly make out of the truth of our salvation.

### **AUTHOR.**

It was written by James, the brother of Jesus. At first, he was bitterly opposed to the Lord's ministry and did not believe in him (JOHN 7:5). After the resurrection, Jesus appeared to him personally and he was converted. (1 COR. 15:7). By the time this Epistle was written, James had become the recognised leader of the Jerusalem assembly. He was known as James the Just or Camel Knees", which was because of the great calluses on his knees, developed through hours of prayer. He was slain by the Jews about AD 62.

### **MESSAGE OF JAMES.**

This epistle emphasises practical Christian living and the doing of God's word instead of merely hearing or knowing it. James writes about faith in the context of specific situations. He is telling us that faith is more than a mental attitude or a profession of certain doctrines. He emphasises the nature of faith and its implementation into our daily lives. His theme is that faith without works is dead (2:26).

However, it needs to be understood that James is not referring to being saved from sin by works instead of by faith in the blood of Christ. He is trying to explain that all believers must allow that new faith in their lives to outwork and change all the practical situations they are

involved in. If they merely have a mental belief without any evidence of transformation or fruit of the spirit, their faith is valueless.

In this epistle, faith is seen in a variety of practical situations

### **1. FAITH OVER TRIALS OR TEMPTATION - Chapter 1:2-21**

The source of temptation is revealed as being out of man's own heart and not from God. (verse 13-16). God sends good things and not evil things (v. 17-18). In times of testing faith manifested as patient waiting for the end result, is needed (1:2-4, note verse 12).

### **2 FAITH BY ACTIONS - Chapter 1:22-2:26**

a. James points out vain religion, which he defines as being like a man looking in a mirror and then forgetting what he looks like. He says that all forgetful hearers of God's word (i.e. those that hear it but do not do it) are deceived. Pure religion shows itself in caring for the needy and living in holiness.

b. Respect for Persons is shown to be sin. Preferential treatment to the well to do and despising of the poor and needy is not acceptable to God despite the amount of "mental" believing a man may engage in. James says that this kind of faith without the works or proof of Jesus' life in us is dead (2:17). He says that believing alone is not enough. Even the devils believe, but are not saved. True faith shows itself in obedience to God as Abraham exemplified in his willingness to offer up Isaac.

### **3. FAITH IN WORDS - chapter 3**

Strife and bitterness easily wells up through loose speech. In fact, James declares that the tongue is the key to the whole life. True faith will reveal itself in victory over the tongue and the manifesting of the fruits or righteousness.

### **4. FAITH IN SEPARATION.**

One of the real evidences that faith is working in our hearts is that we separate from the world and are not motivated by the desire for ungodly pleasures. (4:1-5).

A key to understanding why many people are overcome by worldliness is that the pride is present - pride in their ability to handle the devil and temptation, and not be caught. However, the Word says that the only way to successfully resist the devil is to submit yourself to God (4:6-8). This submission to God must also carry over into such things as our daily plans. Self-confidence will destroy us. Only God knows what is best for us and what the future holds. True faith in God will not use the prideful, self-willed spirit of the world even in business, but will submit every detail to the Lord.

### **5. FAITH THROUGH PATIENCE - 5:1-12.**

These verses show the true believer enduring affliction in a right attitude, understanding that the Lord has all things in control. Patient faith is illustrated by the sowing of seed and waiting for the harvest. Our trust in God is never wasted even if there is no apparent result. The seeds will eventually bear fruit.

### **6. FAITH IN PRAYER - 5 :13-20.**

James points out that the only kind of prayer of any value is one imbued with faith - confidence in God's willingness and ability to answer. Elijah is the classic example of this. He prayed earnestly and did not give up. The prayer of faith for healing of sickness is mentioned as a specific case in point (verse 14-16), as is the intercession for unbelievers (v. 19-20).

**KEY VERSE.**

JAMES 2:26.

# Chapter Nineteen

## 1 & 2 Peter

These two epistles were written to the Gentile Christians in particular (4:3), although their message certainly related to the Jewish believers as well. Apparently the first epistle especially was sent to the churches in Asia-Minor which had been founded by Paul, for a two fold purpose:

- a. To encourage the sorely tried believers during severe testing and persecution.
- b. To show that there was unity in teaching between the apostles. Many of the Early Churches had the idea that there were different doctrines held by the various apostles, and in particular that Peter and Paul were at cross-purposes.

Peter was the author of these letters, and in them he demonstrates the real transformation that has come into his life since the days Jesus rebuked him for his instability (MATT. 16:23). He is now the "rock" Jesus prophesied he would be. He is now able to fulfil the ministry that was given to him.

- a. To strengthen his brethren (LUKE 22:32);
- b. To feed the Lord's sheep (JOHN 21:17)

This he does powerfully in these epistles, having himself been strengthened by the Lord for the sufferings of the Christians.

## 1 PETER

### THEME

The first epistle concentrates on the theme of trials or suffering, attempts to get the believers to get the victory over the testing time by seeing what the ultimate purpose of God is. The word "suffering" or its equivalent is found 21 times in the first epistle and the sufferings of Christ are mentioned in each chapter. It is not referred to in the second Epistle.

Suffering is never to be considered a mark of shame, but of opportunity to be progressively transformed. The trial of faith is much more precious than gold - when it is refined in the fire only the best will remain - praise and glory to Jesus. Chapter 1:7.

Suffering or trial is only the process God uses to develop our salvation to its promised goal of making us ready for the coming of the Lord (1:1-13 and 5:10).

The next section (1:14 - Chapter 3) deals with the necessity to live in holiness. If a believer is receiving harsh treatment as a result of his careless and unchristian behaviour, not only does he merit this judgement, but he becomes a reproach to the Lord. Our example is the Lord Jesus, who suffered only for righteousness and never for evil. When he was reviled, he reviled not again (1 PET. 2:22-23).

In this respect we must:

- a. Honour and obey our elected Governments - 2:14,15, &17
- b. Keep the laws of the Land - 2:13

- c. Not have a double standard - 2:14
- d. Give fair labour to our employers - 2:18

The third section of 1 Peter - chapters 4 and 5, show that if we submit to the trials of the Christian life in the right spirit, we actually enter into a fellowship with the Lord (4:13). It is this persecution or trial which is keeping the house of God purified (4:17).

It is important to realise that character is not developed out of the good experiences of life, but as a result of learning to triumph over the bad circumstances.

### **KEY VERSE.**

1 PETER 4:1 "for as much then as Christ has suffered for us; in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin; "

### **OTHER THEMES IN 1 PETER.**

#### **1. PRECIOUS THINGS.**

Peter highly values the things of God which have made his life worthwhile. They are:

- a. Precious trial of Faith (1:7)
- b. Precious Blood of Christ (1:19)
- c. Precious Cornerstone (2:4-6)
- d. Precious Jesus (2:7)
- e. Precious Faith (2 PET. 1:1)
- f. Precious Promise (2 PET. 1:4)

These elements are all above the price of this world's wealth and indeed precious.

#### **2. HEALING IN THE ATONEMENT.**

1 PET. 2:24 includes the great redeeming promise that Jesus made provision for our physical health as well as for our souls. When Jesus' body was broken and lacerated by the whip, our sickness was dealt with, as much as our sins were dealt with by Jesus' death on the Cross. IS. 53:4-6 also includes this same promise and MATT. 8:17.

#### **3. HUSBAND AND WIFE RELATIONSHIPS.**

1 PET. 3:1-7. This is shown to be a most important area of Christian life. Modesty and submission by the wife toward her husband, and love and compassion by the husband toward his wife. Peter goes so far as to point out that contention between husband and wife will cause their prayers to be hindered or 'cut off' (3:7).

#### **4. THE ROLE OF UNDERSHEPERDS.**

Ministers must conduct themselves in humility knowing that they are under the oversight of the great shepherd - Jesus Christ. It is this humility expressed not only to God directly, but to His chain of delegated authority (5:5-6) which gives us the right and ability to resist Satan. Anyone who is not submissive is open prey to the "roaring lion" (5:8).

## 2 PETER

### THEME.

No suffering is mentioned here, but rather vigilance, to be aware of, and to expose false teachers.

There is a real parallel between 2 PETER and 2 TIMOTHY. Both these books were written at about the same time and no doubt deal with the same type of problems. False teachers were trying to pervert the church and introduce wrong doctrine and sensual practices, having wrong motives regarding finance (2:1-3).

Peter emphasises the need for:

- a. Doctrinal purity. 2 PET. 1:12 He upholds the Word of prophecy that will keep us from both stagnation and excess (1:19-21)
- b. Moral purity. These false teachers will lead the unwary astray into evil practices, causing them to lose their salvation, chapter 2 - note 1:4.

### COMING JUDGEMENT.

The judgement of God is certain against all the ungodly, even the backslider. Peter brings out a great revelation of the coming of the Lord in chapter 3. Just as in the days of Noah the judgement fell (though the scoffers thought it would never come), so in the End-time, despite the mockery of mankind, the Lord will come to judge the world.

It is totally necessary that everyone live in Holiness to escape that awful time of God's wrath against ungodly men (3:11, 14, 17).

### GROWTH IN CHRIST.

Peter has seen this fantastic miracle of human temperament being transformed by Christ's life, working in his own experience. He shows us that while salvation is instantaneous, God continues to do His great work in us by a "growth process". Not overnight, but steady progress. Note 3:18. This is the main thought of chapter 1.

Faith is the basic thing - "Like precious faith" received at the moment of conversion (2 PET 1:1). However, that faith needs certain things to be added to it to make it effective:

- a. Virtue
- b. Knowledge
- c. Temperance - or self-control
- d. Patience
- e. Godliness
- f. Brotherly kindness
- g. Love

### NOTE 2 PETER 1: 5-7 .

If these things are in us in increasing measure, we will never be barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Those, however, who lack these "growth" factors are actually deceived, and sin still has a hold on them.

Peter says that the person who has given attention to growing in the Lord in these simple but practical areas of faith and character will NEVER fall. 2 PET. 1:10.

**KEY VERSE.**

2 PETER 1:4 "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

# Chapter Twenty

## 1,2&3 John

### **AUTHOR.**

These epistles were written towards the end of the first century, probably about 90 AD, from Ephesus where John spent the final years of his life. He was a very elderly man and calls himself, "the elder" in 2 JOHN v. 1 and 3 JOHN v. 1.

Although the epistles do not state that John wrote them, they were referred to by the leaders of the church in the 2nd century as John's, and there are many parallel statements found in the epistles and John's Gospel, e.g. JOHN 1:1,2,14 - L JOHN 1:1, JOHN 1:5 - 1 JOHN 2:8, JOHN 8:44 - 1 JOHN 3:8.

## **1 JOHN**

There is no greeting to this epistle, and no suggestion as to whom it was directed. This is significant. The only two epistles in the Bible that have no greeting or specific nomination are Hebrews and 1 John. There is a sense in which these epistles are directed to the whole church universal, rather than to deal with specific local church problems. First John is a powerful epistle dealing with the personal believer's successful Christian life rather than the details of the local church. In fact, John never refers to the church in this epistle, but only to believers.

### **PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE.**

John gives four reasons for writing the epistle:

- a, That their joy may be full (1:4). The knowledge that Jesus has indeed come in the flesh to redeem us is the basis for real lasting joy.
- b. To preserve them from sin (2:1)
- c. To warn them of false teachers (2:26)
- d. To assure them of their eternal life (5:13). They needed encouragement and certainty in their faith in Jesus.

### **KEY WORDS & MAIN THEMES IN 1 JOHN.**

#### **a. KNOW**

This word or its equivalent occurs 32 times in this epistle. Jewish and pagan converts alike had introduced into the church many of their old ideas and beliefs. Eventually this heresy grew into Gnosticism, an insidious sect which claimed to acknowledge the Deity of Christ but denied His humanity. They claimed a 'superior revelation' and referred to themselves as "Gnostics" or "knowing ones" and despised anyone unsophisticated enough to still believe the word of the apostles. Because of the beginnings of this heresy, John constantly emphasises to the individual believer the things that they "know"

Note the following references for an example of this point:

Chapter 2:3, 5, 13, 14, 20, 21, 29;  
Chapter 3:2, 5, 14, 15, 19, 24;

Chapter 4:2, 6, 7, 13, 16;  
Chapter 5:2, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20.

- WE KNOW that righteousness is the fruit of relationship with God (2:29, 5:18).
- WE KNOW that Jesus was manifested to take away our sin (3:5).
- WE KNOW that love is the proof that we have passed from death to life (3:14).
- WE KNOW that Jesus abides in us by the revelation of the Spirit (3:24).
- WE KNOW that we have eternal life (5:13).
- WE KNOW that God answers prayer (5:15).

## **b. LOVE**

John was known as the Apostle of love and this emphasis comes through strongly in this Epistle. The word occurs at least 29 times and always it is the Greek word "agape" - real love, not "phileo" - mere affection - which is used. This is miracle love. It is not natural to man, and according to ROM. 5:5, it is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost. In fact GOD IS LOVE (4:8). Now we love Him because He first loved us (4:19), and we are able to love "one another because of this new love in our heart through God" - (4:7). This "agape" love, if allowed to develop, will deal with our fears (4:18) and give us boldness in the day of judgement (4:17).

## **c. FELLOWSHIP**

Fellowship is also a key word in this epistle. Note chapter 1:3,6, 7.

## **d. SAYING AND DOING.**

There are seven occasions in 1 John where we are given comparisons between what some people "say" and what they actually "do".

- 1) If we say we have fellowship with God and walk in darkness we lie and do not tell the truth (1:6).
- 2) If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us (1:8).
- 3) If we say we have never sinned we make God a liar (1:10).
- 4) He that says, I know God and keeps not His commandments is a liar (2:4).
- 5) He that says he is in the light and hates his brother is in darkness (2:9)
- 6) He that says he loves God and hates his brother, is a liar. (4:20).

## **e. SIN**

John shows very clearly that our sin - all of it, is dealt with by the blood of Christ (1:7 and 1:9).

If there is sin occurring in our lives after conversion, we have an advocate with the Father (2:1). This is not a license to sin, for John commands, "sin not", but if it happens through weakness or misunderstanding we are able to appropriate immediate wholeness again.

John declares that sin has a deceptive power to blind the mind and heart (1:8 and 2:9, 11).

Sin is defined in this epistle as transgression of the law (3:4) and those that commit sin are of the devil (3:8).

However, Jesus was manifested to take away our sin (3:5). In Him there is no sin. His life in us (his seed) cannot sin. This does not mean that Christians will never sin for 2:1 has already made provision for cleansing them if they do. This verse, 1 JOHN 3:9 means that a true believer cannot habitually practice sin. The life of God in him will break its power and habits - see Amplified New Testament.

The fantastic strength of the New Birth - the life of Christ in us should never be under-estimated. There is no sin or chain which cannot be broken by this divine seed in us. Through it we are overcomers (4:4 and 5:4).

## **OTHER SIGNIFICANT THEMES IN 1 JOHN.**

### **a. THE ANTI-CHRIST**

There are many references throughout the Bible to the Satanic Superman who will be revealed in the last days to attempt to take control of the world and fight against God (2 THESS 2:8). However, this epistle is the only place where he is actually called the Anti-Christ. John also reveals that while there will be an actual person - known as Anti-Christ, there are actually many forerunners of him and there is a spirit of anti-Christ at loose in the World, preparing the way for this last great deception. 1 JOHN 2:18-22 and 3:3.

The Spirit of anti-Christ is revealed not only as those who are obviously totally against God, but those who seek to deceive, putting on the appearance of being believers but actually denying the essentials of our faith in Jesus, saying that He was not really manifested in the flesh. This is essentially what a wide range of denominations teach today. Those who propound these ideas, whether they be cults or historic churches, are of the spirit of Anti-Christ.

### **b. MATURITY**

John wrote to three specific groups of people in this epistle Fathers, young men, and children (2:12-14).

There is a development in God from stage to stage, and four stages of growth are seen in these descriptions.

1. Children. There are two Greek words used in 2:12-13. One is "teknon" - an infant, a new born one, and "paidia" one able to walk and talk. The first stages of our spiritual life relate to the two main areas of:

- i) Receiving new life and receiving the consciousness that you are indeed a new creation.
- ii) Developing the basic skills of prayer, Bible study, fellowship, resisting temptation, etc., which are paralleled to a young child learning to walk and talk.

These two areas relate to sins being forgiven and getting to know the Father. (2:12 & 13).

2. Young Men. Greek word - "neanskoi". This means a developing person in the prime and strength of life. Basic skills are well developed and the more complex skills of self control, and social relationships and industry have also been mastered. This speaks of the maturity of spiritual life which has mastered the devil (2:13) and is no longer gullible like a child and blown about by every wind of doctrine - Ephesians 4:14.

3. Fathers. Greek word - "pateres", speaks of those who have known him who is from the beginning (2:13). GEN. 1:1 shows us God in the beginning, creating - bringing forth life. This is the final level of maturity, to enter into the creation ministry of God the Father - bringing forth life and feeding the new children in the faith. Soul-winning and teaching are the highest stage of maturity but they only come out of "knowing Him" - a deep relationship with God.

## **2 JOHN**

John wrote this epistle to an elect lady and her children. They are unnamed. Though only 13 verses long, it contains some vital truths, particularly warnings against deceivers.

John emphasises that the doctrine of Christ is essential to salvation. He is referring to the personality of the Son of God both His humanity and Deity (v. 7-9). It is essential to our salvation to believe in the Incarnation of Jesus - that is, His physical birth brought about by the Holy Spirit in the virgin Mary.

Belief in His bodily resurrection is also necessary. John says that it is the Spirit of the Anti-Christ which denies these truths.

False cults - such as Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons, etc, are identified and the believers are told not to welcome them into their houses (verses 10-11).

## **3 JOHN**

This epistle, also written by John, centres around the activities in a local Church.

It was written to Gaius. A number of people by this name are referred to in the New Testament, and we are not sure if this man is referred to elsewhere.

A situation had developed in this church where an unscrupulous person named Diotrephes had taken control because of his love for pre-eminence. He had even refused John permission to come (v. 9-10). However, it is apparent that in the midst of this confusion God was growing some beautiful saints. Gaius was highly commended for his practical love toward the saints (v. 3-8). Also Demetrius has a good report (v. 12). In the most difficult situations, the grace of God still flows, bringing forth victory and the fruit of the Spirit.

A further truth in this small epistle is the dynamic concept in verse 2 - that it is God's will for His children to be healthy and prosperous, even as God intends their soul to be healthy and prosperous also. We see that here there is real deliverance from the curse, and total freedom from spiritual, mental, physical and material bondage is God's will for us.

# Chapter Twenty One

## Jude

The Epistle of Jude is one of the smallest New Testament books yet it is filled with a powerful message and contains facts not found elsewhere in the New Testament.

### **AUTHOR.**

Jude was almost certainly the brother of the Lord Jesus, and of James, who wrote the Epistle of James - MATT. 13:55, MK. 6:3. He was not an apostle and like James had not believed in Jesus JOHN 7:5. In this epistle he refers to himself not as the brother of Jesus but as His servant. The work of faith was complete. Unbelief had given way to submission.

The epistle is called a "general epistle" because it was not addressed to a church in particular but to believers generally (v. 1).

### **PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE.**

It is apparent that he started out to write to believers about salvation, but was then constrained by the Holy Spirit to change the theme to include charges against false brethren and heretics.

The Epistle urges the believers "to earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints", and not to be carried away with unscriptural innovations or corrupt practices.

Certain men had come into the church, ungodly men who were denying the truths of Jesus Christ. There were attacks on His Deity and sinlessness and atonement etc.

Jude gives examples of these errors which were infiltrating the church, having happened before. There are three accounts of individual wickedness in the midst of God's people - Cain's hatred and self-righteousness, Balaam's greed and preparedness to join with the enemies of God's people for personal gain, and Korah's dissension against Moses.

There are also three accounts of corporate wickedness given as examples to the believers to beware - Israel who believed not God's Word, the angels who rebelled against God and took human wives (see GEN. 6:1-4) and Sodom and Gomorrah. The men contemporary with Jude whom he calls filthy dreamers, who defile the flesh, despise dominion, and despise the angelic powers, or dignities, are then identified with these past sinners.

The main emphasis Jude makes against these false persons is the trend to immorality. It is almost inconceivable that people who were associated with the Church could even condone such impurity, let alone be involved in it. However, this vile behaviour had become the order of the day as far as these nefarious men were concerned. Immorality is one sure way to destroy a church. This is the reason for Jude's strong language against this falseness.

Added to the sins of these ungodly men was the fact that they were exalters of men, murmurers, and boastful.

### **THINGS ONLY REVEALED IN JUDE.**

1. Dispute over the Body of Moses (verse 9).

This account of the contention between Michael the Archangel and Satan is not mentioned elsewhere in the Bible.

It is important to note that Jude says that the fallen angels still are powerful beings and answerable to the Lord. They are not to be maligned or made the object of jest. Even powerful Michael did not bring any accusation against Satan. His pattern is a good one for us to follow:

- a. He resisted the devil.
- b. He refrained from insulting words.
- c. He relied on the Lord's word and work.

2 Enoch's Prophecy of the Lord's Return (verse 14-15).

Right back in the very beginning of human history, the Lord's promise of the day of judgement and the fulfilment of the saints is seen. Tens of thousands will be with Him in the rapture.

**KEY WORD.**

The word "keep" appears in three senses in this epistle.

- a. The angels failed because they "kept not" their first place with God (verse 6).
- b. The saints can "keep" themselves in the love of God by praying in the Holy Ghost and building themselves up in the faith (v.21)
- c. Above all this, God is able to "keep" us from falling (v. 24), and to present us faultless in His presence.

Despite such heresy and vileness which had infiltrated the early Church, Jude was still confident of God's power to not only save but to keep the believers pure and holy. PRAISE THE LORD!!

# Chapter Twenty Two

## Revelation

### **INTRODUCTION .**

This book is considered difficult to understand by many people. Consequently it is often avoided. However it is part of the inspired word of God. It is the only book in the Bible which carries a commendation and promise to those who read it (1:3), and a curse on those who interfere with its message (22:18-19).

Despite its apparent difficulties, it is one of the most important books in the whole Bible for this generation, for it deals primarily with the events of the End-Time. In these awesome days every Christian needs to be very familiar with this book.

This study will not be sufficient to cover every aspect of these details and only a broad outline will be possible. (It is dealt with in detail in "End Time Events" by David Cartledge published by Paraclete Ministries.)

### **AUTHOR .**

John the apostle wrote this book as a result of his vision of the Lord. Revelation is actually the direct word (of Jesus Christ about the things which must shortly come to pass) which was sent to John. (1: 1)

John had been exiled to the Isle of Patmos because of his Christian witness (1:9). It was while he was there worshipping the Lord on the Lord's day when Jesus actually appeared to him and gave him this revelation (1:10-20).

The book was written about 96 AD and was the last part of the New Testament to be written. Jerusalem had been destroyed and all the other initial apostles had been martyred.

It is interesting to note that John wrote the last 5 books of the Bible to be written - the Gospel, the 3 epistles and the Revelation. Moses wrote the first 5 books of the Bible. Five is the number of grace. The Word of God to men begins and ends with grace - God's unmerited favour.

The book was written primarily to the seven churches of Asia, but is as significant to us as it was to them.

### **MAIN THEME OF REVELATION.**

There are many facets of truth presented in this book but the recurring theme is Jesus Christ. He is in the first chapter and the last. He is seen throughout the book. He is seen in the midst of the church (chapter 1), speaking to the churches (chapter. 2-3). He is seen in heaven opening the sealed books (chapter. 5), and in chapter 7 with the 144,000 as well as in chapter 14. The marriage of the Lord to His bride and His conquering of the nations is in chapter 19. He is in the New Jerusalem (chapter. 21-22). He is the beginning and the end.

There are many names which are ascribed to Him in this book each are revealing aspects of His person or work for us. He is called - the faithful witness (1:5), the first begotten from the dead (1:5), the prince of the Kings of the earth (1:5), the Alpha, the Omega (1:8), the Son of Man (1:13), The Son of God (2:18), the Amen (3:14), the beginning of the creation of God (3:14), the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, and the Root and offspring of David (5:5), the

Lamb (5:8), Christ (11:15), Jesus Christ (12:17), Lord of Lords, King of Kings (17:14, 19:16), Faithful and True (19:11), The Word of God (19:13), and the bright and Morning Star (22:16)

The predominant Name ascribed to Him, though, is as our redeemer - "THE LAMB". It is mentioned 28 times in the book, and His blood is referred to a number of times - " they overcame the devil by the blood of the Lamb" (12:11) . He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

There are of course many subsidiary themes covered in Revelation which we will mention, but the overwhelming emphasis is that of the Lord Jesus Christ.

John had been used to walking with Jesus. He was no stranger to him. But when he was confronted with the resurrected Lord, now glorified with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, (John 17:5) John fell at His feet as if he were dead. The description in chapter one is far different from the despised Galilean who walked the dusty roads of Judea and was rejected by His own. If this is the impact the Glorified Lord has on His own disciple, we can well imagine the terror his appearance will strike into the hearts of unbelievers (1:7, 6:16) .

He is dressed in a garment down to the foot - the robe of His High Priestly ministry. However, He now wears the golden waistband of the King, not the towel of the servant (JOHN 13:4) .

He is the Lord of Glory and our Prophet, Priest and King.

### **INTERPRETING THE BOOK.**

The key to the book is understanding the symbolic language used. In the very first verse there is a reference to Revelation being a book of Signs and symbols - "signified". There are about 300 symbols used in the book. Many of these can only be interpreted by referring back to other parts of scripture where they have already been used and identified.

Revelation is not a closed book. Some of Ezekiel's and Daniel's prophecies are sealed until the end-time, but Revelation was meant to be understood. It spells out Satan's doom in no uncertain terms. Perhaps this is the reason why Satan has turned the majority from understanding about his final overthrow. John was in the Spirit when he received this Revelation (1:10) . Interpretation also needs the help of the Holy Spirit.

### **THE SCOPE OF REVELATION.**

The book has a three-fold scope. John was commanded to write about:

- a. the things he had seen - Past
- b. the things which are - Present
- c. the things which shall be hereafter - Future.

This is also a key to the book. Some of the events are already past. Others were current in John's day, while the majority of the book was to be fulfilled later.

There are two main ideas about interpreting this book. One is the Historicist view. The other is the Futurist. Historicists claim that all of Revelation up to chapter 19 has already been fulfilled during the last two thousand years. In their view the Catholic church, or Pope, is

identified as the Anti-Christ. Futurist's see most of Revelation from chapter 4 as being fulfilled in this present day which they believe is the End-Time. This is the view given in this study.

It is generally felt that Revelation divides into two distinct parts - Chapters 1-11 and 12-22. It is apparent that the second half of the book is a repetition in more detail of the first part of the book, particularly chapters 4-11. This is a Biblical principle. God often "doubles" important things to teach by repetition. NOTE - GEN. 41:32 and DAN. 2 & 7 - These two chapters both show the Empires of the End-Time from different perspectives) .

## **THE BOOK OF CONSUMMATIONS.**

There is a very definite relationship between Genesis - the book of beginnings and Revelation - the book of endings. Note these connections between the two books.

### **GENESIS - BEGINNINGS**

The first heaven and earth  
Sun, moon and stars created  
Paradise lost Satan wins the first round  
Tree of life barred to men  
Sorrow, tears & the curse  
Redemption promised  
First Adam & his bride  
River flowing out of Eden  
Gold pearl, precious stone

### **REVELATION - CONSUMMATIONS**

The new heaven and earth  
No need of them in New Jerusalem  
Paradise restored  
Satan loses the last round  
Tree of Life restored to men  
No more tears, curse removed  
Redemption fulfilled  
Last Adam and His bride  
River flowing out of throne of God  
Gold, pearl, precious stone

### **SEVENS AND TWELVES.**

In the first part of Revelation, all of the numbers used are sevens. There are seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven thunders, seven vials of wrath. However, at the end of the book, twelve is the predominant number.

There is a real significance in this. Both these numbers symbolise perfection, but of a different kind.

Seven is made up of 3 plus 4. While twelve is made up of 3 multiplied by 4. Three is the number of the Godhead, while four is the number of creation or the earth. In seven we see God added to-man making seven - perfection. But what has been added can also be taken

away. However/in twelve we see God and man so intermingled that there can be no subtraction. Twelve means governmental perfecting, and man joined with God, with God's laws written in His heart and God causing him to walk in His ways, is man totally under the government of God.

Another reference to this perfect union is seen in chapter one, where Jesus is seen standing the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, which represent the seven churches to which this message was sent. Seven candlesticks with seven branches each equals 49 branches, plus Christ in the midst equals 50, the number of jubilee, release and restoration. When Jesus is in the midst of the churches, restoration and release is the result.

## **THE SEVEN CHURCHES**

The second and third chapters of Revelation were specifically written to the seven churches of Asia.

There were actually more than seven churches in this area, and it straight away becomes apparent that these messages are in fact an appraisal by the Lord of the state of the church in general. It is also a prophetic picture of the church through the last two thousand years. Each church addressed represents a period of Church history, as well as becoming an example or warning to us because of the particular situations which developed at each place mentioned.

Despite the fact that serious problems are referred to, chapter one closes with Jesus standing in the midst of these churches. He does not easily cast off a church which has failed, but seeks to restore it to its holy place by encouragement, teaching and dire warning, in that order.

### **1. EPHESUS. REV. 2:1-7**

The Church at Ephesus had been founded by the ministry of Apollos and Paul - ACTS 18:24 and 19. In later years the Apostle John lived there and ministered to the assembly. The city was an important provincial capital in the Roman Empire and was the centre of idolatrous worship, being the location of the Temple of Diana.

The Lord came to this church seeking a Bride but found a servant instead. The major indictment made against this church was that they had lost their "first love" for Jesus. They had become engrossed in doing things, but had fallen into the trap of confusing activity with real achievement. In this case, the only lasting achievement is a right relationship with the Lord. All other things, however good, fall far short of satisfying the Lord's desire for fellowship with His people.

They were a thoroughly orthodox church - with good works, patience, good doctrine, refusing false teachers, labouring for the Lord's sake. Despite all of these good aspects the Lord says that they are "fallen" (2:5).

The Lord does commend them, however, on their attitude to the Nicolaitanes. These were a group who taught that the clergy were a special class separated from ordinary Christians. The Ephesians had maintained a true fellowship in the Body of Christ without establishing a special priesthood.

The Lord declares that He is the one who stands among the Candlesticks. This is where John first saw Him - in the midst, not on the outside of the churches, but the very centre of their

interest.

Ephesus is the first church to be addressed, because all the problems found in other churches begin with the one thing the Lord had against Ephesus - "losing the first love".

The only way back to the first love is to do the "first works". This involved repentance and returning to fellowshiping with the Lord rather than just doing things for Him. The reward for those who overcome this servile attitude is to eat of the tree of life.

Prophetic view - A type of the Apostolic church at the end of the first century.

## **2. SMYRNA - 2:8-11**

The church here had been subjected to much persecution. Smyrna was a prosperous port about 50 miles North of Ephesus. Polycarp, a leader of the church here was martyred about 169 AD. Tribulation was a continuing feature of the church at Smyrna. Many paid for their faith with their lives. To this church Jesus reveals Himself as the Lord who has overcome death. The prediction that they would have persecution "ten days" is a reference to:

(a) The ten fearful emperors under who the Christians suffered - Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, Severus, Maximum, Decius, Valerian, Aurelian, and Diocletian.

(b) However, there is probably a special reference to the last and severest persecution of these Christians under Diocletian - 303 - 313 - ten years during which all scriptures and churches were to be destroyed.

There is no rebuke given by the Lord to this church. Obviously the fires of persecution had a purifying effect on the church. Though through the persecution they had material poverty, yet they were rich in faith.

The name Smyrna means Myrrh - the fragrant perfume. Surely the suffering of these believers arose to God as a sweet perfume.

The Lord promised that the overcomers in this situation would be given a crown of life.

Prophetic view - The Persecuted Church. 120 - 313 AD

## **3. PERGAMOS - 2:12-17**

Pergamos was an important cultural centre which had developed a library of over 200,000 volumes - all copied by hand. It was also the centre of worship of the heathen idol Aesculapius - the god of healing. The sick were able to spend the night in the temple where snakes crawled over them. The snake was the symbol of Aesculapius. This is a reference to "Satan's Seat" - a false lying emphasis on healing as a counterfeit of the true ministry of Jesus Christ.

Pergamos was also the most devoted centre of Emperor worship in the Roman Empire. In most other places, Christians were in jeopardy once a year when a pinch of incense had to be offered in worship to the Emperor, but at Pergamos it was required every day. Those refusing to do so were in danger of their lives constantly.

The church at Pergamos received both commendation and rebuke. They had held fast to being called, "Christians", and had not denied their faith even when the martyrdom of Antipas took place.

They were rebuked because they had tolerated two false doctrines and practices.

a. The doctrine of Balaam - which is identified in Numbers 25:1-3-as fraternizing with the world. It is trying to be compatible with worldly people - using worldly methods and adopting worldly standards. Balaam, the false prophet of Israel, interested only in wealth by any means, gave Balak, King of the Midianites, the idea of snaring Israel when he couldn't get them cursed.

b. The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes - this is the same problem as mentioned to the church at Ephesus. However, Ephesus was commended for hating this practice while the church at Pergamos had tolerated it. Twice the Lord said He hated this thing. This doctrine eventually led to the priestly class, and the developed mediatorial structure of the Roman Catholic church.

The overcomers in this situation are to receive:

a. The "hidden manna". This is a reference to the "manna" which was hidden in the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle of Moses. It speaks of receiving revelation instead of the formalised or worldly ideas which were creeping into the church at Pergamos.

b. A white stone with a new name written onto it. The white stone was a sign used in courts of the accused being "not guilty". Man's disapproval doesn't mean God has cast us off. He approves us. There is no condemnation, despite the persecution of the enemy.

Prophetic view - Pergamos is a picture of the Christ of the Imperial Age, 313- 476 AD Pergamos means "married". It was during this time that the union of church and State took place, through the Emperor Constantine, and the doctrine of Balaam began to take place a marriage of the church and the world - Satan's seat became the counterfeit church.

#### **4. THYATIRA - 2:18-29**

It was situated between Pergamos and Sardis and was famous for the art of dyeing cloth purple. Lydia of ACTS 16:14 was originally from Thyatira.

This church also receives both commendation and rebuke from the Lord, though the rebuke is the most severe so far.

Despite the deep problems found in this church, the Lord commends them for many things, including their works, and the last to be more than the first, or "of late you have been even better", and for their love. There are many contradictions in this church - great heights of faith and love and patience and good works, and then the depths of Satan - a false woman teacher who has an influence on the Christians like Jezebel did (Ahab's wife - (1 KINGS 16:31-34) -which led them into spiritual adultery. This was no doubt a reference to the introduction of idolatry - worshipping of statues and saints, etc, and joining in the Trade guilds of the city which involved the heathen deities. This was a forerunner of the Mark of the Beast. No successful business could be conducted without this indulgence. Apparently Jezebel authorised these actions.

The Lord promises swift destruction to "Jezebel" and all those influenced by her.

The overcomers in Thyatira will receive power over the nations. Those who overcome the Spirit of Anti-Christ are going to rule and reign with Christ over the nations during the Millennium.

Prophetic view - Thyatira is the Papal Church, 450 - 1500 AD It is the time of compromise and darkness which existed for about 1000 years while the power of the Church of Rome grew. The main feature of this time is spiritual adultery. The total mixture of church and state which began in the Pergamos period.

### **5. SARDIS - 3:1-6**

This city was situated about 30 miles south east of Thyatira at the junction of 5 major trade highways and was thus an important centre of trade and travel.

The church here however, had a reputation that it could not justify - "a name that it was alive, when in fact it was dead".

Generally this church was not commended at all, except for the few individual believers who had kept themselves from defilement.

There was no persecution or false doctrine or corruption for which this church was rebuked - just a complacent attitude which was causing their relationship with God to die.

Prophetic view - The church at Sardis is a picture of the Reformation Church from 1517 AD on. Although it was a period where many good things happened, the Church of that period stopped short in the restoration of true faith. The Protestant reformation didn't move very far from the Papal church of the Dark Ages still retaining many of its trappings and rituals - i.e. infant baptism, the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes in its clergy and formal services. It was a period of imperfect restoration, which the Lord said was all outward form, but inward death.

The seven aspects of the Holy Spirit are mentioned here. Note the reference to the sevenfold Holy Spirit in ZECHARIAH 4:6-10 during a period of restoration. The people of that day had only gone so far in the restoration of the Temple. They needed the help of the Holy Spirit to complete the rebuilding. The Church in Sardis also desperately needed a full release of the Holy Spirit in their midst. Orthodoxy without Him is merely respectable death.

### **6. PHILADELPHIA - 3:7-13**

This city was built on the boundary of 3 countries - Lydia, Phrygia, and Mysia. It was founded for the specific purpose of disseminating the Greek culture and language and life-style.

The Lord didn't give any rebuke to this church - known as the church of Brotherly love. Only Smyrna and Philadelphia had this type of approval from the Lord.

Philadelphia had kept the word of God and was promised freedom from the time of Tribulation.

They had refused false teachers and the Lord said he would make those of the synagogue of Satan (or counterfeit teachers), to admit the righteousness of this church. The overcomers in Philadelphia are promised a permanent place in God's New Jerusalem.

Prophetic view - This is the End Time Church before which the Lord has put an "open door" of missionary opportunity. The end time church which holds the Lord's favour will reach the utmost parts of the earth with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

**7. LAODICEA - 3:14-21**

This city was about 40 miles from Philadelphia and was a very self-sufficient place. When the whole area was devastated by an earthquake about 60 AD, both Philadelphia and Sardis were re-built with help from the Emperor. Laodicea refused help and built the city again out of their own resources. They claimed to be so well off that they needed no help from God or man. Their main resources were the clothing factories producing white raiment which was exported all over the then known world.

They were also famous for special eye powder supposedly able to cure eye defects. Not one good thing is said about this church. It is a church which is self-sufficient, complacent and rich, but in reality is wretched, poor, blind and naked spiritually. Laodicea means the voice of the people. Congregational government can never work in a church. The Body of Christ is a Theocracy and must be governed by those God has set in the Church. 1 COR. 12:28-29

The Laodicea overcomers are promised a place in His throne. Perhaps the obstacles to overcome in Laodicea are the most difficult to overcome of all the problems mentioned in these two chapters.

Prophetic view - Like Philadelphia, Laodicea is a picture of the End-time Church, but it is the very opposite of Philadelphia. It is the lukewarm worldly self-satisfied church of modern times which is spiritually blind, having no revelation, feeling that it has arrived - "having need of nothing".

The Lord stands "outside" this church knocking and trying to get in and have fellowship with them. This is obviously where the failure point is - lack of personal relationship with the Lord. All the amassing of wealth and influence will only become a problem without the fire of God in the midst of the church. He wants His church HOT or He will cast them out.

These seven churches not only reveal the needs, strengths, rewards and warnings of these historic churches, and the prophetic picture of the whole church down through the centuries, but they reveal otherwise unknown aspects of the Lord Jesus Christ in His present ministry as our High Priest.

CHURCH	REBUKE	MANIFESTATION OF CHRIST	WARNING	OVERCOMERS REWARD	PROPHETIC SIGNIFICANCE
EPHUES	LEFT FIRST LOVE	HOLDS 7 STARS, STANDS IN MIDST OF 7 GOLDEN CANDLESTICKS	CANDLESTICK WILL BE TAKEN OUT OF ITS PLACE	ACCESS TO THE TREE OF LIFE	EARLY CHURCH 100 AD
SMYRNA	NONE	THE FIRST AND THE LAST WHO WAS DEAD AND IS ALIVE AGAIN	NONE	THE CROWN OF LIFE	PERSECUTED CHURCH 100-313 AD

PERGAMOS	DOCTRINE OF BALAAM - WORLDLINESS DOCTRINE OF NICALAITINES - SPECIAL PRIESTHOOD	THE SHARP TWO-EDGED SWORD	LORD WILL FIGHT WITH THE SWORD OF HIS MOUTH	THE HIDDEN MANNA A WHITE STONE A NEW NAME	IMPERIAL CHURCH 313 - 450 AD
THYATIRA	JEZEBEL - IDOLATRY	EYES AS A FLAME OF FIRE FEET AS FINE BRASS	LORD WILL SEARCH THE REINS AND HEARTS GREAT TRIBULATION	POWER OVER NATIONS THE MORNING STAR	PAPAL CHURCH 450 - 1517 AD
SARDIS	NAME THAT THOU LIVEST BUT ART DEAD	7 SPIRITS OF GOD AND 7 STARS	LORD WILL COME AS A THIEF AT AN UNEXPECTED HOUR	WHITE RAINMENT NAME NOT BLOTTED OUT OF BOOK OF LIFE NAME CONFESSED BEFORE FATHER	PROTESTANT CHURCH 1517 - ON
PHILADELPHIA	NONE	HOLY AND TRUE HAS KEY OF DAVID OPENS AND NO MAN SHUTS	NONE	WILL BE KEPT FROM GREAT TRIBULATION PILLAR IN GOD'S TEMPLE THE NAME OF GOD AND THE CITY OF GOD - AND A NEW NAME IN HIM	END TIME CHURCH VICTORIOUS
LAODICEA	LUKEWARM	AMEN - FAITHFIL AND TRUE WITNESS BEGINNING OF CREATION OF GOD	SPUED OUT OF GOD'S MOUTH	SHARING THE THRONE	END TIME CHURCH FAILING

The rest of the Book of Revelation is a complex study involving many symbols and events. In the scope of this study it will only be possible to give a very brief and general coverage to chapters 4-22.

We believe that most of the details referred to in this section of the Book relate to the End-Time and have either been or are being fulfilled in this present generation.

The theme followed in this study is that chapters 4 -11 are dealt with again from a different perspective in chapters 12 - 22 - there is a repetition of emphasis to these awesome events.

Note that in Revelation 10:7, in the days when the seventh angel begins to sound, the mystery of God shall be finished. Revelation 11:15 describes the ultimate intention of God's redemptive programme in this age of human history. The rest of the book does not go on to speak of events in eternity, but on earth prior to the coming of the Lord. Therefore it is clear that chapters 12-22 are repetitive. This is in accordance with God's plan of bringing revelation. The whole thing is "doubled" - GEN. 41:32. There are "two witnesses" even in the way the book is written.

## **A. THE FIRST VIEW OF THE END-TIME**

### **1. THE DOOR OPENED IN HEAVEN.**

Chapter four begins with John seeing a door opened in heaven and a voice saying, "Come up hither". This occurs directly after the descriptions of the End-Time church as epitomised by Philadelphia and Laodicea.

This is a reference to the Rapture of the overcoming church. Note: Philadelphia was promised "an open door which no man could shut" (3:8).

John sees the 24 elders sitting on "thrones" (literal translation) wearing crowns, clothed in white raiment. They are representative of the redeemed of all ages and sing the song of the redeemed (5:9-10). Note that in the Old Testament there were 24 courses of priests used in the worship of God. This heavenly scene is a picture of events after the Rapture of the Bride. Crowns are not given until after the Second Coming for the Saints. (2 Tim. 4:8).

### **2 THE SEALED BOOK.**

Chapter five reveals the drama of God's dealings with the earth after the Bride has risen to be with her Lord. The seven sealed book is opened by the "Lamb". That book is without doubt the title deed to the earth. No-one else could open it. Note the culmination of all these events (11:15). Jesus alone has established the right to that book - Satan tried to beguile Him in the programme to deliver the earth from evil and restore it to the Kingdom of His Father (Matt. 4:8-9).

### **3 THE OPENING OF THE SEVEN SEALS.**

These seals represent the awesome power God will unleash upon a rebellious and degenerate world in the final years of the Conquest of the Earth.

#### **a. FIRST SEAL - REV. 6:1-2 - THE COUNTERFEIT CHRIST**

This revealed a White Horse and a rider with a bow going forth to conquer.

This is the Anti-Christ, who receives a crown (note verse 2) and becomes the head of the Beast Kingdom.

He carries no arrows and this, together with the White colour speaks of him being outwardly peaceable. However it is all a strategy to win the nations to his rule His real intention is to conquer. His peaceful intention is to propose a World Federation of Nations of which he is the head. The first judgement unleashed upon a Godless world will be to be the evil and humanistic Government it deserves.

Note 1 Thess. 5:3, and Daniel 11:2.

#### **b. SECOND SEAL - REV. 6:3-4 - WAR**

We see here a rider on a Red Horse with power to take peace from the earth and to cause war. He has a great sword. This will culminate in the III World War which will usher in the Anti-Christ Kingdom. This rider is the Anti-Christ, now showing his true colours. His intention all along was to elevate himself as the undisputed head of all the human race, even at the price of multiplied millions of lives. The rejection of Christ - the Prince of Peace - culminates in the most terrible conflagration ever seen in human history.

#### **c. THIRD SEAL - REV. 6:5-6 - FAMINE**

Terrible starvation follows in the wake of World War III - seen in the picture of the rider on the Black Horse with a pair of scales in his hand. Economic hardship will devastate the earth at this time. The Anti-Christ will appear as the genius-saviour of the world at about this time, with solutions to the economic crisis and starvation situation.

#### **d. FOURTH SEAL - REV. 6:7-8 - DEATH**

The Pale Horse's rider is called Death. Terrible onslaughts against the population of the earth - both men and beast - will ensue at this time. Millions will die in combat in war, millions more through hunger, but the greatest devastation of mankind will be through nuclear warfare. To "kill with death" in scripture means to strike dead suddenly. One quarter of the earth will be subjected to this devastation as a result of the opening of the fourth seal. The period of time covered by these four seals and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse is the time of the Great Tribulation. This is what is spoken of as the 70th week of Daniel's vision (Dan. 9:27). During this time, God will allow the evil in man's heart to be unleashed and terrible will be the results. Man inspired by Satan will attempt the ultimate in humanism - the deification of man in the person of the Anti-Christ and the worship of his image.

However, after this there will come a period of the wrath of God against ungodly men.

#### **e. FIFTH SEAL - REV. 6:9-11 - MARTYRS**

During the time of the Anti-Christ's reign and the time of Great Tribulation, there will be an unprecedented attack on those who dare to believe in God. Those who have missed the first fruits rapture, but have by this time repented, and refuse to compromise, will be martyred by the millions. The souls of these end-time martyrs are seen under the Altar of God in heaven waiting until the last martyr has been slain.

#### **f. SIXTH SEAL - REV. 6:12-17 - THE GREAT AND TERRIBLE DAY OF THE LORD**

Matt. 24:29 dates the darkening of the sun, etc, and the events known as the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord (Joel 2:31), as beginning immediately after the

Tribulation. The period of time known as the Great Tribulation, and commonly referred to as Daniel's last week or the final 7 years, actually divides into 2 parts. The first half approximately is the period of Great Tribulation, while the latter half is the time of God's wrath. The seven seals and 7 trumpets are most likely in the first half, i.e. the Tribulation period, while the 9 vials are in the "time of God's wrath".

During the 6th seal, supernatural events will occur:

- i) There will be a great earthquake.

- ii) The sun will be darkened, the moon will appear as blood, and
- iii) There will be violent meteor showers.

These events will mark the dividing line between man's wrath against God's people, and God's wrath against evil. Peter declared that the signs in the sun and moon would occur before the great and notable day of the Lord came (Acts 2).

After this time Jesus will return visibly with His saints to execute judgement on the wicked - 2 Thess. 1:7-10.

There will also be those especially of Israel who are known as the 144,000 (Rev. 7:3-8) - the servants of God who are sealed during the time of tribulation and will be protected from God's wrath as Israel was in Egypt by the Passover "blood" sealing their houses. It is significant to note that God said to Abraham that his descendants would continue in Egypt for 400 years in slavery. Gen. 15:13-14. A Bible or prophetic year is 360 days. There are 144,000 days in 400 years. This number is distinctly related to suffering. It is most likely that the 2 groups of 144,000 mentioned in Revelation are the same - 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel who follow the Lamb.

#### **g. SEVENTH SEAL - REV. 8:1-2 - TOTAL JUDGEMENT**

There is silence in heaven for half an hour as the next phase of God's dealings with ungodly men unfolds. The sixth seal ushers in the Seven Trumpets, each of which signal an awesome catastrophe similar to the plagues poured out on Egypt when Israel was being set free from slavery and suffering. The last three trumpets are also known as "woes". The change of the year in Israel in the 7th month was always ushered in by the Feast of Trumpets (Lev. 23:24-25). These end-time trumpets fulfil the Old Testament ones by ushering in the change of the world's government.

#### **A FIRST TRUMPET - REV. 8:7**

Hail, Fire and Blood - one third of the earth's trees will be destroyed and all green grass will be burnt.

#### **B. SECOND TRUMPET - REV. 8:8-9**

A burning mountain (meteorite) hits the sea and one third of the earth's sea is polluted, one third of the sea life dies, and one third of the ships are destroyed.

#### **C. THIRD TRUMPET - REV. 8:10-11**

A poisonous object, probably a meteorite or missiles with biological warheads, affects the land as the previous one had affected the sea. One third of the rivers are polluted and made unfit to drink and many die.

#### **D. FOURTH TRUMPET - REV. 8:12**

The sun, moon and stars are affected and do not give light for a third of a day.

#### **E. FIFTH TRUMPET - REV. 9:1-12 (first woe)**

A locust plague. However, these are not ordinary locusts, but demonic powers under Satan's control, who are sent forth to hunt those not sealed with God's mark in their foreheads. They cannot kill, but only torment. The men affected will seek to die because of their agony, but death will be suspended for five months. Note Gen. 7:24. This flood - God's judgement - lasted 5 months.

#### **F. SIXTH TRUMPET - REV. 9:13-16 (second woe)**

Once again demonic forces are unleashed upon ungodly men in a measure never known before in the world's history - four evil angels bound in the Euphrates are loosed.

One third of the world's population die - perhaps as many as 2 billion people.

#### **THE TWO WITNESSES - Rev. 11:3-14**

In the days of the sixth Trumpet the ministry of two special witnesses sent forth by God during the last half of the Great Tribulation - 1260 days or 3~ years - will be concluded. They will be slain by the Anti-Christ's forces and the world will rejoice. Their dead bodies will lie in the streets of Jerusalem for 3~ days. At this point they will be resurrected in the sight of all and be raptured. An earthquake killing 7000 will occur at this precise hour. These two witnesses will most likely be Tribulation Saints. The Tribulation period is now closing. Note that in Elijah's day during the three and a half years of judgement by drought there were 7000 faithful to the Lord.

#### **G. SEVENTH TRUMPET - REV. 11:15-19, 10:7 (third woe)**

Under this event the final scenes in casting down the Anti-Christ and establishing the Kingdom of Christ will occur. It is at this point that the righteous dead will be raised and there will be the judgement of the righteous dead and rewards given to the Lord's servants who are not of the firstfruit company. Note: the unbelieving dead are not resurrected until after the Millennial reign of Christ is concluded (Rev. 20:6) so this resurrection is only of the Tribulation Saints.

When the seventh trumpet concludes sounding, the "mystery of God" will be finished. The Church will have been completed, purified, gathered from the four corners of the earth, resurrected and incorporated into God's Eternal purpose. It is during the last Trumpet that this general resurrection of the righteous will occur. 1 Cor. 15:51-52. Also Eph. 3:9, 5:32, Col. 1:22, which speak of the Church as the "mystery" of God.

Just as the opening of the Seventh Seal included the seven Trumpets, so the Seventh Trumpet also includes the seven Vials (Rev. 15:7). As stated at the beginning of this study, Rev. 4-11 is the whole history of this earth until Christ begins to reign. Rev. 12-22 is a recapitulation of those events in more specific detail. Chapter 15-16 are chronologically in the same time as Chapter 11.

These Vial judgements at first seem to be the same as the Trumpets, but there are many differences. They will occur at the same period of time, but their intensity and effect is greater and severer to make the 7th Trumpet the greatest "woe" of all. Rather than deal with these Vials in the next section of the study, we will include them here in their chronological order as part of the seventh Trumpet.

FIRST VIAL - Terrible boils, probably cancerous sores upon those who have the Mark of the Beast probably an effect of atomic radiation.

SECOND VIAL - The whole sea turned to blood and every living thing in it dies.

THIRD VIAL - The rivers of earth turned to blood in retribution for the blood of the martyrs slain.

FOURTH VIAL - The heat of the sun is increased and the whole world scorched.

FIFTH VIAL - The Anti-Christ Kingdom is in total darkness. So great will be the pain from their sores that those with the mark of the beast will gnaw their tongues with pain.

SIXTH VIAL - The river Euphrates is dried up and the Kings of the East - the Oriental powers of China, Indo-China, Japan, etc, descend on Israel for the Battle of Armageddon together with the northern hordes of Russia and the Anti-Christ forces from the revived Roman Empire.

SEVENTH VIAL - This culminates all of God's judgements and the overthrow of His enemies. The angel cries, "It is done". (Rev. 16:17) The greatest earthquake in human history occurs. It will be world wide. The cities of the nations will collapse and Jerusalem will be divided into three parts. The whole topography of earth will be altered mountains and islands disappearing and tremendous hail of about 42 kg falling on the ungodly.

## **B. THE SECOND VIEW OF THE END-TIME**

### **1. THE WOMAN AND THE MANCHILD - Rev. 12**

Theories abound for the interpretation of this passage. Some believe that the woman is Israel and the manchild is Christ. Others that the woman is the Bride and the manchild is some new class which will be produced from her union with the Bridegroom. Some think that the woman is Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Despite the various theories, one thing is apparent - all of the symbols of the woman are Jewish. The sun, moon, and stars are part of Joseph's dream regarding the heads of the 12 tribes of Israel (Gen. 27). The Manchild is the 144,000 from these 12 tribes of who are caught up to the throne of God. This is the only place in the Book of Revelation which shows the Rapture of these sealed Jewish Saints. In chapter 7 they are seen on earth, but in chapter 14 they are seen in heaven with the Lamb.

This takes place at about the midway point of the seven years of the Tribulation period and we see war in heaven after the Manchild is caught up and Satan is cast down to the earth. It is significant that we next see the Anti-Christ change from a peacemaker and begin his reign of terror for the last 3 years of the Beast's Kingdom.

The woman is Israel who flees from the Anti-Christ after he breaks his covenant with the Jews.

Note Hosea 2:14-16.

### **2. THE RISE OF THE ANTI-CHRIST**

Chapter 13 relates the emergence of this terrible Kingdom to Daniel's visions of the End-Time (Dan. 7). There will be remarkable things associated with the "Beast" or

Anti-Christ involving an apparent resurrection, with miracles and signs, and wonders which cause all the world to be deceived. All of this culminates in the erection of the image of the Anti-Christ in the temple at Jerusalem and the receiving of the Mark of the Beast by everyone except the Tribulation saints who will suffer intensely as a result. The Mark of the Beast will almost certainly be a computer classification of everybody in a series of 3 sets of six digits tattooed on the right hand or forehead. No-one will be able to work, trade or be involved in his Kingdom without this mark.

### **3. THE VIAL JUDGEMENTS - Rev. 14:8- 16:21**

These have already been referred to with the Opening of the Seven Seals and the Sounding of the Seven Trumpets.

### **4. THE WOMAN ON THE SCARLET BEAST**

Rev. 17 and 18 identifies the harlot church as being confederate with the Revived Roman Empire. This will be the mammoth World Church created out of the Ecumenical movement which will result in union between the Roman Catholic Church and the Apostate Protestant Churches.

The Anti-Christ will use this harlot church to achieve the unity of his Kingdom, but once this is achieved he will turn on these corrupt religious institutions and destroy them and put his own humanistic worship in its place (Rev. 17:16-17).

The scriptures go on to say that this harlot church is a great city which rules over the Kings of the earth. Chapter 18 speaks of it as Babylon. However, this is not physical Babylon which was destroyed centuries ago, but spiritual Babylon - or confusion. It is the Roman Catholic Church unified with all other Apostate Churches and it will be destroyed totally - probably with the city of Rome (its headquarters), by nuclear attack by the Anti-Christ.

### **5. THE JUDGEMENT OF THE ANTI-CHRIST**

Rev. 19-20 shows the Lord coming forth with His army - to destroy the Anti-Christ. The Beast or Anti-Christ and his False Prophet are thrown into the Lake of Fire.

### **6. THE MILLENIAL REIGN OF CHRIST**

Satan is bound for a thousand years while the Lord reigns with His saints from Jerusalem over the "sheep nations" of the earth (Matt. 25:31-46) - those that render aid to Israel. The Great Tribulation "harvest" of the church will also be with the Lord in the Millennial Kingdom.

After the thousand years is finished, Satan will be loosed from his prison and allowed to go forth to demonstrate that without repentance and regeneration the human heart is still corrupt and will respond to temptation. Satan deceives the nations to rebel against the Lord and the final chapter of the earth is written as these deceived nations are destroyed and Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire.

### **7. THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGEMENT**

At this time all the ungodly dead from all ages will stand before God to be judged. Since no-one appearing there will have their name in the Book of Life, they too will be cast into the Lake of Fire.

## **8. THE NEW JERUSALEM - Rev. 21-22**

God is going to create a new heaven and a new earth after the seven thousand years of human history comes to its fulfilment. For eternity God's people and God will be united. The fantastic truth is that the Bride will have the "Glory of God" upon her.

The New Jerusalem is said to be the Bride, the Lamb's wife (Rev. 21:9-10). It is almost beyond us to understand how the descriptions and dimensions fit in with the Bride.

However, we see that in this symbolic city the 144,000 are seen. The city is exactly cubic - just as the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle of Moses was (10 x 10 x 10 cubits). We see the dimensions of 12,000 furlongs 12 times in a cube = 144,000. This is the "firstfruits" company, and the New Jerusalem indicates the special place this group will have with Christ throughout all eternity.

## **CONCLUSION**

The overall purpose of the New Testament scriptures is to establish that the Old Covenant was fulfilled in Jesus and to teach that a new way of living was now possible through his redemptive work.

The greatest challenge seen in the scriptures is the temptation to revert to Old Testament living based on works and externalism instead of faith and total dependence on Jesus' resurrection life.

**This is the New Testament**