

# The Contender

"CONTEND FOR THE FAITH WHICH WAS ONCE DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS" JUDE 3

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## The Body Of Christ, Part 4



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WHEN I GOT STARTED PREACHING ON THE BODY OF CHRIST, I NEVER DREAMED IT WOULD RUN INTO ANYTHING SO LENGTHY, BUT WHEN YOU GET INTO A MESSAGE LIKE THIS, THERE ARE SO MANY AVENUES TO COVER, IT SEEMS LIKE THERE IS JUST NO PLACE TO END IT. NATURALLY OUR FIRST

THOUGHT WAS TO SHOW WHAT THE BODY OF CHRIST IS, WHO IS IN IT, HOW THEY GOT INTO IT, AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE. BUT THEN, THAT OPENED UP QUESTIONS ON HOW THE BODY FUNCTIONS, AND HOW THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT WORK IN THAT BODY TO ACTUALLY CONTINUE THE MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE WORLD, RIGHT ON THROUGH TIME. WE HAVE USED MANY SCRIPTURES, AND MANY PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATIONS, BUT NONE OF THEM HAVE BEEN USED WITH THE INTENTION OF TRYING TO FORM A MOLD FOR ANYONE TO FIT INTO. MY MAIN PURPOSE IN PREACHING LIKE THIS, IS TO TRY TO STIMULATE OUR THINKING, AND GET US LOOKING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. I HAVE SAID BEFORE, AND I WILL SAY AGAIN, I CANNOT GIVE YOU A GIFT, NOR CAN I MAKE YOU

ANYTHING THAT GOD WILL ACCEPT. ALL I CAN DO IS POINT YOU TO THE PATTERN, AND THEN ALLOW THE ANOINTING OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD TO TAKE IT FROM THERE. HE IS THE ONE THAT SETS US IN THE BODY, AND HE IS THE ONE THAT DISTRIBUTES THE GIFTS ACCORDING TO HIS OWN WILL, BUT WE HAVE LOOKED AT THE SCRIPTURES THAT TELL US TO DESIRE THESE GIFTS, AND ESPECIALLY THAT WE MAY PROPHECY. SO GOD EXPECTS US TO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER THESE THINGS THAT WILL ENABLE US TO PORTRAY OURSELVES AS TRUE SAINTS OF HIS MYSTICAL BODY.

WE HAVE SEEN THAT EVERY MEMBER OF THE BODY OF CHRIST IS IMPORTANT, AND THAT WHEN ONE MEMBER SUFFERS, THE WHOLE BODY IS AFFECTED BUT WE HAVE ALSO BEEN MADE AWARE OF THE FACT THAT WE ARE NOT YET PERFECT. WE HAVE SEEN HOW THE SPIRIT OF GOD MOVED FROM THE JEWS TO THE GENTILES WITH THE SAME LEVEL OF REVELATION, AND HOW IT LIFTED PAGAN GENTILES UP OUT OF THEIR FILTH AND DEGRADATION, AND MADE THEM ACCEPTABLE AS

SONS OF GOD, AND NOW WE ARE LOOKING AT THE OVERALL PICTURE OF CHRISTIANITY, AS THE SPIRIT OF GOD IS GRADUALLY WITHDRAWING HIMSELF FROM THE GENTILES AND PREPARING TO RETURN TO THE JEWS IN FULL PREEMINENCE. SO LET US PRAY WITHOUT CEASING, AND KEEP OUR HEARTS CLEAN, FOR THE END IS CLOSE AT HAND.

### **THINGS THAT HAPPEN**

Any time God does anything to stimulate a body of people and get their minds upon spiritual things, it seems like the devil is always present, to counteract what God does, and try to put fear in the hearts of those who truly do desire to be spiritual. In the realm of the gifts, he will cause some element of flesh to manifest itself, in a way that puts doubt and fear in the hearts of those who have not yet learned to discern between the two spirits. So regardless of what happens, just hold steady, for these things are for our tests. If someone jumps up with a Thus saith the Lord, you must do such and such, let that prophecy be judged. If it truly is God, there will be a vindication, so there is no need to become fearful, and if it is just some overzealous flesh being manifested, that will be revealed also. But

remember 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 1:7 says, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” Paul also told Timothy to “Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus,” and I say the same thing to you, for there is nothing the devil likes better than to have someone get a little private revelation, and start to run with it. That sort of thing has happened all over this world of religion, and it runs people in a ditch who practice it. God wants every member of the body of Christ to participate in the worship services, but He wants to lead and direct what they do; therefore He is in the process of perfecting us, so we will better now how to fill our place. Now a lot of people go around from place to place, looking for a perfect church, but saints, they are not going to find it, and even if there were such a thing, that kind of person would never recognize it, for they do not know what true perfection is. It is true, God has set in the Church a five fold ministry, for the perfecting of the saints, and I am looking for the Church to be perfected, but brother, when she is, she will not be left here on earth for characters like that to play around with.

### **PERFECTION**

To perfect, is to add to, or to improve upon the quality of something. Therefore a lot of people will say, How can Ephesians 4, be for our day, when Paul wrote it 1900 years ago? They only have a mental picture of what the church was back then. But remember this, As the Church moves through time, it is made up of many generations of people. Each generation rises, fulfills their particular position in the body of Christ, and God deals with them according to their hour, and they die; but perfection is something that must always move on, to be applicable to the oncoming generations. So we have to say, The church is not made up of perfect people. The Church is made up of sinners, washed in the blood of Jesus Christ and filled with the Holy Ghost. Therefore after God gets you out of your sinful state, He must then improve upon you. He improves upon your character, your nature, your understanding, your motives, and everything about you, and perfecting the Church is the same way; it is always moving toward a climax. It has to be returned to what it was in the beginning, when the revelation was still pure. As long as some men see no more than charismatic, they will never perfect anything, but praise God; there is a perfecting process going on just the same. God is getting some people ready to take them out of this old world for a while. But you have certain elements who do not believe in the rapture of the church, before the great tribulation, simply because they have a

wrong interpretation of the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter of Revelation. They think verse 14 is speaking of the bride, when actually it is speaking of foolish virgins and a righteous element of Jews that are martyred during that tribulation hour. Paul is the one who taught that the church would be raptured, (1<sup>st</sup> Thess. 4:13-17) and in chapter 5:4-5, he said, "But ye brethren are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief, ye are the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night nor of darkness." In other words, God has not appointed the church to wrath (the tribulation) because we are the children of the day. So that multitude John saw, was not the bride Church; it was those foolish virgins, that stayed too busy running to charismatic meetings, to ever get themselves dressed up in the revealed word of God in time for the rapture. In other words, Paul saw the bride Church going to meet the Lord in the air, and in Revelation, chapter 19, John saw her already there in glory, and then he saw her coming back to earth with Jesus, after the tribulation had already run its course. John knew what he was looking at, when he saw the bride, for he heard a voice say, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." How did she make herself ready? By getting dressed up in a pure revelation of the word of God. That is what is taking place right now. God is bringing about conditions that are forcing His

people to move their lives right into His will and purpose.

### **ONE BODY**

I keep coming back to the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter of Ephesians, but as we are dealing with the body of Christ, and endeavoring to cover every aspect of it, this 4<sup>th</sup> chapter keeps coming back to my mind. A lot of people say, Oh I believe the Bible, but when you begin to go into it, and bring out certain details, you find that they really do not believe it after all. Therefore let us read some of these precious verses that give us so much insight into what we are studying. "There is one body, (Notice now, one body. What we see out here in the world of Christendom, in its organizational structure, is multiples of bodies, and each one is looked upon by its members, as though it is that one body.) And one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the

body of Christ; Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” Alright, we have read some beautiful scriptures, and the analysis of it all, is, Right there is the ministry that was set in operation in that first century of Christendom, and that is exactly why Christianity flourished in that first century as it did. The gospel was spread throughout the then known world, and it was done without the help of tape recorders, radios, and television. Brother it was done by the divine leadership of the Spirit of God. He can get more done in one hour than we can in six months, if He is allowed to have His way, for He will go right to the heart of every situation.

## **THE EARLY CHURCH** **MINISTRY**

Let us look now at that ministry, that the devil finally succeeded in perverting into a priesthood. It took him 500 years to do it, but then the world walked for a thousand years in utter darkness as a result of it. They called it Christianity, but it was a far cry from what we see here in the Bible; when those black robed priests represented the total ministry of what was called, the Church. Now brothers and sisters, I am going to say a lot of things I never thought I would say, but at the same time, I believe we are going to see something out of the scriptures, you never before thought you would see. When Paul wrote this, the church had been in existence for about 30 years, and he was a prisoner in Rome. The Church started with Jews, but by the time of this epistle, the main impact was already among the Gentiles, and the Jews were about ready to be dealt with. In just a few short years, their city was demolished, their temple was torn down, and they were scattered to the four winds. But the point I want to make is it sounds like Paul is saying that these gifted ministries were set in the church from the very first day, but they were not. The church was born right there in Acts 2, in an upper room, where about 120 disciples were assembled, waiting for the promise of the father. What kind of ministry was

in that upper room? Only twelve apostles and one of them was chosen by the other eleven, to take Judas' place, because it was written in the Psalms concerning Judas, Let his bishopric be taken away, and given to another. A lot of Gentiles speak of Matthias being voted in, as though the other eleven apostles had made a mistake, but I assure you: it was no mistake. They were fulfilling prophecy. They could not wait until Saul got converted, in order to have twelve apostles. At that time, Saul was still ranting and raving, persecuting Christians. Nevertheless there were only twelve apostles in the Church at its inception. Saul was not there, Timothy was not there, Titus was not there, nor Agabus, nor none of those other ministries you see in the Church later. How did these other ministries come to be in the Church then? Time itself, along with conditions, produced them. Paul was sitting over there in Rome, in prison, looking back at the church, how it had grown, and the affect it had had on society, and how God worked conditions to fulfill His will and purpose. Jesus was not here on earth administering the effects of Ephesians 4; the Holy Ghost was doing that, while Jesus was in glory interceding for all of us before the great eternal Spirit. You might say, The church is like a little seed, holding within it the germ of life, that will draw from the mind of God every purpose of His will, to be fulfilled in it, that the Church may become the fullness of

Christ, as Christ was the fullness of God. Therefore time waited for pastors; and for evangelists, prophets and teachers. The Church did not need all of that the first day it was born, but as souls were added to it, and it grew in number, it soon required more attention than what those twelve apostles were able to give it. That is when deacons were brought into the picture. The Bible tells us that as the Church grew, the multitude of them had all things common, and that there was no lack of anything among them, for those who had extra, contributed the extra, to be distributed among those who had need. But as always, in such cases, some began to squabble and fret. The Grecian Jews began complaining, saying that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution, so that is when the apostles decided to enlist some help. They said to those brethren, choose ye seven men from among you, that are of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, that we may appoint them over this business of taking care of the daily distribution. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. Alright now, they wanted men of honest report. They were not concerned about how much money they had in their bank account; it was their spiritual status that was being considered. How they were seen spiritually in the eyes of the people is what they were concerned about; and these things are determined by how the Holy Ghost has been

leading such men. Acts 6:5 gives the names of the men who were chosen, and Phillip and Stephen were among them. They were all young Jewish men, and there was no such qualifications required, like you see in the epistles later; let them be the husbands of one wife, and so forth. Twenty some years later, it comes into Paul's record that Phillip then had four daughters that were prophetesses, so we know he married sometime during those years, but my point is, in the beginning the only qualifications for deacons, was that they be of good report, and full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom.

### **AN EVANGELISTIC TOUR**

Stephen and Phillip really stand out as time moves on. No sooner was Stephen placed in his position as a deacon, then he began to preach in the streets of Jerusalem. The Bible says, (Acts 6:8) "And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." It did not take him all day to fulfill his duties among the widow women, so he spent the rest of his time preaching and witnessing of the grace of God, and the Holy Ghost confirmed it with signs and miracles. Of course it made those Judiastic Jews mad, and they later killed him, but this is really what made one of the first evangelists in the New Testament Church. Saul

was still on the Sanhedrin Court at that time, and when Stephen's preaching got to the place where it could no longer be tolerated by those Judiastic Jews, he evidently was the one that said something to more or less cause the crowd to press in upon Stephen, and force him, outside the city walls, where they stoned him to death. Saul held the garments of those that actually bashed his head in. But right there you see the first evangelist, and also the first martyr, and this began to cause a great fear to come upon all the others, and they started to flee from Jerusalem, all except the apostles; they stayed in the city. So this is when the great commission began to be fulfilled; Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. In Luke 24:47, it says that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His (Jesus) name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. The commission had been given, but it took certain conditions to put it into force. That is why I say, God will create conditions here at the end of the age, that will cause the little bride church to shine. Conditions then, caused Phillip to wind up in Samaria, right where Jesus had witnessed to the woman at the well. Just think of it, saints, Phillip was only chosen to be a deacon, by the church at Jerusalem. But God had used conditions of persecution to project him into the ministry that he had truly been called to, for 27 years later, he is referred to in the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter of Acts, as Phillip, the evangelist. He had no

Bible school diplomas on his wall, and nothing he could brag about, but one thing is sure; he is obedient to the Holy Ghost. Right in the middle of that great revival there in Samaria, the Spirit spake to him by an angel, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. The angel did not tell him why; he just told him to go, and he went. That of course is where he met the Ethiopian eunuch returning home from Jerusalem in a chariot, and reading the scriptures that prophesied of Jesus. "And the Spirit said unto him, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." As he obeyed the Spirit, he heard the Ethiopian man reading from Isaiah, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter: and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened He not His mouth." Phillip climbed up into that old chariot, and started preaching Jesus Christ to him, and by the time they came to a hole of water, the eunuch was ready to be baptized in that precious name. Phillip baptized him, and he went on his way as a witness of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now do you catch my point as to how an evangelist was brought into the picture? He was not appointed as an evangelist, conditions made him move right into the perfect will of God.

## **CONVERSION OF SAUL**

There are a lot of scholars writing books today, on the subject of the five fold ministry, elders, bishops, and deacons, and they have the opinion that the five fold ministry is called by God, but the others are more or less appointed by men. They call them secondary offices. They do that, because of certain Greek words, but listen to me brothers and sisters, Greek words can never change what God uses conditions to bring about. You can not get a revelation from the Bible, just strictly on the fact that you know certain Greek words mean such and such. The conversion of Saul is a good example of how God works in, and through conditions, to fulfill His will. It is found in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts, and I want you to know, that, at this time, there was already a church at Antioch, and also at Damascus. Saul is an unbeliever, on his way to Damascus with authority to arrest Christians, and try to stop that bunch of heretics from preaching any more in the name of Jesus. But what does God do? He strikes him down in the road. His power just literally slays him, there on that old desert road, and Saul is helpless to even get up. (It would be wonderful, if that could happen to a bunch of theologians in our day.) But then Saul heard a voice saying unto him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord?"

And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” That was all it took old Saul said, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” His will is broken, so now the Lord can deal with him, concerning what God has ordained for him to do. “Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.” He is blind but he can walk, so the men that were with him, led him into Damascus, and he was without food and water for three days. Then God spoke to another Jew by the name of Ananias, in a vision. (Have you ever wondered where Ananias got his schooling? He had no Asbury, nor Wilmore to go to. Brother he was schooled by the Holy Ghost.) The Lord said to him, “Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus; for behold, he prayeth.” Brothers and Sisters: The Lord knows exactly where you are today, just like He did Saul then. That is why I say, just stick around awhile, and you will see that the Lord is still in control. Anyhow Ananias said, Lord I have heard how much evil this man has done unto thy saints at Jerusalem, and how he has authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon thy name. But the Lord said, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake. After that, Ananias could walk into the house

and call him “Brother Saul,” saying, The Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. Well you know what happened, Saul received his sight and was baptized, and his days of persecuting Christians were over with. But I want you to take note of the fact that there was a man in Damascus, that was used in a prophetic way. Regardless of what he was called later, Ananias fulfilled the office work of a prophet, in this instance with Saul of Tarsus. Furthermore all these ecclesiastical things that Saul had learned at the feet of Gamaliel, he said later, he had to count them all as loss, for the sake of Jesus Christ. That is why he went into the Arabian desert for three years, he had a lot of things to sort out. But what time he was in Damascus after his conversion, he went into the synagogue and preached Jesus Christ, so he had no problem with that, after his encounter with Ananias. But God had to take him out there, and by revelation, teach him how all that Old Testament law and prophecies really pointed forward to the time when it would all be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

### **SAUL AND BARNABAS**

Now when Saul came back to Jerusalem he met a man that had been in the faith for quite a while, whose name was Barnabas, and Barnabas was attracted to Saul, who is also called Paul. But here was Paul, back in Jerusalem, probably thinking that since it had been three years since his conversion, and all the saints had had plenty of time to hear about it, they would no doubt be glad to see him. The Lord had already told him that they would not accept his testimony there, but he somehow must have felt like if he could just get back to his old home ground, everything would surely work out. A lot of those disciples there are Jerusalem doubted him though. Probably some of them had even been persecuted by him, or at least some of their loved ones, and they could not forget it. But God did not want Paul to be comfortable there, for He had other plans for him. Therefore He just allowed that sort of attitude to linger around, to keep Paul from just sort of desiring to just settle down there with the others. Well Barnabas took back to Tarsus, right back to southern Turkey, where he was raised. Now the church at Antioch has been growing, so we want to go to the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts and pick up a few points, but first let us read verse 27, from chapter 11, "And in those days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch." What does that tell us? It tells us that the Church at Jerusalem has been growing, and these gifted ministries are raising up from their midst, and their very

ministries bore witness as to what they were. God did not have to send someone down the road appointing them, and announcing them; their very anointing did it all. So there were not only evangelists, but there were prophets also. "And there stood up one of them named Agabus, (This is his first mention) and signified by the Spirit that there should be a great dearth throughout all the world, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar," which according to history was just a short time off. In other words, as we have already said, New Testament prophets deal more with present tense, and soon to come prophecies, as opposed to the long range prophecies of the Old Testament, and they usually are concerned more with the people to whom they minister. But as a result of this dearth, or drought, it says every man determined according to his ability, to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea, and they sent it by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. So now let us go to chapter 13, for we are looking at this church at Antioch, and what took place there. Notice the first verse. "Now there were in the Church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul." It does not stipulate who was what, it just speaks in general terms. "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said,

Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.” This was 44 A.D., and Saul had been a believer for 10 or 11 years, and it is time for him to enter fully into the ministry that the Lord has called him to. Peter had already preached to some Gentiles in the house of Cornelius, but Peter was not the apostle to the Gentiles. So the Holy Ghost is beginning to stipulate what this Saul of Tarsus is to do. Right in the very area where he was raised up, he begins to minister to the Jews of the various cities. It was he himself, that said, For the gospel is to the Jew first, and then to the Gentiles. He is going out from Antioch to spread the good news of the gospel to the Gentiles, yet in his heart, he always knew that he must seek out the Jews of every city first. Therefore he would find the synagogue first, and give the Jews first chance to hear his message, and it seems that the Lord would always give him at least two or three, and they would be influential individuals that God could use to inaugurate His purpose in that city.

### **ELDERS ORDAINED**

Saints: What we are endeavoring to show, is how God went about the job of setting this gifted ministry in the Church. Did He have an election? Was there a committee that had to pass upon them? No. God just raised them up as

they allowed themselves to be led by His Spirit. We notice too, that as Paul would pass back through, he would ordain elders in the various churches, and you might ask. How would he go about doing that? I would say he did it by watching how the Spirit would lead certain men in the assembly, and by observing their growth in spiritual matters. That is how you determine who is qualified; by watching how people yield to the leading of the spirit. Regardless of the type of leadership though, there is always the problem of certain characters coming by from time to time, that will stir up trouble. Paul and Barnabas were gone from Antioch teaching the people that except they be circumcised according to the law of Moses, there is no way they can be saved. That brings us to Acts 15, verse 2, so let us read it. “When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and ELDERS about this question.” Alright now, that brings the word elders, into the picture, so let me say this, Do not think of elders as though they are another kind of ministry. The writer always gave predominate recognition to the apostles, because they were the ones that walked with Jesus, and were witnesses of His ministry. But prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers were raised up to fill those other offices, and these are the men

that are primarily referred to as elders. Regardless of what your theologians may say, when the Church was born, the only ministry present, was twelve apostles, and they are what the writer was referring to, when he would say apostles, but those other four offices had to be fulfilled also; therefore they were brought on the scene by God's divine guidance, and they are primarily what make up the category of elders. Let us read verse 5, and continue on here. "But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, (there at Jerusalem) saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And the apostles (representing the Twelve) and elders (men representing those other four offices) came together for to consider the matter." Peter then gave testimony of how God had given the Holy Ghost to those at the house of Cornelius that believed, and said that God put no difference between the Gentiles that believed, and the Jews that believed, so why put a yoke upon them, that neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? Then Paul and Barnabas were given an opportunity to tell what the Holy Ghost had been doing through their ministry, and when they finished, James reminded them of what was written in the prophets, and so forth, and said, My sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God. So they wrote a letter to be delivered to the church at Antioch by Paul's company and in

verse 28 and 29, we will read what their instructions were. "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well." Now this is what the apostles and elders at Jerusalem have written, concerning Gentiles that have believed, and Paul and Barnabas delivered the letter, so do you not think Paul taught these very things to the Gentiles from then on? When Paul had that great revival at Ephesus, don't you think he taught these things to them? Yet in 96 A.D. after Paul had been dead for many years, that Thyatira church was practicing the very things the apostles and elders had said they should abstain from. Nevertheless, when that letter was delivered to the church at Antioch, it brought a sigh of relief, and lifted the burden of condemnation, doubt, and confusion that had been among them. Now notice verse 32, "And Judas and Silas, BEING PROPHETS also themselves exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them." Right there, was two elders that God used in a prophetic way to bear witness of the things that had just been read among them.

**PAUL AND BARNABAS**

After Paul and Barnabas remained there at Antioch for awhile, preaching and teaching the word of the Lord, they determined to go on a second missionary journey, to visit every place where they had preached before, and see how things were going. But before they got started on the journey, they split up because of a dispute. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark, and Paul did not want to take him, because he had started out with them the first time, and turned back. Verse 39 says, "And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other." So Barnabas took John Mark with him, and Paul took Silas with him, and they both started out. It was on this second journey, that Paul met Timothy, another young Jew. So with Silas, one of the prophets there at Antioch, Paul started back confirming the Churches where they had preached the gospel before. Barnabas did not backslide. Do not think that. It was just simply a situation where there was not perfect agreement on what to do. It had nothing at all to do with their revelation fo the word of God, nor with their concern for each others ministry. So Barnabas took John Mark, and headed for Asia, but let us read verse 1, of chapter 16. "Then came he (Paul) to Derbe and Lystra: (He was there, on his first journey, so he is going around

again) and behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman which was a Jewess, and believed, but his father was a Greek." Now there was Paul, an apostle, Silas, a prophet, and then this young man Timothy, joins the party, and even though there is not much detail given, we do know that when Paul wrote to Timothy, later, he said to him, Do the work of an evangelist, so we are seeing how God raised up the fivefold ministry in the early Church, one here, one there, and another somewhere else. Luke, who wrote the book of Acts, soon joined Paul's party, for he started using the terminology we, instead of they. But my point is we do not want to break apart the body of the ministry, as we see it growing, in the book of Acts, for it is all an addition brought about by the Spirit of God, as He adds to the Church in its universal growth. When He raised up a man, He gave that man the necessary anointing for what He had called him to be. Therefore as Paul sat in that old Roman prison, looking back over thirty some years of the growth of the church, it was easy for him to say, "And He gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." But it was done over a period of time, and these men definitely were the elders in the churches. These things may not seem important to some of you, but I get letters from people saying, What is an elder? What is a bishop, a presbyter, and so forth, and how are they chosen?

Therefore the best way for me to answer all of them, is in a message such as this. Elders is a word that is commonly used. Then when we get into 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy and Titus, where it deals with the election of bishops and deacons, we also see the word presbyter, used. So are we going to have to study Greek, in order to understand these various terminologies? No. These are just common words to Jewish people. They are words that speak of men who are in places of authority, but they need not be separated from the fivefold ministry, in their New Testament usage. What we see out here in this world of religion, is what Gentile scholars have made these various words to mean. We know Peter was an apostle, but look at 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5:1, and notice the terminology he used. "The elders which are among you I exhort, WHO AM ALSO AN ELDER, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ." He was writing to the elders, but he said, I also am an elder. Therefore my point is, all of that fivefold ministry were elders in the universal body of believers, but the word elder, did not specify what office they held. It is just like seeing a car with 5 policemen in it, and saying, They are policemen. That is a true statement, but it does not give you any idea at all, of the rank they hold. That has to be determined by other means. Well it is the same way with the ministry of the body of Christ. Bishop is another word that was used, but it in no way deviated from the five

fold ministry. It just simply referred to one set in charge. At the same time, presbyter is another Jewish word that could have been used instead of bishop. That is why I say, It does not pay to get too technical about these different words. It is the kind of ministry each one has, that really determines what office he holds in the body of Christ.

### **BISHOP QUALIFICATIONS**

Let us go to 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy now, and let me say this, For a long time, my mind was not completely made up on this, for I paid too much attention to what others said, but I finally had to get it settled for myself. Paul is saying to Timothy, and Timothy is an evangelist, "This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." According to what David wrote in the Psalms, Judas, that betrayed Jesus, was referred to as a bishop. "Let his bishopric be given to another." So this was a Jewish word that spoke of one in authority, or one in charge, and Paul is laying out some qualifications for one who would hold such a place. But the reason it is necessary to do so, is because the work is primarily among Gentiles by the time Paul writes this, so in verse 2 he says, "A bishop then must be blameless, (socially and morally) the husband of one wife." Now here is

where the controversy always comes in. Does a bishop really have to be married? I used to think so, simply because I had heard it so much. But when I started to lay this alongside history, I found that it was not so. Polycarp was not a married man, and history has him as the bishop of the church of Smyrna, and Clement, whom Paul mentions in Philippians 4:3, was not a married man, and he is believed by historians, to have been the first bishop of the church at Rome. I realize that this is a subject that can cause you to lose friends, but truth still must prevail. Many of these men in the ministry of that hour were not married men; history proves it. Yet some of them were, so what point is Paul making, when he says, A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife? He is not saying that a man has to be married to be a bishop or elder, but if that man is married, he must meet these qualifications. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 9, we find Paul actually defending his own image as a result of some things that have been said by certain ones. He says, "Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord. Mine answer to them that do examine me is this, (The examination he is referring to concerns his celibate life. No doubt they are comparing him to some of the other apostles, so notice what he says.) Have we not power to

eat and to drink? (Of course) Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" James was a brother of the Lord, and Cephas was Peter, and we know that Peter was a married man, because Jesus healed his wife's mother of a severe fever. But the point is, Paul is defending his single life. This of course opens up another question. Was he ever married?

### **CHRIST ENDED THE TYPES**

When we had an opportunity to speak with a Jewish Rabbi, in 1968, one of the questions I asked him was concerning the marital status of the members of the Sanhedrin Court. His answer was, Traditionally we have been made to believe that every man on the Sanhedrin Court was a family man. That would make sense, from the standpoint of the fact that they were faced with the responsibility of judging social matters, that would involve home structure. There as family men themselves, it was no doubt felt that they would be better equipped to judge those family matters. Therefore Paul could have been a married man at one time, but he definitely defended the right for anyone to remain single if they desired to do so. Timothy was not a married man, and John was not a married man,

so why would anyone think such men as these would have been obligated to set only married men in charge as bishops? Therefore the question is not whether bishops should be married or single. But if they are married, they should have only one wife. That of course covers both polygamy and marriage and divorce. This determination was necessitated when Gentiles were brought into the gospel, for many of them did have more than one wife, and a man with more than one wife could never exemplify the Lord Jesus Christ, who would never have but one wife. I am not saying these things to reflect on anyone's salvation. It matters not, if you have been married a half dozen times, if the grace of God has saved your soul, then you are my brother, or my sister, as the case may be. I am not saying any of this from the salvation standpoint of leadership among those who are partakers of God's great salvation. In other words, we want to make the devil acknowledge that the word of God is right. Priests in the Old Testament were to set certain types, and a lot of preachers who like to quote Bro. Branham, want to bring everything from the Old, and apply it here in the New. But I say, Stop that! Christ was the end of the law to every man that believeth, Christ was the end of every type, in that respect. I remember when Bro. Branham preached marriage and divorce, how he made reference to the fact that the priest must marry a virgin. But I admonish you to remember this,

He did not speak in detail; it was only the high priest that must marry a virgin daughter. These ministering priests had no such requirements on them. They could marry widow women if they so desired. The truth is, far too many people close their ears to the truth, and just believe anything they want to believe. Bro. Branham made that point without any explanation, so a lot of people jumped on the little part they heard, and said, A preacher is required to marry a virgin. Some of them even went so far as to consider ditching the wife they had, and then marry a virgin. That just shows you how carnal some people can be. Anyhow, Calvary ended that type. Christ Himself was the end of it. Therefore what Paul is saying about a bishop being the husband of one wife, must be considered in the light it belongs in, just like what Bro. Branham said about the priest. If a married man desires the office of a bishop, then let him be the husband of only one wife. Because he is to exemplify Christ to his perverted, polluted Gentile society. This very type of moral image that the early church established, is what eventually did away with polygamy. You can follow the history of Christianity in the area of Turkey, which is the area where Paul preached that great revival. For almost 8 centuries, that country was kept clean, because of the effects of Christianity. What is called Christianity in Turkey today, is Greek Orthodox, which is only a shell, dead,

with no revelation. They are living on the past, just like denominational Christianity as a whole. The great revelational truths of the Bible have been turned into mere theories, that theologians debate about. The only thing that will ever get this little bride church ready to leave here, is to find the reality of those first century truths once again. I have been just as guilty of following tradition in the past, as anyone else, but by the grace and mercy of God, I am through with following something, just simply because tradition has taught it a certain way. God now puts me in a corner, and makes me dig and scratch until I open my eyes and see the truth. But oh I am so thankful that I did not have to run off to a seminary some place, and take a course in theology. Hallelujah! I love Him.

### **PAUL CHANGED HIS MIND**

In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, chapter 7, you can see how Paul breaks down this marital problem. You do not find him discriminating between man and woman in either case. He shows a very compassionate attitude, as he gives this counseling advice. He makes certain suggestions to them, because of what he called, the shortness of time, and admonished them to keep themselves wholly unto the Lord. In verse 27, let us start reading and catch a little of

what Paul is saying here. This is not a law he is laying down; it is just his best judgment at that time. “Art thou bound unto a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you. But this I say brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they have none.” In other words, Do not allow yourselves to become taken up with the cares of the world, and neglect your service to the Lord. He is really urging them to stay single, and dedicate themselves fully to the Lord, as he has done. But approximately 6 years later, he has spent two years in Caesarea, he has been shipwrecked on the Mediterranean, tossed from one military officer to another, and is now sitting over there in Rome, writing to Timothy, and says, “I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.” Now to me, this shows the human side of every man. In six years time his feelings about marriage has changed. His revelation of the word of God did not change, but his personal feelings about marriage among the younger folks did. It was not his intention to lay down any kind of doctrine in either epistle, but as always, you can be sure some took it like that. People seem unable to hit the middle of the road with anything. They either ignore something completely, or they take it and go too far with it. No I am not talking about true saints of God

who love truth; I am talking about those who call themselves Christians, yet they read the Bible every way but right. It is just like what Paul wrote to Timothy, in chapter 2, of his first letter, Let the women keep silence in the church, or rather in this case he said, "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not (or allow not) a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." Women will read that, and then they will say, Well the same word is used in the Greek for preach and prophesy, so if it is permitted for women to prophesy, then they may also preach. So you can see how easy it is to twist scripture around, if you already have your mind made up, and are trying to project your flesh. But some take those same scriptures, and actually forbid a woman to open her mouth in church at all. So what was Paul actually getting at, when he wrote as he did here, and also as he did, in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 14, where he did say, Let the women keep silence in the Church? Simply this, There are some women that would stand right up and say, Listen here preacher, I will have you know that God gave me a better revelation than that. That is the kind of thing he had in mind when he said, Let them keep silence. But when he said, I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, that is exactly what he meant, for God has ordained that men be the ones that teach doctrine, and usurp authority in the Church. God never did call women

to be priestesses in the temple. The only time you see a woman that really stands out in the Old Testament, is in the period of the judges, and that was in an hour of great apostasy in Israel. God raised up a woman to shame those weak men that were too cowardly to fulfill their duties. Remember, God even used a donkey one time, but that never gave anyone the right to set up a school, to train donkeys to be prophets. So when Barak the army officer, turned out like our politicians, with not enough courage to do what needed to be done, God used Deborah, but after Israel was pulled back together again, He used men again. But women were always permitted to be prophetesses. Look at Anna, right at the birth of Christ. She ministered in temple, but she was not a preacher. Neither was she a priestess. She was a prophetess, that spent much of her time at the temple fasting and praying. Then came the day that the Holy ghost anointed her, and led her right down the line to Mary, and she looked upon that little baby. Hallelujah! Don't tell me women are forbidden to speak, in the sense of prophesying. You just need to get everything lined out in its proper place. The point is, Women are just as justified to be in the gift categories, as men. But when it comes down to teaching doctrine, revelation, and leadership in the Church, that is where Paul meant for them to keep silent in the church.

## **BISHOPS AND DEACONS**

Like I have said, when Paul wrote this to Timothy, he was in Rome, and knew he was not going to be around to deal with the situations that were then present. Timothy is going to be responsible for proper application of these instructions, that are meant for conditions that are coming into focus. Paul was not laying down law, he was merely giving out sound doctrine. The Church of the living God, as pictured in the Bible, has never had an earthly headquarters. Her headquarters are in heaven, and her head is Jesus Christ. Paul wrote of Him, as the chief bishop and shepherd of our souls. Well let us get back to 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3; and read some more of what we started on a while ago. “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?) Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he falls into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without (the

unbelievers) lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” Now he comes right on down to the deacons, so notice verse 8, and remember, This is thirty some years beyond the choosing of the first seven deacons in the book of Acts. Gentiles are now in the picture, and conditions are completely different, and deacons no doubt have more responsibility, as far as actual duties, than those first seven had. The truth is, when those first seven were chosen, it was not necessary to be concerned about all these specific details, for those Jewish men’s lives automatically met all of these requirements, by the very fact that they were believers in the first place. In other words, The Church was at its purest period, there in the early years, when they all had all things common, before Gentiles got into the picture. “Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery fo the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved, then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus. These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry

long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Now what have we read? We have read, where the apostle Paul, while in prison, wrote to a young evangelist named Timothy, and gave him certain instructions to carry out, concerning leadership in the Church. You can find basically the same thing in Titus. This young man Titus, should be considered in the same role as Timothy, a young evangelist that Paul has confidence in to be faithful in all things. But as we read these things, if we do not investigate, comparing these things with other scriptural facts, and also with history, we will likely fall right into line with traditional teaching, and say that bishops and deacons have to be family men. That is why I say, You have to interpret these scriptures altogether from the beginning of the word deacon at least, and the first deacons were not married men, or not necessarily married men. For when you look at the men that are really mentioned in the book of Acts, most of them were single men. No doubt this new faith brought such a profound joy and expectation, it caused those young men to really go all out serving the Lord. You can tell by reading the scriptures, that the early Church considered it reasonable to expect Jesus to return in their lifetime. James and Paul both wrote like that. James said, The coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and Paul said, Because of the

shortness of time, it is better to remain single. But Paul's instructions to these young evangelists, let us see that he sees things quite differently by then. The gospel was predominately among the Gentiles by then, and the quality of exampleship was not what it was, when that first bunch of deacons were chosen. Our ancestors, (Gentiles) before they received the gospel, had no morals. That is why the Jews looked upon them as dogs. Gentile nations did come through an era of time though, when the gospel of Jesus Christ had a cleansing affect upon them, for many nations embraced it, and even took the exampleship of the Christian faith, and applied it to their laws. But now, from our schools to our politicians, and on down the line, we are fast drifting back to what Gentiles were two thousand years ago. Statistics show that three out of every five marriages end up in divorce. That was not the case, when I was a boy. Times and conditions are rapidly changing. Morality is fast going to the dogs. Therefore let me say something to you young people. I would not say anything to deliberately hurt any of you, but the only chance you have of escaping these marital statistics, is to let the Lord Jesus in your life, and marry in the faith. Unless you surrender your lives to God, and marry in the faith, there is little hope for a successful marriage in this day and hour. The spirit of the age has everything stacked against you. Only God knows how many times you will make the wrong choice, unless you

allow Him to choose for you. The only thing you have in your favor is the grace and mercy of God.

### **THE ISSUE IS MORALS**

As I said earlier, The first converts in these predominately Gentile Churches, were Jewish converts out of the local synagogue, and the Jewish society was not a mixed up, immoral bunch of people. Fourteen hundred years of law, had kept them, or at least a lot of them, morally clean. Do you know why I say that? When Jesus walked the shores of Galilee, choosing fishermen to be His disciples, can you believe He would choose a whoremonger, or any such person? Think of that for a minute. It was not just Jesus the man, choosing men he liked; it was the omniscient mind of the Father in Him, that was doing the choosing, and he knew everything about every last one of them. Nazareth was a city that did not have a good report, and that caused Nathaniel to say, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Yes. God found a young virgin down there, and chose her to mother His only begotten Son. So my point is, God does not go to the garbage dump, to get men to fill places of leadership. My illustrations may be crude, but I believe you will get the point. It just seems that an awful lot of people have the idea; that once God saves a person's soul, they can be just

anything they choose to be, but that is not right. It is true, when God saves you, He will forget your past, as far as holding anything against you. He will forget your past, but He may not put you in the president's chair. He saved Mary Magdalene, but that did not mean that she should be made the secretary of the church. That is just a remark now; please do not make anything out of it; for we are dealing with leadership. Like I said, Some people have the idea that if God saves you, He can make you anything. No. It only makes you a child of God. When it comes to leadership, God looks at past morals. Old Saul was as mean as a snake when he was persecuting Christians, but he was morally clean. He had not been going to bed with everything that came along. God knew that man had some principles about him. It was the same with those first seven deacons. They were not men that had bad, immoral records. It is one thing to be saved from immorality, from drunkenness, from dope addiction, and all such like, but it is quite another thing to have lived a life free from all of that sort of thing, and be leadership material. I can see why it was necessary for Paul to be very stern, as he laid down qualifications for these offices of leadership. Those Gentile congregations had people in them, that had been converted from every sort of life people could live. But the mere fact that God had saved their souls, did not make them leadership quality. Therefore instead of looking at these

qualifications from the standpoint of them being family men, try to see it from the standpoint of past morality, for both bishops and deacons. Why would Paul make such stipulations here, when it was not so in the book of Acts? Simply because those seven men in the book of Acts had already met the requirements. But it was going to be hard to find men like that, out here in this Gentile society, and these requirements would keep men out of the ministry, that had been married and divorced two or three times, as well as polygamists. I will even go a step further, and say, Those sailors, who had a girl in every port, and maybe had little children scattered from here to yon, were not qualified either, even though they may never have married at all. I cannot see a man like that exemplifying Christ in the ministry to the saints. Will God save him? Sure He will save him. But just getting saved, does not qualify a man for the ministry. Saving a man's soul is one thing, but putting him in the ministry is something else. This is something a lot of people just simply will not accept, but it is because they are not willing to look at Bible exampleship. Jesus Christ is coming for a bride one of these days, and we know for sure, that He will keep Himself away from everything, until that wedding in glory. Therefore when the Bible says, A bishop must be the husband of one wife, you can apply that to polygamy, or married, divorced, married and divorced either one. Or he may have

only one legal wife, but he has slept with many other women, and maybe has little children that he has fathered into the world by other women. Do you think such a man is qualified for the ministry? Absolutely not. You may do it today, but according to the writings of the Antinicean fathers, no such man would ever have made it into the ministry in the days of the early apostles. It is the exampleship that makes the difference, because we are dealing with the very cause of man's sin in the first place. Adam was not cast out of the garden for making moonshine whiskey, nor for robbing a bank; it was the way the sex act was used, that got him in trouble. We all need salvation, for without it we are doomed, and the shed blood of Jesus Christ purchased that salvation for us, and we can be washed clean. But the life we have lived before we come to this salvation experience is what many people are going to remember about us. That is why exampleship is so important. Only the man that has kept himself clean, is scripturally qualified for the ministry, and that applies to the deacons as well.

### **POLYGAMY**

Now even when I was back in the Methodist Church, I heard people say, Well if the apostle Paul went into a polygamist community, and a bunch of

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those polygamist got converted, they would have to get rid of some of those wives. No. That is not what Paul taught. They do not have to get rid of any of their wives, but at the same time, no such man would ever qualify for the ministry. Now Bro. Jackson: I just do not see that. Do you know why? It is because you are a Gentile, living 1900 years this side of that social structure. But if you had lived back then, you would have seen it, because your life would probably have been a part of it. Do you mean God would save a man like that, and then allow him to go ahead and live with all of his wives? Yes, and furthermore, God could save all of his wives, and everyone of them could sit right in the congregation of the local church. But let me say once again. The man in the pulpit would only have one wife. He would be an example for the children being brought into the world by those families, and they would be able to see by his exampleship, that polygamy was not what God had in mind, when He gave Adam a wife. The example set by those bishops and deacons, caused the younger generations to see the better way. As those young men would surrender their lives to God, and would be taught by God's qualified ministry, they would see how God wanted them to have just one wife. That is what finally pushed polygamy right out of the picture, as far as Christianity was concerned. It took that staunch apostolic teaching to do it. You can go back before the flood of Noah's day,

and you will see when you get to Genesis, chapter 6, that after the sons of God began to take unto themselves the daughters of men, it was not long until polygamy was introduced, and it went on and on until the whole society was a mixed up, sinful, immoral mess, just like it is getting to in our day. We may not have so many polygamists today, for it seems that not too many people even bother to get married, but I am talking about homosexuality and every other sort of perversion. Immorality is running rampant in our day, just like it was before the flood. God looked upon Noah, and saw him to be a just man, and He spoke to him before he ever had the opportunity to take another wife. He had only one wife, and they had three sons, and those three sons each had only one wife. Think of it saints. The only people saved out of all of that were those that had only one mate. Right there is your perfect exampleship. God just wiped the slate clean, and started over again with Noah and his three sons, and their wives. That ought to tell us something, if we are interested in seeing God's truth.

### **INSTRUCTIONS TO TIMOTHY AND TITUS**

Alright let us go to chapter 4 of 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy. There is something here, I

want you to see. Paul is in prison, but Timothy is still out in the ministry, still ministering to the saints in the areas where he got acquainted with, while traveling with Paul, and evidently he got discouraged at times, so notice how Paul writes to him. "Let no man despise thy youth." He was not a child evangelist, like some of these little children you have heard of; he was just simply a young man. This child evangelism is for the birds. It is for denominationalism; but not for the body of Christ. There was no such thing as child evangelism in the apostolic church. But this Gentile church world will sell you anything. They have all kinds of gimmicks and rallies, and things to try to get a crowd. Can you just imagine the apostle Paul coming into Athens with a herd of ponies, and a cart load of junk, that he is going to give away, to try to get a large crowd of people together? The only thing he came to town with, was a revelation. Alright, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation (which is manner of life) in charity, (love) in spirit, in faith, in purity. Till I come, give attendance to reading, (Not Bible school, just reading the word of God) to exhortation, to doctrine." Well it looks like there really is a place for doctrine, doesn't it? The church world today, does not want doctrine; they say it divides. It does divide; it divides the tares from the children of God. It separates the boys from the men,

spiritually. Verse 14, now, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee (Listen to this. There was a gift) by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." You do not want to preach that, in the Methodist Church, nor the Baptist. As a matter of fact, there is not very many places where you could preach that. They say that was just for the days of the apostles; but brother, it is still good today, and you will see it, when the body of Christ really begins to function again; back to its original relationship with the word of God. Alright, How was the gift given? By prophecy. How was it ministered? By the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Well who were these men known as the presbytery? Presbyter is just another term for bishop, or for the ministry in a particular church. But what we want to see here, is that this gift was ministered through the unctioning and leadership of the Holy Ghost, and Paul was there when it took place. That is the main reason he is reminding him of it. No doubt Timothy's youth has been causing him a little problem. There are always a few people that are ready to look down upon someone like that, as though they are too young to know anything. But if you will remember, by the time this letter was written, Timothy had walked with Paul for quite a while. It was the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts, where we first read of their meeting each other, and that was back around 53 A.D., and this epistle was written some twelve years later. He

was still a young man, but he was certainly not a novice. So probably he had had some accusations thrown at him, critical remarks that had caused him to be a little reserved. That sort of thing will bind you up, and keep you from being as free as you ought to be. Therefore Paul has to admonish him saying, Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. He could just as well have said, by the laying on of the hands of the elders, or the bishops. Anyhow this lets us know, that as the early church went forth, God raised up a ministry that was well able to oversee the affairs of it. It was not that men were being set into the five fold ministry by prophecy, but some of the various gifts were no doubt administered in that way. When it came to the man's ministry itself, people recognized that, from the way the Holy Spirit used the particular man. But at the same time, there was a certain ordaining process administered, to take care of certain needs. Turn with me to Titus 1:5, where we will see that. Paul was writing to Titus, another young evangelist, and said, "For this cause left I thee in Crete that thou shoudest set in order the things that are wanting, (or lacking) and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." Now regardless of what we read, we still must remember that it is God that raises up men to fulfill the ministry of the body of Christ. But the fact is, as

men like Titus and Timothy moved on to the next place, it sort of necessitated that they appoint certain ones of those gifted men to be in charge of the various assemblies. Just a matter of giving them personal recognition before the people that they are to represent and be in charge of. Then Paul goes right into the qualifications for such elders, and you find the same terminology used here, that was used in the epistle to Timothy, a bishop must be blameless, and so forth. It certainly lets us see that elders and bishops were of the same category. Now I want to make a point here. Some time ago, a certain man wrote an article stating, that in the original apostolic hour, God never did appoint any one certain bishop, or any one certain church. It was his opinion that every church just had a ministry of bishops, more or less ruling as a committee, with no certain one in charge. Well if that man ever reads this article, I want him to know that his idea will not hold up, when you go into the book of Revelation, for those seven letters, written to the seven churches, were written specifically to the angel of each church. To the angel of Ephesus, Smyrna, and right on down the line. So if there were not certain specific men in charge, then you tell me what those words mean. Brothers and Sisters, we just have to allow scripture to interpret scripture, if we are ever going to get a true revelation from what we read. A person might be able to quote the whole Bible, but if such a person never

allowed the Spirit of God to take those verses of scripture and put them together into a revelation, all they have is just a lot of words in their mind. I never encourage people to see how much scripture they can read, but I believe it is better to read a little bit and understand it, than to read a lot, and just have a lot of words running through your head. Nevertheless the true body of Christ is a word produced body, therefore studying the word of God, is to the spiritual part of you, what eating natural food is to the physical part of you. We are the people of the kingdom of God. That is why Jesus said, The kingdom of God is within you. What were we before we entered into the kingdom of God? Just miserable, lost sinners. The Bible says, all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, so let us talk a little about this kingdom of God.

### **THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

Now since we were born in sin, and shapen in iniquity, and there is none righteous. What does it take to change that picture? Jesus told Nicodemus it required a new birth. In John 3:3, Jesus said to him, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Why? Because the kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom which does not exist in politics. It is something that exists

only in the hearts of people, after God does a work in their lives. Furthermore people of the kingdom of God have never been accepted by the world. That is why you read in 1<sup>st</sup> John, "Marvel not that the world hates you." The world has always hated the true people of God. But let me present to you a little thought concerning the gospel of the kingdom. In Matthew 24:14, we find a very controversial verse of scripture which says, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations: and then shall the end come." He never went a bit further, to elaborate on that statement at that time. He was crucified, arose from the dead the third day, and went about establishing His resurrection, and in Matthew 28, you might say, He picked up right where He had left off. Verse 16, "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. (Notice now.) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name (Notice also, that the name is singular) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." What does that tell us? It tells us that the Bible is not to be interpreted one way to one group, and some other way to another group, but rather, Teach all nations to observe

ALL THINGS whatsoever I have commanded you. "And, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." He verified that in the gospel of John, when He said the Comforter that would come, would abide with us forever. Not just for a few short days, but as long as the dispensation stands, from century to century, and from generation to generation. Alright what is the gospel of the kingdom? Let me say this, Whatever it was then, it is still that today. God will deal with you and me on the basis of whatever was preached in that day and hour, as He reaches into these religious systems of confusion, and pulls out the predestined seed. It is no wonder so many college students look upon religion as a farce: they have only studied it from the external standpoint, and from the various interpretations of the scriptures, as presented from these denominational systems. In other words, Some people spend most of their time fussing over the mode of baptism. They isolate Matthew 28:19 from everything else in the Bible, and say, This is what Jesus said, so I am going to believe it. Well that was a commission, but that was not the only thing He ever said. There were many things that He had previously said, and that commission was, Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. Therefore we want to explore a little, and see what all Jesus actually did say. Of course there was a time, when the church did get off course. They were sidetracked from

the word of God, and slipped into spiritual decline, and during that long period of time, God dealt with mankind on the basis of what truth, or light he could understand in his respective hour. But at the same time, let us realize that God had purposed not to leave the Church as a whole in darkness. He had already purposed to restore it back to its original state. That is how God is. I am so thankful that He never leaves the universe all wrapped up in one winter season. Not even the polar caps. There always comes a time when the sun does shine through, and when it does, the birds soar through the sky rejoicing, because of the sunshine.

### **DO THE GOSPELS DIFFER?**

Alright now, as I have said many times, Matthew was a disciple of Christ, and so was John, and they wrote their records from what they had each seen and heard while walking with Jesus. On the other hand, Mark and Luke wrote their gospel records from what they learned from others that had walked with Him. But when you take all four of them together, you get a more complete record of what Jesus said and taught, during that short 3 ½ years of His ministry. The fact that Matthew failed to mention something Mark mentioned, did not annul it in the least. So let us turn to Mark 16:14 and read a few verses. These are verses that

Pentecostal people like to use, and the Baptists and Methodists like to use Matthew 28, but the true body of Christ sees that there is nothing between the two, to squabble about. "Afterward He (Jesus) appeared unto the eleven (Mark does not say where they were, but we know they were in Galilee) as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen." Brother He scolded them because of their unbelief, because they had walked with Him, and had heard the things that He had told them would come to pass. Brothers and Sisters: God is going to hold us responsible for what we have heard. You may hear me say something that you do not understand, but you do not need to get up and stomp out of here mad, and say, Bless God, I will never go back there again. If you do not understand, just lay it up for a while, and spare yourself from those frustrations. The main thing is just to be honest with God, and then, if what I am saying is the truth, God will knock on your door with it when the time is right. When you close your mind and shut yourself out, you are like a turtle. A turtle will just draw himself up into his shell, and shut everything out, but if you do that, you will never know anything else exists, except what is in your little shell. We just have to depend upon the spirit of God to reveal His word to us as we are able to bear it. Our debate, 1900 years

later, is not whether Jesus arose from the dead or not, but rather, is God really seeking to restore the church back to apostolic teachings or not. That is one thing a lot of people really have a hard time believing, but that is exactly what He is doing, so let us continue on here. What Mark wrote here, was not something Jesus said at a different time, it was all spoken at the same time as what Matthew wrote in his gospel. That is why God inspired all four of these men to write these records; they became a guard to everything pertaining to what Jesus said, when He was here. In verse 15, Mark wrote, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." That is not the same words that Matthew used, but it does not change the commission the least bit, Go and teach all nations. Matthew said, Baptizing them in the name, singular, but does not mention a name; only three titles. Mark said, He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. Bro. Jackson: Does that mean that everyone who gets baptized is saved? No, it does not. But everyone who believes by a divine revelation and obeys the scriptures, does receive the benefits. You just have to realize, that in the hour Jesus spoke this, Jews were holding to their pagan deities, and when the church was born, no one would have taken the chance of being ostracized from their religion, their family, and their friends, just to win favor with the church, because the

church was looked upon as misfits and heretics. Therefore the only ones, either Jews or Gentiles, who would submit to Christian baptism, were the ones God dealt with by a divine revelation. We are living in an hour when joining the church is just good business policy for a lot of people, and being baptized is just part of it, but sad to say, there is very little true salvation involved in it all. Remember this also, To join the church, so to speak, in that hour, might just get you fed to the lions, or burned at the stake, or stoned to death, so no Jew, nor Gentile was running to the waterhole without God first dealing in their lives. Think about this also, "He that believeth not shall be damned." If that were true then, it is still true today, even if you are buried in water. The water alone has no virtue. It is, "He that believeth and is baptized," that shall be saved, just like it was then. This universal brotherhood his the biggest lie the devil has told since the garden of Eden. He has all these religions believing, that if they can just get along with each other, everything will be just fine, God will accept it all. Brother it did not start out with people going to the church of their choice, and it is not going to end that way either. Christianity is being treated just about like the Constitution of the United States, Something is always being changed to try to please some protestor, or demonstrator somewhere.

## **THESE SIGNS SHALL FOLLOW**

Alright when we come to verse 17, we find Mark writing something that Matthew did not even mention, but does that mean that Jesus did not say it, and Mark is just adding something? No, I am completely convinced that it was spoken right along with the other things we have been reading about. Just to use myself as an example, if I preached for an hour, there is not a one of you that could go out of here and repeat every word I said. One would say, He said so and so, and another would say that I said something else, but not one could repeat every word in order. You can always remember certain statements though, and that is how the Gospels were written. This is one reason why it is a good idea to tape everything, If someone wants to attack you, and accuse you of saying certain things that you know you did not say, then you can just pull out the tape and say, Right here is what I said. The only thing is, in the days of Christ there were no tape recorders, so those men wrote what they each heard. However God did have some men He could trust, doing the writing. So Mark said, "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall

recover.” Now Jesus said these signs would follow them that believe, but He did not say that any believer should major on any one of them, or that they should major on signs at all. Too many people are presenting the gospel like that. But the gospel is not something that is preached to try to get God to do signs and wonders. Yet on the other hand you have systems of religion that have fought against every manifestation of the Spirit of God, saying it is all of the devil. They say all of that ended with the early apostles, and they want no part of any of it. But praise God for the people who still believe and honor the word of God. I am so thankful that God did not cease to honor His word when the apostles all died, and that Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” As the centuries passed, the Church lost her anointing for those spiritual manifestations, but God Himself never did change. Church history proves that even in the darkest hours of the Dark Ages, certain individuals who dared to believe that there was something that could reach beyond their religious systems, experienced supernatural manifestations of the Spirit of God. “So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. (The book of Acts bears witness to this next verse.) And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs

following.” We can say this, They went forth preaching the gospel in truth, and for one purpose; that the gospel would be the message of God’s great news to lost mankind, that he needs salvation. But be assured, that salvation was always hinged upon the repentance of the sinner. He would accept the Lord on the basis of the scriptures, instead of just some little program of man. Then God Himself would bring them right through the whole formality of being baptized, and receiving the Holy Ghost, after true repentance was a reality. That puts the person in the kingdom of God, but that is only the beginning, for there is much for the person to be taught after that. The apostle Paul referred to it as the doctrine of Christ. The book of Acts vindicates the fact that Jesus Christ was preached in the full revelation of the Godhead, and that water baptism was to be administered in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. Acts 2:38 is actually the fulfillment of Matthew 28:19. A lot of people say, Bro. Jackson: I just cannot see that like that. But that is because the Holy Ghost has just never illuminated their spiritual mind. They are still leaning on natural mentality. The Bible tells us that there is only one name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved. That is the name of Jesus Christ. Once the incarnation took place, that became the redemptive name of Jehovah, the only name He would honor in any preaching of the

gospel, casting out devils, praying for the sick, and in water baptism.

### **THE FATHER'S NAME**

When I was in India, there was one big bishop sitting there praying, God shut that man up. But I did not shut up. I asked one preacher if I could use his little boy to illustrate Matthew 28:19, as it is fulfilled in the scriptures. I said, Matthew 28:19 is only a commandment, and the fulfillment of it is in Acts 2:38. So I took the little boy and said, Now we are going to baptize him; and just for the sake of illustration, let us say that we have him in the water. I am going to baptize him in the NAME of the Father, so someone tell me what the name of the Father is because the word FATHER, is not a name in itself. It is the title of something. I said, Come on, and tell me what the Father's name is, and there was a hush. You could have heard a pin drop. Then I said, Did not Jesus say, I am come in my Father's name? If we are going to baptize this little boy in the name of the Father, then we have to know the Father's name. Is that not right? Well if Jesus came in His Father's name, then the name of the Father would have to be Jesus. All right now, every one of you will tell me the name of the Son, for we know His name was given to Joseph, by the angel of the Lord, before He was

even born. In Matthew 1:21, the angel said to Joseph "And she (Mary) shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins." But then Jesus Himself, in John 14:26 tells us what name the Holy Ghost would come in, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send IN MY NAME, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." That lets us see that the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, came, working only through the name Jesus. Therefore when our eyes are opened to see it, there is only one name that can be used to fulfill the commandment in Matthew 28:19, and that is the name used in Acts 2:38. Peter was standing there that day when Jesus spake those words recorded in Matthew 28:19. He knew exactly what Jesus said, and when it came time to fulfill that command, he did not hesitate to say, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." That is the difference a revelation makes. A revelation will cause you to use the name those titles point to, instead of just repeating the titles themselves in water baptism. That is why I say, You can learn the Greek and Hebrew words that the scriptures were translated from, by going to the theological seminary, and you can learn how to present a point properly, as far as social acceptance

goes, but you will never get the Holy Ghost revelation out of a seminary. Just knowing how to speak properly, does not give you any special favor with God. As a matter of fact, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:14 says, "But the natural man (or mind) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The apostle Paul was an educated man, but he wrote those words just the same. I am not against education. We are living in a society where a good education is very necessary for some things, but when it comes to understanding the word of God, your education will not be sufficient to reach out and get a revelation. It is the Spirit of God that takes what is written and reveals its true meaning to your spiritual mind, and God is no respecter of persons. He would just as soon give a revelation to a fellow that could not read, as He would be a fellow that had read and memorized every word of the Bible.

### **HOW GOD WORKS**

Let us look now at the signs that were to follow believers. A lot of people get so taken up with the signs, they actually forget what the Lord is after, and that is the souls of individuals that are foreknown of Him. In 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 12, the apostle Paul said,

"But the manifestation of the Spirit hath been given to every man to profit withal." Now as we look at the apostolic age, are we to believe that every believer had a continual flow of these signs following them every moment of the day and night? That is not the point. The point is, When genuine faith is exercised, whether it be the ministry, or the laity, God is always faithful to fulfill His part of what is being done. One thing is sure, Christians in that first age, did not sit around fussing with each other about what they believed, like you find going on today. Those that were brought into this new faith from either Judaism or paganism, left those old traditions and arguments, and stood ready to be taught. They had found life and light, and truth, and they stood ready to be remolded into a vessel of honor. But actually I would have to say, The book of Acts gives us a very limited record of how God worked in that first age of Christianity. The truth is though, they were not majoring in signs; they majored on seeking to be obedient to the word of God, that was bringing them into the fellowship of God's kingdom. Peter was not worrying about signs, when he preached on the day of Pentecost, and 3000 souls were saved. He was just obeying the leading of the Spirit he had just received. Neither was he thinking about signs, when he said to the lame man, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk,"

but brother the signs were present. When that man leaped to his feet, and started walking, everyone knew, by what they saw, that something had happened. Now, no doubt Jesus had passed by that very man on His way to and from the temple, without ever paying any attention to him. But here came Peter and John, and the Holy Ghost anointed them. That was the hour that God was going to do something for that man, something that He could have done through the person of His Son, but did not. God is like that. Many times He will bypass me and you, under certain ministries, and then send another minister along, and through his ministry, just bless the daylights out of you. That is how the Holy Ghost distributes the manifestations of the Spirit to all believers, so that the whole body of Christ is well represented. What we mainly see in the book of Acts though, is how the ministry followed the command Jesus gave them, and began in Jerusalem to preach the gospel that was to be preached to all nations. The only thing is, had God not allowed some kind of persecution to come about, they would have probably stayed right there in Jerusalem. Until the persecution came, Jerusalem was growing by leaps and bounds. The fame of Peter had spread abroad, insomuch that people were coming from the regions round about, and laying their sick folks in the streets, not for Peter to pray for them personally, but just so his shadow might pass over

them as he walked by. The great Holy Ghost honored their faith though, for as Peter would pass by, and his shadow would pass over them, they would be healed. Brothers and sisters we have got to realize that the traditional church world does not like to hear you quote scriptures like that. They look upon all such as that, as fanaticism. They do not believe that God will do anything outside the confines of their system. Oh, saints, I am so thankful that God does not have to get permission from anyone, when He gets ready to do something for someone. Like the time Jesus was coming through Capernaum, and the little woman with the issue of blood saw Him. She was probably of very small stature, and probably very timid, and did not like to make a show of what her need in life might be. But she had said in her heart, oh if I could but touch the hem of His garment, I would be made whole. She worked her way through the crowd, in a way that was not conspicuous, trying not to make a show of herself. But there was an all seeing eye watching her all the time, and the very minute she touched His garment, Jesus turned and said, who touched me? Something inside of Him had been activated. I can just see the shy little woman, sort of turning away from Him. But when Jesus turned and saw her, He said, "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole." The report of that incident spread like wild fire throughout all the regions round about, and the first thing they knew,

people were begging Jesus, Come to our town, that our sick folks may at least have an opportunity to touch your garment. Therefore we can understand why the people felt like they did, about the shadow of Peter passing over their sick people. They knew it did not require long prayers in order for them to be healed, but they also knew what they needed to make some kind of effort to attract that healing virtue to themselves, so whatever they heard, that had worked for someone else, that is what they wanted to do, and God would honor their faith. Now it is not that God will do something for everyone, all the time; for whatever it is, it must be done by an anointing, and that anointing is for a purpose of God, but it is not limited. If God told someone just to pick up a bucket of water, and pass it down the line of sick folks, and He would heal them, the world would say, that is foolish. But does not the Bible say that God has chosen the foolish things to confound the wise and the prudent? He can do anything, and He can do it any way He chooses. Hallelujah! What a God we serve. I imagine the pope of Rome feels that he is just as holy as Peter, and that is why he does some of the things he does. Well it was not the fact that Peter was so holy; it was the fact that he was an ambassador of a holy God, and God allowed those people to be healed just simply by Peter's shadow passing over them. Like I said though, Those early disciples were not out there majoring in signs. The majored in

preaching the gospel, and the signs followed them.

### WHAT CRITICS SAY

One of the fellows in prison that correspond with me, sent me a pamphlet, a very unique piece of work. It was statements taken from other men's writings, even from John Wesley, and men like that. But what I want to mention, is that some of the remarks were taken from critics of the Pentecostal move that took place around the turn of the century, when emphasis was placed upon speaking in tongues and healing. They assumed that the reason the church in the book of Acts needed that kind of demonstration, was because the people in that hour were mostly ignorant and unlearned. They did not know very much, so the power of God had to work like that, in order to make them believe. People like that believe that medical science is the answer to everything. They try to be so smart, they do not need God. What a pitiful shame. Are we going to deny some poor soul the privilege of being healed by the power of God, just because we are so educated in this hour? God forbid. The truth is, practically every case of healing that really stands out in the Bible, were people whose condition had gone beyond the help of natural means. Their situations had

already been given up on, by the physicians of that hour. So I say, Are we going to deny some individual the benefits that God has provided for them, just to prove a religious argument? By the same token, are we going to be so ignorant, so religiously stupid, to say, We do not need miracles today, to make people believe, because we are better educated? We have a world full of sickness today, and multitudes of people have already gone beyond the means of the medical society. So are we going to try to explain away the benefits of God, and trust only in what medical science can do? Some will, of course, but the true child of God knows better than that. I am convinced that no display of God's power at any time, has ever been strictly because the people were uneducated. They were ignorant of a true revelation of the true and living God. The Jews of that hour had so ritualized the teachings of Moses, the law and the prophets, they had almost lost sight of the supernatural God that had brought their fathers across the Red Sea and preserved them in the wilderness for forty years. They could talk about the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and all such like, but where was the God in their hour? They had intellectually interpreted Him into such a thick, rigid, set of ideas, it was necessary for God to vindicate Himself in the light of truth. He was not just being merciful to one generation of people who were too ignorant to help themselves and from them on, just

leave it up to medical science to cure the ills of all humanity. It matters not, whether it is 33 A.D. or 1986 A.D., God sees no difference in unbelief. The only difference is, we now have over 1900 years of Christianity behind us, that we can look back upon, and when Jesus walked on earth, there was no such thing as a Christian. Therefore if this age has any extra benefit over that first age, it is certainly not man's education that has given it to us: it is only that we have a written record of how Christianity got started, and many many testimonies of what the power of God has done since then. But any way you look at it, it is still the same God that delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt, and preserved them in the wilderness, that we either believe in, or have unbelief toward. People either believe that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and that He can do anything He purposes to do, or else they will try to explain away the supernatural things of God. Brother I cannot accept any kind of an interpretation that says we should not be a people that believes in signs and wonders, and the moving of God's Spirit in the world today.

**RELIGIOUS FORM VS.**  
**REVELATION**

When you look at the world of religion today, you see Catholicism standing at the head of it all, as the mother church. At least that is how they present it. Anyhow I watched some of the scenes on the TV news broadcasts, when the Pope went down through Africa. Every place he went, they sent out men ahead of him, to build a platform, gather a great crowd of people, and bring in the priests of that area. In other words, they readied everything, for him to serve a mass when he arrived. I just thought to myself, as I watched them shake those salt and pepper shakers with the "holy water" in them, Imagine Jesus, going from Galilee to Judaea with such stuff as that, shaking holy water all the way. Imagine Peter carrying one of those things, as he walked the streets of Jerusalem. You offend people when you talk like this though, because all of that looks good to carnal flesh, the carnal man that has never been born again. Even Buddhists have a similar form of ritual that they go through. They have prayer beads, and they burn incense, which every bit comes from ancient paganism. It certainly has no Bible foundation. When that early Church went forth, they had no incense burners; they had no salt and pepper shakers, nor any of that kind of junk. I seriously doubt that the apostle Peter even dressed any different when he went out preaching, than he did when he would go to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Through the centuries, carnal minds, under the inspiration of the devil, have

come up with all this religious junk, gowns, and robes, and turned around collars. All of that looks good to the carnal man, and the simplicity of truth looks so naked to him; you can see why they will try to dress it up. After the third century, the clergy got to feeling so holy, all because of the way Satan worked on their minds. I can well see how all of that led right into a church system, that the world for a thousand years, accepted and looked upon, as the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, when it was nothing but Satan's perverted system, cloaked in a disguise. They claimed to be the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, but they possessed little of the virtue and spiritual qualities of that early church. All one need do to confirm that, is to compare church history with the events recorded in the book of Acts. For the book of Acts is a true record of how the Church got started, by the men who walked with Jesus for 3 ½ years, as the Spirit led them. Yes they were led by the Holy Ghost, to do what they did, as they went out preaching the gospel. Did not Jesus say to them, As the Father hath sent me, so I send you? How did the Father send His Son? By getting in Him and leading Him from within. Well, once the promise of the Father, which was the Holy Ghost (the Spirit of Christ) got inside those disciples, they were led by Him, to do exactly what Jesus had commissioned them to do, preach the gospel to every nation. In Luke 24:45-48, you will find the commission written in a little

different form than what Matthew 28:19 has it, but I assure you, it all means the same thing. Jesus is assembled with His disciples, and this is the same account as was recorded by Matthew, in chapter 28, and Mark, in chapter 16, but in Luke, the historian is writing this from information he gathered from other disciples. For neither he, nor Mark were personal disciples of the Lord, like Matthew and John were. So notice now, “Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to raise from the dead the third day; And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.” Then He said to them, “Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” So this is the same commission, Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. Therefore I would have to say, that repentance and remission of sins through baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ was well understood by all those disciples. I believe the book of Acts is recorded proof of how they all went forth in one accord preaching the gospel. Brother for the first three centuries, that gospel knocked on the doors of South Russia, penetrated the British Isles, covered Europe and the Middle East, and was

well on the way of fulfilling what Jesus had said in Matthew 24:14, “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the nations; and then shall the end come.” Of course we realize that the new world had not even been heard of then, but in the then known world, they did a pretty good job of spreading the gospel. Much of Central and South Africa was left untouched by early Christianity. But Egypt, Libya, Ethiopia, Algiers, and Morocco, actually cover the whole northern boundary if you care to look at a map of Africa. So by the first three centuries, Christianity had been spread from one side of North Africa to the other, and was a fast growing faith. Egypt became a very fast growing society of the Christ faith. Of course we realize, that the Nicene Council confusion caused a decline in Christianity in many of these areas, as well as in Europe. But the main thing is, the gospel of the kingdom, as it had been presented by the early Church, had been witnessed in these areas. Central and South Africa were not included at that time.

### **RESTORING OF GOSPEL**

Now in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, a Moslem by the name of Muhammad Ali came riding out of Saudi Arabia, and his aim was to rid the earth of all those people called Christians. He desecrated many

of the Christian churches, and beheaded, and killed by other means, many of the Christians. However a small percentage of them did manage to survive. Eventually though, Moslem power did succeed in going through Ethiopia, Libya, Algiers, and Morocco, until it practically wiped out all traces of early Christianity, that had been established by the preaching of the early disciples. Those nations so taken over by the Moslems, have practically sunk to economic despair. They went east, through Turkey and took the Christian churches and made Moslem prayer towers out of them. Christianity was not completely destroyed in Turkey, but it dwindled down to practically nothing. Most of what is left, is what is known as Greek Orthodox, which is nothing much more than the eastern side of Catholicism. (That is my way of expressing it.) It was not until the Reformation began, that the regions of central and South Africa began to feel the affects of Protestant missionaries, and before long, there went Catholicism also. But let me say this, Lutheranism, under the Reformation, was not the full gospel of the kingdom. Neither was what Calvin brought, nor Knox, nor Wesley. But the point is, all of those doctrines had to be restored and dealt with. It seems though, that when it came to the baptism of the Holy ghost, and the signs portion of the gospel, God reserved the major part of the restoration of that until around the turn of the twentieth century. Actually

the new world has been the launching pad for missionizing the world, through its various denominations. They have sent out dedicated missionaries, but the true gospel of the kingdom was not preached. God used it though, to get a universal element of people alerted to the gospel, and have them standing in a place to be called out, when the cry went forth. Therefore I am convinced that God has an element of people scattered throughout this world, believing this restored message of truth, and allowing the Spirit of God to lead their lives, that are going to show that they are the kind of Church the early Church was. Certain nations will not feel the great impact of it, like they did 1900 years ago, but nevertheless, God will vindicate this restored gospel, to be the very thing that closes out what Jesus said in Matthew 24:14. This is the gospel that shall be preached in all the world, right before the end comes. This is the gospel that those early disciples preached. When Philip went down into Samaria, this is the gospel he preached. You remember me saying Ethiopia had the gospel; let us go back to the 8<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts, and see how they got it. Verse 5, "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. (Now the reason Philip went to Samaria, was because persecution had hit the church in Jerusalem.) For unclean spirits,

crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in the city. But there was a certain man, named Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name (Notice now, the NAME) of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.” Remember, the book of Acts covers the first 30 odd years of the early Church, and this record shows that where ever they went, they all preached the same thing, and all of the converts were baptized the same way, in the name of Jesus Christ. Now it was not just hearing the name Jesus: it was how that name was taught to them, that made the difference. “Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy

Ghost. For as yet He was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” How were they baptized? In the name of the Lord Jesus. Brother, the book of Acts gives us a clear record, and surely to goodness all of those men were not fanatics. However we have a lot of so called Bible scholars in the world today that think the usage of the name Jesus, in water baptism, is false doctrine. Saints: That was the only name that was ever used, in the whole book of Acts, because it is actually the name that goes to all of those titles of Matthew 28:19. If some of these oneness Pentecost people could have ever seen that the name JESUS is a compound name, they might have been able to help a few trinity people see more light. Let us go on. “Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered

Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.” As they returned to Jerusalem, they preached in those little villages along the way.

### **PHILIP AND THE ETHIOPIAN**

Let us get back to Philip though, where we will see how Ethiopia came into the picture. Verse 26, “And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip , saying Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.” Remember now, Philip was in the middle of a great revival, and most preachers would not have left there when he did, under any circumstances. But Philip was subject to the will of the Lord, so when he was told to go, he went. He was already north of Jerusalem, so that meant he had to go back to Jerusalem first, and then head south toward Gaza, the old area of the Philistines, laying along the Mediterranean coast. “And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning,

and sitting in his chariot read Esaias (Isaiah) the prophet.” Let me explain something. It says here, he was a eunuch, but what I want to say is, He was an Ethiopian Jew, a Jew living in Ethiopia, and it was quite common back then, to make eunuchs of servant men who were going to be used in royal palaces. So to get the setting, he was a loyal servant to the queen of Ethiopia. That is obvious, by the fact that he had the charge over all her treasure. But he was a Jew, that had come to Jerusalem to worship his God, the God of his fathers. Acts 2 proves that there were many such people, who at times got the opportunity to make a trip to Jerusalem to worship the Lord. That is why, on the day of Pentecost, there were devout Jews gathered there, out of every nation under heaven. So this man had already been, and was on his way home, sitting there in his chariot reading from the prophet Isaiah. “Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Isaiah, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?” Now we must realize that Philip was Jew, a native of the homeland, and only knew the proper Jewish language, and he heard that Ethiopian man reading, in the language he knew, so what does that tell us? That is one of the things that tell us the man was a Jew. All Jews, everywhere, spoke that mother tongue. Well Philip understood his speech, and asked him if he understood what he was reading,

and he said, “How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened He not His mouth: In His humiliation His judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? For His life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet? Of himself, or of some other man?” That man was familiar with the scriptures, and there is no doubt he was very grateful to have them, but as to the thought contained in what he was reading, he knew nothing, and he knew nothing about what was going on. He had already been to Jerusalem and worshiped, and was heading home, back to Ethiopia where he worked. He had fulfilled the rituals of worship according to the law of Moses, yet deep down in his heart, he had a question, and he was looking to Philip for some kind of understanding. God just ordained it to be that way. Remember now, the two men are in a chariot, and the horses are walking, and they are talking. “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?”“ That lets us know that Philip has preached

baptism to him, and you can believe that it was presented to him as a part of the salvation experience, for his first reaction was, Here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, “If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. (He believed what Philip had preached to him.) And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch: and he baptized him.” I read an article one time, by a Methodist doctor of divinity, who was trying to prove that sprinkling was a Bible method of baptism, all because he had been to the place where Philip baptized the eunuch, and there was not enough water there, for him to have been immersed. Well it is a desert place, and it is a known fact that many of the springs become filled up, through the centuries, so that was a very poor way to try to prove anything. Furthermore the Bibles says they both went down into the water, and he baptized him. You do not have to go down into the water to sprinkle someone.

### **HOW THE GOSPEL GOT SPREAD**

After Philip baptized the eunuch he had an experience that modern

evangelism would pay any price for, but this is like the Holy Ghost; it is not for sale. I am talking about his plain air ride. Philip was not asking for anything like that; he was only being obedient to the Spirit of God. He had left a place where God had been giving him souls, just to fulfill the will of God, and his obedience so pleased God, that God rewarded him with a free ride to his next destination. "And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more; And he went on his way rejoicing." Philip did not just run off somewhere; the Holy Spirit came upon the scene, and, zoom, he was gone. What did the eunuch do? He went on his way rejoicing, going back to Ethiopia, and brother, I believe when he got home, he gathered up a bunch of Jews and told them everything Philip had told him. The Bible does not say how long Philip was with him, but I believe it is reasonable to assume that they studied a lot of scripture, as they rode along there. The Bible says, Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture the man was reading, and preached Jesus Christ to him, and when the Spirit of God snatched Philip away, and the eunuch went on his way rejoicing, you can believe he had something to rejoice about. Through the preaching of Philip, the Spirit of God had caused those scriptures to come alive to that fellow. Brother he had plenty to tell when he got home. That is the same

way the Roman Church got started. It was one church that was not started by the ministry of an apostle. What those Roman Jews heard at Jerusalem that day, was all it took to start the church in Rome. So Philip was caught away, and the eunuch went on his way rejoicing, going home to tell his people what he had heard. But thinking about the verse of scripture in Matthew 24:14, it says, This gospel shall be preached in all the world, this gospel of the kingdom. Not that the whole world would be saved, but as a witness unto all nations. Therefore when we think of a witness, and look back through the era of Christendom: in the first century, the apostles penetrated the areas of Ethiopia, Egypt, Libya, and all those vast regions round about. But when the apostles were all dead, the gospel was still spreading. That is why I said earlier, all of North Africa was penetrated by the gospel. In the first century, in 54 A.D., according to the record, old doubting Thomas had gone further than any of them, all the way to Madras, India. Well some might say, Who was he preaching to? He was a Jew, and he was preaching to Jews in dispersion. He was going to tell them about their Messiah. He doubted at first, but he was a witness of the resurrection of Christ, and he had something to tell. Therefore what I am stressing is the witness of this gospel of the kingdom. Even all those Arab areas, as we see them today, received the gospel in the first century. The first outpost church was at

Antioch, in Syria. But Christianity has never risen in any of those areas, to shine like it did before. Europe had it for the first century and a half, (the gospel of the kingdom) yet she went right into the dark ages. Of course we realize that even in the Dark Ages, God was able to deal with an individual soul from the standpoint of salvation, but from the standpoint of the revelation of the gospel of the kingdom, it was a dark time. The new world had not been discovered, and many areas of the far east had never been penetrated with the gospel, but keep in mind, This gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world, for a witness. So remember, the Reformation was right within those nations where the gospel had declined into such an apostate form, specifically Catholicism. That was where God began to reconstruct that which had been torn down. That is where God began restoring people back to the original truth. It was not the gospel that needed reconstructing; it was people's religious attitudes, so they could understand the original truth. But the history and route of it declares, that just as it took a few centuries for the church to lose her understanding of the apostolic gospel, it also takes a few centuries for it to be fully restored. So the nations that were guilty of causing it to go the route it did, were the ones God dealt with in the Reformation.

## **REFORMATION - RESTORATION**

Alright what about those nations of the Reformation? How did they react? Germany, while the powers of Rome were cracking the whip, just squelched down, and submitted themselves to the dictates of the pope. They were just a servant-like nation. They were scared of the Vatican, what it could do to them. But when the hour came, that God raised up a priest by the name of Martin Luther, the nation of Germany really rallied to the cause. It was during Luther's hour that the German people were really blessed. But when that time passed, Germany began to slip and slide, right back into that same old rut, back into that same old apostate spirit she had before the Reformation started. It was the same way with Belgium, the Netherlands, France, and all those areas like that, which had been affected by the men of the Reformation. Now when you talk about the Reformation, England was ripe, for a man like John Wesley. The king had split with the Vatican, refusing to have his crown placed on him by the pope. So there they sat, across the British Channel, at odds with the pope. The king of England was really ripe for the message of John Wesley, when he came on the scene. In the church ages, that time is known as the sixth church age, the age of brotherly love. Between George

Whitfield and John Wesley, the British Isles was rocked with the message of sanctification. Nevertheless as great as it was, Wesley still did not preach the gospel of the kingdom of God; he only preached a fragment of it, just like Luther and all the rest of those men God used in the Reformation. Every man fulfilled his part in God's great program though, and today we can look back upon how God restored the original truth of the gospel of the kingdom, and marvel, realizing that everything is right on schedule. Saints: I am so thankful that God waited for the new world to get in a position where He could bring the baptism of the Holy Ghost to it. Yes right out here on our western shores, in California, is where the Holy Ghost blessing fell. Hallelujah! What was going on? Little by little, God was restoring a people back to the original gospel, and we are privileged to be living in the generation when He winds it all up. Sure, Wesley's message blessed a lot of people, and so did Luther's, and Calvin's and all the rest, but look what came out of all of that, as it was brought to this country. I cannot even name all the different denominations, that actually came out of what was done in the Reformation, but I will say this, The founding fathers of those denominations held a truth in their hearts, that was a part of the original gospel preached by the apostles. All of this confusion among the various organizations is not their fault; they could only preach what God gave them

to preach, and what happened to it later, was out of their hands. Now we have all these systems of religion, and not one of them will budge one inch, to accept more truth of God's word. Most of them are Trinitarians, and water baptism is in the titles of Matthew 28:19, rather than the name of Jesus Christ, and a lot of them will even accept the ritual of sprinkling, instead of immersion. In other words, regardless of all the missionaries that were sent out, the world was still waiting to hear the gospel of the kingdom of God, that was to be preached as a witness to all nations before the end would come. What about all those people who believed the message of their hour? That is what is so beautiful about the plan and purpose of God, He will only hold a person accountable for what they had opportunity to hear and believe. That is why you need not worry about your saintly old grandmother, or grandfather. If they obeyed the truth of their hour, God accepted them. You cannot even compare them with our day, for we are living in a day when new light has come. Well, what we call new light, is what the apostles had almost 2000 years ago, but it is new to us, for most of us came out of these systems that deny much of the original gospel truth.

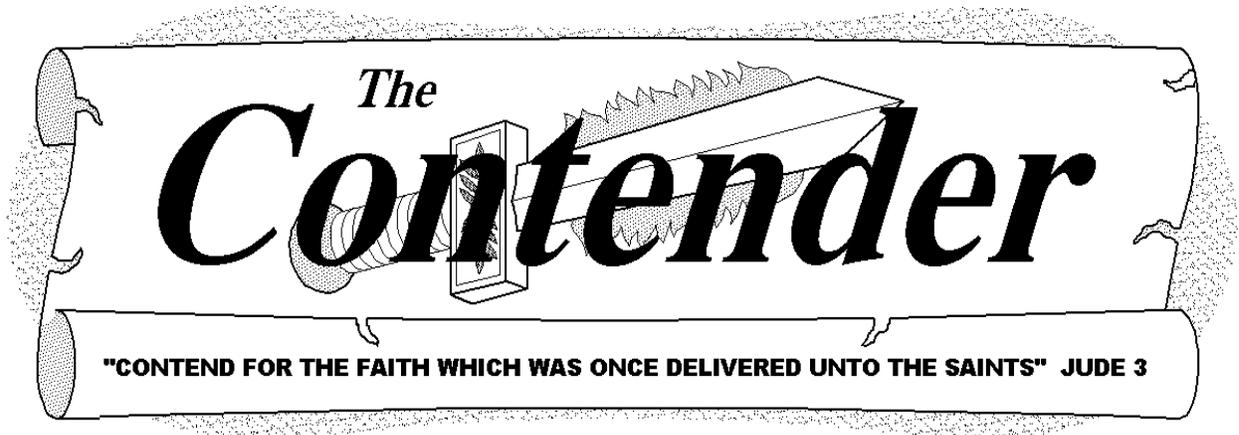
## LOOKING TO THE END

Now saints, everything I have said, was to lead us to one conclusion. Before the end of the age, there has to be a people on earth that know and understand the gospel of the kingdom, that was preached in the first century of Christianity. That means they must have the same revelation, on every doctrine taught by the apostles. Do we have such a people in the earth today? Yes. I believe this is the generation that shall live to see the coming of the Lord. That is why there had to be a messenger sent to this age. The fig tree has budded, and this generation shall not pass away until all these things be fulfilled. But the messenger that God sent, came with a message that took all of these restored truths, and presented them in one gospel. He was ridiculed and denied by the great scholars of the systems, but in his simple way, he made this Bible come alive to some people that were hungry for more than they had been getting. I am talking about a little man by the name of William Marrion Branham, a humble little man, that loved the word of God. He prayed for the sick, and preached the Bible from cover to cover, and God vindicated his ministry with signs and wonders, just like it says in Mark 16. (In one pamphlet I read, this fellow was so bold as to say that Bro. Branham prayed for the sick and did all those miracles by the power of

witchcraft. He said also that the angel that conversed with him, was like a witchcraft spirit.) He came on the scene when Pentecost was standing at the door of opportunity, to be used by God to foster something to the world. But God bypassed every one of them, because their minds were already fixed in their denominational framework. It just goes to show, God does not have to have a highly educated man to get the job done. Now Bro. Branham's religious background had been Baptist, but he was not a Baptist, because his experience and his belief would not fit into the Baptist church. Nevertheless when God raised him up, He already had some people on earth, that was ready to hear what the little man had on his heart. He literally preached the same form of baptism, Godhead, and plan of salvation, that the early apostle preached, and there was not a theologian around anywhere, that would take their Bible, and openly challenge him on what he preached and taught. Oh they all loved the miracles and signs, but they did not like the doctrines he taught from the word of God. Twenty years after Bro. Branham's death, people are still going to extreme limits, trying to discredit what he taught. Nevertheless the true children of God are receiving it, because it is a revelation of what those early apostles taught. Let me say also, there is hardly a nation left that this message has not penetrated to some degree. Oh yes, there is a lot of fanaticism traveling with it, but the

truth is getting there just the same. Anywhere truth goes, there will always be a bunch of tares ready to grab it, and twist it, but the predestined seed will hear it, and understand it in it's restored form. These are those that make up the true body of Christ in the kingdom of God. Now as we think on these things, we have to realize that the United States has been blessed by God, like no other nation since the apostolic age, but it could well be, that the Lord has just about got His crop out of this nation, for she is fast heading down the road of spiritual and moral corruption. As I said, We are no longer a Christian nation. Our forefathers would not recognize the Constitution they worked so diligently to set up on Christian principles, and only the grace of God can keep this nation from hitting rock bottom on her downward trend. Brothers and Sisters: I just have to believe that Matthew, chapter 24, is fast being wrapped up. The universal body of Christ is being knit together and shaped for her end time role, and I believe it is time to say, Look up, for your redemption draweth nigh. Do not look for a great earth shaking revival; we are at the end. Distress of nations is a reality, politically, economically, and in every way. So let us be very thankful for the gospel of Jesus Christ, that we now have in it's restored form, and keep our lives clean before God, so we will be ready for His return. Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away, Jesus said. Therefore regardless of how evil and

corrupt the world may become, the word of god will remain the same, so we do have an anchor: something to hold us steady. While the world in general is heading for the great tribulation, the true body of Christ is heading for the rapture. Therefore let us (as Paul said) covet earnestly the best gifts, but let us above all else, be sure we have a right attitude and motive for everything we do. If we allow the true love of God to motivate us, everything will turn out all right. Praise His name. Amen.



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