

The Christian Assembly

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Foreword to First Edition

God has been pleased to give us in His Word very definite instructions regarding the church (or the "ekklesia," or the assembly, as it is variously called). These instructions form a chart or road map for the guidance of the Christian in his church life.

There are in every generation a goodly number of young Christians who are not yet familiar with these principles, not having been taught them. Many of them find themselves in Christian assemblies, sharing in assembly privileges and assembly responsibilities, largely because of the fact that their parents were in these same Christian assemblies before them. It is a great blessing to have the example of godly parents as a guide—the writer is among the number who must thank God for the influence such an example has upon a young Christian life. But more is needed than the influence of godly example, if young believers are going to weather the storms that arise in their lives—personal difficulties, assembly difficulties. If they are to "be able to withstand in an evil day and, having done all, to [still] stand," it is needful that they should be well grounded in the principles of the Christian Assembly as they are found in the Holy Scriptures.

Conscious of this need, the writer has sought to set these principles before a large Bible Class of young men meeting during the winter months in the city of Toronto. The lessons covered four and a half winters. Then came requests for the publication of these lessons for use in Bible Classes in other centers. This was done through the Bible Class edition of "Words of Love." This will explain the more or less uniform length of the chapters in this book, seeing the same space was allotted each week in the magazine for the teaching of these precious truths.

With certain necessary corrections, and a few additional paragraphs, these lessons are now being sent forth, at the request of a number of brethren, in more permanent form. To facilitate their use in Bible Classes, the Questions for written answers as well as the Summaries at the end of the chapters have been retained. If it should not seem too presumptuous on the Author's part, he would like to suggest that Bible study classes for young believers might be arranged wherever possible for the study of these truths, and that the members of the class be encouraged to prepare written answers to the printed questions at the conclusion of each lesson. Whenever an experienced brother can be found to act as class teacher, he will be able to enrich these studies from his own knowledge of the Scriptures. When such a teacher is not available, young believers will be able to get a good grasp of the truth presented by reading the chapter and at the same time reading and meditating upon the Scripture

passage cited—for one of the salient features of this little volume is its constant reference to the Word of God.

There is no presumptuous claim on the Author's part that herein is found the whole counsel of God in relation to the Christian Assembly, although it is hoped that the careful study of this book along with the careful reading of the Scripture references will do much to give the young believer a solid foundation in the truths taught. The Author is keenly aware that some good and godly men may differ in the interpretation of certain Scripture texts that have been quoted. Yet despite these shortcomings, the book is sent forth with a fervent prayer that God will use it in the instruction and blessing of young Christians for whose use it has been written.

The Author wishes to here acknowledge his indebtedness to certain elder brethren, among whom was his own father, under whose influence and teaching he came in the early days of his Christian life for their counsel and teaching in these truths. These men are now with the Lord, but their works remain with us.

J. R. Littleproud

Toronto, Ontario, Can.
17th October, 1938

Preface to the Second Edition

Numerous requests for copies of "The Christian Assembly" after the first edition was exhausted has led to the second edition of the book. A few minor changes have been made, dealing mostly with chapter headings and divisions. A chapter on the Prospect of the Christian Assembly has been added and the chapter on Essential Meetings of the Christian Assembly has been omitted, most of the meetings having already been referred to in other parts of the book. One of the added appendices however deals with this subject. The other additions in the Appendix have been reprinted from editorials which have appeared in Assembly Annals, a monthly magazine devoted to ministry concerning Christ and the Church, printed by the publishers of this book.

The former edition of "The Christian Assembly" was quickly sold out because of its adaptation to study classes. Anticipating a similar use for the present edition pages for notes have been added for the convenience of teachers and students.

Wm. J. Pell

Grand Rapids, Mich.
27th May, 1955

— N O T E S —

**SECTION A — THE CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY IN
PROPHECY — Genesis 49:10.****I. The Place where God's people should gather—
"Shiloh."**

1. Foretold by Jacob: Gen. 49:10.
2. Promised by God: Deut. 12:5.
3. Carried out by Israel: Josh. 18:1; Jer. 7:12.
4. Forsaken by God because of sin: 1 Sam. 4:1-11;
Ps. 78:60.
5. Superseded by Jerusalem: 2 Chron. 6:6.

**II. The Person unto whom God's people should
gather—"unto Him" (Isa. 9:6; Col. 1:20).**

1. Foretold by Jacob: Gen. 49:10.
2. Identified with Him who made peace, the very
Prince of Peace: Isa. 9:6; Col. 1:20.
3. Anticipated the Christian Assembly: Matt. 18:20.
4. Ready to be fulfilled when civil government
passed into the hands of the Romans: Mark 14:
64; John 19:7; 18:31.

* * * *

— N O T E S —

SECTION A

The Christian Assembly in Prophecy

Chapter 1

THE PROPHECY OF SHILOH

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be (Gen. 49:10).

As old Jacob lay dying down in Egypt, he called his twelve sons to him that he might bestow upon them a father's blessing. With remarkable spiritual foresight, God enabled him to look into the future and foretell what would befall each of the tribes of people that would descend from his twelve sons. Concerning the tribe of Judah, he said "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." Two things should be noticed in this Scripture:

I. The Place

There was to be a place where God's people should gather—Shiloh. Over two hundred years later, when the people were about to enter the land which God had promised to give them, God decreed that His people should be separate from the places in the land where the nations worshipped their gods, and should destroy them. "But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His name there, even unto His habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come" (Deut. 12:5). God thus promised

1. That He would choose a place in the land—
2. Where He would put His name—
3. Wherein He would dwell—
4. To which His people should come.

Seven years later, when the people are in the land, we read, "The whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the taber-

nacle of the congregation there" (Joshua 18:1). Old Jacob's prophecy had come true thus far—the people had gathered themselves together at Shiloh. But was this the place that the Lord had chosen to place His name there? Let us read Jeremiah 7:12: "But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel." Here are two truths:

1. Shiloh was the place where God set His name.
2. God later judged this place because of evil tolerated there.

The first book of Samuel opens with Shiloh still the place where God's name was and where His people gathered (cf. I Sam. 1:3, 24). The two sons of Eli were priests in those days; but they were "sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord" (I Sam. 2:12). Their conduct was so unseemly in the house of the Lord at Shiloh, that "men abhorred the offering of the Lord" (2:17). God could not be expected to tolerate such things long, nor long remain in such a place, for "holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, forever" (Ps. 93:5). God permitted the Philistines to come against Israel and overcome them in battle. In their distress, the people of Israel sent to Shiloh to "bring from hence the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubim" (I Sam. 4:4). But this expedient did not save Israel. The Philistines smote them, and "the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain" (v. 11). When Phinehas' son was born shortly afterwards, the mother called him Ichahod (Where is the glory?), saying, "The glory is departed from Israel; because the ark of God was taken" (vv. 21, 22). The absence of the ark betokened the absence of the presence of the Lord, for He had dwelt in the glory cloud between the cherubim above the mercy seat that was upon the ark. Hence we read, "So He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which He had placed among men" (Ps. 78:60). Nor need we expect to find God presencing Himself today in places where sons of Belial act as priests and where ungodly practices prevail.

But God would not leave Himself without a testimony on earth. The Philistines were soon glad to get rid of the ark which they had captured. Read First Samuel 5. They made a new cart, and laid the ark of God upon it. They yoked two milch cattle to the cart and sent the ark back to Israel. In David's reign, the ark was brought to Jerusalem, (II Sam. 6), and Jerusalem became the place where God chose to place His name and dwell among His people (II Chron. 6:6; 7:12-16). Unfortunately in bringing up the ark, David adopted the Philistine expedient of the new cart with disastrous results (II Sam. 6:3-7), for God had appointed that the ark should be borne by the Kohathites (Num. 3:29-31). It was only when this injunction of the Lord was obeyed and the Lord was sought "after the due order" (I Chron. 15:5, 11-15), that there was joy and blessing in Jerusalem.

II. The Person

But Jacob's prophecy was more far-reaching than the gathering of the people unto the place called Shiloh. There was also to be of the tribe of Judah, a *person* unto whom the people should gather. "Unto *Him* shall the gathering of the people be." Who is He, arising out of the tribe of Judah, and called Shiloh, unto whom the people shall gather? We learn that Shiloh means "Pacificator" or "Peace-bringer" and immediately we have the answer to our query. There is only One who is truly a bringer of peace, whose very name is "The Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6), and who "made peace through the blood of His cross" (Col. 1:20). Old Jacob looked down the long avenues of time, and saw a day when the people would be gathered unto Him, when the pattern of the Christian assembly would be, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). Moreover, old Jacob's prophetic discernment was so acute that he could indicate the time when the promised Shiloh, arising out of the tribe of Judah, should come. The government would not be taken from Judah until the promised Shiloh came. "The sceptre (symbol of the

right to govern) shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver (one to govern) from between His feet, until Shiloh come." After the Jewish Sanhedrin condemned Jesus as being "guilty of death" (Mark 14:64), they took Him to Pilate. Before him they said, "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God" (John 19:7). Yet they were powerless to carry out the death sentence which they had pronounced. They had to admit to Pilate, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death" (John 18:31). Why? The power of civil government had passed into the hands of the Romans—hence, this appeal to Pilate. The sceptre had departed from Judah, and the lawgiver from between his feet. Shiloh had come! The day was at hand when old Jacob's prophecy was to receive its fulfilment in toto, "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." The time was at hand for the institution of the Christian Assembly, the gathering together of saints in His name, with Himself in their midst.

QUESTIONS

1. Quote the prophecy made by Jacob concerning the gathering center of the people of God.
2. Mention four important features of the gathering center as it is pictured in Deut. 12:5.
3. Quote from Scripture to prove that Shiloh was the place where the Lord had chosen to place His name.
4. Why did God forsake Shiloh?
5. Show that Jacob's prophecy was to have a twofold fulfillment.
6. (a) What does Shiloh mean?
(b) Quote two passages of Scripture to identify the Lord Jesus Christ as the true Shiloh.
7. Quote a New Testament verse of Scripture that sets forth the pattern for the gathering of saints as foretold by Jacob.
8. Why could the Lord Jesus not be put to death by the Jewish nation?
9. In the light of Jacob's prophecy, what did their admission (Jn. 18:31) prove?

— N O T E S —

SECTION B — THE CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY IN PICTURE — Deut. 12:5.

I. A Place of Gathering—Deut. 12:5

1. Authorized by His Word.
2. Distinguished by His Name.
3. Honored by His Presence.

II. A Place of Separation — Deut. 12:10-14, 29-32.

1. Commanded to offer sacrifices there.
2. Restrained from offering sacrifices elsewhere.
3. Prefigured separation from the world and its associations: Gal. 1:4; 2 Cor. 6:14-18.

III. A Place of Commemoration — Deut. 16:1-6.

1. Selection of the place for the Memorial Feast (cf. Acts 20:7).
2. Appointment of the time (cf. Acts 20:7).
3. Determination of the manner (cf. 1 Cor. 11:23-30).

IV. A Place of Worship — Deut. 26:1-11.

1. The Law of the Firstfruits.
 - a. The Type.
 - b. The Antitype.
2. The Offering of the Firstfruits.
 - a. Confession of Ruin: (i) Born of ruined parentage; (ii) Ready to perish.
 - b. Acknowledgment of Redemption: (i) Crying to the Lord; (ii) Redeemed with a mighty hand.
 - c. Profession of Separation: (i) Brought out of Egypt; (ii) Brought into a good land.
 - d. Presentation of Firstfruits: (i) Giving to God the firstfruits; (ii) Rejoicing in His presence.

V. A Place of Ministry — Deut. 18:6-8.

1. The Sphere of Ministry: "The place which the Lord shall choose."
2. The Preparation for Ministry: Exercise of soul.
 - a. Thorough acquaintance with the subject.
 - b. Personal application of the truth.
 - c. Public ministry.
3. The Authority for Ministry: "In the name of the Lord."
4. The Maintenance of Ministry: "That give unto the Lord."
 - a. Hospitality in our homes.
 - b. Helping on journeys.
 - c. Sending gifts.
5. The Travesty of Ministry: Judges 17, 18.
 - a. A Levite consecrated as a priest.
 - b. The acceptance of a stated salary.
 - c. Serving in a man-made system.
 - d. Bringing unscriptural practices among the people of God.

SECTION B

The Christian Assembly in Picture

Chapter 2

THE PLACE OF HIS NAME

But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come (Deut. 12:5).

Nearly two and a half centuries after Jacob uttered his memorable prophecy, foretelling the gathering of the people unto Shiloh, his descendants reached the borders of the land of Canaan into which God had promised to bring them. God instructed His people through His servant Moses concerning their worship in that land. They were not to worship in those places where the idolatrous Canaanites worshipped their gods, but rather to utterly destroy them. Then God promised that there would be a place which He would choose, and wherein He would dwell ("unto His habitation"), unto which Israel should gather. Four characteristics of this place should be noted:

1. The place was chosen by the Lord.
2. This place was to be Israel's gathering center.
3. His name was placed there.
4. The presence of the Lord was there (cf. 2 Chron. 20:9).

We have already seen that this place was Shiloh (Josh. 18:1; Jer. 7:12), and that it pictures for us the Christian Assembly of the New Testament. The correspondence with Matt. 18:20 is very suggestive. Observe:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. The Place— | "For where two or three are |
| 2. The Gathering Center— | gathered together |
| 3. The Name— | in My name, |
| 4. The Presence of the Lord— | there am I in the
midst of them." |

The place where the Lord chose to place His name was to be for Israel—and in *picture* for us:

I. A Place of Gathering—Deut. 12:5

Uncircumcised Canaanites might worship elsewhere, but Israel's gathering centre must ever be the place of the Lord's choosing, where He had placed His name, and where His presence was to be found. What empty shrines all other places must have been, for they lacked His authority, they were not marked by His name, and they were not honoured by His presence. Drawn by the authority of His word, by the distinction of His name, and by the attraction of His presence, Israel gathered at Shiloh. It was a sad day in the nation's history when Jeroboam built high places in Bethel and in Dan in order to prevent the people of God worshipping in the place where the Lord had placed His name, and to prevent the kingdom returning to the house of David (Cf. 1 Kings 12:26-33).

II. A Place of Separation—Deut. 12:10-14, 29-32

Israel was commanded to separate themselves from the world's religion and from its places of religion (10-14). Their offerings, their sacrifices, and their tithes were to be brought unto the place which the Lord their God had chosen, while all other places were forbidden. Cf. Rev. 18:1-4. They were also commanded to separate themselves from the world's ways, from the evil ways that were all about them lest they should be snared by following them (vs. 29-32). One purpose for which Christ died on the cross was "that He might deliver us from this present evil world" (Gal. 1:4). Being thus delivered, we are exhorted to present our "bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Rom. 12:1); and to separate ourselves from unbelievers, from the unrighteous, from darkness, from Belial, and from every unclean thing in order that God may be to us everything that His Father's heart would like to be, and that we might be to Him everything that a son or daughter should be (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

III. A Place of Commemoration—Deut. 16:1-6

Israel was a redeemed people—redeemed by the blood of the paschal lamb (Ex. 12:1-14). They were com-

manded to commemorate their redemption by an annual "feast to the Lord throughout your generations." Now as they drew near to the land that the Lord had promised them, the Lord *selected the place* where the Passover was to be kept. "Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the pass-over unto the Lord thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the Lord shall choose to place His name there" (vs. 2). In perfect harmony with this divine picture is the practice of the early assemblies. "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow" (Ac. 20:7). The coming together of the disciples is the gathering together of the saints, the two or the three of Mt. 18:20, meeting in His name. At this place—the coming together of the disciples—the New Testament memorial feast, the breaking of the bread, should be kept.

Then God also *appointed the time* in which Israel should keep the Passover. "Observe the month of Abib" (vs. 1). This appointed time is still more definitely stated in Lev. 23:5. "In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's passover." There was a peculiar fitness to such an appointment, for it was on the night of the fourteenth day of Abib, back in Egypt, that God had passed over their doors as a Saviour-God and preserved them from the hand of the destroyer. Still in harmony with this Old Testament picture is the New Testament practice. "On the first day of the week . . . the disciples came together to break bread." Other references (e. g., 1 Cor. 16:2; John 20:19) would indicate that the first day of the week was the day of meeting for New Testament saints, even as the sabbath day had been the special day in the Old Testament times. How fitting that the Christian Assembly should honour the first day of the week, for it was on the first day of the week that Christ rose from the dead. How suggestive are the opening words of Matt. 28:1, "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre." It was the morning of His resurrec-

tion; it was "the end of the sabbath"; it was the dawning of a new day for the people of God. How fitting that the breaking of bread, the memorial feast that commemorates His death for us, should be kept on this day.

Not only did the Lord select the place in which the Passover should be kept, but He also *prescribed the manner* in which it should be kept. This is found in Num. 28:16-25. As long as the feast was kept according to God's order, it was accounted a "feast of the Lord" (Lev. 23:4, 5); but when it became corrupted by man's order, it was but a "feast of the Jews" (Jn. 6:4). Such a corruption is recorded in 1 Kings 12:25-32. Jeroboam's feast was held in a wrong place (vs. 29), at the wrong time (vs. 33), with a man-made priesthood officiating (vs. 31), and held from a wrong motive (vs. 26). Golden calves replaced the presence of Jehovah (vs. 28), and Jeroboam set Him aside as Lord (vs. 25, 26, 33). His feast was only an imitation of the feast of Jehovah, it was "like unto the feast" (vs. 32). Little wonder that God calls the whole arrangement "a sin" (vs. 30).

God, in His Word, has carefully prescribed the manner in which the Christian Assembly should keep the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-30). Let us jealously cling to the Scriptures in our remembrance of Him, that we may bring glory to His worthy name, that we may not participate in the Lord's supper in an unworthy manner that would bring judgment upon ourselves, and that the Lord's Supper shall not degenerate in our hands as the Passover did in the hands of the Jews until it becomes merely a human ordinance.

QUESTIONS

1. Mention four characteristics of the place where the Lord chose to place His name (Deut. 12:5).
2. Divide Matt. 18:20 into four sections to correspond with the four characteristics listed above.
3. What three things attracted Israel to Shiloh?
4. From what was Israel commanded to be separated? (Deut. 12:10-14).
5. Quote a New Testament passage to indicate that one

purpose of the cross work of Christ was our separation from the world.

6. Quote another that promises blessing as a result of such separation.
7. Mention three particulars specified for the keeping of the passover.
8. Quote New Testament verses to show a similar definite order for observing the Lord's Supper.

— N O T E S —

Chapter 3

THE PLACE OF HIS NAME (Continued)

Thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the Lord thy God giveth thee, and thou shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name there. Deut. 26:2

IV. A Place of Worship—Deut. 26:1-11

During the long years of wilderness pilgrimage, Israel neither planted crops nor reaped harvests. It would have been useless to plant grain in the springtime, for they would have been miles on their journey when the harvest would have been ripe. Yet they did not starve. God fed them with manna, bread from heaven, fresh every morning. But when Israel entered the land of Canaan, they again ate grain, "the old corn of the land." They were now in a position to plant seed and in due season harvest the grain.

But it must have taken considerable faith on their part to bury that precious seed in the earth. Would it grow? The generation that had seen grain sown and harvested had died in the wilderness. These people were wilderness-born, and had never seen a harvest. Yet they buried their seed and waited for it to grow. With what interest they must have watched the first green shoots come up through the ground, watched the plants grow taller and taller, and finally come out in head. Then as the warm sun shone on their fields of grain, a few heads here and there turned golden colour ahead of the rest of the field. With hope and expectancy the farmer wended his way carefully through that field and plucked these golden heads. Then rubbing them in his hand, he rubbed off the husks, and there in the palm of his hand lay a dozen or more golden kernels of threshed grain. His faith had been justified; he had not buried that seed in vain; it had fallen into the ground and died, and yet it had borne fruit. That little handful of golden grain, the *firstfruits* of his harvest, was a *promise* of a coming har-

vest; it was also a *sample* of what that harvest would be like. God required that His people should bring their firstfruits, "the first of all the fruit of the earth" and "put it in a basket" and "go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place His name there."

In 1 Cor. 15:22,23, we get the Holy Spirit's interpretation of the firstfruits:

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming."

Christ in resurrection is the firstfruits!

Christ in His death was the corn of wheat that fell into the ground and died (Jn. 12:24). He died for our sins; we have put faith in that death. Has our faith been justified? It has indeed. We read:

"Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25), and,

"When He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9), and,

"We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Heb. 8:1).

The Christ who died for us has been accredited in heaven, and His sacrifice accepted; "God . . . raised Him up from the dead and gave Him glory" (1 Pet. 1:21). Our faith is not in vain!

But in resurrection, He is the firstfruits—a sample and a promise of a harvest yet to come—the resurrection of "the dead in Christ" (1 Thes. 4:16); "Christ the firstfruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming."

But before the Israelite presented his basket of firstfruits unto the Lord and worshipped before Him, there were three conditions that must be observed. The priest took his basket and set it down in front of the altar, and waited for him to proceed.

(i) *Confession of Ruin*: (vs. 5). The first condition was a confession of what he was before he was redeemed. He confessed a poor genealogy—by birth he

had no claim upon God. "A Syrian ready to perish was my father." The reference is the time when Jacob fled from Esau his brother whom he had wronged, and went down to Padan-aram in Syria to his uncle Laban. Here he remained for at least twenty years, an exile. He was an old man, about 97 years of age when he returned to his own land. How apt the description his posterity gave him, when centuries later they came to present their firstfruits unto the Lord: "A Syrian (cf. Gen. 28:5; Hos. 12:12) ready to perish!"

How like to this is the confession of a redeemed soul today, as he comes into the presence of God to worship, for he too sprang from a perishing race. How he rejoices in a Gospel, one of whose terms is, "shall not perish," (Jn. 3:16). He recalls the hard bondage and the affliction which he endured when in his sins (cf. vs. 6)—for sin and Satan are cruel taskmasters. How often he pours out in God's presence the story of his utter ruin before grace reached and saved him.

(ii) *Acknowledgement of Redemption*: (vs. 7,8): "We cried unto the Lord." What a mercy when men and women can write such a sentence into their life stories, for "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13). Israel cried unto the Lord, and "the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand." How wonderful the story summarized in these few words—selecting a lamb free from spot or blemish, proving it until the fourteenth day of the month, killing it at eventime, catching the blood in a basin, sprinkling the blood on the door-posts, taking shelter behind the blood-sprinkled doors, God passing over their doors and preserving them from the destroyer, eating the roast lamb, marching out of Egypt, crossing the Red Sea, the destruction of Pharaoh and his host, singing in the wilderness! Truly they could say, "The Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand."

How like to this is the glad confession of all who are "redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:18, 19). How they delight to acknowledge Him through whom they have redemption, the forgiveness of

sins, according to His rich grace (Eph. 1:7). They cried unto the Lord, the Lord heard them, and delivered them. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

(iii) *A Profession of Separation*: (vs. 9): Not only had God brought them out of Egypt, but "He hath brought us into this place," into a land where there were temporal blessings—where milk and honey flowed—and into a land where there were spiritual blessings—where was situated "the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place His name there."

The land of Canaan is typical of the heavenlies as expounded in the Epistle of the Ephesians—spiritual blessings that belong to the whole household of faith. Within that land there was one place where the Lord had chosen to place His name, and to which His people were to gather. This one place of gathering in that fair land is a lovely foreshadowing of a Christian assembly.

How fortunate is that young believer who has not only been delivered from Egyptian bondage but has also been brought into a Christian assembly—a place where the name of the Lord is, and where He meets with His gathered saints (Matt. 18:20).

IV. Presentation of Firstfruits—v. 10

Now having confessed that he sprang from ruined stock, having acknowledged redemption from Egypt by blood, having witnessed to his separation from all but the place where God had brought him, the Israelite presented his basket of firstfruits unto the Lord, and worshipped with rejoicing in His presence.

And so with the believer in Christ to-day. He comes into the place where the Lord meets with His gathered saints. His confession is of ruin; his redemption is by blood; he testifies to a position outside all that is of the world. Then with rejoicing he presents to God the Christ who died but who lives again—the true firstfruits of a coming harvest of resurrection. He gratefully remembers the Lord's death as he breaks the bread and drinks the cup, pictured for him in Israel's passover; but he also rejoices in a Christ who rose again, pictured for him in the firstfruits—a Christ who lives for evermore!

QUESTIONS

1. Why did it require much faith on Israel's part to plant their grain in Canaan for the first time?
2. How did God feed His people in the wilderness?
3. What is pictured for us in the firstfruits of the harvest?
4. Quote a New Testament Scripture to prove your answer.
5. Name three things an Israelite did before he presented his basket of firstfruits unto the Lord.
6. What does the Christian do to-day that corresponds to Israel's passover feast?
7. What does he do that corresponds to Israel's presentation of the firstfruits to God?
8. Where does the Christian come to keep his memorial feast and to present a risen Christ to God in worship that corresponds to the place where the Lord chose to place His Name?

— N O T E S —

Chapter 4

THE PLACE OF MINISTRY

If a Levite come from any of thy gates out of all Israel, where he sojourned, and come with all the desire of his mind unto the place which the Lord shall choose, then he shall minister in the name of the Lord his God, as all his brethren the Levites do, which stand there before the Lord. They shall have like portions to eat, beside that which cometh of the sale of his patrimony.

Deut. 18:6-8

I. The Sphere of Ministry

God appointed the sons of Levi to a special ministry in connection with the tabernacle. When the camp moved they carried the ark, the altar, the table of shew-bread, and all the furniture and vessels of the tabernacle, as well as the curtains, the coverings, the pillars and the sockets. Read Num. 3, 4. Theirs was a God-given ministry to be performed in the place where the Lord had chosen to place His name.

The ministry of the Levite, as he carried the holy furniture from place to place thus making its sacred service available to Israel at all times, a service that pictured Christ in the manifold glories of His person and work, is a foreshadowing of the work of those whom the Lord has placed in His church to-day to minister Christ to His redeemed people. We learn from 1 Cor. 12, that the Holy Spirit has gifted certain men for certain definite work. We read in Eph. 4, that the Lord has placed these gifted men in the church, evangelists, pastors, teachers, etc., "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." The ability to minister is the gift of the Holy Spirit to man (1 Cor. 12:11); the gifted man is the gift of the risen Lord to His Church (Eph. 4:8-12).

II. The Preparation for Ministry

But gifted men need exercise of soul before they seek to minister the holy things to the people. So we read in our picture (Deut. 18:6) that the Levite came "with all the desire of his mind (that is with exercise of soul) unto the place that the Lord shall choose." It is a principle taught throughout the Word of God that exercise of soul and preparation for ministry must precede the giving of the message to men.

Paul the Apostle wrote to Timothy, the young preacher, the following definition of good ministry:

"If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained" 1 Tim. 4:6.

There are three essentials to good ministry listed here:

(a) *Thorough acquaintance with the subject*: "Whereunto thou hast attained," is rendered by Mr. Darby, "which thou hast fully followed up." God's truth is not arranged like a geography text-book with all the information on a certain subject on one page and under one heading. But He has revealed Himself and His truth, here a little and there a little, throughout the whole Bible. It is important then that we should "fully follow up" a subject before we attempt to minister it in public.

(b) *Personal application of the truth*: "Nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine." This implies that the man who teaches truth shall first have experienced that truth in his own life—been nourished up in the words which he ministers. How disappointing it is to hear a man minister truth which he himself does not practice. In wilderness days, manna that was gathered but not eaten "bred worms and stank" (Ex. 16:20). It is important that we first appropriate truth to ourselves before we teach it to others.

With such exercise of soul—thorough knowledge and personal application of the truth—the minister is now ready for the third step:

(c) *Public Ministry*; "Laying these things before the brethren" (Darby). With his subject thus in hand, he who teaches may rise in the assembly of the saints, and minister the word of God to the edification and profit of all. How like unto this is the Old Testament picture: "And if a Levite come . . . with all the desire of his mind unto the place which the Lord shall choose . . ." Cf. also Ezek. 3:1-4; Eccl. 12:9-11.

III. The Authority for Ministry

Thus exercised the Levite came to the place which the Lord had chosen. "Then he shall minister in the name of the Lord his God, as all his brethren the Levites do." The phrase, "in the name of the Lord," is common in the Scriptures and signifies by His authority. The importance of this fact warrants a few references to support it. In vs. 20 we read of a prophet who "shall presume to speak a word in My name which I have not commanded him to speak." To speak without His authority is only presuming to speak in His name; so that conversely, speaking in His name is speaking with His authority. Cf. also verse 22.

In Acts 9, Paul is described by the Lord as "a chosen vessel unto Me to bear My name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel" (vs. 15). Consequently when this chosen vessel spoke, it is recorded that "he spake boldly *in the name of the Lord Jesus*." He was speaking by His authority. Again in Acts 10, Peter commands that Cornelius and those in his house who had believed should "be baptized in the name of the Lord." He challenges any other authority to "forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we."

So the Levite's authority for ministering in the place which the Lord had chosen was from the Lord—he ministered "in the name of the Lord." In the New Testament the Lord again authorizes ministry for the edification of His saints. Read carefully Eph. 4:7-13; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; 14:3, 29; 1 Pet. 4:10, 11.

IV. The Maintenance of the Ministry

The Levite had no inheritance in Israel. He did not earn his living by farming or by other secular calling. His inheritance was the Lord (vs. 2); he served the Lord, and the Lord sustained him. But the Lord chose to sustain him out of that which his brethren gave unto the Lord. He was to eat of the offerings of the Lord (vs. 1). When the people gave liberally to the Lord, then the Levite shared in the bounty; but when the people neglected to give unto the Lord, the Levite suffered from that neglect.

It is even so today, with the Scriptural New Testament ministry. John in his third epistle gives instructions for our care of those brethren who labour for the Lord. He says of them that "for His name's sake they went forth, taking nothing from the Gentiles" (vs. 7). Theirs is a service of faith; they trust in the living God. When we who are God's people give generously to the Lord, they benefit from our liberality; but when we neglect our stewardship, they suffer from our neglect.

Our responsibility in this matter seems to be threefold:

(i) Hospitality in our homes: 3 Jno. 5, 6a, 8. Cf. Acts 18:1-3; 18:24-26; Rom. 16:2; 16:6, 23.

(ii) Helping them on their journey: 3 Jno. 6b., Cf. Acts 15:2, 3; 21:5; Rom. 15:24: 1 Cor. 16:6; 2 Cor. 1:16.

(iii) Sending them gifts after their departure: Phil. 4:14-16; 1:5; 4:10.

In these three ways we become "fellowhelpers to the truth" (3 Jno. 8). There is a word of caution however in 2 Jno. 9-11. It is forbidden to help those who teach unsound doctrine lest we be partaker in their sin.

V. The Travesty of the Ministry

In the Book of Judges, we read of a sad departure from this God-given standard for the Levite's ministry and sustenance. There was a man named Micah who dwelled in Mount Ephraim. He had "an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest" (Judges 17:5).

Micah's house was an idolatrous house and its priesthood was man-made, in sharp contrast to the Aaronic priesthood which God had ordained. The secret of this sad departure from the things of God is given in verse 6: "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

Now there was in Bethlehem-judah at this time a young Levite, who instead of ministering at the house of God which was still in Shiloh (Judges 18:31), went out to find a place for himself (17: 7, 8). He was seeking a "call." In the process of his journey, he came to Micah's place. He acquainted Micah with the fact that he was a Levite, and open for a call ! The idea appealed to Micah at once; it would be fine to have a saved man minister in his system! So he offered him a fixed stipend—ten shekels of silver per year—together with board and clothes as an added perquisite ! "So the Levite went in." He had accepted the call! Whereupon, "Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest" (17:12). A consecration service for the new minister! Remember that though a true Levite, this man was a sham priest, despite Micah's consecration. But that meant nothing to Micah. He looked forward to a great revival now; he had a saved man for a minister. "Now know I that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest" (17:13).

But Micah's hired ministry was not going to bring him the blessing he anticipated. In the next chapter we read that the Danites invaded the land. When they came to Mount Ephraim, and found this Levite in Micah's employ, they said to him: "Go with us, and be to us a father and a priest. Is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel?" (Judges 18:19). This looked like a better call. He would serve a larger congregation, and they the people of God ! A tribe in Israel ! "So the priest's heart was glad" and he accepted this better call. "And he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people." Instead of bringing blessing to Micah's house, he had become tainted with the idolatry of that

system, and now he was introducing it into the tribe of Dan. The last two verses tell a sad tale. The image was set up in Dan, and Jonathan, Moses' grandson (see R. V.) became a priest under this idolatrous system, even while God's true order of gathering and of ministry was being observed at Shiloh. Let us beware today of departing from the order of the living God, and of importing from the systems of men those things that will displease and dishonour God.

QUESTIONS

1. Where was the Levite authorized by God to minister?
2. Of what New Testament function was the Levite's ministry a picture?
3. What preparation preceded the Levite's coming to minister?
4. What is the meaning of the phrase, "in the name of the Lord"?
5. How were the Levites sustained in their work for the Lord?
6. Give three reasons why the Levite in Judges 17 should have refused to accept Micah's offer.
7. In what way did his disobedience affect the people of God?

— N O T E S —

**SECTION C — THE CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY IN
PRINCIPLE—Ps. 50:5; Matt. 18:20.**

I. In the Old Testament.

1. The Authority for Gathering: "Gather my saints together."
2. The Members of the Gathering: "My saints."
3. The Center of the Gathering: "Me."
4. The Separation of the Gathering: "Unto Me."
5. The Unity of the Gathering: "Gather my saints together."
6. The Purpose of the Gathering: Worship, prayer, discipline, ministry.

II. In the New Testament.

1. The Church or "Ekklesia."
 - a. Distinctively a New Testament truth; first mention Matt. 16:18.
 - b. An out-called assembly, a people for His Name: Acts 15:14.
2. A Local Church, a miniature of the whole—an "Ekklesia."

SECTION C

The Christian Assembly in Principle

Chapter 5

GATHERED TOGETHER UNTO HIM (Old Testament)

Gather My saints together unto Me, those
that have made a covenant with Me by
sacrifice. —Ps. 50:5

We move forward about four centuries from the days when God gave instructions regarding the gathering of His people at a place which He had chosen to place His name, and we find God still interested in the gathering of His saints. In Psalm 50:5, He sets forth the principle of that gathering. Six items merit our consideration.

I. The Authority for Gathering

It is God who speaks. There is no higher authority for any action that man may undertake than the command of the Lord. We are never on such safe ground as when we have a Thus saith the Lord for our procedure. The gathering together of saints in Old Testament days rested upon this sure foundation: "Gather My saints together unto Me, those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice."

It is a matter of real satisfaction to an exercised soul today to find such divine authority for assembly gathering as, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). It is equally instructive to study the records of some of those early assemblies where this divine pattern was translated into practice, e. g., at Jerusalem (Ac. 2:41-42), at Antioch (Ac. 11:19-30; 13:2-4; 14:26, 27; 15:22-32), and at Philippi (Phil. 1:1).

II. The Members of the Gathering

Those whom God would gather together are His saints, His "holy ones," His "set-apart-ones." They are further designated as "those that have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice." Such, and such alone, were embraced in the divine command, "Gather My saints together unto Me."

The same truth pervades the New Testament. The members of the church of God at Corinth are described as "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints" (1 Cor. 1:2). Those in the assembly at Rome were "beloved of God, called saints" (Rom. 1:7). What are saints?

In answering this question it should be observed that the words holy, saint and sanctify all are derived from the same root, and all bear the same idea, to be set apart. God's saints are His holy ones, His set-apart-ones. The term saints applies to all Christians, to all who "are sanctified (set apart) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10).

But as in Old Testament days, God's saints are still those who have been brought into covenant relationship with Himself. That covenant is based upon the cross-work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In instituting the Lord's Supper, the Lord said, "For this is My blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Christ negotiated this covenant "by means of death" (Heb. 9:15); ratified it with His own blood (Heb. 9:18, 22-26); and guarantees its terms by His life at God's right hand (Heb. 7:25).

III. The Center of the Gathering

The Lord's ideal of gathering His saints together is that they be gathered around Himself. In the wilderness, He gave instructions for making the tabernacle, using these words to explain His purpose, "Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8). Prior to their redemption from Egypt, God never dwelt in the midst of His people. He appeared at times to certain of the patriarchs, but never did He dwell among them until they were redeemed by blood.

When the sin of idolatry broke out in the camp of Israel, for the people worshipped the golden calf that Aaron had made, "Moses took the tabernacle and pitched it without the camp" (Ex. 33:7). That position without the camp separated those on the Lord's side from the evil within the camp, and identified them with Himself. How pertinent in the light of this incident is the exhortation to New Testament saints, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13:13). When we have done so, our position will be that of gathered saints with Jesus in the midst (Matt. 18:20), a fulfilling of that lovely foreshadow of a Christian Assembly: "Gather my saints together unto Me."

IV. The Separation of the Gathering

God purposed that His saints should be separated unto Himself. Separation in the Scriptures is always twofold: from and unto; from that which displeases God and unto Himself. When God promised to separate Israel from Egypt, He said, "I am come down to deliver them *out of the hand of the Egyptians*, and to bring them up out of that land *unto a good land and large*, unto a land flowing with milk and honey" (Ex. 3:8). He separated them out of Egypt and unto Canaan. So when He gathered His saints together in the land, it was that they might be gathered unto Himself, a truly separated people.

New Testament Scriptures but emphasize this truth. "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. 13:13). When we take a position outside the camp, it is to be identified with Himself. Similarly we read in 2 Cor. 6: "Come ye out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." The unclean thing from which we are to be separated is clearly defined in the immediate context: the unbeliever, the unrighteous, darkness, Belial, and infidel, and idol—in short that which is unclean. How can clean and unclean be joined together? What fellowship can there be be-

tween light and darkness, between saved and unsaved. God would have His saints separated from all this and gathered together unto Himself. Then He will be to them all that His Father's heart would like to be, and we shall be to Him that which He would desire a son or daughter to be.

V. The Unity of the Gathering: Together

But if God would have a separation between His saints and all that is unclean, all that is immoral, all that is impure, all that is defiled, He would have no divisions among His saints. "Gather my saints together unto Me," saith the Lord. God's plan is for unity among His people.

As God looks down from heaven, there are few things on earth He can call good. He looks on men, and says, "There is none good." But when He sees those same men redeemed, and gathered together in fellowship with Himself and with one another, He says, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Ps. 133:1). The newly formed church at Jerusalem was a lovely example of this truth. "All that believed were together, and had all things common." They met daily with one accord; there was gladness and singleness of heart among them, as they praised God and found favor with all the people (Acts 2:44-47).

Such a gathering of saints is assured the blessing of God's Holy Spirit. It is likened to the precious ointment (type of the Holy Spirit), poured upon Aaron's head when he was anointed as priest (Ex. 30:25,30), "that went down to the skirts of his garments." The outer garments speak of testimony; they are what the world sees of us. How blessed when the Spirit of God is so poured out upon His saints that the skirts of the garments are anointed—that the testimony of the saints is fragrant with the savour of His presence. This can happen when brethren dwell together in unity, when the saints are gathered together unto Himself, when all that believe are together!

The next verse in Ps. 133, uses another symbol of the Spirit, the dew. The dew speaks of the fruitfulness of the Spirit in our lives. The heavy dew that fell about

Mt. Hermon in the north also fell upon Mt. Zion in the south, thus uniting the whole land in fruitfulness. This is God's ideal for His saints—there “the Lord commands the blessing, even life for evermore.” Would we see the blessing of the Lord in life for evermore, in the gift of eternal life to sinners in our midst? Let us dwell together in unity; let the saints be gathered together unto Himself!

VI. The Purpose of the Gathering: Worship, Prayer, Discipline

God has His own purposes in gathering His saints together unto Himself. One of these is that they might worship Him. “Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High” (vs. 14). One of the responsibilities attached in Hebrews 13 to going forth unto Him without the camp, is offering the “sacrifice of praise to God continually . . . the fruit of lips, giving thanks to His name.”

One of the characteristics of the early church was steadfastness in prayer (Acts 2:42). When Peter and John were arrested and forbidden to teach again in the name of Jesus, the saints met to pray. They spread their petitions before the Lord and sought His guidance and blessing. “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31). In addition to the practice of the early church, we have for our encouragement, such promises as, “Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do” (Jn. 14:13).

Immediately preceding the command to gather the saints together unto Him, are these solemn words: “He shall call to the heavens above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people.” He gathers His saints together that He may govern and discipline them after the integrity of His own heart. “Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever” (Ps. 93:5). God dwells in the midst of His gathered saints that He may preserve the holy character of His own house. Hence “God is

greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them about Him" Psalm 89:7.

QUESTIONS

1. What authority did Old Testament saints have for gathering unto the Lord?
2. What authority have New Testament saints for gathering unto the Lord?
3. Who are to be included in a gathering unto the Lord?
4. (a) What is the meaning of the term 'saint' ?
(b) To whom does it apply ?
(c) How are believers sanctified or made saints?
5. (a) What is the center for the gathering together of God's saints ?
(b) Quote an Old Testament Scripture to support your answer.
(c) Quote a New Testament Scripture to support your answer.
6. (a) From what would God separate His people today?
(b) Quote a New Testament Scripture to prove your answer.
7. (a) Unto what would God separate His people today?
(b) Quote a New Testament Scripture to prove your answer.
8. (a) Quote a Scripture to prove that God would have His people gathered in unity.
(b) Cite a New Testament example of this.
(c) What divine blessing is promised on such a gathering?
9. Name four purposes for which God gathers His saints together.

— N O T E S —

Chapter 6

GATHERED TOGETHER UNTO HIM (New Testament)

For where two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in the midst of them. Matthew 19:20.

We have seen interesting and instructive foregleams of the Christian Assembly and of assembly principles in the Old Testament, but the church itself is not to be found there.

I. The Church or "Ekklesia"

In seeking to get the meaning of any word in Scripture, there are three principles often helpful; its derivation, its use in general writing or conversation and its specific use in the Scriptures. The word translated church is "ekklesia". It is derived from the preposition "ek" (out of) and "kaleo" (to call), thus suggesting an *out-calling*. In every day use the word signified any assembly of people. In Acts 19:32 it signifies the gathering together of the townspeople of Ephesus—a disorganized mob. "Some therefore cried one thing, and some another; for the assembly (ekklesia) was confused." In verse 39 it refers to a legally constituted law court. "But if ye enquire anything concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly (ekklesia)." These two sources of information—the derivation, and the common use—teach us that an ekklesia is an *out-called assembly*.

The Lord often redeems words from their common use and uses them with a sanctified meaning. "The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Psalm 12:6). The word "ekklesia" is one of the Lord's *purified* words. It occurs for the first time in Matthew 16:18. Simon Peter has just confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The Lord replies, "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build My church (ekklesia); and the gates of hell shall not

prevail against it." This church or ekklesia was still future at that time — "I will build." In Acts 2, it had come into being, for we read, "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). It began at Pentecost, with the descent of the Holy Spirit to indwell the believers at that time. It embraces all the children of God from the day of Pentecost until the coming of the Lord. The Lord calls this great out-gathering from among the Gentiles (Acts 15:14), this people for His name, "My church."

In Matthew 18 the word occurs again. Instructions have been given for settling a difficulty between two brethren. If these instructions, when followed, fail to produce the desired settlement, then there is a further injunction. "If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church (ekklesia)" (Matt. 18:17). It is evident that the word has a different meaning here to what it had in Matthew 16, for it would be physically impossible to tell the matter to the whole church, all the saved ones. But verse 20 interprets it for us; "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." The ekklesia now is a gathering together of a local group of God's "saved ones" — an assembly of saints.

II. A Local Church — an "Ekklesia"

It is very instructive to notice that God uses the same word, ekklesia, to define a local assembly as He uses to describe the whole company of redeemed souls during this day of grace. A local assembly is to be a miniature or facsimile of the whole church. Another writer has illustrated the matter. The Atlantic Ocean is that large body of water extending from the North American Continent to Europe and from the South American Continent to Africa. That is the Atlantic as a whole. But a man standing on the sea shore near New York and looking out over a few miles of water that his eye can see, says, "That is the Atlantic." Another man standing on the coast of Spain or on the shores of Brazil could say the same. Each of these three men saw the Atlantic Ocean as it manifests itself locally. The local aspect is but a mini-

ature of the whole. The church as it gathers together in any locality should be a facsimile of the whole gathering of the redeemed saints—an ekklesia or an assembly out-called from among the Gentiles.

Similar use of other terms to designate (a) the church as a whole, and (b) the church gathered locally, further strengthen the conclusion that the local assembly should be a facsimile of the whole. Note:

- (1) A Building — (a) Eph. 2:21; (b) Eph. 2:22.
- (2) A Body — (a) 1 Cor. 12:12; (b) 1 Cor. 12:27.
- (3) A Flock — (a) John 10:16 R.V.; (b) Acts 20:28.

QUESTIONS

1. Mention three ways of determining the meaning of a Scriptural term.
2. What is the derivation of the term 'ekklesia'?
3. What is the common use of 'ekklesia'?
4. What is the "purified" or special use of 'ekklesia'?
5. What is the difference in the use of 'ekklesia' in Matthew 16 and Matthew 18?
6. Give a reason justifying the statement, "A local assembly should be a miniature or facsimile of the whole church."

— NOTES —

**SECTION D — THE CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY IN
PATTERN — Matt. 18:20; Acts 2:36;
Phil 1:1; Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9.**

Distinguishing Marks of a Christian Assembly

I. Restricted to Christian Membership.

1. Saved-ones: Acts 2:47.
2. Believers: Acts 5:14.
3. Disciples: Acts 20:7.
4. Christians: Acts 11:26.
5. Saints: 1 Cor. 1:2.
6. Brethren: Col. 1:2; Heb. 3:1; 1 Thess. 1:4.

**II. Gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ:
"My Name."**

1. His name in relation to the assembly: Lord Jesus Christ. Cf. 1 Cor. 1:10.
2. "Having been gathered" by the Holy Spirit.
3. Having been gathered "in the name" of the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. Distinguishing names forbidden: 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:3, 4.

**III. The Presence by the Lord in the Midst: "There
am I in the midst of them."**

1. The Conditions of His Presence: Two or three saved-ones gathered in His name.
2. The Certainty of His Presence: There am I.
 - a. The Prophecy: Gen. 49:10.
 - b. The Picture: Exod. 25:8.
 - c. The Principle: Ps. 50:8.
3. The Nature of His Presence: Personally present.
4. His Presence Gives Character to the Assembly: makes it a "House of God" (1 Tim. 3:15).

**IV. Subject to the Lordship of Christ: "There am
I in the midst."**

1. Lord ("kurios") means "Supreme in authority."
2. God has recognized Jesus Christ as Lord: Acts 2:36.
3. We are enjoined to give Him the place of Lord in our hearts: 1 Pet. 3:15, R.V.
4. When Christ is set apart in our hearts as Lord, He will also be recognized as Lord in the Assembly. Cf. Heb. 3:6.
5. The Holy Spirit teaches us to recognize Christ as Lord in the Assembly: 1 Cor. 12:3.

6. When Christ gets His place as Lord in the Assembly, then His Word becomes our sole authority (2 Tim. 2:16, 17) in all matters of—
 - a. Doctrine
 - b. Discipline
 - c. Assembly Practice.

V. Guided by Overseers.

1. The Terms:
 - a. Overseer (sometimes translated "bishop"): Phil. 1:1; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2.
 - b. Elder: Acts 20:7; Tit. 1:5; 1 Pet. 5:1.
 - c. Identification: Acts 20:17, 28; Tit. 1:5, 7; 1 Pet. 5:1, 2.
 - d. Distinction: an elder—the person; overseer—the function.
2. The Qualifications:
 - a. Personal: 1 Tim. 3:2, 3; Tit. 1:7, 8.
 - b. Social: 1 Tim. 3:4, 5, 7; Tit. 1:6, 8.
 - c. Spiritual: 1 Tim. 3:2, 6; Tit. 1:8, 9.
 - d. Volitional: 1 Pet. 5:2; 1 Tim. 3:1.
3. The Work:
 - a. Feeding: Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2.
 - b. Guiding: Heb. 13:7, 17, 24 (marg.).
 - c. Leading: 1 Pet. 5:3.
 - d. Caring: 1 Tim. 3:5.
4. The Meetings for Oversight:
 - a. To take counsel regarding the spiritual welfare of the assembly: Acts 20:17-38.
 - b. To take counsel regarding the doctrines taught in the assembly: Acts 15:4-29.
 - c. To give counsel to individual believers: Acts 21:18-25.
 - d. To administer funds belonging to the assembly: Acts 11:28-30.
5. The Appointment of Elders:
 - a. Elders are made overseers by the Holy Spirit: Acts 20:28.
 - b. Elders were pointed out by Paul and Barnabas in the assemblies at Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra: Acts 14:23.
 - c. Elders were established in Crete through the ministry of Titus: Tit. 1:5-9.
6. The Recognition of Elders:
 - a. To be known by their labors: 1 Thess. 5:12.
 - b. To be esteemed for their works: 1 Thess. 5:13; 1 Tim. 5:17.
 - c. To be remembered for their teaching: Heb. 13:7.

- d. To be obeyed for their faithfulness: Heb. 13:17.
- e. To be saluted (greeted as guides): Heb. 13:17.
- 7. The Reward of the Overseers: A Crown of Glory: 1 Pet. 5:4.

VI. Instructed by Ministers.

- 1. The term "deaconos": minister or servant: sometimes rendered "deacon" as Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-12.
- 2. The Qualifications:
 - a. Personal: 1 Tim. 3:8, 10.
 - b. Social: 1 Tim. 3:11, 12.
 - c. Spiritual: 1 Tim. 3:9; Eph. 4:8, 11.
- 3. The Work of the Ministry:
 - a. Ministry of the Gospel: 1 Thess. 4:12.
 - b. Pastoral Ministry: 1 Pet. 5:2; John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28.
 - c. Teaching Ministry: Acts 15:35; 18:11.
- 4. When Should a Man Minister? 1 Pet. 4:10, 11.
 - a. When he has a gift.
 - b. When he has a message from God.
 - c. When he has God-given ability.
 - d. When he ministers to the glory of God.
- 5. The Tests of God-given Ministry. 1 Cor. 14:3.
 - a. Edification.
 - b. Exhortation.
 - c. Consolation.
- 6. Variety in Ministry. 1 Cor. 14:29.

VII. Exercising the Priesthood of Believers—Matt. 18:20; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9.

- 1. Old Testament Priesthood:
 - a. The Patriarchal Priesthood: Head of the Family: Gen. 8:20; 26:25; 31:54.
 - b. Under Law:
 - i. The National Priesthood: Exod. 19:5, 6.
 - ii. The Tribal Priesthood: Exod. 28:1.
 - iii. The way into the Holiest was closed (Heb. 9:8) because the sin question remained unsettled: Heb. 10:4.
- 2. New Testament Priesthood:
 - a. The New Testament Priest: 1 Pet. 2:5, 9 — An holy priesthood . . . a royal priesthood, composed of God's "spiritual house," of "new-born babes," of those who "have tasted that the Lord is gracious," of all them "which believe."
 - b. Rev. 1:5, 6—"kings and priests"—those who have been washed from their sins in His blood.

- c. The Rent Veil:
 - i. The sin question settled: Heb. 10:10; 9:11, 12; 9:26.
 - ii. The way into God's presence now open: Matt. 27:51; Heb. 9:22.
- 3. New Testament Worship and Sacrifices: Heb. 13:15; Phil. 3:3.
 - a. Praises: Heb. 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9.
 - b. Persons: Rom. 12:1.
 - c. Purses: Heb. 13:16.

Section D

THE CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY IN PATTERN

Chapter 6

DISTINGUISHING MARKS OF A CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY

For where two or three are gathered together in My name there am I in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20).

There are seven distinctive marks of a Scripturally gathered assembly.

I. Restricted to Christian Membership

“The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). “Such as should be saved” translates two words, rendered by Mr. Newberry, the “saved-ones.” The Lord added to the church daily the saved-ones! What a delightful word, the saved-ones, the trophies of God’s grace! In Acts 5:14 the saved-ones are called believers—believers because they have exercised faith in Christ. Another Scripture describes them as disciples: “Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them” (Acts 20:7). The term disciple means a scholar or a learner. The saved ones are believers because they have believed in Christ; they are disciples because they are scholars in His school.

In the city of Antioch the disciples were first called Christians (Acts 11:26). What a lovely term this is—Christians or “Christ’s ones” — Christ’s ones because the saved ones or Christians have been sanctified, or set apart for God—“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:10). Finally, Christ’s ones are called brethren because they are members of the same family, the family of God — “faithful brethren” (Col. 1:2); “holy brethren” (Heb. 3:1), and “beloved brethren” (1 Thess. 1:4).

The Scripturally gathered assembly then is restricted to "saved-ones," trophies of God's grace, to "believers" who are united to Christ by saving faith, to "disciples" who learn in the school of Christ, to "Christ's ones" who have been set apart to God through the death of Christ, to "brethren," faithful, holy, and beloved, members of the household of faith. There may be but "two or three" (Matt. 18:20), but with Jesus in their midst they constitute a Scripturally gathered assembly or ekklesia—a green spot in a barren world, a sweet foretaste of heaven itself.

In the building of the church as a whole, "the church universal" as it is sometimes called, *Christ is the builder* (Matt. 16:18). Hence, the whole building is "fitly framed together" and groweth into an holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:21). In this building there is no spurious material. All those built into this house are "living stones" (1 Peter 2:5). Only "Christ's ones" or "saved-ones" are material for His building. Similarly since the local ekklesia is to be a facsimile of the whole, only saved-ones, Christ's ones, believers, saints, should be included in it. But the building of the local assembly is *entrusted to men*. As a wise master builder, Paul laid the foundation of the Corinthian assembly; then others builded thereon. If they built wisely, their work would be aproved at the Judgment seat of Christ; but if their building was wood, hay or stubble, it would be burned, and the builders would suffer loss. Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-16. Because man is a builder in a local ekklesia or assembly, sometimes they let in those whom they should not. Even in the church in Jerusalem, that at first contained only "saved ones" (these "the Lord added to the church" Acts 2:47), at a later date had certain "false brethren unawares brought in" (Gal. 2:1, 4). But Scripture describes men who have "crept in unawares" as "ungodly men" (Jude 4). While their presence may be the occasion for much sorrow, let us never forget that God expects us to maintain His standards. Let us seek to be among the saved-ones who gather together in His name with Himself in the midst.

The second distinguishing mark of a Scripturally gathered assembly is that it is

II. Gathered in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ

The Lord Jesus possesses many titles in the Scriptures indicative of His manifold work and grace. He is Saviour (Titus 2:13), Lord (Acts 2:36), and Master (Luke 22:11). He is Advocate (I John 2:1), High Priest (Heb. 8:1), and Chief Shepherd (I Pet. 5:4). Each of these titles denotes a specific office of the Lord Jesus. Similarly there is one title that seems to be intimately associated with His relationship to the assembly of His people—Lord Jesus Christ. We might call it His official title. In I Corinthians—an epistle that deals largely with assembly practices and assembly order—this title occurs again and again. See I Cor. 1:2,3,7,8,9,10, etc. This is the “My Name” of Matt. 18:20. This is the Name that God would have His people identified with in their assembly gathering.

Those who can read the original and those who have access to Mr. Newberry's version will observe that the word “gathered” is a perfect participle in the passive voice—“having been gathered.” The passive voice indicates that another has done the gathering, this One being the Holy Spirit. It is His prerogative to gather together the saints of God with the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of His own people.

The preposition translated ‘in’ in the phrase “in My name” is ‘eis.’ The word is of very frequent occurrence in the New Testament being translated “into” 571 times, “unto” 208 times, ‘in’ 131 times. It “marks entrance into a state or sphere.” (Green's Grammar of the New Testament). It marks relationship, identification. It occurs in Gal. 3:27, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ,” for baptism expresses in figure our relationship to Christ, our identification with Him. “In the Name” suggests authority (Deut. 18:20, 22; Acts 9:27, 29 with 9:15, 16; Acts 10:47, 48; Matt. 7:22), “Into the Name” suggests relationship, identification.

Some years ago the writer was left in charge of his father's business for a period of two or three weeks.

He was given power of attorney to sign his father's name to business papers. He did business "in the name of his father, that is by his authority. A few years later he was taken into partnership by his father in that business. It was decided to continue the business under the father's name, for that name had standing in the community. Again the writer signed his father's name to business papers. But this time that name included him; he was "into the name." God would gather His people not only in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that is according to His own Word or by His authority, but He would also gather them into that Name; He would have them identified with that Name; that Name would include them.

Someone may raise the question, "But should not different groups of Christians meeting together have some special name to distinguish them from other groups meeting elsewhere?" The answer to this question is NO. Such names are strictly forbidden in the Scriptures.

"Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" (I Cor. 1:12). "For ye are yet carnal, for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" (I Cor. 3:3, 4).

If we may not use such honored names as those of Paul and Apollos and Cephas, or even that most honored of all names, Christ, to mark differences between God's people, how much less should we use such modern terms as Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Baptist or Plymouth Brethren. Proponents of these and similar terms may be able to produce convincing arguments for their use but the Corinthian Scriptures quoted forbid that they be used. Why do we need any name other than "that worthy Name by the which ye are called"—Lord Jesus Christ?

III. Presenced by the Lord in the Midst

The third distinguishing feature of the Christian assembly is the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of His gathered saints. What certainty we have in His promise, "There am I in the midst of them!" It was His purpose from the beginning to be in the midst of His gathered people. Old Jacob's prophecy read, "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49:10). The purpose of the gathering together at Shiloh was "let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8). The principle set forth in Psa. 50:5 reads, "Gather My saints together unto Me."

He is *personally* present in the gathering of His saints. His personal presence is not restricted to His bodily presence. Talking to Nicodemus in Palestine He said, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven" (John 3:13). Standing on the soil of Palestine bodily, He was still "the Son of Man which is in heaven." So that His personal presence is not controlled by His bodily presence. Bodily, He is in heaven seated at the right hand of God (Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1); but personally, He is ever present in the midst of His gathered saints. It is His presence that gives character to the assembly. It is His presence that is the attraction there for His saints. Because of His presence in the midst of His gathered saints, the local church is called a House of God (1 Tim. 3:15).

Q U E S T I O N S

1. What is the first distinctive mark of a local assembly?
2. List six words used in the New Testament to describe or designate members of a Christian Assembly. Opposite each term, give a Scripture reference.
3. Why does no spurious material get built into "the church universal," the "My church" of Matthew 16:18?
4. What is the second scriptural mark of a Christian Assembly?
5. What is suggested by the perfect participle, "having been gathered"?

6. What is the difference in meaning between "in My name" and "into My name"?
7. What is the third mark of a Scripturally gathered assembly?
8. Why is an assembly called a "House of God?"

— N O T E S —

Chapter 7

DISTINGUISHING MARKS OF A CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY (Continued)

For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them. (Matt. 18:20).

Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. (Acts 2:36).

We have learned that a Scriptural gathering of saints, a Christian 'ekklesia' or assembly is:

1. Restricted to Christian membership.
2. Gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. Presenced by the Lord in the midst of His gathered saints. The next distinguishing feature of the Christian assembly is:

IV. Subject to the Lordship of Christ

In a former study we learned that the official title accorded Christ when He is viewed in relation to the assembly is 'Lord Jesus Christ' (cf. 1 Cor. 1:3). The name Jesus was given Him at His birth (Matt. 1:21), because of the saving work which He had come to do. By His death on the cross as a sin-bearer (Is. 53:5, 6; 1 Pet. 2:24), He justified the giving of that name to Him—a name that excels all other names (Phil. 2:9, 10). But God raised Him from the dead and exalted Him to a place of honour at His own right hand (Ac. 2:32, 33). Speaking through the apostle Peter, the Holy Spirit makes this comment on the event: "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Ac. 2:36). 'Christ' is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew 'Messiah' and means 'Anointed' (cf. Jn. 1:41 with the margin). The Lord Jesus is God's Anointed One, the One approved by God, and marked out as His Anointed!

The term 'Lord' is a translation of the Greek 'kurios' defined in Strong's Concordance as 'supreme in authority.' The Lord Jesus Christ is in the midst of His gathered saints as One supreme in authority, as Lord. It is a vital mark of a Scripturally gathered and Scripturally functioning assembly to recognize His Lordship, His supreme authority.

The Scriptural complement to God's action in making Him Lord (Acts 2:36), is the giving Him that place in our own hearts. This must be accomplished before He can ever be given that place in the assembly—for an assembly is just as godly as its component members. Hence the injunction, "*Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord*" (1 Pet. 3:15 R.V.). This involves complete submission to His will. It means that *the desire to please Him* becomes *the controlling passion* of the believer's life. Another has aptly put it thus: "The first step in discipleship is submission to the Lordship of Christ." Saul of Tarsus had learned that lesson when he cried out, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). This is lordship *defined*. What a contrast is found in Peter's impetuous words in the next chapter, "Not so, Lord" (Acts 10:14). It would be difficult to find a more glaring contradiction than to call Him Lord, and then say, "Not so" to His bidding. This is lordship *disputed*. It is useless to call Him Lord and still not do the things which He commands (See Luke 6:46). This is lordship *disowned*.

When Christ gets the place of Lord in the lives of the individual believers, He will readily be accorded that place also in the assembly of the saints. In a former day, "Moses verily was faithful in all His house (God's house) as a servant" (Heb. 3:5) . . . God still has a house among men, a place where He dwells. It is not an earthly house, the work of men's hands (Acts 17:24), but a spiritual house composed of living stones (1 Pet. 2:5). Of this house, the assembly is a local expression (See 1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 2:22; 1 Cor. 3:16). Over this house Christ is Lord. In God's house in a former day, Moses was a servant; but today God has set "Christ as a Son *over* His own house" (Heb. 3:6).

The Holy Spirit would teach us to recognize His Lordship in the assembly (1 Cor. 12:3). "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit." It should be noticed that this chapter deals with gifts in the church and their use. The bestowal of the gifts is the work of the Holy Spirit (v. 4); but their use, their administration or ministry (mar.) is subject to the mind of the Lord (v. 5). If we are taught to call Him Lord in the administration of church gifts—taught by the Holy Spirit (v. 3)—then we can never recognize the authority of man-made appointments to rule over the church, be they presidents, moderators, archbishops, or popes. Let us learn to give Him that place in the assembly that God has given Him, "Son over His own house,"—Lord Jesus Christ.

The recognition of Christ's Lordship involves submission to His Word as the sole authority of the assembly in all matters of doctrine, discipline and practice. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

"Given-by-inspiration-of-God" is the translation of one word, meaning 'God-breathed.' The Scriptures are a record of what God breathed upon the page. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). This God-breathed revelation is a complete guide and a final authority for the Christian assembly in all matters of doctrine, of discipline and of practice.

A little chap, about three years of age, was writing a letter to his grandfather. "Dear Grandpa:" he began, and so on. "Quite impossible," you exclaim. No, not at all. His father reached over his shoulder, and put his hand over the little lad's hand. As father moved, the little lad wrote. When all was finished, he looked up into his father's face and said, "What did I write, Daddy?" So with the prophets of old. They wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. But after they finished, they often desired to know the meaning of

what they had written (1 Pet. 1:11). What they wrote forms part of our Bible today, a complete revelation for the guidance of Christian assemblies in all things pertaining to life and godliness.

(a) *Doctrine*: "Profitable for doctrine." God has taught us many important truths in His word, e.g., The Deity of Christ, The Virgin Birth, His Atoning Death, The New Birth, Eternal Life, Justification by Faith, The Coming of the Lord, etc., etc. This great body of revealed truth is sometimes called "the faith" (Jude 3)—it is that which we are called upon to believe. Because it was the truth taught by the apostles, it is also called "the apostles' doctrine" (Acts 2:42). These are "things which are most surely believed among us" (Luke 1:1). They are set forth clearly and distinctly in the Holy Scriptures, to which we must look for instruction. The sermons of the most celebrated preachers must never be accepted as doctrinal standards. Neither may man-made creeds be adopted as authoritative statements of Christian doctrine, even though they be formulated by the most eminent church councils. When such are accepted as authoritative statements, then the commandments of men are taught as doctrine in substitution for the Word of God. All who acknowledge the Lordship of Christ, will bow to God's Word and to God's Word alone as a final authority.

(b) *Discipline*: "Profitable . . for instruction" (lit. child training, or discipline). God's house must be kept clean. "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever" (Ps. 93:5). Paul, writing to Timothy, said, "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" (1 Tim. 3:15). Notice in the heart of that verse these important words, "*Thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God.*" God has laid down in the Scriptures definite rules for the behaviour of His saints, and equally definite rules for the discipline of His saints when they misbehave. These instructions leave the man of God "thoroughly furnished." He has no need for further rules or discipline, even though such may have the authority of some church conference, or synod, or dignitary.

To let such supersede the Scriptures, is to deny Christ as Lord. Such rules might be quite contrary to the Word of God—discipline to be “in righteousness” must be according to the Scriptures.

(c) *Practice*: There are many things in the life of the assembly that need to be regulated according to the Word of God, e.g.:

1. The time, and the manner of keeping the Lord's Supper,
2. Baptism, the mode, and the subjects,
3. Support of the servants of the Lord,
4. The reception of believers into the assembly,
5. The government of the assembly,
6. The position of women in the assembly,
7. The ministry of the Word of the Lord.

These and other important practices are definitely regulated in the Word of God. The recognition of Christ as Lord in the midst of His gathered saints will cause exercise of heart that our assembly practices conform to His Word.

QUESTIONS

1. Name four distinguishing features of a Christian Assembly.
2. What is the meaning of the term ‘Lord’ as applied to Jesus Christ?
3. What is the meaning of “Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord?”
4. Quote a Scripture that refers to a local assembly as a house of God.
5. Quote a Scripture that indicates Christ's position as Lord over God's house.
6. What is the meaning of “given-by-inspiration-of-God?”
7. Where can one find an authoratative statement of Christian doctrine?
8. Where can an assembly find instructions for the rule and discipline of its members?
9. Name four assembly practices regulated by the Word of God.

— N O T E S —

Chapter 8

DISTINGUISHING MARKS OF A CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY (Continued)

For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them. Matthew 18:20

Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons. Philippians 1:1.

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and unto all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. Acts 20:28.

From our studies of Matthew 18:20, we have learned four of the distinctive marks of the Christian Assembly. As we read Paul's salutation to the assembly at Philippi we learn two more of these distinguishing features:

- (a) Guided by overseers (or bishops), and,
- (b) Instructed by ministers (or deacons).

In this study we shall inquire into the first of these essential characteristics.

V. Guided by Overseers

The word translated 'bishops' in Phil. 1:1 is 'episkopos.' and means superintendent or overseer. The latter term is used in translating 'episkopos' in Acts 20:28. The verb form of the same word ('episcopeo') occurs in 1 Peter 5:2, and is translated "taking the oversight." The correct translation of the word is therefore, 'overseer.' That the translators in 1611 knew that is evident from their translation of Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2.

One of the policies of the translators was that "The old ecclesiastical words were to be kept." So the translators used the word bishop in 1 Tim. 3, in Titus 1 and in Phil. 1:1.

But in order to keep a uniformity of rendering for the word "episcopos" we will render it 'overseer' throughout

this study, and at the same time we will get away from the ecclesiastical flavour attached to the term bishop.

OVERSEERS AND ELDERS

In Acts 20:17, Paul sent from Miletus to Ephesus, and called the elders (presbuteros, an elder) of the church. When these elders had come to him, he addressed them as 'overseers' as we have already seen (Ac. 20:28). It is evident that the two terms refer to the same persons—the elders are overseers. The same identification of terms can be seen in Titus 1, where the elder of vs. 5 is the overseer of vs. 7. Again in 1 Pet. 5, the elders of vs. 1 take the oversight in vs. 2. What then is the distinction between the terms? The term elder refers to the person—he is to be an older man, a senior man in the assembly, "not a novice" (1 Tim. 3:6). The term overseer refers to the work he does—he oversees or cares for the welfare of the assembly. "'Elder' is the title, 'oversight' is the function to be exercised by the holder of the title within the Ecclesia" (The Christian Ecclesia—Dr. Hort).

QUALIFICATIONS OF AN OVERSEER

The Scriptures outline in great detail, the necessary qualifications for a man who is to be recognized as an overseer in one of God's assemblies. Read carefully 1 Tim. 3:1-7, and Tit. 1:5-9. These are not ideals toward which an overseer should seek, but are standards which he *must* attain (1 Tim. 3:2). These various qualifications may be grouped under four headings, thus:

(1) *Personal*: Five Positive Moral Qualifications:

- (a) blameless: 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6.
- (b) temperate: 1 Tim. 3:2 (R.V.); Tit. 1:8.
- (c) sober (sober minded): 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8.
- (d) of good behavior: 1 Tim. 3:2.
- (e) patient: 1 Tim. 3:3.

Six Negative Moral Qualifications

- (a) not given to wine: 1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7.
- (b) no striker: 1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7.

- (c) not greedy of filthy lucre (or, base gain) : 1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7.
 - (d) not a brawler (not contentious) 1 Tim. 3:3; cf. not soon angry: Tit. 1:7.
 - (e) not covetous: 1 Tim. 3:3.
 - (f) not self-willed: Tit. 1:7.
- (2) *Social*:
- (a) the husband of one wife: 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6.
 - (b) ruling his own house well: 1 Tim. 3:4, 5.
 - (c) having his children under control: 1 Tim. 3:4; Tit. 1:6.
 - (d) given to hospitality: 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:8.
 - (e) having a good report outside the assembly: 1 Tim. 3:7.
- (3) *Spiritual*:
- (a) a lover of good — good men and good things: Tit. 1:8.
 - (b) maturity — not a young convert: 1 Tim. 3:6.
 - (c) personal godliness — just, holy: Tit. 1:8.
 - (d) good knowledge of the Scriptures — holding fast the faithful word: Tit. 1:9.
 - (e) skillful in teaching, able to convict gainsayers of sound doctrine: 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:9.
- (4) *Volitional*: “willingly,” “of a ready mind”:
1 Pet. 5:2; 1 Tim. 3:1.

The emphasis in 1 Tim. 3 seems to be upon the personal and social qualifications. The requirements are things that should be true of every Christian. The overseer's Christianity must be healthy, normal Christianity; he must himself be a good exponent of the Christian life and practice that he would attempt to oversee or superintend or guide. The Ephesian elders (see 1 Tim. 1:3) were to be a “conspicuous embodiment of what the Ecclesia itself was meant” to be (quotation from Dr. Hort). How incongruous it would be if the assembly leaders were poorer examples of Christianity than the Christians whom they sought to guide!

The personal or moral qualifications need but little comment—their fitness and importance must be evident

to all. The word "blameless" in 1 Tim. 3:2 means "irreproachable," i.e., no charge could be proven against the overseer. The word "blameless" in Tit. 1:6, 7 means "unaccused," i.e., no charge has been laid against the overseer. What could bring the assembly into disrepute quicker than that the leaders were men against whom charges were laid—men who had a poor report of them that are without? How careful God is to guard the good name of His assemblies.

The instructions for the Ephesian elders were written in 65 A.D., and concern an existing institution—for Paul had summoned the Ephesian elders to meet him at Miletus (Acts 20:17) some five years previously. But the instructions for the Cretian elders (cf. Tit. 1:5) were for the establishment of oversight in that assembly, a thing that was wanting, or left undone (mar.) up to this time. The emphasis here is upon the spiritual qualifications needed for an overseer. He needs to be more than a good exponent of Christian life and practice, more than a conspicuous embodiment of what the church itself is meant to be. He needs to be able to guide the assembly and its members into the same Christian excellencies.

To be entrusted with such responsibility, he should be a mature Christian, not a novice or one newly come to the faith. In other words, he is an elder. There is grave danger in placing the responsibility of leadership in an assembly upon young shoulders, "lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." Moreover, he needs a good grip on doctrines and principles of the Christian religion that he may be able to "feed the flock of God" (1 Pet. 5:2), and also to 'convict' or confute those who teach unsound doctrines. Sometimes these men are very hard to 'convince'; yet they can be 'convicted' by the Scriptures. To do these things, the overseer needs not only to know the Scriptures, but he needs also to be "apt to teach." Skill in teaching the Scriptures is one mark of a divinely equipped shepherd who would care for and feed the people of God.

The final qualification for oversight is a willingness to serve God's people. He who guides an assembly should

do so "not by constraint, but willingly" (1 Pet. 5:2). He should desire "a good work" (1 Tim. 3:1), not an office (there is no word 'office' in the original text; 'office-of-a-bishop' is all one word—'episkope' overseership). Among Scriptural overseers, there is no place for conscripts, nor for seekers after honors.

THE WORK OF THE OVERSEER

Definite instructions are given in the Scriptures regarding the work of overseers:

(a) *Feeding*: "Take heed . . . to feed the church of God" (Acts 20:28) was Paul's exhortation to the Ephesian elders. Peter likewise exhorts elders to "feed the flock of God which is among you" (1 Pet. 5:2). How necessary that younger Christians be fed "the sincere milk of the word" that they may grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:2), and that older Christians be given "strong meat" lest they become weaklings—unable to use the word of righteousness (Heb. 5:13, 14). It is the responsibility of the overseer to thus feed the people of God.

(b) *Guiding*: In Heb. 13:7, 17, 24, overseers are spoken of as those who rule over God's people, or more correctly (see marginal renderings) as those who are their guides. How often God's people need guiding, shepherding into the ways of righteousness. It is the work of those who are mature, those who know the Scriptures, those who are skilled in teaching them, to guide the saints in these godly paths.

(c) *Leading*: "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:3). More is needed than teaching God's people the godly paths. The leaders must walk in them themselves. The saints are not led in the ways that please God through overlordship, but through the power of a godly example.

(d) *Caring*: "If a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the house of God?" (1 Tim. 3:5). The word translated 'take care of' only occurs elsewhere in the Scriptures in Luke 10:34, 35. In the first of these verses we read that the Samaritan went to the man who had been wounded on the Jericho road,

“and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him upon his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and *took care* of him.” The Samaritan is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ in His saving grace displayed to perishing men. After He saves the sinner—binds up his wounds and pours in oil and wine—He would place him in an assembly (pictured by the inn) where He would care for him and his spiritual welfare. But besides caring for the man himself, the Samaritan entrusted him to the care of the inn-keeper. “And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, ‘*Take care* of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee’” (vs. 35). The inn-keeper is thus a picture of a shepherd of God’s people, entrusted with the care of the flock. The Lord Himself cares for His sheep; He also entrusts their care to the overseers in the assembly—“take care of the house of God.” Ability to care for his own house is an indication of ability to care for God’s house. Because the overseer is given this trust, he is called “the steward of God” (Tit. 1:7). Let all those thus entrusted, remember the exhortation, “It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful” (1 Cor. 4:2).

QUESTIONS

1. What is the fifth distinguishing mark of a Christian Assembly?
2. What Scripture references would you use to show that the word ‘bishops’ in Phil. 1:1 should be translated ‘overseers’?
3. What is the distinction between the terms ‘overseers’ and ‘elders’? Give one Scriptural proof that they are the same.
4. List five qualifications of an overseer, and give one Scripture reference for each qualification listed.
5. Why should an overseer be a mature Christian “not a novice”?
6. Give two reasons why an overseer needs to know the Scriptures well.
7. List four functions of an overseer, and give one Scripture reference to support each one listed.
8. Why is an overseer called “the steward of God?” (Titus 1:7).

— N O T E S —

Chapter 9

DISTINGUISHING MARKS OF A CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY (Continued)

For where two or three are gathered together in My Name there am I in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20).

And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called for the elders of the church.

(Acts 20:17).

OVERSIGHT MEETINGS

We have learned that the Christian assembly is guided by elder brethren, who having the necessary personal, social, and spiritual qualifications, and having a desire to promote the welfare of the assembly, have given themselves to the service of the assembly, to feed, to guide, to lead, and to care for the people of God. It is necessary that these overseeing brethren meet together from time to time to confer on matters of interest to the assembly. For our guidance, the Spirit of God has placed on record an account of a number of such meetings. Let us learn some of the purposes for which elder brethren may meet together.

1. To take counsel together regarding the spiritual welfare of the assembly. Read Acts 20:17-38. The apostle was making his last journey to Jerusalem, and wished to counsel the Ephesian elders regarding the welfare of the assembly at Ephesus. He desired to reach Jerusalem for Pentecost; so to save time, he summoned the Ephesian elders to meet him at Miletus, a seaport town some 36 miles from Ephesus. They conferred together regarding:

- (a) The preaching of the Gospel (vs. 20, 21),
- (b) The application of the Word of God to the daily life (vs. 26, 27),
- (c) The ministry of the Word—feeding the church of God (vs. 28),

- (d) The danger of unregenerate men seeking to get into the assembly (vs. 29),
- (e) The danger of men within the assembly seeking to establish parties and divisions (vs. 30),
- (f) The remedy for all assembly ills — fellowship with God, and guidance by the Word of God—
“I commend you to God and the Word of His Grace” (vs. 32),
- (g) The care of the weak (vs. 35).

What a joy such an oversight meeting must be when elder brethren confer together thus, and seek to counsel one another for the well-being of the people of God. How blessed is that assembly whose overseeing brethren thus exercise themselves for the welfare of the saints.

2. To take counsel together regarding the doctrines taught in the assembly. Read Acts 15:4-29. Difficult questions had arisen as a result of the conversion of Gentiles in Antioch. There were certain of the Pharisees that taught that these Christians must keep the law of Moses—otherwise they could not be saved. The controversy spread from Antioch up to Jerusalem. So, “the apostles and elders came together, for to consider this matter.” The meeting got under way as so many oversight meetings since that day have done with “much disputing.” But there were able men there, who could give wiser counsel. Peter told how he had been chosen of God to take the Gospel to the Gentiles, of their conversion, and how grace saved Jew and Gentile on the same basis. Why then put the Gentiles under the law, seeing it had been a yoke too heavy for the Jew to bear? (vs. 7-12). Barnabas and Paul added their testimony to what God had been doing in grace among the Gentiles (vs. 12). Then James Analyzed the matter carefully. Christianity was a new thing—not Judaism revived. God was taking out from among the Gentiles a people for His name! Why turn them back again under the law? His setting forth of God’s truth was so clear that the apostles, the elders, and the whole church accepted it (vs. 22). It is a great blessing when there are able and godly men in the assembly—men like Peter, Barna-

bas, Paul, and James—men who can teach the people the Word of God, and bring about quietness where there had been “much disputing.”

3. To give counsel to individual believers. Read Acts 21:18-25. How often there is need for this in our day—godly men who can give godly counsel to individual believers regarding personal conduct and the course they should pursue.

4. To administer funds belonging to the assembly. Read Acts 11:28-30. Besides the spiritual matters which we have been considering, there are many temporal or ‘domestic’ affairs that must be attended to that all things may be done decently and in order. One such matter is the administration of assembly funds. There are accounts to be paid, needy saints to be succoured, fellowship with the ministering servants of the Lord to be sent, etc.

THE APPOINTMENT OF ELDERS

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). Overseers obtain their spiritual fitness for their work from the Holy Spirit, who also causes them to desire the “good work” (1 Tim. 3:1). Men cannot make overseers! They cannot create spiritual fitness; they cannot implant godly desires! Yet it is the responsibility of godly brethren to see that God’s order is understood and followed in the assemblies of His saints.

Hence, when Paul and Barnabas came the second time to the cities of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch (in Pisidia), they confirmed the souls of the disciples, exhorted them to continue in the faith, and “ordained them elders in every church” (Acts 14:23). The word translated ‘ordained’ means to stretch out the hand. Since voting was done by raising the hand, the word often bore the meaning “to elect” or “appoint.” It would seem rather a peculiar practice however if Paul and Barnabas started raising their hands to elect elders in Antioch and Iconium. Does not the word imply to

point out rather than to appoint? When the apostles returned to these assemblies, they saw men with spiritual fitness for the work engaged in feeding, guiding, and shepherding the flock—men whom the Holy Spirit had made overseers. They pointed these men out so that the assembly would recognize that these men were functioning after a godly pattern.

At Crete, the situation seems to have been different. There would appear to have been no oversight whatever. It is one of "the things that are wanting" there. Hence Paul admonished Titus "to ordain elders in every city" (Tit. 1:5). This word 'ordained' means "to place down," "to designate." Now remembering that the Holy Spirit makes men overseers, Titus' responsibility was to determine those brethren in the assemblies in Crete that conformed to the Scriptural pattern (for his guidance, Paul enumerated the qualifications, verses 7-9), and to 'designate' them or to point them out to the assemblies. Brethren who are used of the Lord to establish assemblies today will often find it necessary, when they return to confirm the souls whom they have won, to point out to these assemblies that the Spirit of God has fitted certain men for the work of overseeing the flock, and that they are showing a godly care for the people of God.

It should be observed that in every case there was a plurality of elders or overseers in the assembly. Paul addresses "the saints . . . which are at Philippi, with the bishops (overseers) and deacons." He sent from Miletus to Ephesus, "and called the elders of the church." Cf. also Acts 14:23; 15:6; Tit. 1:5; etc. It is man's travesty of God's order of church government when one 'bishop' or 'elder' or 'overseer' or 'president' or 'chairman' rules over the people of God.

THE RECOGNITION OF ELDERS

"We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (1 Thess. 5:12, 13). We are exhorted *to know* and *to esteem* those who are over us

in the Lord. How are we to know them? How does the little lad playing on the street know the postman? "Why, he's the man that delivers our mail," he would tell you. Just so, we know the real shepherds among the people of God by the work that they do. And we are to esteem them highly in love for their work's sake. The better they serve, the more highly we should esteem them. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine" (1 Tim. 5:17).

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow considering the end of their conversation—Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:7, 8). These men are long to be *remembered* because of their speaking to us the Word of God, and because of their godly walk—"whose faith follow."

"Obey them which have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17). There is a certain knowledge of God and His Word, a certain fulness of experience, a certain maturity of judgment, that only comes with years of experience. Hence, older brethren often give counsel that is at variance with the judgment of younger men. Which counsel are we to take? The Scriptures answer, "*Obey* them which have the rule over you, and submit yourselves." These men have a care for the souls of younger Christians; they must give an account of their shepherding when the Chief Shepherd appears.

"Salute all them that have the rule over you" (Heb. 13:24). That is, we greet them as guides, as leaders among the saints of God.

THE OVERSEER'S REWARD

Peter exhorts the elders to feed the flock of God, to take the oversight of the assembly, and be examples to the flock (1 Pet. 5:1-3). "And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that

fadeth not away" (vs. 4). There may be much to disappoint and discourage those who seek to care for the church of God now. There may even be criticism and abuse to bear. But the Chief Shepherd is watching all. He notes every action done for the good of His people; and at the judgment seat of Christ, He will reward all faithful service. How blessed to hear from His own lips, "Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Then He has a special reward for faithful shepherding—"a crown of glory that fadeth not away." Then will the disappointments, the discouragements, the criticisms and the abuse, all seem as nothing, as the faithful shepherd enters into the joy of his Lord.

Such is one of the distinguishing marks of a Christian assembly—Guided by Overseers!

QUESTIONS

1. For what purpose did Paul summon the Ephesian elders to meet him at Miletus?
2. For what purpose was the meeting of the elders in Jerusalem called in Acts 15?
3. Mention two other matters which the Scriptures indicate should be dealt with at a meeting of overseeing brethren.
4. How are men constituted elders?
5. What did Paul and Barnabas do at Antioch when they "ordained" elders there?
6. Why did Paul instruct Titus to establish elders in the assemblies in Crete?
7. Quote one Scripture to support the statement that there should be more than one elder in an assembly.
8. Quote five words used in the Scriptures indicating the recognition we should give elders.
9. What reward is promised an overseer for faithful service?

— N O T E S —

Chapter 10

DISTINGUISHING MARKS OF A CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY (Continued)

For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them. Matt. 18:20.

Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons. Phil. 1:1.

VI. Instructed by Ministers

The word rendered deacons in Phil. 1:1 is 'diakonos,' and means a minister or servant. It is translated by the term minister in 1 Tim. 4:6, in Eph. 3:7, and in 18 other places. The corresponding noun, 'diakonia' is translated 'ministry' in Eph. 4:12, in Acts 6:4, and in 14 other places. It is also translated 'ministration' 6 times. The verb form, 'diakoneo,' is translated 'minister' in Rom. 15:25, in 1 Pet. 4:11 and in 18 other places. It will be at once evident that 'deacon' is not a translation of 'diakonos' at all, but merely a transliteration.

The word is used in the Scriptures with reference (a) to *those who served in temporal matters* in connection with the assembly (Acts 6:1-3), the business of serving (diakoneo) tables being called a 'daily ministration' (diakonia), and, (b) to *those who serve in the ministry* (diakonia) of the Word (Acts 6:4). It is this latter aspect of the term that is before us in this study, though we might note in passing that for serving in temporal ministry:

- (a) The assembly has the power to appoint men to thus serve, and that,
- (b) There are definite qualifications required for men who may be so appointed:
 - (i) Good reputation: "men of honest report"

- (ii) Spirituality: "full of the Holy Spirit"
- (iii) Sound judgment: "and wisdom" (Acts 6:3),
- (iv) Acceptability of the assembly: "the saying pleased the whole multitude (vs. 5), and "they laid their hands on them" (vs. 6).

It would seem Scriptural to require that brethren who serve the assembly today in such matters as building responsibilities, Sunday School administration, ushering, caring for the needy, platform ministrations and arrangement etc., should be appointed and should have such qualifications.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR MINISTRY

On the other hand, when we come to ministering the Word of God, these offices are not the gifts of the church but of the risen Lord, and men who undertake to minister the Word of God in the assembly should have certain definite qualifications.

The qualifications for those who minister the Word are listed in 1 Tim. 3:8-13 and in Eph. 4:8,11. They may be summarized thus:

(1) *Personal* :

- (a) grave: 1 Tim. 3:8
- (b) not double tongued: 1 Tim. 3:8
- (c) not given to much wine: 1 Tim. 3:8
- (d) not greedy of filthy lucre: 1 Tim. 3:8
- (e) blameless, proven so: 1 Tim. 3:10.

(2) *Social* :

- (a) their wives grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things: 1 Tim. 3:11.
- (b) the husbands of one wife: 1 Tim. 3:12. As in the case of overseers, this is "restrictive, not injunctive."
- (c) ruling their children and their own households well: 1 Tim. 3:12.

(3) *Spiritual*:

- (a) "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure con-

science" 1 Tim. 3:9. This requires two things (i) knowing what the Scriptures teach—"holding the mystery of the faith." How can a man teach, if he doesn't know? (ii) practicing what the Scriptures teach—holding the truth in a good conscience." Of what value is ministry if the man ministering does not sufficiently believe his own message to practice it?

- (b) Possession of a ministry gift: Eph. 4:8,11. The Holy Spirit gives men gifts for ministry, the *ability* to minister, spiritual enablements (1 Cor. 12:4-11). The risen Lord has given gifts, *gifted men*, to His church for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." It should be noted again as in the case of overseers, that the term is plural—ministers (Phil. 1:1). God never intended that one man would do all the ministering in an assembly. Some men are gifted as evangelists, others as pastors, others as teachers (Eph. 4:11). On the other hand, God never intended that all men should minister in His assemblies. He gave *some* to be evangelists, *some* to be teachers. "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophecy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth; etc." (Rom. 12:6,7).

THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY

There are different ministry gifts suiting men for different types of ministry.

1. *The Ministry of the Gospel*: 1 Thess. 4:12. Timothy is called a "minister of God." His service was that he was a "laborer in the Gospel."

2. *A Pastoral Ministry*: In 1 Peter 5:2, Peter exhorts the elders to feed (lit., shepherd) the flock of God. Peter himself had been commissioned to do this work by the Lord Jesus. Read John 21:15-17. When Peter confessed his love for Christ, the Lord said, "Feed My lambs" (vs. 15). When Peter confessed his love the second time, the Lord said, "Feed (lit., shepherd)

My sheep" (vs. 16). When Peter had again confessed his love for the Lord Jesus, he was again commissioned, "Feed My sheep" (vs. 17) What a high premium the Lord Jesus puts upon love to Himself as a qualification for feeding and shepherding the sheep of His pasture! It was love for the Lord Jesus and for His redeemed people that constrained the great apostle to send for the Ephesian elders to meet him at Miletus, where he exhorted them thus, "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

3. *A Teaching Ministry*: We read that after the delivery of the letter from the Jerusalem elders settling the controversy about Gentile converts keeping the law, Paul and Barnabas "continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the Word of the Lord" (Acts 15:35). What a delightful thing when there are men within an assembly gifted to teach the Word, as in Antioch (Acts 13:1), or when brethren so gifted visit an assembly and bring to us a message from the Lord. We read that Paul "continued a year and six months, teaching the Word of God" at Corinth. (Acts 18:11).

WHEN SHOULD A MAN MINISTER

The answer to this question is found in 1 Peter 4: 10, 11. Let the reader stop long enough to read these verses carefully. Then let him note four conditions that should obtain before a man ministers the Word of God:

He should have a gift: vs. 10a: "As every man hath received the gift even so minister the same." When God calls a man for any type of work, He fits him for that work—He gives him a gift.

He should have a message from God: vs. 11a: "If any man speak let him speak as the oracles of God." This Scripture should guard all who teach from giving forth anything save that which is strictly in accord with Holy Writ.

He should minister in dependance on the Lord. "If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which

God giveth." In the business world, employers expect that their employees will render service to the best of their ability. What a pity when we attempt to express the mind of God upon any subject, and yet do it other than "as of the ability which God giveth." Surely the service of the best of Masters is worthy of the best that we can render.

"My very best, Lord Jesus, is the least that I can do,
And in Thy service I would bring my stedfast love
and true,
For all that I can render is not half that is Thy due,
Oh, I would do my very best, Lord Jesus.

He should be able to minister to the glory of God: "that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ." A man may have a gift, he may have a message, he may have God-given ability, but the present moment may be an inopportune time to give that message. Unless he can speak to the glory of God, it would be better to wait until such time arrives.

WHAT ARE THE TESTS OF GOD-GIVEN MINISTRY

The tests of a prophet's ministry — or of a teacher's — are threefold. "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (1 Cor. 14:3). The three tests are: (a) *Edification*: Building Up—a ministry of instruction for the soul, or, (b) *Exhortation*: Stirring Up—a ministry of stimulation for the conscience, or, (c) *Consolation*: Binding Up—a ministry of encouragement for the heart.

VARIETY IN MINISTRY

"Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge" (1 Cor. 14:29). Here are two limitations placed upon ministry: (i) The tests as to whether ministry is profitable or not are to be made by others (the word is plural in the text); and those ministering are to be subject to the judgment of others in this matter, and (ii) Not more than two or three teachers should minister on the same line. There is a limit to the ability of the people to take in a message. The Lord ministered to the people "as they were able to hear" (Mk. 4:33).

This text would enjoin the same restriction on those who minister the word today. (See Appendix).

It is a delight to sit under the ministry of brethren who have a message from God, who have their message well in hand, who can speak as the oracles of God, whose lives add weight to their ministry, whose teaching builds up God's people in the ways that be in Christ, or stirs them up to a closer walk with Him or to more faithful service in His vineyard, or comforts some discouraged or bereaved saint who is almost ready to faint. Such ministry is one of the distinguishing marks of a Christian assembly, according to the New Testament pattern.

QUESTIONS

1. To what two types of service is the word 'diakonos' or minister applied to in the Scriptures?
2. What are the four qualifications necessary for one whom the assembly appoints for service?
3. What are the spiritual qualifications required of one who ministers the Word of the Lord?
4. Name three types of ministry, and give a suitable Scripture reference for each one.
5. What are the four conditions which should obtain before a man ministers the Word of God?
6. Give three tests that may be applied to ministry to determine whether it is "to profit" or not.
7. What Scripture supplies these tests?

— N O T E S —

Chapter 11

DISTINGUISHING MARKS OF A CHRISTIAN

ASSEMBLY (Continued)

For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them. (Matt. 18:20).

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ . . . But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:5, 9).

VII. Exercising the Priesthood of Believers

The seventh distinguishing feature of a Christian assembly is the recognition and exercise of the believers' priesthood. In this feature, as in other essential marks, the Scripturally gathered assembly is in sharp contrast with many of the systems of men. In man-made systems, there is often a man-made priest to do the praying and the preaching for all the congregation. Let us study the Scriptures with a view to testing such practice.

OLD TESTAMENT PRIESTHOOD

In patriarchal days the head of the family was the family priest. Noah erected an altar after he came from the ark and offered burnt offerings on the altar (Gen. 8:20). Abraham built an altar at Beer-sheba and called upon the name of the Lord there (Gen. 26:25). Jacob offered a sacrifice at Mizpah, as he and Laban camped there for the night (Gen. 31:54). The right to act as priest for the family was part of the birthright that Esau sold when he exchanged the birthright for the mess of pottage.

When the law was instituted, God offered a larger priesthood unto the children of Israel. "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant.

then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine; and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation (Ex. 19: 5-6). God was offering that the whole nation would become a kingdom of priests, but like all the blessings of the law, this blessing was conditional—"if ye will obey my voice . . . and keep my covenant." But Israel never kept God's law, and the nation never became a kingdom of priests. Instead, the priesthood was restricted to the family of Aaron (Ex. 28:1).

THE WAY INTO THE HOLIEST—NOT YET MADE MANIFEST

The tabernacle in Israel was divided into two rooms by a great curtain called the veil. The priests were permitted to minister daily in the first room where was the candlestick, the table of shewbread and the golden altar. But they were not permitted to enter beyond the veil, where God dwelled in a glory cloud, between the cherubim, above the mercy seat. Into this inner room came the high priest alone, and that only on the day of atonement, when he brought the blood of the sin offering to sprinkle upon the mercy-seat and before it. The interpretation of these events is given for us in Hebrews 9:8: "The Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while the first tabernacle as yet had its standing." (See marginal reading.) God did not permit men to enter into His presence because the sacrifices of those days never settled the sin question—"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). The veil which kept the priests from entering God's presence was God's method of teaching objectively that the way into His presence was not yet open.

NEW TESTAMENT PRIESTHOOD

What the law did not accomplish, grace has accomplished. The law never made the people of God a kingdom of priests and an holy nation. But as a result of the operations of God's grace, we read, "Ye also as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God

by Jesus Christ . . . ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people" (1 Pet. 2: 5, 9).

Who then are included in this holy and royal priesthood? The context speaks of "newborn babes" who "have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (vs. 2, 3). It also speaks of those who believe (vs. 8). It is evident that the holy and royal priesthood takes in all who believe, all who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, even the newborn babes. John, in the book of Revelation, teaches the same truth. "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever" (Rev. 1:5-6). The kingdom of priests which John speaks of consists of those who have been washed from their sins in His blood.

THE RENT VEIL — LIBERTY OF ACCESS

The Old Testament sacrifices never settled the sin question (Heb. 10:4); there was a remembrance made of sins year by year continually (Heb. 10:3). But the Lord Jesus by His death settled the sin question forever. We read, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:10). Again, "But Christ being come an high priest . . . by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:1-12). "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." This was the sacrifice that put away sins—"He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9:26, 28).

Matthew records a most instructive incident which occurred immediately after the Lord had cried with a loud voice and dismissed His spirit upon the cross. "Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" (Matt. 27:51). Had any man had the temerity to rend that veil, it would have been torn from the bottom to the top. But the veil was rent that day by the hand of God; it was torn from the top to the bottom. What was God teaching men? He was

teaching objectively that the way into His presence was now open to all priests.

Because the sin question was settled, the way into God's presence was now open; hence the exhortation of Heb. 10:19-22: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

Thus we learn that the blessing of priesthood is conferred upon every child of God, and that the privilege of priesthood is the privilege of coming inside the veil, into the very presence of God, there to worship.

NEW TESTAMENT WORSHIP

What is worship? Worship is the out-flowing of praise and adoration unto God, from the hearts of His own people—"the sacrifice of praise to God continually . . . the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name" (Heb. 13:15). Worship is that which goes up from the heart of man to God by the Holy Spirit (Phil. 3:3). It thus differs from ministry. Ministry comes down from God to men by the same Holy Spirit.

There are three phases of worship—three things we can give to God.

(a) Our Praises—giving thanks to His name (Heb. 13:15). Peter speaks of offering up spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet. 2:5), and of showing forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness (1 Pet. 2:9). How becoming it is for those who have been loved and washed in His blood to sound the praises of their Redeemer. How the memories of Calvary should warm our hearts till like the Psalmist of Old, we are bubbling over with good matter (Psalm 45:1). God says that He is well pleased with such sacrifices as these. Mary expressed her love for the Lord Jesus by breaking a costly box of ointment and pouring it upon His feet till the whole house was filled with the odour of the ointment. The

Lord valued the homage of her heart so much that He said, "Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

(b) Our Persons. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). These bodies which have been withdrawn from the service of sin are now to be employed in the service of God. Our text says that this is but reasonable. But let it be noted that these bodies must also be holy if they are to be an acceptable sacrifice.

(c) Our Purses. "But to do good and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. 13:16). God has committed portions of this world's goods to our care and keeping. It is a stewardship. He expects of us that we will use these earthly goods wisely in His service and for the care of His people and His servants. Such is well pleasing to God.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the seventh distinguishing mark of a Christian Assembly,
2. (a) What offer of priesthood did God make to Israel under the law?
(b) Why was the priesthood actually limited to one family?
3. What did the veil between the holy place and the most holy indicate?
4. Why did not God allow men into His presence under Old Testament sacrifices?
5. Quote a Scripture to indicate or define New Testament priesthood.
6. From 1 Peter 2:1-9 quote two short expressions that indicate that the New Testament Priesthood embraces all believers.
7. (a) What was the significance of the rending of the veil when Jesus died?
(b) Why did God now open the way for all believers to come into His presence?
8. Indicate three ways we can worship God, and give one Scripture reference opposite each item.

— N O T E S —

SECTION E — THE CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY IN PRACTICE — Acts 2:41, 42, 47. .

I. The Christian Church.

1. Foretold by Christ: Matt. 16:18.
2. Founded on the Day of Pentecost: Acts 2:1-4.
3. Formed of the disciples (Acts 1:4,15; 2:1) through the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4, 5, 8; 2:1-4) whose coming was indicated by—
 - a. A rushing, mighty wind: cf. John 3:7, 8; Ezek. 37:1-14.
 - b. Cloven tongues of fire: cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; Rom. 8:9.
 - c. Speaking with tongues: cf. Acts 1:8.

II. The Marks of a Healthy Spiritual Assembly.

1. A Vigorous Gospel Testimony: Acts 2:36-38.
 - a. The preaching of the cross: v. 38. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-4.
 - b. The conviction of sin: v. 38. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-4.
 - c. Repentance toward God: v. 38a. Cf. Acts 20:21.
 - d. Remission of sins: v. 38b. Cf. 1 John 2:12; Eph. 1:7.
 - e. The gift of the Holy Spirit: v. 38c. Cf. Eph. 1:13.
2. The Practice of Believer's Baptism: Acts 2:41
 - a. The Authority for Baptism:
 - i. The Command of the Lord Jesus: Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15, 16.
 - ii. The Practice of the Early Church: Acts 2:41; 8:36-38; 10:44-48; 16:31-33; 18:8.
 - b. The Subjects for Baptism:
 - i. Disciples: Matt. 28:19.
 - ii. Believers: Mark 16:16; Acts 2:41; 8:36-38; 16:33, 34.
 - iii. Those who have received the Holy Spirit: Acts 10:44-48.
 - c. The Significance of Baptism:
 - i. The believer's Identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection: Rom. 6:3, 4.
 - ii. A Confession that the old man and his ways are dead, and a profession to walk in newness of life: Rom. 6:6, 4.

- d. **The Mode of Baptism:**
 - i. "Baptizo" means: to whelm, to dip, to immerse.
 - ii. The significance of the ordinance requires immersion.
 - iii. The Scripture examples imply immersion: Matt. 3:16; John 3:23; Acts 8:38.
- 3. **Assembly Reception:**
 - a. Who Should Be Received: Acts 2:47; 5:14; 20:7; 11:26; 1 Cor. 1:2; Col. 1:2.
 - b. Guiding Principles for Assembly Reception:
 - i. Romans 14:1-3; 15:7.
 - ii. 1 Cor. 5:11; Tit. 3:10.
 - c. Guidance for Difficult Cases: Acts 9:26-29.
- 4. **Assembly Fellowship:**
 - a. "Koinonia": partnership, fellowship, from "koinonos," a partner, a sharer (cf. Lk. 5:10; 2 Cor. 8:23): a sharing together of all the privileges and responsibilities of the assembly—gospel meetings, prayer meetings, expenses, problems, etc.
 - b. Oneness of mind: Acts 2:46. Cf. Phil. 14; Phil. 1:27; 1 Thess. 1:2; John 13:34; Gal. 5:13; Heb. 3:13; 1 Thess. 4:18; Rom. 14:19.
- 5. **Sound Doctrine: "The Apostle's Doctrine: 2:42.**
 - a. The Inspiration of the Scriptures: 2 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:21.
 - b. The Deity of Christ: John 1:1, 14; Heb. 1:8; 1 John 5:20.
 - c. The Virgin Birth: Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:20; cf. Lk. 1:13 with Matt. 1:20, 21.
 - d. Atonement through the Death of Christ:
 - i. Propitiation: Rom. 3:24, 25; Heb. 9:26; 1 John 2:2.
 - ii. Redemption: Rom. 3:24; Matt. 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Eph. 1:7.
 - iii. Substitution: Isa. 53:5, 6; 1 Pet. 2:24; Rom. 5:8; 1 Pet. 3:18.
 - e. The Resurrection of Christ:
 - i. Its Importance: 1 Cor. 15:17.
 - ii. Its Value: Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:20, 23; Rom. 1:4.
 - iii. Its Proofs: "Many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3).
 - f. The Second Coming of Christ: John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thess 4:16, 17.
 - g. The Ruin of Man: Rom. 3:10, 20, 21, 23; 5:12.
 - h. The New Birth: John 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:23; John 1:12, 13.
 - i. The Eternal Life of Believers: John 3:16; 10:27, 28; 1 John 5:13.
 - j. The Eternal Punishment of Unbelievers: Matt.

- 25:41, 46; Rev. 20:15; 19:20; 20:10.
- k. The Trinity of the Godhead: 1 Tim. 2:25; Deut. 4:35; Isa. 44:6; 2 Tim. 1:2; 1 Jn. 5:20; Acts 5:3, 4; Matt. 28:19.
- l. The Personality of Satan:
- i. Personal names: Lk. 10:18; Matt. 4:1; 2 Cor. 6:15; Matt. 12:24.
 - ii. Personal acts: Gen. 3:1-5; Matt. 4:1-11; Zech. 3:1-5; Jude 6; Rev. 12:10.
 - iii. Destiny: Rev. 20:10.
6. The Breaking of Bread: Acts 2:42.
- a. Its Institution: Lk. 22:19-20.
 - i. The Time: Lk. 22:7, 15; 1 Cor. 11:23.
 - ii. The Meaning: Lk. 22:19, 20.
 - iii. The Purpose: "In remembrance of Me" (Lk. 22:19).
 - b. Its Celebration: Acts 2:42; 20:7.
 - i. The Period: "The first day of the week."
 - ii. The Persons: "The disciples."
 - iii. The Purpose: "To break bread."
 - iv. The Preaching: For teaching — for worship.
 - c. Its Explanation: 1 Cor. 10:16-21; 11:20-34.
 - i. An expression of fellowship: 10:16, 17.
 - ii. A feast of remembrance: 11:26.
 - iii. A declaration of His death: 11:26.
 - iv. An anticipation of His coming: 11:26.
7. Prayers: Acts 2:42.

Chapter 12

SECTION E

The Christian Assembly in Practice

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.
—Acts 2:41.

In a previous study we noted the use of the word church or *ekklesia* as it occurs for the first time in the holy Scriptures. Simon Peter had just confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:13-16). In the Lord's reply to Peter, He said, "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (v. 18). The Lord's words were a prophecy—He would build His church. That church had not yet come into being; it was still in the future.

But in Acts 2:47, we read, "The Lord added to the church daily such as-should-be-saved (lit., "the saved ones")." Evidently the church had now come into being, and the Lord was adding to its membership. When did it begin? On the Day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2.

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Before the Lord Jesus ascended from Bethany to the glory, He commanded His disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they received "the promise of the Father." He described this promise of the Father as being "baptised with (lit., in) the Holy Spirit," adding, "ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1:4-8).

The fulfilment of this prophecy occurred a few days later as the disciples (about 120 in number) were all

gathered together in one place. "Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:2-4).

This was undoubtedly the promise of the Father, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the power to witness for Him from Jerusalem to the uttermost parts of the earth. There were three manifestations of the Spirit that day that should be noticed:

(a) *A rushing mighty wind.* The wind is used in Scripture as a symbol of the Holy Spirit in His regenerating, life-giving power. The Lord said to Nicodemus, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, 'Ye must be born again.' The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:7-8). A similar use of the wind to indicate the life-giving power of the Holy Spirit is found in the well-known passage in Ezekiel 37:1-14. Note especially vv. 9, 14a. The use of the rushing mighty wind on the Day of Pentecost was to teach pictorially that the coming of the Holy Spirit into the lives of men and women is their regeneration, their new birth.

(b) *Cloven tongues of fire.* What a striking phenomenon that must have been—cloven, or divided, tongues of fire shooting through the room, and one tongue resting on each individual believer. But it left no doubt in anybody's mind—every believer in that room had received the Holy Spirit. This was precisely the purpose of those tongues of fire, to teach pictorially what later was stated doctrinally, "For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (I Cor. 12:13). The teaching of this verse is unmistakable. Every believer in Christ Jesus ("we all") has been joined into one bundle of life by the baptism of the Holy Spirit ("baptised into one body"), which body is the church (cf. I Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:22-23; Col.

1:18). It was true for that nucleus of disciples (about 120) on the Day of Pentecost; they were fused into one bundle of life by the Holy Spirit; they became the church. It is true for every believer since Pentecost; "for by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free." So universally is this true of every believer, that it is written in Romans 8:9, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." And having the Spirit of Christ, he is a member of His church. This was the unmistakable teaching of the cloven tongues of fire resting on every believer on the Day of Pentecost.

(c) *The speaking with tongues.* This phenomenon had a twofold value:

(i) It was used on the Day of Pentecost in Gospel testimony to the many groups of foreigners then in the city of Jerusalem. "And they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, 'Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?'"

(ii) It symbolized the power given by the Holy Spirit for world-wide Gospel testimony, beginning at Jerusalem and extending to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8).

Some years ago as a young teacher in a country school, I faced a class of five small children to teach my first lesson in that school. The lesson was to be "4 and 3 make 7" according to the notes left for my guidance by the preceding teacher. I gave each child four chestnuts. Each child counted his chestnuts and satisfied himself that he had four. He placed them in a little pile on the platform in front of him. Then I gave each child three more chestnuts. They were carefully counted and put in a second pile not far from the first pile. "How many have you in the first pile?" "Four." "In the second pile?" "Three." "Now put the two piles together. Now how many have you?" Each child counted his pile carefully and determined that he had seven chestnuts. We did it all again with marbles, and again with pegs, and discovered that it made no difference what objects we

used, four and three made seven every time. That is objective teaching.

But I wanted that truth written. One little fellow volunteered to write 4 on the blackboard, and another little lad wrote 3. Still another could write 7. So we had 4, 3, 7 on the blackboard. One little girl said she could write "and" and placed a plus sign between the 4 and the 3. Another little lassie offered to write "makes" and she placed an equals sign in front of the 7. Now we had $4+3=7$. The truth was written, and for them it had never been written before. But now we had no further use for chestnuts or marbles or pegs. Objective teaching had no more value — the truth was written.

So too in Acts 2. Cloven tongues of fire resting on each of them was a most valuable way of teaching that the Holy Spirit had been given to each believer, for First Corinthians 12:13 had not been written at that time. But now we no longer need a rushing mighty wind to teach us that the Holy Spirit is the worker in regeneration for John 3 has been written. We no longer need cloven tongues of fire resting on each believer for First Corinthians 12:13 has been written. We no longer need the speaking with tongues for we have Acts 1:8.

This simple illustration may help explain the use of the objective method of teaching used by God on the Day of Pentecost, and also why we have no need for another Pentecost to teach us what is now clearly written in the holy Scriptures.

Thus we learn the fulfilment of the Lord's prophecy, "On this rock will I build my church."

QUESTIONS

1. What was the teaching of the rushing, mighty wind on the day of Pentecost?
2. What was pictured by the cloven tongues of fire resting on each disciple?
3. Quote one verse to show that every believer has the Holy Spirit?
4. What was symbolized by the speaking with tongues on the day of Pentecost?

- N O T E S -

Chapter 13

THE MARKS OF A CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY

(Continued)

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and breaking of bread, and in prayers. . . . And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. —Acts 2:42, 47.

Jacob had prophesied ere he died of the gathering together of the people of God unto Shiloh—"unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." This gathering of the people unto Himself had been pictured by "the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His name there." Even the principle for the gathering of the saints had been clearly laid down: "Gather My saints together unto Me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." A pattern for this gathering was given by the Lord Himself, when He said, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

In this study we learn from Acts 2 that this very thing had come to pass. The church came into being on the Day of Pentecost through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. There were about 120 disciples at first, but as a result of the first day's testimony about 3000 souls were added. Later we read, "And the Lord added to the church daily the saved-ones" (Acts 2:47). Not only had the church come into being, but it was vigorous, healthy, spiritual.

In Acts 2:41, 42 and 47 we have seven marks of a healthy assembly or church: What is the first mark of a spiritual assembly?

I. A Vigorous Gospel Testimony

"They gladly received the word."

(a) Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost was a forceful presentation of the cross of Christ. "Let all

the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (vs. 36). All gospel preaching should distinctly set forth the death of Christ, His burial, and His resurrection. These three factors constituted the Gospel message as Paul preached it in Corinth (1 Cor. 15:1-4). They formed the burden of Peter's message on the Day of Pentecost.

(b) Peter's preaching was effective; it was followed by conviction of sin. "When they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' " It is a mark of the work of the Holy Spirit in a man's soul when he is convicted of sin. "When He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on Me" (John 16:8,9).

(c) Peter's answer to their query was a noble one. "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 Spirit." Repentance follows conviction. It is a change of mind—a change of mind toward God regarding our sin, regarding His Son, regarding His salvation. It needs to be accompanied by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (see Acts 20:21).

(d) The result of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is "the remission of sins." What a delightful theme for a sin-burdened soul. John wrote to a group of believers, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." The forgiveness of sins is the very genius of the Gospel. It is possible because of the blood of Christ: "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7). Repentance and forgiveness of sins are inward and spiritual experiences which none can see; they should be outwardly and publicly confessed through baptism, as indicated in Peter's preaching—a subject that will be dealt with at length, if the Lord will, in our next study.

(e) "Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit..

This was the promise to all who believed. It is still the "fundamental fact of Christian life and experience." "In whom also, having believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13).

This then is the first mark of a healthy, spiritual assembly — a vigorous, gospel testimony — a preaching of the cross that leads to the conviction of sin, which in turn works repentance toward God, thus bringing the sinner the forgiveness of his sins, a blessing sealed unto him by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Peter's preaching was so effective that about three thousand souls gladly received his message and were baptized. The Gospel continued to be effectively preached in Jerusalem, "and the Lord added to the church daily the saved-ones."

Q U E S T I O N S

1. What is the first mark of a healthy, spiritual assembly?
2. What are the three fundamental truths of the gospel?
3. How do we know that Peter's preaching was effective?
Give two answers, and a reference in Scripture to support your answer.
4. What is the meaning of the word repentance?
5. What is the result of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus?

N O T E S —

Chapter 14

THE MARKS OF A CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY

(Continued)

Then they that gladly received his word
were baptized and the same day there were
added to them about three thousand souls.
—Acts 2:41

In the present study we shall discuss the second mark of this healthy assembly.

II. The Practice of Believer's Baptism

There are but two ordinances in the Christian Church—baptism and the Lord's supper. Both are instituted in the Gospels, celebrated in the Acts, and explained in the epistles. Since they are instituted in the Gospels, and that by the Lord Himself, we may gather that they form an important part of the Evangel itself. Since they are celebrated in the Acts, we may gather that they belong to the practice of the Christian Church. Since they are explained in the epistles, we may gather that they are designed to be continued to the end of the present dispensation. Let us inquire into:

THE AUTHORITY FOR BAPTISM: WHY BAPTIZE?

The Lord commanded: "Go ye therefore, and teach (or, make disciples) of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). Again He said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15, 16). The Matthew citation is the Lord's command to the evangelist—he is to make disciples, and then baptize them. The 16th verse of Mark 16 gives the Lord's injunction to the convert; it is the Gospel that is to be preached unto him. These two commands of the Lord are sufficient warrant for the practice of believer's baptism—no further authority is needed. Yet it is helpful to note :

The Practice of the Early Church—the interpretation put upon the Lord's words by those who heard Him speak. We read concerning the converts on the Day of Pentecost: "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized." In Acts 8 we read of Philip's preaching to the Eunuch from Isaiah 53. As they went on their way, the eunuch inquired if he might be baptized. As soon as he had confessed his faith in Christ, Philip commanded that the chariot be stopped. And they went down both of them into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him" (vs. 38). Further examples of the apostolic practice may be found in Acts 10: 44-48; 16:31-33; 18:8.

THE SUBJECTS FOR BAPTISM: WHO SHOULD BE BAPTIZED?

In seeking an answer for a question like this, a question where present-day practice varies, it is well to disregard all present-day practice and even accepted traditions and seek an answer direct from the Scriptures themselves. Then, and then only, are we upon safe ground. What saith the Scriptures?

(i) Disciples: The evangelist was commanded to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them . . ." (Matthew 28:19).

(ii) Believers: The message in the Gospel to the sinner is "He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Only those who believe should be baptized. Apostolic practice is in absolute accord with this. "They that gladly received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:41). The eunuch confessed his faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and then Philip baptized him (Acts 8:36-38). The jailor at Philippi "was baptized, he and all his . . . and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house" (Acts 16:33, 34).

(iii) Those who have received the Holy Spirit: Peter was privileged to preach the gospel to the Gentiles at Cornelius' home for the first time in history. While Peter was still preaching, "the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard the word." Peter then enquired, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized

which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?" Then he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord (Acts 10:44-48).

We conclude then that baptism is limited to disciples, or believers, or those who have received the Holy Spirit.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM: WHAT DOES BAPTISM MEAN?

The answer to this important question is concisely stated in Romans 6:3, 4: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Baptism then is a declaration of the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. The apostle could say, "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20). Christ's death is a death for the believer. The believer's identification with Christ in His death is symbolized by his going down into the water — "baptized into His death." Hence we must also be identified with Him in His burial, a fact that is symbolized by going under the water—"buried with Him by baptism into death." But the apostle also speaks of our being "risen with Christ" (Col. 3:1). Our identification with Him in resurrection life is symbolized by our coming up out of the water — "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

But baptism is more than a declaration of the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. It is an acknowledgment that the old man and his ways are dead—"our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed"—and a profession that henceforth we are living a new life—"that henceforth we should not serve sin," but that we "should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:6, 4).

THE MODE OF BAPTISM: HOW SHALL WE BAPTIZE?

A reference to a lexicon or to an English-Greek con-

cordance reveals two truths: (i) that baptize is not a translation of an original Greek word, but a transliteration, that is bringing a word into another language without changing or translating it. The original word is 'baptizo'. (ii) the lexicon meaning of baptizo is "to make whelmed, that is fully wet," "to dip." It is evident that 'baptizo' means to dip or immerse. Why then was it not so translated? Sprinkling had already been introduced in Britain, and had been widely accepted. It is said to have found its way into the Westminster Confession in 1643 by the deciding vote of the chairman, Dr. Lightfoot, after a tie vote of the committee, 24 votes for it, and 24 votes against it. With so great a public opinion in favor of sprinkling, the 1611 translators passed on the responsibility by transliterating instead of translating, by using a Greek word, 'baptize' that meant nothing to English ears, instead of using the word, 'immerse' which would have declared the truth even though it might not have settled the controversy.

How necessary immersion is if the ordinance is to signify death, burial, and resurrection! When the believer goes into the water, death is pictured; when he goes under the water, burial is pictured; when he comes up out of the water, resurrection is pictured. But all this symbolism is lost when sprinkling is practised—the very meaning of the ordinance is gone.

Moreover, the examples of baptism recorded in Scripture imply immersion rather than sprinkling. "Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water" (Matt. 3:16). Why would He have ever entered the Jordan, if John were baptizing by sprinkling? Again we read, "John also was baptizing in Aenon, near to Salim, because there was much water there" (Jn. 3:23). How unnecessary to seek out 'much water' if baptism were by sprinkling. Let one more reference suffice: "They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him" (Acts 8:38). How unnecessary to stop at "a certain water" and to go down into it, in order to get a little water to sprinkle on the eunuch's head.

All this seems conclusive to one who will bow to the authority of the Word of God. The Lord commanded

that believers in Himself should be baptized. In doing this the believer publicly confesses his identification with Christ in His death, His burial, and His resurrection, and also professes that henceforth his walk will be in newness of life—that the members that once served sin and Satan will now be employed in the paths of righteousness and in the service of Christ. Such symbolic action can only be by immersion. Should these words be read by one who trusts in Christ, but who has not yet confessed Him in baptism, let me urge upon you the importance of obedience. Obedience in the matter of baptism is called in 1 Pet. 3:21, “the answer of a good conscience toward God.” How can one have a good conscience if he knows what God would have him do, and does it not?

QUESTIONS

1. What is the second mark of a healthy, spiritual assembly.
2. Give two reasons why believers should be baptized, and give two Scripture references in support of each reason.
3. Give three words or phrases to indicate who should be baptized, and opposite each one give one Scripture to support your answer.
4. What is the meaning of the ordinance of baptism? Give two answers and a Scripture reference in support of each answer.
5. Give three reasons for believing that baptism should be by immersion.

— N O T E S —

Chapter 15

MARKS OF A HEALTHY, SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

(Continued)

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. —Acts 2:41.

That Christ is the focal point in all church gatherings, the centre of all church activities, and the authority of all church administration is obvious even to the casual reader of the New Testament. The pre-eminent place thus given by God to Christ as the Centre of His people must ever govern in all church affairs, and this is true in the third mark of a healthy, spiritual assembly.

III. Assembly Reception

The preaching of the apostle Peter on the Day of Pentecost was not only vigorous, it was effective also. Those that received his Gospel message were converted to God, and gave public testimony to their conversion by being baptized. Then they went a step further; they identified themselves with the saints. "The same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." Reception into an assembly and its fellowship is a great blessing that may well be coveted by every child of God.

WHO SHOULD BE RECEIVED

Who are they who are eligible for assembly reception? In the case we are considering, it was those who had received the word (vs. 41) and had been baptized who were added to the assembly. Such persons are described in vs. 47 as "such as should be saved" or (lit.) "the saved-ones," and are said to have been "added to the church." In 5:14, believers are said to be "added to the Lord." In 2:47, they are "added to the church." This is the work of the Lord, and should ever precede reception into a local assembly.

Attention has already been drawn to different terms used to describe the people of God who are fit subjects

for assembly privileges: saved-ones (Acts 2:47), believers (Acts 5:14), disciples (Acts 20:7), Christians (Acts 11:26), saints (1 Cor. 1:2), and brethren (Col. 1:2). What a lovely group of descriptive titles God has conferred upon His own.

GUIDANCE FOR DIFFICULT CASES

Two principles are laid down in the Scriptures for the guidance of assemblies in the matter of reception:

(a) *Receive those whom the Lord has received*: In Rom. 14:1-3, we have instructions for receiving a brother who is "weak in the faith," that is, one who does not understand the Scriptures and the blessings and liberties that are in Christ Jesus. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye . . . for God hath received him." In the portion omitted from the above quotation, we are directed not to decide the man's scruples, or settle his doubts, such as whether meats should be eaten or not; but we are to receive him despite the weakness of his faith, because God has received him. Where will he get a healthier spiritual environment or better teaching to strengthen his faith than in the assembly into which he has been received?

In harmony with this instruction, is a similar admonition in Rom. 15:7, "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God."

(b) *Reception is refused to those who are morally or doctrinally unclean*: Six moral evils, listed in 1 Cor. 5:11 will exclude a man from assembly reception or assembly fellowship, even though he be a Christian. The assembly is a house of God (1 Tim. 3:15), a place where He chooses to dwell, "an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). Being His dwelling place, the assembly must be kept clean (cf. Ps. 93:5).

Doctrinal evil is also given as a barrier to assembly reception or fellowship. "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition reject" (Tit. 3:10). The first admonition would seem to be that elder brethren would 'convince' (or convict) him from the Scriptures (Tit. 1:9). If he persists in teaching the error,

then he must not be allowed to teach at all—his mouth “must be stopped” (Tit. 1:11). This would appear to be the second admonition. If that fails, to curb his spreading of evil doctrine, then he must be rejected. Weakness of faith is no barrier to reception as we have seen (Rom. 14:1-3), but diseased faith—the holding of unsound doctrine re fundamental truths—excludes a man from God’s assemblies.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ASSEMBLY RECEPTION

There are times when it is difficult to know whether an applicant for reception into an assembly is genuinely born of God or not. Such a case was that of Saul of Tarsus. He had a terrible reputation as a persecutor of the Christians before God saved him. When he sought fellowship in the assembly at Jerusalem, the Jerusalem saints “were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.” Such a case required careful investigation and consideration before action could be taken. Barnabas was able to declare his manner of life since God saved him, and how he had preached boldly in Damascus in the name of Jesus. Upon such testimony he was received, “and was with them: coming in and going out at Jerusalem.” Read carefully Acts 9:26-29.

IV. Assembly Fellowship

We shall leave for our consideration in our next study—soundness of doctrine—and consider now as the fourth mark: Assembly Fellowship. “They continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and in fellowship (lit. ‘the fellowship’).”

(a) The word for fellowship is ‘koinonia’ and is derived from ‘koinonos’ which means a partner or sharer. We read that James and John were ‘partners’ (koinonos) with Simon in the fishing business (Luke 5:10). What does that mean? James, John, and Simon all shared in the ownership, the responsibilities, and the profits of the fishing enterprise in which they were ‘partners’ or ‘sharers.’ Similarly we read of Titus that he was a ‘partner’ (koinonos) and fellowhelper of Paul in his work of teaching and preaching. (2 Cor. 8:23). Titus shared

with Paul in the responsibility, in the joys, and in the sorrows of their work for the Lord.

Let us apply these principles to the life of the assembly, as seen in Acts 2. Those who had received the Gospel, and witnessed to their conversion in the ordinance of baptism, had been added to the assembly. "And they continued steadfastly in . . . the fellowship." They took their share in the privileges and the responsibilities of the life and well-being of the assembly. They were present at the prayer-meeting, even as they were at the breaking of bread. They even sold their possessions and shared with them that were in need. They visited from house to house, and ate together. All this produced gladness and singleness of heart. This is true fellowship.

There is great need today among the assemblies of the saints for teaching on this most important subject. The assembly should be viewed as a partnership, each member of the assembly being a shareholder, and having a definite interest and responsibility in all the activities of the assembly. The assembly maintains a Gospel testimony; therefore, I have a share in that testimony. That at least requires my presence at that meeting. Possibly I can invite some one to attend the meeting, or better call and bring that person to the meeting. Can I not attend the gospel meeting and pray for the brethren who will be responsible to bring the Gospel message at the meeting? Can I not pray for the preacher while he is preaching, or for the sinner while he listens? This is having a share in that Gospel meeting, it is fellowship!

Then there is the assembly prayer meeting. Each member in the assembly has a share in that meeting. That seems to require attendance at the meeting, and a sharing in the exercise of prayer. Some will pray audibly leading the assembly in prayer; others will pray silently. But we all should be sharers in the meeting—we should continue steadfastly in fellowship!

In the same way, each member of the assembly should be interested in the problems that arise within the assembly. Certain brethren may be more gifted for solving these problems, but we can all pray about them. Then there are the assembly expenses, and the communi-

cating with ministering servants of the Lord. Surely each member should be exercised to share in these responsibilities as the Lord has prospered him (1 Cor. 16:2) and according to the exercise of his own heart (2 Cor. 9:7).

(b) But there is more involved in fellowship than having a share or a part in the assembly. There was oneness of mind—they were all of “one accord” in the Jerusalem assembly (Acts 2:46); there was “singleness of heart” there. How can this oneness of mind be attained?

(i) *By Consulting One Another*: Onesimus the runaway slave had been converted in Rome, and became a faithful servant to Paul the Apostle. Then Paul learned that Onesimus had been a servant to Philemon, a Christian living at Colosse. Paul would gladly have retained Onesimus — he needed him — but that might cause a break in fellowship with Philemon. So he wrote him a letter, and sent Onesimus back, for “without thy mind would I do nothing” he wrote (Philemon 13, 14). How such a spirit of consideration one for the other promotes fellowship (Heb. 10:24).

(ii) *By Working One With the Other*: The Apostle wrote to the Philippian Christians exhorting them to “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel (Phil. 1:27). Unity of purpose (such as interest in the Gospel) and unity of action (such as striving together for the spread of the Gospel) bind hearts together into “one accord.” Fellowship is promoted.

(iii) *By Praying One For the Other*: (1 Thes. 1:2) and *by Loving One Another* (John 13:34). How can there be a serious breach of fellowship between two brethren who love each other and who pray for one another?

(iv) *By Serving One Another* (Gal. 5:13).

(v) *By Exhorting One Another* (Heb. 3:13).

(vi) *By Comforting One Another* (1 Thes. 4:18). What a helpful ministry this is.

(vii) *By Edifying One Another* (Rom. 14:19).

These seven methods of promoting fellowship may be looked upon as promoting individual rather than assembly fellowship. But let it ever be remembered that the assembly is just the total of all its members. If there is a happy fellowship between the members, there will be happy fellowship in the assembly.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the third mark of healthy assembly practice?
2. Who are eligible for assembly fellowship? Give three references to support your answer.
3. What are two principles to guide in the matter of assembly fellowship?
4. What is the fourth mark of healthy assembly practice?
5. What is the meaning of the word fellowship (koinonia)?
6. Suggest four activities of the assembly in which fellowship can be exercised.
7. Suggest four ways of promoting fellowship within an assembly.

— N O T E S —

Chapter 16

MARKS OF A HEALTHY, SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

They continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine. Acts 2:42

V. Sound Doctrine

The next mark of healthy assembly practice as illustrated in the Jerusalem assembly is soundness of doctrine. Christian truth is known in the Scriptures as "sound doctrine" (Tit. 1:9), and as "the faith" (Col. 1:23; Jude 3).

THE SOURCE OF THE DOCTRINE

It is the whole body of revealed truth contained in the Scriptures—hence, the Scriptures are said to be "profitable for doctrine" (2 Timothy 3:16). But in the days of Acts 2, the New Testament had not yet been written, and doctrine had to be transmitted orally by the apostles. For this reason it is called "the apostles' doctrine" that is, the truth which the apostles taught.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE

The importance of sound doctrine can be gathered from the following considerations:

(a) We are exhorted to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3).

(b) Any one who denies "the doctrine of Christ"—His deity, His Sonship, His virgin birth, His atoning death, His resurrection—is not a Christian at all (2 Jn. 9; 1 Jn. 2:23).

(c) Men who deny fundamental doctrines are debarred from assembly fellowship (Tit. 3:10; 1 Tim. 1:19, 20; 2 Tim. 2:17, 18; 4:14, 15).

Let us briefly consider

CERTAIN FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINES

(1) *The Inspiration of the Scriptures*: "All Scripture is given-by-inspiration-of-God" (2 Tim. 3:16). Literally it reads, "All Scripture is God-breathed." Sometimes

we breathe against a frosty window pane, and our breath congeals in patterns on the glass. Suppose we could breathe exactly what we wished on that window pane. Then the resultant pattern would register exactly what we breathed. "All Scripture is God-breathed"; it registers exactly what God has said; it is the Word of God. Cf. also Heb. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:21.

(2) *The Deity of Christ*: The Scriptures teach emphatically that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and God the Son. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God" (Jn. 1:1). We read again of the Word in verse 14, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." The first verse asserts His deity; the other verse identifies Him as Jesus Christ—Jesus Christ was God! In Heb. 1:8 we read: "Unto the Son, He saith, Thy throne, O God is for ever and ever." The Father recognizes Him as God the Son. In 1 Jn. 5:20, it is written, "We know that the Son of God is come . . . and we are in Him . . . even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." This verse speaks of the Son of God, and that there may be no misunderstanding about who is meant, He is identified as Jesus Christ. Then comes that emphatic statement, "This is the true God." This fundamental doctrine was part of the apostles' teaching, and needs to be reiterated with emphasis in these days of modern infidelity, ever remembering that "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father" (1 Jn. 2:23).

(3) *The Virgin Birth*: In Eden's garden, God foretold the coming of the Saviour who would bruise the serpent's head and described Him as the "seed" of the woman (Gen. 3:15). This word "seed" (Heb. 'zera'; Gr. 'sperma') occurs frequently in the Scriptures and is always used with reference to the father and not the mother, save in this one case (Cf. Gen. 12:7; Jn. 7:42; Jn. 8:33; Rom. 1:3). There was to be something unusual about the birth of the Saviour—the seed of a woman. Isaiah the prophet explains the unusual event thus, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7:14). When the

time drew near that He should be born, an angel of the Lord brought this assurance to Joseph, Mary's husband, "That which is begotten in her is of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 1:20). In recording His genealogy, the Spirit of God is studiously accurate: "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise . . ." (Matt. 1:18). "On this wise" suggests something different from the cases that preceded, births that were of natural generation. The angel who announced the birth of John, said to Zacharias, "Thy wife, Elizabeth, shall bear *thee* a son" (Lk. 1:13), for John was Zacharias' son. But when the angel spoke to Joseph, he said, "Mary, thy wife, . . . shall bring forth a son." He was God's Son. The importance of this doctrine is very great—the facts which it rests upon provide us with a sinless Saviour—a claim that could never be made for any man born with a human father. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 Jn. 4:10).

(4) *Atonement Through the Death of Christ*: The apostle states that the Gospel as he preached it in Corinth, had three great truths:

- (i) The death of Christ, interpreted according to the Scriptures,
- (ii) His burial,
- (iii) His resurrection, interpreted according to the Scriptures. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:3, 4.

Let us note three things which the Scriptures teach concerning His death:

(a) *His death was propitiatory*: "Being justified by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood" (Rom. 3:24, 25). Propitiation is that which meets the claims of God's holiness on account of man's sin, and makes it possible for God to show mercy in forgiving sins. Man's sin is an offence against God and His holiness. The death of Christ met all the claims of God's holiness. So thoroughly did the Lord Jesus settle the sin question, that it is written He "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9:26). "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours

only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 Jn. 2:2).

(b) *His death was redemptive*: "Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). Redemption means to buy back by the payment of a ransom price and to set free. The term is used of the buying back and setting free of alienated lands, and of one who had been sold into slavery. The death of Christ is set forth as the ransom price that was paid to buy back the sinner and set him free. "The Son of man came . . . to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). "Redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:18, 19). "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7). Propitiation is that aspect of Christ's death that meets God's claims; redemption is that aspect of His death that meets the sinner's need.

(c) *His death was substitutionary*: The term substitution does not occur in the Scriptures, but the doctrine of substitution is one of Scripture's foremost truths. "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5). Here are three truths:

(i) *Sin bearing*: "The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Cf. "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24).

(ii) *Substitutionary sacrifice*: "Wounded for our transgressions . . ." Cf. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

(iii) *Salvation resulting from that sacrifice*: "By His stripes we are healed." Cf. "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18).

We conclude then that atonement is by the death of Christ, and by that death alone. Thereby has God been propitiated, and thereby can man be redeemed. But this

propitiation and this redemption were both affected by a substitutionary sacrifice.

5. *The Resurrection of Christ*: The great doctrine of the early Gospel preaching, to be intimately associated with the preaching of His death, was the preaching of His resurrection. For what assurance could we have that God had accepted His death as a propitiation for our sins unless He raised Him from the dead? What proof could we have that we have redemption as a result of His death unless He were raised again? "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. 15:17). But "the Lord is risen indeed" (Lk. 24:34). Herein lies proof of our redemption; He "was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). Herein lies the proof that the dead in Christ will be raised. "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept . . . but every man in his own order; Christ the first-fruit; they that are Christ's at His coming" (1 Cor. 15: 20, 23). Herein lies an unanswerable declaration of His deity: "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4).

This fundamental truth—so essential to the Gospel (1 Cor. 15:4; Rom. 10:9)—has been vigorously attacked by the enemies of the cross. Yet it is accredited in the Scriptures "by many infallible proofs" (Acts 1:3).

During the forty days after His resurrection, He was seen by His disciples, He showed them His hands and His side, He ate supper in an Emmaus home, He broiled fish on the shores of Galilee and gave to His disciples, He made arrangements with His disciples to spread the Gospel, He led them out from Jerusalem to Bethany, where He blessed them ere He ascended into the Glory, where He now is seated a Prince and a Saviour.

(Probably this is the primary meaning of the expression, "the apostles' doctrine," for they preached the resurrection constantly in the early days of the church's history (cf. Acts 2:24, 32; 3:15; 4:10; etc.). But the apostles taught all the doctrines that we have; hence the treatment accorded the subject here).

QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by "the apostle's doctrine?"
2. Quote two Scriptures to prove that the Bible is divinely inspired.
3. Quote one Scripture from the Old Testament, and one from the New, to prove the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus.
4. Quote two Scriptures to prove that Jesus is the Son of God.
5. What are the three great truths upon which the gospel rests?
6. (a) What is meant by propitiation?
(b) Quote a Scripture to prove that the death of Christ has propitiatory value.
7. (a) What is meant by redemption?
(b) Quote a Scripture to prove that the death of Christ has redemptive value.
8. What three great truths are proven by Christ's resurrection?

— N O T E S —

Chapter 17

MARKS OF A HEALTHY, SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

They continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine. Acts 2:42

4. *Sound Doctrine*

We read in 2 Tim. 3:16, "All Scripture is given-by-inspiration-of-God, and is profitable for doctrine" Doctrine or teaching is an essential part of Christianity—it is propagated by teaching and preaching; it is embraced by believing. The only authoritative statement on what we should believe is to be found in the Scriptures themselves. Creeds and doctrinal statements are dangerous when they are accepted as standards of belief. Yet statements of Scripture doctrines are helpful when they send the reader to the Bible to search the Scriptures whether the things stated are so. The doctrines outlined in this and in the preceding study are not a complete list of the truths taught in the Bible, nor is the treatment accorded by any means exhaustive. But it is hoped that the brief statements given and the references cited will enable the young believer to get a reasonably good grip on these important truths.

(6) *The Second Coming of Christ*

The disciples sorrowed because the Lord had said, "Yet a little while I am with you." To comfort their sorrowing hearts the Lord said, "Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me . . . I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again*, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (Jn. 14:1-3). When He ascended into heaven, His amazed disciples gazed after Him as He was received by the cloud out of their sight. Two men from heaven brought them this message, "*This same Jesus*, which is taken up from you into heaven, *shall so come* in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

The apostle, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, enlarges this theme in I Thess. 4:16, 17, "*For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven* with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together

with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Words could not be plainer than these. "I will come again." "This same Jesus shall come." "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven." Jesus is coming; He is coming personally. He is coming to receive His own unto Himself, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself." "We which are alive and remain shall be caught up with them . . . to meet the Lord in the air." Praise His ever blessed name!

(7) *The Ruin of Man.*

Despite man's progress in material things—science, medicine, art, business—despite his theories of evolution and of improvement, the Bible teaches that man is a fallen creature, that there is none righteous (Rom. 3:10), that by his own works no man can be justified in God's sight (Rom. 3:20), that all have sinned (Rom. 3:23), and that the punishment of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). The whole paragraph, Rom. 3:10-20, should be carefully read. It would be difficult to find a more concise summary of Bible doctrine on the fall and ruin of man than Rom. 5:12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

(8) *The New Birth*

The complementary truth to the ruin of man is regeneration or the new birth. This great truth was enunciated by the Lord Himself as He spoke to Nicodemus. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (Jno. 3:3). He also told him the necessity for this new birth: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (vs. 6). This means that which is born of a ruined stock is a ruined stock itself; it is "dead in trespasses and in sins" (Eph. 2:1). The new birth is brought to the sinner by the Word of God: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. 1:23). It is received by faith: "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of

man, but of God" (Jno. 1:12, 13). All that "believe on His name" are "born of God," and thus "become the sons of God."

(9) *The Eternal Life of Believers*

The greatest Gospel text of all reads, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jno. 3:16). Again, the Lord Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (Jno. 10:27, 28). John sums up the purpose for which he wrote his first epistle thus, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 Jno. 5:13). It is not presumption (as some people say it is) for a believer to say that he has eternal life and that he knows he has it—the Scriptures declare these things to be so.

(10) *The Eternal Punishment of Unbelievers*

The complementary truth to the eternal life of the believer is the eternal punishment of the unbeliever. In the judgment of the nations, it is recorded of those placed on the left hand, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment" (Matt. 25:46). Of these same people it is written, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (vs. 41). When the final assize of the wicked dead is over, when they have been judged from the open books, then whosoever has not his name in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15). A description of this terrible place, given us in connection with the punishment of the beast and the false prophet contains these solemn words: "a lake of fire burning with brimstone" (Rev. 19:20) and "tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10). This is a very solemn truth. Let him who reads beware.

(11) *The Trinity of the Godhead*

The Scriptures teach that there is one God (1 Tim. 2:5) whose name is the Lord, or Jehovah (Deut. 4:35)

and beside Him there is no other true God (Is. 44:6). But in the one God, there are three persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Paul speaks in 2 Timothy 1:2 of “God the Father.” John in his third epistle writes of the Son of God, distinctly names Him as Jesus Christ, and then adds, “This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 Jn. 5:20). In Acts 5:3 we read that Ananias lied unto the Holy Spirit; but in the next verse, it is recorded that he lied unto God; for the Holy Spirit is God.

Seeing then that the one God exists as three persons, it is not surprising to find the name of God written thus, “the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). It is one name; yet three persons.

(12) *The Personality of Satan*

Men often deny the personality of the devil, and declare there is no such being. They teach that Satan is but an evil principle, or the absence of God. But the Scriptures themselves speak quite differently. He is given personal names: (a) Satan, (Lk. 10:18); (b) Devil, (Matt. 4:1); (c) Belial, (2 Cor. 6:15); (d) Beelzebub, (Matt. 12:24). He accomplishes personal acts: (a) He tempted Eve, (Gen. 3:1-5); (b) He tempted Christ, (Matt. 4:1-11); (c) He opposes God, (Zech. 3:1-5); (d) He contended with the archangel, (Jude 9); and (e) He accuses the brethren in the presence of God, (Rev. 12:10). His end is to be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where he will be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Rev. 20:10).

Other important Bible doctrines should also be learned by the young believer, notably,

(13) The Creation of the Worlds: Gen. 1:1; Jn. 1:1-3; Heb. 11:3.

(14) The Justification of the Believer: Rom. 3:24; 5:1; 5:9; 2 Cor. 5:21.

(15) The Believer's Two Natures: Rom. 7:14-25; Gal. 5:16, 17.

(16) The Believer's Subjection to the Spirit of God: Rom. 7:1-39; Gal. 5:22-25.

(17) The Christian's Accountability at the Judgment Seat of Christ: Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Cor. 3:11-15.

(18) The Believer's Fellowship With God: 1 Jn. 1:3-10; 2:1-2.

(19) The Lordship of Christ: 1 Pet. 3:15 (R.V.); Heb. 3:1-6; 1 Cor. 1:2.

QUESTIONS

1. Quote three Scriptures to prove that the Lord Jesus is coming back again.
2. Give in one verse a summary of the Bible teaching on man's fall and ruin.
3. Why is it necessary for man to be born again?
4. Show that the new birth is received by faith in Christ.
5. Quote one verse to prove that the believer has eternal life.
6. Prove from the Scriptures that the wicked dead will be punished eternally.
7. Prove from the Scriptures that there are three persons in the Godhead.
8. Give three proofs that there is a personal devil.
9. (a) How can a sinner be justified before God?
(b) How can a believer who has sinned be forgiven?

— N O T E S —

Chapter 18

MARKS OF A HEALTHY, SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY

VI. The Breaking of Bread

They continued stedfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers. Acts 2:42.

(1) *Its Institution*: Luke 22:19-20.

The Lord's Supper was instituted by the Lord Himself "the same night in which He was betrayed" (1 Cor. 11:23). It was the night in which the passover was kept, "the last acceptable celebration" of this famous feast—for on the morrow Christ died; "for even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7). So this memorable night, when the passover was kept for the last time (in God's reckoning) and the Lord's Supper was instituted, marks the end of one dispensation and the beginning of another—law ends and grace begins. "Not for a single hour were the people of God left without a sign-post of hope." The passover looked back to the night of Ex. 12, and forward to the cross of Christ (1 Cor. 5:7). But after the cross, there would be no further need for the Passover feast; hence, the Lord's desire (vs. 15) to terminate the passover and institute the Lord's supper, which looks back to the cross and forward to His coming (1 Cor. 11:26).

The meaning of the breaking of bread is very clearly stated, "He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body, which is broken for you" (1 Cor. 11:24). The breaking of the bread symbolizes the breaking of His body when He gave Himself for us at the cross. Similarly we read the meaning of the cup, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you" (vs. 20).*

*It will be helpful for the young believer to draw a pencil line after vs. 18 and before vs. 19 in reading Luke 22. This line separates between the passover feast and the Lord's Supper. The cup of vs. 17 belonged to the passover; the cup of vs. 20 belongs to the Lord's Supper.

meaningful words these are for a believer in Christ to ponder as he sits at the Lord's table.

The purpose for which the Lord's Supper is kept is also clearly stated. "This do in remembrance of Me" (vs. 19). How blessed to have Scriptural authority for keeping this simple, memorial feast in fond memory of Himself! What sacred memories flood the soul when one is seated in His very presence, with the emblems of His broken body and shed blood to give the feast the atmosphere of Calvary.

(2) *Its Celebration*: Acts 2:42; 20:7.

There was a very definite time for the keeping of this memorial feast in those early days: "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them . . ." (Acts 20:7). The sabbaths ended when Christ lay in the grave; the dispensation of the law was over. This seems to be suggested in Matt. 28:1, where sabbath is plural in the text—it was "the end of the sabbaths." Surely it was the dawn of a new day, a dispensation of grace, when the first day of the week, the day when the Lord rose from the dead, would be kept in honour of Him. It was on this day, the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, that the disciples came together to break bread.

Who were they who came together for this sacred purpose, "The *disciples* came together to break bread." Only Christians, or "saved ones," can remember Him; the unregenerate have never known Him. How then can they commemorate His death? These are days when specious arguments are brought forward to justify letting all who wish to do so sit at the Lord's table and keep the feast; but the Scriptures only give warrant for "disciples" to break bread.

There was a very definite place where Israel was commanded to keep their memorial feast, the passover. "Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates, which the Lord thy God giveth thee; but at the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place His name in, there shalt thou sacrifice the passover." (Deut. 16: 5, 6). Equally definite is the practice of the early church

— the breaking of bread occurred when the disciples came together for that purpose on the first day of the week.

How specifically the purpose of this meeting on the first day of the week is stated. "The disciples came together to break bread." That was the primary purpose of the gathering. He Himself had commanded, "This do in remembrance of Me." Loyal hearts sought to obey that command.

Paul embraced the opportunity afforded by the gathering together of the disciples to preach the Word to them. It often happens that such a gathering is the most representative meeting of the assembly, and therefore affords an excellent opportunity for ministry. It would appear from the context that the breaking of bread came first, and that Paul's preaching followed. Certainly when ministry is of a teaching character it should follow, not precede, the breaking of bread, lest it interrupt the continuity of the worship that seems so fitting an accompaniment of the breaking of bread. On the other hand, how often have souls been refreshed and worship stimulated by a short, devotional message before the breaking of bread, a message bringing the Lord directly into the soul's meditations.

(3) *Its Explanation.* 1 Cor. 10:16-21; 11:20-34

Like the other ordinance given to the Christian Church, baptism, the Lord's Supper was instituted in the Gospels, practiced in the Acts, and explained in the epistles. Let us note:

(a) The Lord's Supper is *an expression of fellowship*. "The cup which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" The word communion is the same as fellowship. The Lord's Supper is an expression of fellowship, a fellowship established through the shedding of the blood of Christ, through the giving of His body as an atoning sacrifice. This fellowship embraces the many who are one bread, one body, the partakers of Christ. "For we, being many, are one bread, one body, (omitting the italicised "and"); for we are all partakers of that one bread." The fellowship of the body of Christ is expressed by partaking

of the Lord's Supper — partaking symbolizes participation in the value of His shed blood and His atoning death, even as partaking at the altar (vs. 18) symbolized participation in the Old Testament ritual, its sacrifices and its law-keeping. In the same way, to partake of things sacrificed to idols symbolizes a participation in the fellowship of demons (idols are nothing, but the demons behind the idolatry are very real, vs. 19, 20).

(b) The Lord's Supper is a *feast of remembrance*. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." How delightful to sit down with His gathered saints, having the assured promise of His own presence in the midst (Matt. 18:20), and review the cross of Christ. What memories flood our souls, memories of His suffering, of the ignominy heaped upon Him, of His patient endurance of it all, of the love that constrained Him thus to die, of the atoning and redemptive value of the sacrifice He made. Surely it is a feast of blessed memories that stirs our souls afresh to amazement, to gratitude, and to worship, each time we partake of it.

(c) The Lord's Supper is a *declaration of His death*. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." The eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup constitute an act of testimony to the world around that we are saved through the death of Christ. By partaking of the feast we declare this glorious fact. But the eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup are also an act of worship — a declaration before God of the atoning value of the sacrifice which He made upon the cross.

(d) The Lord's Supper is an *anticipation of His Coming*. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." The feast is a sign-post pointing forward to His coming again. The feast that began when He went to the cross will be continued till He comes to receive His own to be forever with Himself. If we look backward from the Lord's table, we are reminded that we have been redeemed with precious blood; if we look forward from the Lord's table, we are reminded that He has promised to come quickly.

VII. Prayers

One of the distinguishing marks of a Christian is prayer. When Saul of Tarsus was converted, God commissioned one Ananias to minister to him. One mark was given Ananias whereby he might know him, "Behold; he prayeth." It is one of the characteristic activities of the Christian. When the Christians come together collectively, prayer becomes one mark of a healthy, spiritual assembly. "They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

Prayer gives a believer an audience in heaven; hither he may come with holy boldness, not with fear and trembling as when Esther came unbidden into the king's presence (Esther 4:11; 5:1-3), for the sceptre is ever extended toward us (Heb. 4:16). It is in this holy exercise of prayer that the Christian renews his strength after the toil of battle; it is here that he mounts as with wings from the sordid atmosphere of earth till he breathes the very air of heaven; it is here that he obtains the grace to run the race without wearying, to walk in the paths of righteousness and not faint (Is. 40:31). It is the neglect of this holy exercise that causes our fainting by the way, our wearying in the race, our weakness when we need strength.

These things being so, it has well been said that the assembly prayer-meeting is the thermometer that indicates the spiritual temperature of the assembly. Alas! that the reading of the thermometer should ever show the assembly to be but a few degrees above zero.

QUESTIONS

1. What is the meaning of keeping the Lord's Supper?
2. When should the Lord's Supper be celebrated?
3. Who should be permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper?
4. Quote Scriptures to prove that the Lord's Supper is
 - (a) An expression of fellowship.
 - (b) A feast of remembrance.
 - (c) A declaration of His death.
 - (d) An anticipation of His coming.
5. What is the seventh mark of a healthy Christian assembly?
6. Quote one Scripture to show the value of prayer.

— N O T E S —

SECTION F — THE CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY IN PROGRESS.

I. The Expansion of the Church — Acts 11:26.

1. The Institution of the Church: Acts 2.
2. The Expansion of the Church:
 - a. The Gospel to Samaria: Acts 8.
 - b. The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus: Acts 9.
 - c. The Assembly at Antioch: Acts 11:19-30.
3. The Assembly at Antioch: Acts 11:19-30; 13:1-3.
 - a. Composed of Jews and Gentiles: 11:19-20, R.V.
 - b. First use of the term "Christian": 11:26.
 - c. Guided by the Holy Spirit: 13:2.
 - d. Variety of ministry Gifts: 13:1.
 - e. Independent, yet in fellowship with the Jerusalem assembly: 13:1-3; 15:1-32.
 - f. Sent out Evangelists and Teachers: 12:2-4.
 - g. Interested in Missionary Work: 14:26, 27.

II. The Building of a Christian Assembly—1 Cor. 3:10-17.

1. The Assembly at Corinth: 1 Cor. 1:2; 3:16.
2. Laying the Foundation: 1 Cor. 3:12.
3. Building on the Foundation: 1 Cor. 3:12—
 - a. Gold: God's glory: Exod. 25:18; Heb. 9:5.
 - b. Silver: Redemption: Exod. 30:12, 13; 38:25.
 - c. Precious Stones: Christ: 1 Pet. 2:6; Rev. 4:3.
4. Principles of the Assembly: Scriptural or unscriptural.
5. Persons in the Assembly: Saved or unsaved.
6. Practices of the Assembly: Scriptural or unscriptural.
7. Reward or Loss.

III. Women's Service in the Christian Assembly —Eph. 5:24, 25, 32.

1. Woman's position in relation to her husband:
 - a. An help meet for him: Gen. 3:18-24; and to be subject to him as head of the home: 1 Tim. 5:14; Tit. 2:4, 5.
 - b. To picture the Church in submission to Christ: Eph. 5:22-23.
2. Woman's position in the Christian Assembly:
 - a. She must be silent in the church: 1 Cor. 14:34, 35.
 - b. She must not teach: 1 Tim. 2:12.
 - c. She must not exercise authority over the man: 1 Tim. 2:12.
 - d. She must wear long hair and pray with covered head: 1 Cor. 11:3-15.
3. Woman's sphere of service:
 - a. Homemaking: 1 Tim. 5:14; Tit. 2:3-5.
 - b. Kindness and good works: 1 Tim. 5:19; Rom. 16:1, 2; Acts 18:1-3.
 - c. Private instruction: Acts 18:26.
 - d. Personal Testimony: Phil. 4:3.

SECTION F

The Christian Assembly in Progress

Chapter 19

THE EXPANSION OF THE CHURCH

And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.

Acts 11:26.

I. The Institution of the Church

We have already learned the wonderful story recorded in Acts 2 of the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, coming as a rushing, mighty wind in regenerating power, coming with cloven tongues of fire resting on each of the disciples to teach that all who are regenerated are partakers of the Holy Spirit, coming with the gift of tongues to indicate the world-wide testimony entrusted to the people of God. This remarkable phenomenon is called the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5), an operation through which all these hundred and twenty believers were made one body (1 Cor. 12:13). This body was called "the church" or assembly (Gk. 'ek-klesia'); and because it was situated at Jerusalem was called "the church (or assembly) which was at Jerusalem" (Acts 8:1). Its growth in this city was remarkable. The first day of its existence, about three thousand souls were added to it, a number which was soon increased to about five thousand (Acts 2:41; 4:4). But for some years the activity of the Christian assembly was largely limited to Jerusalem.

II. The Expansion of the Church

But following the death of Stephen, "there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles . . . They that were scattered abroad, went everywhere preaching the word" (Acts 8:1, 4). So the persecution inflicted upon the church was turned into a great blessing. The persecution scattered the saints, but they scattered the Gospel wherever they went. Philip took the Gospel to Samaria, and many believed and were baptized

(Acts 8:5, 12). An African statesman, chancellor to the queen of Ethiopia, also heard the Gospel from the lips of Philip. He too believed and was baptized. Thus the Gospel reached Africa (Acts 8:26-40).

In the 9th chapter is the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, a chosen vessel whom the Lord was preparing to carry the Gospel to Gentiles, to kings, and to the children of Israel (vs. 15). The 10th chapter records the conversion of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert to Christianity. God was not only taking the Gospel beyond the confines of Jerusalem; He was actually taking it to the Gentiles!

III. The Assembly at Antioch

In the goodness of God, the Gospel reached the city of Antioch in northern Syria. The first missionaries to this city were directly from Jerusalem, and they preached unto the Jews only (Acts 11:19). But God had richer purposes of grace than this for Antioch. Presently other preachers came to Antioch, men from the island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean Sea, and men from Cyrene, a city in northern Africa. These preachers spake unto the Greeks (not Grecians as in the A. V., but Greeks; cf. R.V., Mss., Editors), "preaching the Lord Jesus" (vs. 20). Then we read these glorious words, "a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord." God has granted repentance unto the Gentiles in all verity!

News of this evangelical work soon reached Jerusalem, and the church there sent Barnabas down to Antioch to investigate and report. When Barnabas arrived his soul was thrilled at what he saw—the working of God's grace in Antioch. As a true son of encouragement (for such is the meaning of the name of Barnabas), he "exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (vs. 23). Under Barnabas' ministry "much people was added unto the Lord."

The Coming of Paul to Antioch

Barnabas seems to have been a good gospeller and a good exhorter—two very valuable gifts in any assembly.

But young converts need to be taught as well as exhorted. So Barnabas left Antioch and journeyed to Tarsus in search of Saul who is later known to us as Paul the apostle. Saul accompanied Barnabas back to Antioch, and for a whole year these two men "assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people.. There are seven characteristics of the assembly at Antioch that merit our attention:

(1) *It was composed of Jews (11:19) and Gentiles (11:20, R.V.)* who "believed and turned unto the Lord." In this respect it differed greatly from the assembly at Jerusalem, which appears to have been composed of Jews only. This new order of things at Antioch represents God's mind for His church during the present dispensation. Under the Old Covenant, there was a great wall separating Jews and Gentiles. The Jews had covenants and promises; they had sacrifices and offerings; they had a sanctuary and a glory cloud in which God dwelt in their midst. But the Gentiles had none of this—they dwelt on the other side of the wall. They were "without Christ" (Could there be any worse calamity?); they were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel"; they were "strangers from the covenants of promise"; they had "no hope"; they were "without God in the world." But under the new Covenant all this is changed. Jew and Gentile are alike reconciled unto God in one body by the cross. The middle wall of partition between them has been broken down. Read Eph. 2:11-18 carefully. This new ideal of saved Jew and saved Gentile together in one body found its first expression in fact in the assembly at Antioch.

(2) *"The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch"* (vs. 26).

It has been suggested that the term Christian was given these disciples as a nickname by the people of Antioch. But careful study seems to disprove such a contention. The word translated 'called' suggests to be divinely called, to declare as an oracle. The following uses of this same word will indicate its meaning:

(a) "It was revealed unto him by the Holy Spirit" (Lk. 2:26).

(b) "Moses was *admonished-of-God* when he was about to make . . ." (Heb. 8:5).

(c) "By faith Noah, being *warned-of-God* of things not seen . . ." (Heb. 11:7).

Evidently the word carries with it the thought of divine revelation. The disciples were divinely called Christians first at Antioch. Why? Why did not God bestow this lovely name upon the saints at Jerusalem, for most certainly they were Christians, even though not yet so called? Was it not that at Antioch for the first time, Jew and Gentile met on common ground, and God bestows at Antioch that lovely name—Christian?

(3) *They were subject to the control of the Holy Spirit.* (13:2).

The Holy Spirit desired that Barnabas and Saul should now leave Antioch—a well-established assembly by this time — and take the Word of God to other places. The saints at Antioch were so closely in touch with the Spirit of God, that they got His message and sent Barnabas and Saul on their way. How blessed when an assembly is in such close contact with God the Holy Spirit that He can speak to the assembly and the assembly can hear.

(4) *They were ministered unto by the Lord's gifted men* (13:1).

There were certain prophets and teachers in Antioch who "ministered unto the Lord" in that they taught and preached in the assembly. It should be noted that there were several of these prophets and teachers—it is not wholesome when ministry is restricted to but one brother. Neither is it wholesome when an assembly is subject to an every-man ministry. He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some teachers" (Eph. 4:11). Again, it should be noticed that this variety of ministry gift led to a variety of ministry within the assembly: (a) Gospel preaching (11:20), (b) exhortation (11:23), (c) teaching (11:26).

(5) *They were independent of the assembly at Jerusalem, yet fellowship between the two assemblies was maintained :*

The assembly at Antioch was called "the church that

was at Antioch." It was an *ekklesia* as much as the assembly at Jerusalem. It had its own prophets and teachers. The Spirit of God dealt directly with this assembly—not through the Jerusalem *ekklésia*. See Acts 13:1-4. But though the two assemblies were thus independent, they were also interdependent. Problems would arise that required a mutual understanding between these assemblies if fellowship was to be maintained. Such a question arose over the presence of Gentile believers in the Antioch assembly. Should they not be circumcised before they could be recognized? A number of brethren went down from Antioch to Jerusalem to get the matter settled (Acts 15:1-2). How happily it was settled when faced in a spirit of fellowship (Acts 15:4-32). Another lovely expression of inter-assembly fellowship is seen in the gift sent by the Antioch assembly to their brethren in Judaea (11:27-30).

(6) *They sent out evangelists and teachers* (13:2-4).

Gifts are primarily for the building up of the assembly. But after they have been used and proven there, God sometimes signifies His wish that they be used in regions beyond. What a lovely thing to see an assembly so prospering spiritually that they can afford to share their ministry gifts with other and less fortunate places.

There seems to be definite instruction here for our guidance in commending brethren for the work of the Lord beyond the confines of the assembly where they are in fellowship. The order seems to be:

(a) The possession of a definite gift (vs. 1). There were prophets and teachers in the assembly at Antioch, men gifted by the Holy Spirit for their work (1 Cor. 12:4-11).

(b) A personal call to service (vs. 2a). These men "ministered to the Lord" in the assembly where they were located. They thus proved their gift and their ability to minister to profit.

(c) The saints were called to separate certain of these gifted men to the work of the Lord (vs. 2b). Here are two points worth noting:

(i) Only some of the gifted men were to be sent

forth. Not all the gifted men in an assembly should be sent forth to labour in other fields. Gifted men are required within the assembly itself.

(ii) The Spirit of God made it evident to the saints that Barnabas and Saul should go forth. They were not sent forth because they desired commendation but because the Holy Spirit said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul."

(d) The fellowship and commendation of the assembly followed (vs. 3). There was spiritual exercise on the part of the assembly in this matter, for they prayed and fasted. They expressed their fellowship with these two brethren by laying on of hands. Cf. 1 Tim. 5:22.

This method of commending brethren to the work of the Lord is called, "being sent forth by the Holy Spirit" (vs. 4). Another has commented, "To go unsent is to return unblest."

(7) *They were interested in missionary work* (14:26-27). Paul and Barnabas left Antioch commended to the work by their brethren there. They travelled westward, visiting the island of Cyprus, and many cities in the southern part of Asia Minor. It would appear that a number of assemblies were planted by these two brethren, and that the saints were established in the things of God by their ministry (14:21-25). When they returned to Antioch, the assembly came together to listen to their report on the Lord's work in distant places. They "rehearsed all that God had done" (14:27).

QUESTIONS

1. How are individual believers made members of the body of Christ?
2. What event was responsible for the spread of the gospel beyond Jerusalem?
3. How did the assembly at Antioch differ from the assembly at Jerusalem?
4. Why were the disciples first called Christians at Antioch?
5. Why did Paul and Barnabas leave Antioch and go into the regions beyond?
6. Name three types of ministry gifts found in Antioch.
7. How did the Assembly at Antioch show an interest in the regions beyond? Give two answers.

— N O T E S —

Chapter 20

THE BUILDING OF A CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY

According to the grace of God given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. I Corinthians 3:10.

I. The Assembly at Corinth

The assembly at Corinth is described in 1 Cor. 1:2 as "the church of God which is at Corinth . . . them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints." Such is the composition of a Scriptural assembly. It contains the sanctified ones or saints, those separated unto God through the death of His Son. Together they are called "the church of God."

It has pleased the Lord to dwell in the midst of His gathered saints through the Holy Spirit. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (3:16). For this reason an assembly is called a "temple of God" (cf. Eph. 2:21,22), and a "house of God" (1 Tim. 3:15).

The building of this house, God has committed to men. Paul says he laid the foundation for the assembly in Corinth, and that other men built upon this foundation. He admonishes them to build wisely, for such building will stand the test of the Judgment Seat of Christ, and receive a reward. He warns them that careless building will not stand this test, and that such builders will suffer loss when Christ rewards His servants for their work.

II. Laying the Foundation

The apostle laid the foundation of the Corinthian assembly by preaching the Gospel in that city. We read that he "was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews Jesus Christ" (Acts 18:5). "Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8). The apostle continued with these new converts for a year and a half, "teaching the word of God among them." He calls this work laying the foundation of the assembly.

Then he adds the significant warning, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Down through the years since then, men have gone into new places, preached the Gospel, baptized the believers, gathered them into assembly capacity, and taught them the word of the Lord. They too have laid foundations; others have followed and built thereupon.

III. Building on the Foundation

"Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work what sort it is."

There are thus two types of building: (i) gold, silver, precious stones, and, (ii) wood, hay stubble. The first type of building is of great value, while the second is almost worthless. The first type will stand the test of fire, and be purified by it; but the second type will be consumed by the fire.

What is the meaning of gold, silver, precious stones; of wood, hay, stubble?

The instructions for making the cherubim above the mercy-seat on the ark required that they be made of gold (Exod. 25:18). When we read of these same cherubim in Heb. 9:5, they are described as "cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat." Thus we learn that in the symbolism of Scripture gold speaks of God's glory.

In the instruction for numbering the children of Israel, we read that each man was required to bring "half a shekel" as "a ransom for his soul" (Exod. 30:12-13). From Exodus 38:25, we learn that this ransom money was silver. Thus we learn that in the symbolism of Scripture, silver speaks of ransom or redemption.

In 1 Peter 2:6, the Lord Jesus Christ is described as "a chief corner stone, elect precious." Thus we learn that in the symbolism of Scripture, a precious stone speaks of Christ. In harmony with this interpretation is John's description of Christ as he saw Him on the throne in the

glory: "He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone" (Rev. 4:3).

Wood, hay, and stubble are but earthly growths. The one has commercial value; the next feeds natural appetites; and the last is but rubbish. Is it possible that commercial motives should ever enter into the building of an assembly? Is it possible that another should build only to gratify his own desires? Is it possible that another should build rubbish into an assembly of God? Let us study this building a little.

There are three things built into an assembly: Principles, Persons, and Practices.

IV. Principles of the Assembly

We have already studied the distinctive principles of the Christian assembly — the things that mark it off as distinct from the organizations of men, viz.:

- (a) Restricted to Christian membership;
- (b) Gathered into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ;
- (c) Presenced by the Lord in the midst;
- (d) Subject to the Lordship of Christ;
- (e) Guided by overseers;
- (f) Instructed by ministers;
- (g) Exercising the priesthood of believers. (See the studies on Matt. 18:20).

When we build these principles into an assembly, when we teach men that these are God's standards, when the assembly we build is characterized by these principles, then our building is to the glory of God. It will be rated as gold in that day; it will stand the test of the fire (the holy judgment of God); it will receive a reward. Alas, that different principles should ever be taught among men — taught even for gain. Such building is wooden — an earthly growth that will not stand the test of His searching presence, nor merit any reward in that day.

V. Persons in the Assembly

Two dangers arise in the building of an assembly: (1) Including unsaved persons, and, (2) Excluding saved

persons, not Scripturally disqualified for moral or doctrinal evil. The assembly in Corinth embraced "them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints." When we build thus, on the ground of redemption, our building will be silver in that day. It will stand the test of His holy judgment, and will receive a reward. It is indeed sad when men bring persons into an assembly, unsaved, perhaps to increase the size of the assembly, perhaps because such persons have friends or relatives who are desirous to get them "inside." Such building is only to gratify natural desires, and will be but hay in that day. Let all such remember that "the fire shall try every man's work of what *sort* it is," as well as what *size* it is.

VI. Practices of the Assembly

Beside the principles which mark an assembly, and the persons who compose it, there are the practices which the assembly follows. We learned seven important practices of the Jerusalem church in our studies in Acts 2, viz.:

- (a) Sound Gospel preaching;
- (b) The baptism of believers;
- (c) Reception into the assembly;
- (d) Soundness of doctrine;
- (e) Assembly fellowship;
- (f) Breaking of Bread;
- (g) Prayers.

Such practices, when followed because of love to Christ, will be found to be precious stones in that day. They will stand the test of the fire. They will receive a reward. But what can we say of such unscriptural practices as church bazaars, appealing to the unsaved for money to carry on "the Lord's work," neglecting sound doctrine and preaching philosophy and politics instead? Will not such practices be stubble, mere rubbish, in that day? Will not such building be consumed in the fire?

VII. Reward or Loss

"If any man's work abide which he hath built there-upon, he shall receive a reward." How gracious of our Lord to reward us for our building. What a thrill it will

be for those who have built gold, silver, and precious stones into that building, to hear from His own lips, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things. I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

But if any man's building is but wood, or hay, or stubble, "it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." What a tragedy it is for a farmer to have to stand helplessly by and watch fire destroy his home and barns—most of his life work gone.

How much greater the tragedy to watch much of our building consumed "by fire" at the Judgment Seat of Christ; consumed because it was marked by the teaching of unscriptural principles taught for gain—wood; consumed because it countenanced the adding of the unredeemed to the assembly to satisfy personal desires—hay; consumed because it introduced unscriptural practices among the people of God—stubble. But though a man thus suffer loss—it is the loss of his reward, not of his life; for "he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

QUESTIONS

1. Why is a Christian assembly called a 'house of God'?"
2. What foundation must be laid before an assembly can be built? Quote from Scriptures to prove your answer.
3. (a) Of what is gold a symbol in the Scripture? Give two references to support your answer.
(b) Silver? Two references.
(c) Precious stones? Two references.
4. Name seven principles of the Christian assembly that will be accredited at the Judgment Seat.
5. Why will there be a loss of reward for adding unsaved persons to an assembly?
6. Name seven practices of the Christian assembly that will bring a reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

— N O T E S —

Chapter 21

WOMEN'S SERVICE IN THE CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY

Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be subject to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it.

This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Ephesians 5:24, 25, 32.

The position which the Scriptures accord the woman in the church is one of great interest, as well as one of great instructional value. The apostle teaches in Eph. 5 that the relationship of husband and wife pictures the relation of Christ and His church. What a blessed privilege is given to husband and wife to so order their married state that the world may see a picture of the heavenly union of Christ and His church. The position of subjection thus enjoined upon the woman in her relationship to her husband in the home is carried over into the assembly, where she is again required to be subject to the man in order that she may reflect the subjection of the church to Christ. All this does not suggest that the woman is personally inferior to her husband, but it does indicate that positionally she is subject unto him.

Let us look at these two co-ordinated themes, in the light of the Scriptures dealing first with

I. Woman's Position in Relation to Her Husband

1. An Help Meet For Him :

In creation, man was first formed, then the woman. Her creation is very instructive. We read that God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam. While he slept, God took one of his ribs from him, and from the rib, He made a woman (Gen. 2:18-24). Two truths stand out clearly from this account of woman's creation:

(a) Woman is not independent of the man, but is part of him, made from his very rib—"bone of my bone

and flesh of my flesh," said Adam. She was taken, as another has said, from his side, near to his heart, that she might be loved by him—not taken from his head, lest she might lord it over him; nor was she taken from his feet, lest he might keep her beneath his feet, in servile submission.

(b) The purpose for which God made the woman was that she might be "an help meet for him." She is neither his master nor his slave. She is part of him, his complement, that which is added to him to make him complete—"an help meet for him." "She will do him good and not evil, all the days of her life." (Prov. 31:12).

Married life centres around the home. The wife is pre-eminently the home maker. She is to "guide the house" (1 Tim. 5:14), to love her husband and her children, and to live her life as the maker of the home. All this is necessary to preserve that divine picture of the church's subjection to her Lord. Again let it be remembered that this positional subjection does not imply personal inferiority. One teacher equally capable with the second teacher is subject to that second teacher because he is the principal of the school.

2. *The Woman in Subjection to Her Husband Pictures the Church in Subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ:*
Eph. 5:22-33.

As we read this wonderful paragraph, we feel at times, that the Spirit of God is using the estate of matrimony to picture that holy intimacy that exists between Christ and the Church, and that will be fully consummated at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. He requires that submission from the wife that will reflect the church's submission to her Lord. He requires that love and care from the husband toward his wife that will reflect the Lord's love and care for His church.

At other times as we read this wonderful paragraph, we feel that the Spirit of God is reversing the picture, and using that holy intimacy that exists between Christ and the church to picture the estate of matrimony. The husband is to be to the wife what Christ is to the church;

the wife is to be to her husband what the church is to Christ. We then live an earthly life according to a heavenly pattern. May the Lord give us grace to do so.

II. Woman's Position in the Christian Assembly

Just as men and women meet in the home as husband and wife, men and women meet in the assembly as brethren and sisters. The positional submission required of the wife toward her husband by the Spirit of God in the home is carried over into the assembly.

1. *She Must Be Silent in the Church:*

In 1 Cor. 14, there is much instruction concerning ministry gifts and their use in the church. But all this has to do with the men in the assembly. "Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak . . . if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church" (1 Cor. 14:34, 35).

2. *She Must Not Teach:*

The complementary truth to learning in silence, is not teaching after she has learned. "But I suffer not a woman to teach . . . but to be in silence" (1 Tim. 2:12). This will not be difficult for the woman, even though she may know the Scriptures better than the man, if she remembers that God has entrusted to her to reflect the church's submission to her Lord. She will never desire to mar that sacred picture.

3. *She Must Not Exercise Authority Over the Man:*

Differences of judgment often arise in the administration of the domestic matters of the assembly, even as they will in the spiritual well being of the assembly. Even in these matters the woman is subject to the man. "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." This will *not be difficult* for the woman, if she remembers that it is her special prerogative to reflect the church's submission to her Lord.

(4) *The Signs of Her Subjection:* I Cor. 11:3-15.

Two signs have been given as tokens of her subjection to her husband and of the church's subjection to her Lord:

- (a) She must pray with her head covered: 1 Cor. 11:5, 13.
- (b) She must wear her hair long, i.e., not cut: 1 Cor. 11:5, 6, 10.

Because the man pictures Christ, he wears his hair short, and he prays with his head uncovered. There are to be no signs of subjection here—it would mar the picture entirely. Because the woman pictures the church, she is in subjection to the man, and indicates this fact by her long hair and by covering her head when she prays. Just as a gold band worn on the third finger of the left hand is a symbol of marriage, so the long hair and the covered head are symbols of subjection. This will be a joy to the woman when she remembers that it is her special function to portray the church's submission to Christ. (See Appendix).

III. Woman's Sphere of Service

It must never be thought that because a woman is silent in the church, and is not permitted to teach, that her sphere of service is not important. Hers is a fourfold service:

(1) *Homemaking:* 1 Tim. 5:14; Tit. 2:3-5. God has ordained the home as the centre of family life. The wife is the *homemaker*. The older women are instructed to teach the younger women the duties and the art of homemaking—to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, to be chaste, to be keepers at home, to be good, and to be obedient to their own husbands. Surely this is a great and a noble task. How much the Christian church owes to the godly wives and mothers who have lived their lives according to this Scriptural pattern.

(2) *Kindness, and Good Works:* 1 Tim. 5:10; Rom. 16:1-2; Acts 18:1-3. Beside her duty to her family, a Christian woman has many opportunities of serving

others—relieving the afflicted, doing acts of kindness, caring for the servants of the Lord, etc.

(3) *Private instruction*: Acts 18:26. Although it was not permitted to Priscilla to teach in the assembly, she was permitted to show hospitality to Apollos when he visited Ephesus, and with her husband Aquila to explain to him in their own home “the way of God more perfectly.”

(4) *Personal Testimony*: Phil. 4:3. Paul speaks of those women “which laboured with me in the Gospel.” Though not permitted to preach in the church, women are permitted to tell in other ways what God has done for them, and thus often to win a soul for the Lord. Let men and women never neglect the opportunities that may arise to witness personally for Christ.

QUESTIONS

1. What two truths are pictured by the fact that God made the woman from man's rib?
2. Why is the woman required to be in subjection to her husband?
3. Name four ways in which the woman's subjection to the man is evidenced in the assembly.
4. What two things are symbolized by a woman wearing long hair?
5. What four spheres of service are open to a woman according to the Scriptures?

— N O T E S —

SECTION G — THE CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY — ITS PURITY.

I. Discipline in the House of God—Ps. 93:5; 89:7; 1 Tim. 3:14, 15.

1. The House of God: Exod. 25:8; 1 Kings 8:11; 1 Pet. 2:5; Eph. 2:21; 1 Cor. 3:9, 16; 1 Tim. 3:15.
2. The Provision for Behavior:
 - a. The brother overtaken in a fault: Gal. 6:1.
 - b. The brother who trespasses against thee: Matt. 18:15-20.
 - c. The brother who walks disorderly: 2 Thess. 3:6-15.
 - d. Vain and unruly talkers: Tit. 1:9-14.
 - e. Brethren who cause divisions: Rom. 16:17, 18.
 - f. Serious moral offenders: 1 Cor. 5:1-13.
 - g. Doctrinal evil: 1 Tim. 1:19, 20.
3. Purposes of Discipline: Ps. 93:5; Gal. 6:1.

II. Separation from the World — 2 Cor. 6:14-18.

1. The Picture: The ox and ass yoked together: Deut. 22:10.
2. The Principle: 2 Cor. 6:14-16.
 - a. Definition of unequal yoke.
 - b. Examples of unequal yoke:
3. The Privilege: The expression of the Father's heart toward His children, and the pleasure of the Father's heart in His children: 2 Cor. 6:17-18.

III. Outside the Camp.

1. The Hebrew Argument: No covenant; no sacrifice; no holy place; no altar.
2. The Christian Answer:
 - a. A new covenant: Heb. 8:6, 8; 7:22.
 - b. A better sacrifice: Heb. 10:1-4; 9:26; 9:12; 10:10.
 - c. A high priest in the heavens: Heb. 8:1; 9:7, 12.
 - d. A holy place—heaven itself: Heb. 9:24.
 - e. An altar to which tabernacle worshippers have no claim: Heb. 13:10.
3. The Exhortation to Definite Christian Position: Heb. 13:13.
 - a. Identification with Him as a sacrifice for sin: Heb. 13:11; Lev. 16:27.
 - b. Identification with Him in separation from evil: Heb. 13:12; Exod. 32:1-7; 32:26; 33:7.
 - c. Identification with Him in His rejection: Heb. 13:13; 1 Sam. 22:1, 2; 1 Sam. 18:1; 19:2; 23:16-18; 31:1, 2, 6.
 - d. Identification with Him in His glory: Heb. 13:14; 2 Sam. 2:3; 1 Chron. 12:1; 2 Tim. 2:12; Lk. 19:17.

SECTION G

The Christian Assembly: Its Purity

Chapter 22

DISCIPLINE IN THE HOUSE OF GOD

Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord,
forever. Psalm 93:5

God is greatly to be feared in the assembly
of the saints, and to be had in reverence
of all them that are about Him. Psalm 89:7
These things write I unto thee . . . 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. 1 Timothy 3:14, 15.

I. The House of God

A man's house is the place where he dwells. His house bears the mark of the man's presence there; it seems to partake of his very character. Beautiful pictures adorn the walls of the artist's home; prayer and Bible reading are significant practices of a Christian's home. Similarly we read, "Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever," for our God is a holy God. In wilderness days God dwelt between the cherubim above the mercy seat within the tabernacle. That was the sanctuary where He dwelt (Ex. 25:8). When the temple had been built and dedicated to the Lord, we read that the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord (1 Kings 8:11). The temple was then His dwelling place. But today God dwells not in temples made with hands (Acts 7:48; 17:24). His is a spiritual house composed of living stones (1 Pet. 2:5), "an holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:21). Of this house, the assembly of the saints is a local expression. The assembly at Corinth was called God's building. It was a temple of God in which the Spirit of God dwelt (1 Cor. 3:9-16). It is in this connection that we have this searching exhortation, "thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God" (1 Tim. 3:15). For it is still true, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him."

The church is the depository of Christian doctrine; it is a pillar to hold up the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). It must ever teach. But it must do more. It must live

Christianity as well as teach it. Godly living is the "ground of the truth," the base upon which to erect the "pillar".

II. Provision for Behaviour

The Scriptures are given by inspiration of God. They contain all the instruction that the man of God needs to be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). There is also provision made in these same Scriptures for "correction, for instruction (lit., discipline or child-training) in righteousness." The Scriptures provide guidance for our behaviour, and correction for our misbehaviour. It is this latter theme that is before us in the present study.

1. *The Brother Overtaken in a Fault*

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." This Scripture (Gal. 6:1) pictures a man who has been overtaken in a fault. It is not a deliberate sin that is under consideration, not a pursuing of a course of sin. But rather sin is pictured as an enemy pursuing and overtaking the man. He is the victim of a surprise attack. "He was 'off guard' where he should have been on duty. He fell where he should have stood upright—this is the meaning of 'paraptoma', a fault.

The restoration of such a man is the work of spiritual brethren, men who can set "the Word of God alongside this brother's faulty conduct and condemn it, men whose own conduct is such that they can use the Word of God in correction of another man's conduct—spiritual men. Moreover they are to do this in a spirit of meekness, for meekness is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23) and is a characteristic of brotherly love (1 Cor. 13:4). How much need there is for the guidance of the Holy Spirit and for the expression of brotherly love when one seeks to restore a man overtaken in a fault. Moreover the work of restoration is to be done in a gracious, merciful and sympathetic manner—"considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." The washing of feet by the Master in John 13 is a remarkable illustration of Galatians 6:1.

2. *The Personal Offence: The Brother Who Trespasses Against Thee*

It sometimes happens that one brother wrongs another. The offended brother is not to seek redress in the law courts of the land. Read 1 Cor. 6:1-8 carefully. Instructions how to proceed are given in Matt. 18:15-20.

(a) *Private Settlement* (vs. 15). The offended brother is instructed to go to the offending brother and seek a private settlement—"between thee and him alone." He is to "tell him his fault." "If he repent, forgive him" (Lk. 17:3). "If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

(b) *Two or Three Witnesses* (vs. 16). If the offending brother refuses to settle the matter privately, then the aggrieved brother is to take with him "one or two more" and visit his brother again. These men are called witnesses. They will first witness to the offending brother regarding his error, and later, if need be, witness before the assembly concerning his misdeed and his attitude toward repentance. In view of their responsibility, only good and godly men should be taken on such an errand, men whose judgment will be impartial, men whose character will inspire confidence.

(c) *The Assembly Judgment* (vs. 17). If the offending brother refuses to hear these men, then the matter must go before the assembly for judgment. The witnesses will give their testimony here. When both sides of the matter have been presented, the assembly judges. If the offending brother refuses to hear the assembly, what then? "Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." "Thee" refers to the offended brother, not to the assembly, just as it does throughout the passage (vs. 15-17). In each case "thee" is the offended brother. The passage deals with the settlement of a personal offence; the guidance is for the individual who has been wronged; there is no reference to excommunication in the passage. The offended brother now treats the offending man not as a brother, but as he would treat an heathen man or a publican.

It is easily conceivable that railing or covetousness

or extortion may so enter into the case that further action must be taken by the assembly against the offending one. But responsibility for such action rests in 1 Cor. 5 rather than in the passage before us.

3. *The Brother Who Walks Disorderly.*

2 Thess. 3:6-15; I Thess. 5:14

The apostle writes of the "brother who walks disorderly" (2 Thess. 3:6), and "not after the tradition which he received of us," i.e., not according to the teaching of the Scriptures. From such we are to withdraw ourselves (vs. 6), and to have no company with such, "that he may be ashamed" (vs. 14). Yet he is to be admonished as a brother, and not treated as an enemy (vs. 15). The apostle also speaks of "them that are unruly" (1 Thess. 5:14). We are to "warn" such. It may be that the admonishing of the disorderly brother and the warning of the unruly brother may not be effective. Then what? "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others may fear" (1 Tim. 5:20). Public rebuke may be necessary if admonition and warning fail.

4. *Unruly and Vain Talkers:* Titus 1:9-14.

The apostle deals here with "gainsayers", men who oppose the truth, men who teach error in the assembly, "unruly and vain talkers and deceivers," men who teach "things that they ought not." Such men can do a great deal of harm in an assembly, especially among the younger and less experienced Christians. Such men must be disciplined:

(a) *Restraint:* vs. 9, 11. Elder brethren are to convince (better, 'convict' as the margin reads) such. It is not difficult to convict such men from the Scriptures, although it is often difficult to convince them. Such action is precautionary.

(b) *Rebuke:* vs. 13. If the brother continues to teach "things which he ought not" after he has been shown from the Scriptures that he is in error, then he must be silenced (vs. 11), and rebuked sharply (vs. 13). This action is disciplinary.

(c) *Rejection:* Titus 3:10. "A man that is an here-

tic, after the first and second admonition reject." The first admonition is restraint; the second is rebuke. When these fail, the factious teacher is removed. Such action is punitive.

5. *Brethren Who Cause Divisions* : Rom. 16:17, 18.

Men who cause divisions, parties, and estrangements between groups in the assembly, men who work with "good words and fair speeches," men who "deceive the hearts of the simple" are to be marked or noted, and shunned or avoided (vs. 17). Such men should not be allowed to minister in an assembly, for "they serve not our Lord Jesus Christ."

6. *Serious Moral Offenders*: 1 Cor. 5:1-13.

We have seen how to treat "a brother overtaken in a fault." We are now dealing with a brother who lived in sin, even such shocking sin "as is not so much as named among the Gentiles" (vs. 1). It is necessary "to put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (vs. 13). Such an one is "delivered unto Satan" (vs. 5), that is put out of the assembly into the world where Satan rules. Sins are listed as being punishable by excommunication (vs. 11).

7. *Doctrinal Evil*: 1 Tim. 1:19, 20.

Doctrinal evil, like moral evil, calls for excision, or putting away. Of Hymenaeus and Alexander, we read that they "made shipwreck" of the faith. Hymenaeus taught that the resurrection was past, and overthrew the faith of some of God's people (2 Tim. 2:17, 18). Alexander openly opposed the apostle's teaching (2 Tim. 4:14). Such are "delivered unto Satan, that they may learn (lit., be disciplined, 'paideuthosin') not to blaspheme" (1 Tim. 1:20).

III. Purposes of Discipline

Let us ever remember that discipline has a two-fold objective: (a) To maintain holiness in the house of the Lord (Ps. 93:5), and, (b) To effect the restoration of the offending brother or sister (Gal. 6:1).

QUESTIONS

1. Why ought men to behave themselves in the house of God?
2. In what way is an assembly (i) a pillar of truth, (ii) the ground of the truth?
3. What treatment should be accorded a brother who has been overtaken in a fault?
4. Briefly state three steps to be taken when a brother has committed a personal offence against a fellow Christian.
5. What two forms of discipline do the Scripture prescribe for the brother whose walk is disorderly? Give two Scripture references.
6. What should be done with men who disturb the peace of the assembly by teaching things which they ought not? Give three references.
7. What attitude should we take to division makers?
8. What must be done with persons guilty of serious moral offences?
9. What must be done with men who hold and teach unsound doctrine?
10. What are the two purposes of assembly discipline? Prove with two references.

- N O T E S -

Chapter 23

SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? . . . Wherefore come ye out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

I. The Picture

The question of the unequal yoke belongs to the Old Testament and also to the New. In the Old Testament we get the picture; in the New the principle. "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together" (Deut. 22:10). This verse forms part of a most interesting paragraph (vs. 9-12) in which we learn God's abhorrence of mixed principles. "Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds" (vs. 9). The seed pictures doctrine. Good seed is the Word of God (Matt. 13:23). God desires that nothing should be mixed with His Word. Mixed teaching is prohibited. Cf. Gal. 1:6-9. Then we read, "Thou shalt not make a garment of divers sorts" (vs. 11): The garment is that which is outward, that which everyone sees, and thus speaks of testimony. Mixed testimony is forbidden; everything that we do or say should be to His glory. In between these two prohibitions is the one we are considering, "Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together." Here mixed service is prohibited.

It should be noted that it is not ploughing that is prohibited—ploughing is good. But ploughing with an ox and ass yoked together was prohibited. A yoke is a contrivance for binding two animals together to work together for a common purpose. It is team work, and necessarily limits individuality of action. Team work is not forbidden; the yoke is good. But the unequal yoke, the binding together of ox and ass, is forbidden.

There would seem to be three reasons for this. (a) *The Humanitarian Reason*: The ox and the ass have different gaits, giving them different shoulder movements as they walk. To put a yoke upon them would gall the shoulders of both. Moreover, they walk at different speeds. To yoke them together would annoy both. (b) *The Ceremonial Reason*: The ox is a clean animal (cf. Lev. 11:3). It divides the hoof and chews the cud. It is thus a picture of the Christian. The divided hoof lifts easily from the mud, and speaks of a clean walk. The chewing of the cud, the eating again of that already eaten, speaks of the meditating on the Word of God, spiritual food eaten again and yet again. The ass is an unclean animal. It neither divides the hoof, nor chews the cud. It pictures the unsaved man. Therefore God forbade that they should be yoked together. (c) *The Spiritual Reason*: Old Testament experiences often have typical value. "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples (or types)" (1 Cor. 10:11). The prohibition of ox and ass yoked together foreshadowed the later prohibition of mixed service which we are now considering—"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

II. The Principle

The unequal yoke is the binding together of saved and unsaved for a common purpose. This can be easily seen by setting the two sets of contrasts used by the Holy Spirit in separate columns, thus,

Righteousness	Unrighteousness
Light	Darkness
Christ	Belial
The Believer	An Infidel
The Temple of God	The Idol

The five terms in the first column can be used to describe every believer in Christ. Not one of the terms in the second column is applicable to a believer; they can be applied only to the unsaved. Therefore, the separation enjoined in this text is unmistakably the separation of the believer from the unbeliever, the separation of the child

of God from the world. Let us consider five spheres in which the Christian is sometimes enticed into an unequal yoke, oftentimes to his sorrow, and always to his loss.

(1) *The Commercial Yoke : The Business Partnership.*

James and John were partners with Simon in the fishing business (Luke 5:10). It often happens that men find it convenient to pool their resources and work together in partnership in business. But such an arrangement cannot prosper long when one of the partners is saved and the other unsaved. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" How can the saved man and the unsaved man agree in business methods and business ethics? Two can only walk together if they are agreed (Amos 3:3). The unsaved man cannot rise to the spiritual level of the saved man. The two can agree only if the saved man adopts the ethics and the methods of the unsaved man. "Fellowship can only be obtained by the descent of the righteous to the level of the unrighteous; by the surrender for the time being of all that is characteristic of the calling of the saint." (Caldwell).

(2) *The Matrimonial Yoke : The Domestic Partnership.*

God has ordained marriage as the ideal arrangement for family life. It is God's purpose that man and woman should live together as husband and wife. But it is forbidden that a saved man or woman should marry an unsaved woman or man. "What communion hath light with darkness?" What fellowship can one who has been enlightened by the grace of God have with one who still sits in darkness and refuses the Christ of God. How can such a union picture "Christ and the church?" Read carefully Eph. 5:22-33. How can God bless such an unholy alliance? How can God "be a Father" to such an unscriptural union?

(3) *The Fraternal Yoke : The Social Partnership.*

The world is full of social arrangements—picnics, frolics, clubs, societies, and organizations to promote happiness and mutual well being. The aims of some of these organizations sound quite praiseworthy. But saved and unsaved join together in promoting the pleas-

ure, or the social uplift, or whatever the society exists to promote. That is ploughing with ox and ass yoked together. That is an effort to establish concord (lit., symphony) between Christ and Belial. How could these two ever play a tune in harmony? What concord could ever exist between one who belongs to Christ and a son of Belial even in social events? Whose standard of conduct will prevail, the saved or the unsaved? Whose standards of conversation must be adopted, the saved or the unsaved? Can the unsaved talk of spiritual things, or must the saved talk about earthly things? Which standard of ideals must prevail, the ideals of the Christian or the ideals of the worldling? How could God ever "be a Father" to such an arrangement? "Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing."

(4) *The Ecclesiastical Yoke: The Religious Partnership.*

We have already seen that church fellowship should be restricted to those who have been saved by God's grace. Yet there are systems all about us, devised by men's wisdom, where saved and unsaved meet together for the "public worship" of God. But "what part hath he that believeth with an infidel (or unbeliever)?" How can these two worship together, or testify together, or pray together, or serve together? What part or share can an unbeliever have in preaching Christ as the sinner's Saviour? How could God "be a Father" to such an arrangement?

(5) *The Philanthropic Yoke: The Service Partnership.*

But there is one sphere where the temptation for saved to join forces with the unsaved is very strong—in doing good to our fellow man. "What harm can there possibly be in helping to do good?" is often asked. There is no harm in ploughing—ploughing is good. But the divine prohibition forbids the yoking together of ox and ass, the team work of saved and unsaved. "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" What accord can a worshipper of God have with a mammon worshipper in service clubs, in philanthropic organizations, in social uplift groups?

III. The Privilege

God describes these partnerships as an "unclean thing," and out of all these unequal partnerships, God bids His own to come. "Wherefore come ye out from among them and be ye separate." Come out from among whom? From among the unrighteous, the darkness, Belial, the infidel, and the idol or mammon worshipper! "Touch not the *unclean thing*." Such terms can only refer to the unsaved, the worldling. God will not permit us to call unclean, that which He has cleansed (Acts 10: 14,15): much less would He do so Himself. When the children of God are in view, the exhortation reads, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Ps. 133:1). But when the unsaved are in view, the exhortation reads, "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate . . . and touch not the unclean thing."

There is a priceless reward attached to such separation. "I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." This cannot refer to the fact of our sonship, for that is not conditioned by our works, our obedience. That comes through believing the Gospel, through the acceptance of Christ. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (Jn. 1:12). But although the relationship of sons to the Father and of the Father to His sons does not depend upon our obedience, yet the expression of that relationship is dependent upon that very thing. "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate . . . and touch not the unclean thing . . . and I will be to you all that a Father would like to be to His children, and ye shall be to Me all that sons and daughters ought to be. I will be to you an ideal Father; ye shall be to Me ideal children." Thus might this promise be paraphrased. Who of us does not desire that it might be so in our lives?

QUESTIONS

1. What three things are prohibited in Deut. 22:1-11?
2. Give three reasons why God prohibited ploughing with ox and ass yoked together.
3. What is meant by the unequal yoke? 2 Cor. 6:14.
4. Quote two short portions from 2 Cor. 6:14-18 to prove that the separation here enjoined upon the Christian is separation from the world.
5. Name five spheres in which the Christian is in danger of becoming entangled in unequal yokes.
6. If an unequal yoke is entered upon, upon what ground can agreement or fellowship exist between the saved and the unsaved partners?
7. What two blessings are promised to those who come out from the world and maintain a separate position?

— N O T E S —

Chapter 24

OUTSIDE THE CAMP

Let us go forth unto Him without the camp
bearing His reproach. Hebrews 13:13.

I. The Hebrew Argument

It is always well to remember that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written to the Hebrews, that is to converted Jews, to people brought up in the Jewish religion, many of them until middle life, and then converted to Christ and Christianity. They found it difficult to break away entirely from the things they had learned and practiced; hard to leave the temple, the synagogue, and the teachings of Judaism. Moreover, the orthodox Jew brought strong arguments to induce them to remain in Judaism and renounce Christianity altogether. The Christian religion, they said, had no covenant, no sacrifice, no high priest, no holy place, and no altar.

II. The Christian Answer to the Hebrew Argument

The Epistle to the Hebrews is largely an answer to these arguments.

No covenant? The apostle writes of a "new covenant"—"a better covenant . . . established on better promises" (Heb. 8:6, 8). Of this covenant, Jesus Christ is the surety or guarantor (7:22), as well as the mediator (8:6).

No sacrifice. The Old Testament sacrifices never made the comers thereunto perfect; they made a remembrance of sin every year; they never took away sins (Heb. 10:1-4). What a serious indictment that is! But in the death of Christ, the Christian has a sacrifice that "put away sin" (9:26); through its atoning value, the Christian has "eternal redemption" (9:12); because of its abiding value, the "offering of the body of Jesus Christ" is "once for all" (10:10).

No high priest? "We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (8:1). No such claim could ever be made for Israel's high priest. He entered the presence of the Lord but once a year (9:7); his work was never done. But

Christ, "by His own blood . . . entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (9:12).

No holy place? "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (9:24). How convincing such argument must have been to the converted Jew of the superiority of Christianity over Judaism.

No altar? Yes, "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle" (13:10). The altar is identified for us in vs. 13: "Let us go forth therefore unto *Him*." He is the altar (v. 10) as well as the sacrifice (v. 12) of this altar. The Jew who still brings his Old Testament sacrifices has no right to partake (vs. 10). What does this mean? *They who seek salvation by law keeping have no claim upon Christ!*

III. The Exhortation to Definite Christian Position

The writer has proven (a) the unspeakable superiority of Christianity over Judaism, (b) that Jesus Christ is outside Judaism altogether—He died "without the gate" (vs. 13). "Therefore," writes the apostle, if you would be with Him, "go forth unto Him, without the camp" (vs. 13). There are two correlated principles here: (I) Separation from the systems of men where He is outside—"Go forth therefore unto Him without the camp," and, (II) Identification with Himself in that outside place—"Go forth therefore unto Him without the camp."

The writer uses Old Testament illustrations to indicate what is involved in the position which he calls "without the camp." They illustrate a fourfold way in which we are to be identified with Him, and together form a cumulative argument that is irresistible.

(1) *Identification With Him as a Sacrifice For Sin*

"The bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the gate" (vs. 11). The Old Testament reference is to the Day of Atonement, and the burning of the sin offering without the camp, (Lev. 16:27). When we are exhorted to go forth unto Him without the camp,

two great principles are involved: (I) Identification with Him and His atoning sacrifice "without the camp" and (II) Separation from sin and sinners—outside the camp.

(2) *Identification With Him in Separation From Evil*

"Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate" (vs. 12). The Old Testament reference is to Ex. 33:7 and the incident of the golden calf. While Moses was in the mountain getting communications from God, the people cried to Aaron, "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of Egypt, we wot not what has become of him" (32:1). Aaron listened to their cry, and made them a golden calf, and said to them, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." With what elaborate religious pretensions did he surround this terrible idolatry. He built an altar; he made "a feast to the Lord;" he offered burnt offerings and peace offerings (32:5,6). It should be carefully observed that Aaron's system provided no sin offering. In New Testament language, he had a system that speaks of the cross, that keeps the Lord's Supper, that extols the loveliness of Christ and proclaims peace through Him; but which has no atoning sacrifice for sin. Many today might be deceived by the religious veneer covering such a system, even as many were deceived in Aaron's day. But God was not deceived. He said to Moses, "Thy people . . . have corrupted themselves" (32:7). Nor was Moses deceived. He called upon all that were upon the Lord's side to come unto him as he stood in the gate of the camp. (32:26). This was separation from the evil of idolatry and the religious pretensions which were associated with it. Then Moses pitched the tabernacle without the camp. "And every one that sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp" (Ex. 33:7). This is identification with Himself; this is taking a stand "on the Lord's side." The message to us today is to separate ourselves from all religious evil, despite its religious pretensions, and identify ourselves with Him, without the camp—to come out definitely "on the Lord's side."

(3) *Identification With Him in His Rejection*

"Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (vs. 13). The argument is cumulative. In vs. 11, the emphasis was on our identification with Him as a sacrifice for sins in the outside place. In vs. 12, we are still in the outside place, but the emphasis is now on our identification with Him in separation from evil and evil pretensions. But in this verse, we have the added thought of sharing His rejection, bearing His reproach in the outside place. The Old Testament reference is to the time that David hid from Saul in the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. 22:1-2). Four hundred men—men who were in distress, in debt, discontented—gathered themselves unto him, and he became a captain over them. What a delightful picture of the formation of an assembly. There is a God-anointed king in rejection, even as the Lord Jesus, God's Anointed, is now rejected. Distressed, indebted, discontented men came to David. Did you ever read a more concise, yet more accurate description of the sinner? Distressed, indebted, discontented! As such we came to Him for salvation. But these men did more. They "gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them." What a lovely foreshadowing of an assembly—those who were once distressed, indebted, and discontented, gathered unto Him, and giving Him the place of Lord in their midst.

But David had one devoted follower who failed to share his rejection in Adullam. His name was Jonathan. "And Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Sam. 18:1) "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David;" Again we read, "Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David" (19:2). Jonathan went to David, he acknowledged his kingship, he entered into covenant relationship with him, but he failed to share his rejection in Adullam (1 Sam. 23:16-18). He perished in the disastrous battle on Mt. Gilboa (1 Sam. 31:1, 2, 6)—a sad fate he might have escaped had he been in Adullam. One cannot read this intensely human story, observing the close parallel with many Christian lives today, and escape the conclusion that they will be losers, not only in time but also at the Judgment Seat of Christ. "Let us go forth therefore unto Him . . . bearing His reproach."

(4) *Identification With Him in His Glory.*

This thing has a future! It has its sorrows and suffering now, but it has a reward by and by. "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. 13:14). The argument is still cumulative. Those who shared David's rejection were without a continuing city in Adullam. But when David came to the throne, "His men that were with him did David bring up, every man with his household; and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron" (2 Sam. 2:3). Moreover, they were honoured in David's kingdom. "Now these are they that came to David in Ziklag, while he yet kept himself close, because of Saul the son of Kish; and they were among the mighty men, helpers of the war" (1 Chron. 12:1). Those who shared David's rejection were brought into the cities of Hebron, and became David's mighty men, in the kingdom. Has not all this a lesson for us? "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. 2:12). How it will thrill the soul, should we hear Him say to us in that day, "Well, thou good servant; because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities" (Lk. 19:17).

"Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach," identifying ourselves with Him as the one sacrifice for sins forever, separating ourselves from all evil though clothed with religious pretensions, and sharing His rejection. Then in His glory we shall also share!

Our Lord is now rejected,
And by the world disowned,
By the many still neglected,
And by the few enthroned;
But soon He'll come in glory!
The hour is drawing nigh,
For the crowning day is coming
By and by.

QUESTIONS

1. Quote one verse for each, from the Epistle to the Hebrews to answer the Hebrew argument that the Christian has: (a) no covenant (b) no sacrifice for sins (c) no high priest (d) no holy place (e) no altar.
2. What is the meaning of "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle"?
3. What two principles are laid down for us in Heb. 13:13?
4. What is required of the Christian in Heb. 13:11? What is the illustration used?
5. What is required of the Christian in Heb. 13:12? What is the illustration used?
6. What is required of the Christian in Heb. 13:13? What is the illustration used?
7. What reward is promised to those who share His rejection now? What illustration is used?

— N O T E S —

**SECTION H — THE CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY IN
ITS PROSPECT —**

THE COMING OF THE LORD.

Jno. 14:3; 1 Thes. 4:16, 17, Rev. 21:10 - 22:6

- I. Heaven a Real Place — The Father's House**
- II. The Reception of the Bride by the Lord Jesus**
- III. The Presentation of the Bride in her New Home**
- IV. A City of Matchless Beauty**
- V. A City of Incomparable Blessings**

SECTION H

The Christian Assembly — Its Prospect

Chapter 25

THE COMING OF THE LORD

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. —John 14:3

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

The Second Coming of Christ was the hope and prospect of the Early Church. We read of the Thessalonian Christians that they “turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven” (1 Thess. 1:9-10). It is similarly written in the Philippian Epistle “For our conversation [lit., citizenship] is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20). Even in carnal Corinth, where there was much to occasion shame and sorrow, we read that they were “waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 1:7). Such was the “blessed hope” of the Early Church.

It was a sad day in the Church's history when the Coming of the Lord ceased to bulk largely in their thinking. Little by little they lost that hope. History refers to the centuries in which that hope was dimmed as The Dark Ages. God in His mercy graciously revived this truth in the hearts of His people a little more than a hundred years ago, along with a revival of other blessed truths such as the priesthood of all believers, the gathering of saints in the Name of the Lord Jesus.

In this materialistic age, people are inclined to view the Coming of the Lord with a measure of skepticism. This spirit had begun even in Peter's time. He found it necessary to declare, “We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (II Peter 1:16). Peter goes still further and says that in the last days

there will arise "scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (II Peter 3:3-4). One turns with joy from these worldly-wise opinions to the certainty with which the Scriptures declare the Coming of the Lord.

The disciples in the upper room had been saddened by the Lord's announcement of His approaching death. He comforted them with these words, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

With these words the Lord Jesus Christ filled the souls of His disciples with heavenly vision. His words tended to wean their hearts from the earthly, and center them on that which is heavenly. Let us look at the home of the redeemed in the glory—that place of heavenly magnificance, into which we shall enter immediately upon the coming of our Lord.

I. Heaven Is a Real Place — The Father's House

Because heaven is the home of God the Father, the Lord Jesus called it, "My Father's house." It is the home to which He returned from this earth—"I go to prepare a place for you." It was to this home that He was welcomed when the Cloud (the Shekinah, symbol of the Father's presence) received Him out of their sight (Acts 1:9). It is in that home that He at present is seated at the "right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Heb. 8:1). It is to this home that the redeemed of the Lord shall be presently welcomed—"I go to prepare a place for you." It is a large place for it contains "many mansions"—many dwelling places, homes for the redeemed. It is a city that hath foundations whose Builder and Maker is God (Heb. 11:10). That home is now being made ready by the Lord Jesus for the coming of His blood-bought bride.

II. The Reception of the Bride by the Lord Jesus

It is customary to hold a reception for a bride-to-be. The Lord Jesus Himself will do this for His own bride. "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself." What a delightful event it will be in the glory when the newly arrived bride is received by her Lord.

III. The Presentation of the Bride in Her New Home

1. *Presented in her home*: "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy . . ." (Jude 24). The bride is presented in physical likeness to the Lord Jesus Christ—"faultless," "fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). This will occur after the rapture.

2. *Presented to her Father*: "To present you holy and unblameable and unreprouable in His sight" (Col. 1:22). This is in moral perfection after the Judgment Seat of Christ, when all the blemishes and imperfections shall have been put away. Then truly "we shall be like Him . . . for we shall see Him as He is" (I John 3:2).

3. *Presented to her heavenly Bridegroom*: "That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). This will be at the Marriage of the Lamb, when the bride in the spiritual perfection of family likeness is presented to her heavenly Bridegroom—"For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29).

IV. A City of Matchless Beauty

John the apostle was given a preview of the home city of the redeemed. He has recorded for our learning and encouragement what he saw, in Revelation 21:10 to 22:6. The city has twelve foundations composed of twelve

precious stones, symbolically representing the glories of Christ, for He is the true foundation upon which the Church is built. But in those days when the foundations were being laid, there were twelve men who left their impress upon the Early Church, in token of which the names of the apostles of the Lamb are inscribed upon the city's foundations (21:14). The wall of that city is of jasper, clear crystal stone like our diamond, rising some two hundred and sixteen feet in height (21:17-18). There are twelve gates in this city, each gate being a separate pearl (v. 21). The names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel are written on these gates, suggesting that there will be inter-communication between heaven and earth in Millennial days. The city is built of gold like unto clear glass (v. 18). The street also is paved with pure gold (v. 21). In the middle of the street is a great boulevard with a river of the water of life flowing, clear as crystal, from the throne of God and of the Lamb. On either side of this street grows the tree of life with twelve manner of fruits—a fresh fruit every month (22:1-2).

V. A City of Unparalleled Magnitude

The city is foursquare. Its length and its breadth being equal—twelve thousand furlongs (1500 miles) each way. If placed upon the North American Continent, the corner stone could be laid at the Pacific Ocean and the north wall would reach about one hundred miles into the Gulf of Mexico. Then the city would be squared. It is fifteen hundred miles high. It is a city of real “sky-scrapers,” a city that hath foundations—it surely needs them (v. 16).

VI. A City of Incomparable Blessings

There is no pavement to pay for in that city, for the street is paved with pure gold (v. 21). There will be no water bills, for the river of water of life flows clear as crystal (22:1). There will be no hydro to pay for, for the Lamb is the light thereof (v. 23). There will be

no food shortage, for the tree of life yields a fresh harvest every month (22:2). There will be no depression in that city—the gold is so plentiful, they paved the street with it; the pearls are so large they use them for gates; precious stones are so plentiful, they lay the foundations of the city therewith. There will be no unemployment in that city, for His servants shall serve Him (22:3). There will be no tears there, for God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes (21:4). There will be no pain, no sorrow, and no death, for the former things are passed away (21:4). There will be no curse in that city, for the throne of God and of the Lamb is there. (22:3).

QUESTIONS

1. What was the hope of the early church ?
2. What attitude would be taken towards the Lord's coming in the last days ?
3. Differentiate between the three presentations of the church.

— NOTES —

SECTION I — APPENDICES

Appendix A

THE USE OF "EIS" AND "EN"

Appendix B

RE "TO THE CHURCH" IN ACTS 2:47

Appendix C

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Appendix D

**ESSENTIAL MEETINGS OF THE CHRISTIAN
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Appendix E

**SHOULD WOMEN PUT ON A HEAD COVERING
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Appendix F

PRECENTOR—PRAISE LEADER—SONG DIRECTOR

Appendix G

TAKING CHILDREN TO MEETINGS

Appendix A

THE USE OF "EIS AND "EN"

By J. R. Littleproud

Many Greek prepositions are used with different shades of meaning, so that in some grammars the various meanings are listed and numbered. Mr. Vine in his "New Testament Greek Grammar" lists five such uses for "eis." Under one of these uses, he says, "The proper use is to be gathered from the context." One of the uses he lists for "eis" is, "with the meaning of 'en'", and he cites "eis ton agrin", "in the field" (Mark 13:16) as an example. Many other examples of the use of "eis" as the equivalent of "en" might be cited, e.g., "He preached in (eis) their synagogues" (Mk. 1:39), "It was noised that he was in (eis) the house" (Mk. 2:1).

"He himself stayed in (eis) Asia" (Acts 19:22).

Moreover, there are instances where the meaning of these two prepositions is so similar as to make them interchangeable. e.g.,

- "casting a net into (eis) the sea" (Matt. 4:18),
- "casting a net into (en) the sea" (Mark 1:16),
- "strawed them in (eis) the way" (Mark 11:8),
- "strawed them in (en) the way" (Matt. 21:8).

It must not be thought however that these two prepositions are always synonymous or interchangeable. In the following examples, a very definite distinction in use is quite easily discernible:

- (a) "They went into (eis) Capernaum" (Mk. 1:21)
"Whatsoever we have heard done in (en) Capernaum" (Luke 4:23).
- (b) "He went into (eis) the synagogue" (Lk. 4:16)
"He taught in (en) their synagogues" (Luke 4:15)
- (c) "Entered into (eis) Simon's house" (Lk. 4:38)
"Made him a great feast in (en) his own house" (Luke 5:29)
- (d) "He went into (eis) the Pharisee's house" (Lk. 7:36)
"Jesus sat at meat in (en) the Pharisee's house" (Luke 7:37).

Green in his "Handbook to the Grammar of the Greek Testament" says in par. 308:

"Although no two prepositions are synonymous, they often approach one another so nearly in meaning as to be apparently interchangeable. It is sometimes important to notice the distinction, however subtle; at other times it appears immaterial to the sense. Yet it is always safer to look for a real difference in meaning." It appears to the author that Matt. 18:20 is one of the instances where it is "important to notice the distinction." The following examples are cited to show the distinction between "in the name" (*en toi onomati*) and "into the name" (*eis to onoma*):

Preaching "in (*en*) the name of Jesus" (Acts 9:27) signifies the authority that Paul had for preaching—he had been commissioned by the risen Lord for this ministry (see vs. 15, 16). On the other hand gathering "into (*eis*) the name" of the Lord Jesus (Matt. 18:20) indicates our identification with Him in our assembly relationships.

Similarly, "baptized into (*eis*) Moses" (1 Cor. 10:2), and "baptized into Christ" (Gal. 3:27) indicates identification with Moses and with Christ, whereas, "He commanded them to be baptized in (*en*) the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48) indicates the authority which Peter invoked when he commanded that Cornelius should be baptized. This distinction throws an interesting sidelight on the interpretation of the baptism of the disciples of John in Acts 19. They had already been baptised "unto (*eis*) John's baptism" (vs. 3)—they had been identified with John and his baptism. But after Paul had explained to them the purpose of John's ministry (vs. 4), they "were baptized in (*eis*, lit., into) the name of the Lord Jesus" (vs. 5)—they identified themselves with Him in their baptism.

The author believes he has proven the case for a distinction between "in the name" as indicative of authority, and "into the name" as indicative of identification and relationship; and here leaves the matter to the judgment of his readers.

Appendix B

RE "TO THE CHURCH" IN ACTS 2:47

By J. R. Littleproud

It is difficult to determine with finality whether the words "to the church" belong in Acts 2:47 or not. They occur in the Received Text but not in such excellent Mss. as the Alexandrine, the Vatican, and the Sinaitic. Lachmann, Tischendorf, Tregelles, and Alford omit them, while they are retained by Griesbach and Scholz. It is evident however, that the saved-ones were added by the Lord to something, and that that something is the community of believers at Jerusalem, called in vs. 44, "all that believed." This company is referred to again in Acts 4:32, where it is described as "the multitude of them that believed." In Acts 5:11, this same company is called "the church." This term occurs frequently throughout the Book of Acts to denote the company of believers at Jerusalem, the company at Antioch, and various companies in different centers. It is therefore of little moment to our subject whether the words "to the church" actually occur in the text of Acts 2:47 or not. The idea is there; it is abundantly evident that the company of believers there, to whom the Lord added the saved-ones is the church. The thought is so indisputably in the text, that the term is retained whenever Acts 2:47 is quoted in this volume.

Appendix C

LETTERS OF COMMENDATION

By J. R. Littleproud

When Christians move from the place where they are known to one where they are not known, it is important that they take with them letters of commendation from the assembly where they are in fellowship. When Phebe went from Cenchrea to Rome, Paul wrote to the assembly at Rome, commending her to their care and fellowship (Rom. 16:1-2). How gladly the saints at Rome would welcome her when she came thus commended.

When Apollos left Ephesus to go into Achaia, the Ephesian brethren wrote exhorting the brethren in Achaia to receive him (Acts 18:27). Thus accredited, he was not only received, but the saints had confidence in him, with the result that he "helped them much which had believed through grace."

Again, Paul wrote to the Corinthian assembly, "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you?" He has stated two truths:

- (a) When persons are well known in an assembly where they are visiting, it is unnecessary to bring again letters of commendation.
- (b) Other Christians should bring such letters.

The practice of taking letters of commendation should commend itself to all Christians. It avoids all trouble and doubt at the place one hopes to be received, and begets confidence and a hearty welcome. If one has difficulty in obtaining reception where he is not known because he neglected to observe this Scriptural principle, he has only himself to blame.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE :

We reprint herewith a copy of a letter of commendation written in 1901. The letter was signed by the late brother R. C. Chapman when he was in his hundredth year. One cannot but be impressed by the simplicity of this paper, and we feel it to be worthy of preservation. Such a letter would never be confused with a certificate of membership.

23. 4. 01

9 NEW BUILDINGS,

BARNSTAPLE.

Christ the Lord
our Righteousness

Let me commend to
the fellowship of the
children of God our
brother Kitchin, his wife
Sister M. Laro - now
leaving England for
Canada. (for Toronto)

R. C. Chapman

Edw. J. Pearce

Appendix D

ESSENTIAL MEETINGS OF THE CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY

By Wm. J. Pell

And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them. Acts 20:7.

When ye come together, every one of you hath a Psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. 1 Corinthians 14:26.

The Open Meeting

It seems evident that the meetings of the early church were on the order of 1 Corinthians 14 or what has been called the "open meeting." Older brethren tell us that the meetings in early days of those who gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus alone were open meetings for "prayer, praise and prophecy." One has said that as the power diminished these assembly meetings lapsed. It is to be regretted that in many places such a meeting has been relegated to the meeting for the Breaking of the Bread, which meeting is of necessity restricted in its character.

In a recent publication, the chief of the religious policy for the United States Information Agency* in Washington wrote of such a meeting as the "Alternative to Futility." He advocated, without referring to chapter and verse for doing so, the advisability of groups gathering together without any platform or chair suggestive of a chairman, with no one coming to that meeting expecting to speak and no one determined to keep silence. He suggests that when such a meeting is too large for this face to face gathering there should be the formation of smaller such meetings. Although the professor suggests that such meetings should be a part of larger companies, the Lord has taught His own so to meet in separation to Himself.

Mr. W. Hoste, in his valuable book, "Bishops, Priests and Deacons" says, "To make up our minds not to take part is as unspiritual as coming with our thumbs in our pet hymn, or the leaf turned down at our favourite

Elton Trueblood, in "Alternative to Futility." Harper Brothers, N.Y.C. \$1.00.

chapter, determined to have our say. In this case we fail to edify; in the other we tempt the wordy to take part to no profit. At the same time I believe that *clericalism has arisen as much from the supineness of the majority as from the frowardness of the few*. Unless there be more energy of faith and more preparedness of heart, we shall run high and dry on the reef of ministerialism. Already ominous bumps are felt."

Such open meetings, not necessarily linked with the Remembrance Feast, may assume a different character in keeping with the exercise of the saints and the leading of the Holy Spirit. At times, particularly at times of trial, a burden of prayer may be manifest, but it would hardly be proper to call it a prayer meeting; at other times much time may be spent in ministry, but it is not necessarily a ministry meeting.

Variety or Restriction

There has been difference of thought among the Lord's people as to whether the ministry at such a meeting should be limited to two or three. Our brother, the late Mr. Littleproud, taught that there should be this limitation. There are others, however, who feel that the limitation is rather placed on the character of ministry and that the restriction is a plea for variety in ministry, and a curtailment of a certain kind of ministry. Speaking of this line of ministry the apostle says, "Let it be by two, *or at the most* by three" (1 Corinthians 14:27), leaving room for a fourth to interpret. Speaking however of prophesy, the words "at the most" are omitted, and we read, "Let the prophets speak two or three" (1 Corinthians 14:29). It may be pleasing to have a "thread" running through a meeting, when each hymn and prayer and all ministry follows a certain subject, but at times it may be more profitable if there is more variety in such a meeting.

The Bible Reading

Much has been said for and against the Bible Reading as one of the essential meetings of the assembly. We quote from another. "To these meetings for Bible reading in the last century there is probably no parallel in the history of the church since apostolic times. Their practical

result was that large numbers of God's people became deeply concerned with regard to their individual walk and to their association, and were led to feel their need to be more truly confirmed to the truth they had newly learned through these readings of the word of God." But this same author adds, "Probably, owing to the handicap of illiteracy, the Formal Bible Reading, as we know it, is not on the list of those institutions of the early church described in the New Testament." It was only in the last century or two that Christians were able to take with them their own copy of the Holy Scriptures and thus profit to the fullest extent from a general discussion of a certain portion of it, and very likely, there are gatherings together of children of God in modern times where individual copies of the Scriptures are not available to the many.

In cases where the "Bible Reading" is not considered to be one of the essential meetings of the assembly, much profit might be derived from groups of Christians thus gathering together in homes or elsewhere, or in the Bible Class department of the Sunday School.

Appendix E

SHOULD WOMEN PUT ON A HEAD COVERING IN ASSEMBLY MEETINGS

By Lester Wilson

There is much discussion these days about this question. Christian women, no doubt, fall into three classes on this subject. First, those who are ignorant of the teaching of God's Word on this subject but readily comply when shown. Second, those who know what the Word teaches, but are just careless about obeying. Third, those who do not believe the Word teaches that; and would not likely obey if they did. I trust the following remarks will help those who desire to be helped.

Let us look at the Word of God (1 Cor. 11:1-16). Does this passage teach the wearing of a covering by the women, or is the hair the covering? The word "covering" here is seen in the margin of your Bible to mean "veil." Women in Paul's day wore veils. Some claim the veil referred to is the hair. Let us look at a verse in this passage, verse 4. "Every man praying or prophesying having his head covered dishonoureth his head." If the covering referred to is the hair, then any man praying or preaching with hair on his head dishonoureth his head, which is Christ. Therefore, only a bald-headed man could pray or preach. The passage also implies that the covering is something that a man or woman can put on or off with comparative ease. If the hair is the covering, then one would need to have a wig in order to put on or remove the covering when occasion called for it. Some may ask what verse 15 teaches: "For her hair is given her for a covering or veil." Verse 14 says "Doth not even nature teach you?" Nature is here giving an object lesson, teaching a man to have short hair, and a woman long; but nature's main lesson is teaching a woman she should be veiled or covered. She should do

by grace with an act of her will (cover her head) what nature has done without her will by giving her long hair and setting her an example.

Let us read verse 4 and use the covering as the hair. "Every man praying or prophesying having his hair on dishonoureth his head," (Christ). Does that make sense? Now read it with the covering being the hat—"Every man praying or prophesying having his hat on dishonoureth his head," (Christ). That makes sense. If the covering is the hair, why take up time telling them to keep their hair on when they pray? If the covering is the hair, they had that by nature, his discussion is meaningless.

What does the covering teach? First, subjection: The teaching of the passage is found in verse 3, where the woman is subject to the man, the man is subject to Christ and Christ is subject to God. The woman shows her place of subjection in the church by silence and the covering, 1 Corinthians 11:1-15; 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:9-12. The man shows his subjection to Christ by removing his covering and speaking the mind of Christ when he does speak. As the man shows his subjection, respect, and reverence by taking off the covering, so the woman shows hers by putting it on.

The apostle says in verse 6, "For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered." Let us quote this verse using the hair as the covering. "For if the woman has no hair, let her be shorn." Does that make sense? Now read it with the covering being the veil or the hat. "For if the woman goes without a hat, let her be shorn." That is, if a woman is not going to wear a hat, but have her hat off like a man, then let her have her hair cut off like a man; but if it be a shame, then let her keep her hat on. Some have disgraced this beauty of womanhood, but one can hardly conceive of a devoted and instructed Christian doing this. It is just another sign of the latter days. A woman has a beauty and place in nature and grace all her own, why should she seek to imitate the man?

How nice it is to see sisters showing their subjection to Christ and separation from the world by these outward

signs. The bare head and bobbed hair style is a modern practice. You would not have found it in a church building, even amongst the unsaved, fifty years ago. It is one of the things that has joined the current of the times. It's strange when heaven sets the style and angels veil their faces, and teach us a lesson in subjection in addition to the plain teaching of the passage considered, that Christian women should find excuses and deem it inconvenient to obey.

It seems strange to me that some Christian women want to go as missionaries and do great things for God, yet refuse to do a little thing that gives Him pleasure. Remember "he that is faithful in that which is least (little things) is faithful also in much." The Lord will lead on, teach and use those who obey and subject themselves to His will in little things.

Appendix F

PRECENTOR—PRAISE LEADER—SONG DIRECTOR

By Peter J. Pell

To the Session Clerk of the West Church
Glen Coran.

Dear Sir,

I herewith tender my resignation as precentor in the Church and should like to be relieved of my duties as soon as is convenient. I feel I am no longer able to discharge these in a way as to give satisfaction to all.

I am

Your obedient Servant,
ANGUS MACNEIL

In the Glen, where Gaelic was spoken — but read with difficulty (for 'tis a fearsome language!) to be a precentor was a sheer necessity if the Psalms of David were to be sung to the "tunes o' David!" The precentor must chant out line after line, and then lead the singing, standing in his little desk. Singing and teacher were thus woven together in those early days of the Free Church of Scotland before the coming of the 'Kist-o' Whistles.

Many of those Psalm tunes were stern old melodies, composed with blood and tears, handed down from generation to generation. Others were sweet and rapturous as a lark's song. With pitch-fork in the right hand and Psalm book in the left hand the precentor would "raise the tune," beating time and listening critically while everyone sang with vigor.

In Old Testament times there were courses of singers and there were some who were "taught to sing praise." "Chenaniah, chief of the Levites was for song: he instructed about the song, because he was skilful" (1 Chron. 15:22). Asaph was one of three appointed by David to be leaders of praise. He was also a composer of sacred songs.

In the New Testament we find a significant lack of any mention of organized singers and singing. Worship is in Spirit and in truth. Says Paul, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."

In our day it is becoming the custom in Gospel meetings to appoint song leaders. While this is a departure in many instances from early simplicity it may make for

better and more orderly singing. However, there is a great danger of the director drawing attention to himself. It may be hard as with Precentor Angus "to give satisfaction" to all but there is song directing that will commend itself to the bulk of God's people. That there is also behaviour that is to the grief of the saints is evidenced from the following issue of the "Wesleyan Methodist." We quote.

"What do you mean by those great sweeping motions that remind one of the Dutch windmill? Why all those frantic gesticulations? What is meant by those ambidextrous flourishes and pump handle exercises? And as though boxing with an antagonist, whom the congregation cannot see, were not enough, every once in a while you scream at us, 'Sing it!' as though we were out on an infantry drill field . . . The pretty scroll work evolved by some leaders in the process of beating time for a single stanza might even compete with the frescoes of beautiful Taj Mahal of India, but then, are song directors supposed to make designs? Sometimes the forefinger and thumb are arched together and formed into a delightful little zero which flashes up and down, in and out, around and under, in a mysterious series of unrepeatable, unpredictable flourishes which so far as music is concerned have no meaning at all. If the zero means anything, it stands for nothing—a very good symbol of some directions. Some song leaders have a natural grace and rhythm combined with proper motions which produces an easy atmosphere and a spirit of harmony. It is a delight to sit under such leadership . . . Imitation of such ability is vain . . . Another disturbing practice of some leaders is a human effort to work up human emotions. Here is something that lies in the province of the Holy Spirit. Let us not lay unhallowed hands on His work. The writer deeply appreciates holy emotion, but for a song leader to resort to artificial stimulation is a procedure open to serious question . . . A glorious visitation of the Holy Spirit is—well, just glorious! But a man-induced imitation is a fraud by which we cheat ourselves."

Let the song leader, if such there be, as well as the minister of the Word, remember that the less attention he directs to himself the more his labor is in accordance with the precepts of Scripture and the practices of holy men of God who have preceded him. Why should the saints in the gathering in the name of the Lord Jesus experiment with what has become distasteful to sober minded people elsewhere?

“Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Hebrews 12:28).

O Lord, we know it matters not
How sweet the song may be;
No heart but of the Spirit taught
Makes melody with Thee.

Then teach Thy gathered saints, O Lord,
To worship in Thy fear;
And let Thy grace mould every word
That meets Thy holy ear.

Thou hast by blood made sinners meet
As saints in light to come
And worship at the mercy-seat,
Before the' eternal throne.

Thy precious name is all we shew,
Our only passport, Lord;
And full assurance now we know,
Confiding in Thy word.

O largely give, 'tis all Thine own,
The Spirit's goodly fruit:
Praise issuing forth in life, alone
Our living Lord can suit.

Appendix G

TAKING CHILDREN TO MEETINGS

From "Institution of Marriage" by P. Wilson

The question is sometimes asked, "When should we begin to take our children to the meetings?" For our part we answer, "Begin at once." It is well when the children of Christian parents never know when they started to go to the meetings, where the Lord Jesus is remembered in death, or where He is well spoken of.

Children should be brought up to expect to go to the meetings; they should see their parents faithful in attendance. If the parents carelessly neglect "the assembling . . . together," then they may expect the children to consider that it is of little importance. In the days of King Jehoshaphat, we read, "And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children" (2 Chronicles 20:13).

It is indeed a beautiful sight when the father, mother, growing children, and even the babe in arms are found making their way together to the gospel meeting, or to the place where prayer is "wont to be made," or to other meetings. We recognize that there are certain limitations in the health and strength of either the parents or the children at times, but we are speaking of a general rule and of what is desirable.

Some children learn very easily that they are to be quiet during the meetings, and others learn with great difficulty—sometimes with considerable trouble to the parents. We have known of some parents who went together to their knees and sought the Lord's special help each time before they left for the meeting. It takes wisdom and patience to persevere until the children learn how to behave at such times. It may also require patience and understanding on the part of others while the parents seek to train the children. Usually it is only for a short time for each child, let us parents take courage and bring

the children to the meetings, seeking the Lord's help in dealing with the problem of keeping them quiet. If on occasion a child makes too much disturbance it should be taken out, but let not the parents give up.

Some mothers take time out each day to sing and read with their children while the little ones have to sit still and be quiet. Others see to it that there is a time in the family reading for the children to learn discipline in being quiet in a meeting. Of course, discretion must be used to not overdo the amount of time they must remain quiet. It is important that they should learn at home how to act in a meeting. In all this there is sometimes considerable discipline for the parents in following through with such a program.

Let no Christian parent be influenced by hearing some unsaved one say that he will not go to a meeting because he was forced to go as a child. More frequently than not this is only an excuse for his refusing to hear the gospel of the grace of God now, and a very flimsy excuse at that. Even if the parents of such an one were unwise in the manner in which they handled his reluctance (if it were such), it is no reason for Christian parents to neglect their God-given duty and privilege of taking their children to the meetings.

As the small children grow up they should be taught to listen to what is said in the meetings, and not be encouraged to carelessness by having other things occupy them. Some excuse this practice by saying, "They cannot understand intelligently or take in what is said," but it is surprising what they can and do take in. We have seen and heard of cases where they laid hold of what was said in an astonishing manner, and we fear that parents who allow their older children to have objects foreign to the purpose of the meeting are doing them a positive damage.

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