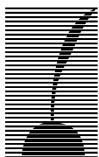


FOOD FOR NEW BELIEVERS

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The Apostle Peter told Christians that they should be like newborn babies and always be thirsty for pure spiritual milk, 1 Peter 2.2. This milk is the Word of God which helps us to grow up as Christians.

Drink abundantly, O beloved.

Oh taste and see that the Lord is good.

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FAITH, and how to get it

In this book we would like to explain simply and clearly some of the great truths which we must know and understand if we want to grow in the Christian life. Peter said these truths were like *pure, spiritual milk*, 1 Peter 2.2. True believers have been born into the family of God through the work of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, John 3.5; 1 Peter 1.23. God the Father wants believers to learn more and more about the truth. At first they are like children, but God wants them to grow and to develop into young men, and then into fathers, 1 John 2.12-14. It is very important that you read carefully all the verses mentioned in this book and ask God to help you understand. Then you will greatly profit from your study.

Let us think first about the great word **Faith**. The Bible says:

1. Our sins are forgiven through *faith* in Christ, Romans 3.25.
2. God counts us to be right with Him if we have *faith*, Romans 4.5.
3. We have been put right with God through *faith* and now are at peace with Him, Romans 5.1.
4. We are saved by God's grace through *faith*, Ephesians 2.8.
5. No man can please God without *faith*, Hebrews 11.6.

These are a few of the many verses in the New Testament which show that faith is very important. The last verse particularly shows very plainly that we **must** have faith in order to please God. So we see that we cannot know God without faith.

Because faith is so important it is essential for us to understand clearly what it is and how we may have it.

What faith is NOT

A person might agree that a certain fact is true, but not act accordingly. This person does not have faith. Agrippa was like that.

He believed what Paul preached but he did not accept the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior, Acts 26.27.

Some people believe everything they hear, but this is not real faith either. Others believe anything that seems to be wonderful even if they do not understand it.

What is faith?

To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of things we cannot see, Hebrews 11.1.

Faith includes three things and all three are necessary so that a person can have faith:

1. He must know the facts that God has revealed to men.
2. He must believe these facts and agree that they are true.
3. He must accept these facts for himself and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ of whom they speak.

A person may know and believe the facts that God has revealed, but he does not receive salvation if he does not put his trust in Christ, and only in Christ.

As an example, let us think of Peter walking on the water, Matthew 14.22-29. The Lord told him to walk on the water and Peter **knew** that the Lord Jesus was the Son of God. He also **believed** that Christ was able to keep him from sinking in the sea. Then he **acted** according to what he believed: he got out of the boat and started to walk on the water.

Here is another example, Genesis 15.1-6:

1. Abraham heard the words of God, verse 4.
2. He was sure God could do what He promised, verse 5.
3. He believed in the Lord, verse 6.

Also think of Paul, Acts 27.21-25:

1. He heard God's message through the angel, verse 24.
2. He believed God, verse 25.
3. He acted according to his faith when he told others the good news, verse 22.

How can a person get faith?

You and I believe many things and trust many people. For example, we take a certain medicine because we believe it will help

us. We get on the bus to go to town because we trust the bus driver and believe he will get us to the place we want to go. But this is not the kind of faith we need to be saved. How then can we get *saving* faith?

Romans 10.17 tells us that we get faith through hearing the Word of God. It is not necessary to hear the Word of God **with our ears**. We can read God's Word in the Bible, in a book, or in a tract. Otherwise a deaf man could not be saved!

What should we believe in? Where should we place our faith?

In the New Testament we read about Simon Peter when he had only a **little** faith, Matthew 14.31; about a Roman officer who had **great** faith, Matthew 8.10; and about the faith of Abraham which made him **strong**, Romans 4.20. It is very desirable for a person to have strong faith like Abraham, but it is even more important that we place our faith in the right Person. It is much better to have a little faith in a good medicine than to have strong faith in medicine which is no good. The true object of our saving faith is the Lord Jesus Christ and we will be saved if we believe in Him, Acts 20.21; Colossians 1.4. If we trust completely in Christ we are just as safe as God can make us. Noah and his family were safe because they were in the ark, not just because Noah had faith. Noah went into the ark because he believed and obeyed God.

What are the results of faith?

The Bible tells us about many things that are the results of faith, but we shall mention only a few:

1. **God** is pleased when His children have faith, Hebrews 11.5,6. He is very happy to see us simply trusting and accepting His Word.
2. **Men** are **saved** and **justified** when they have faith in Christ, Romans 5.1; Ephesians 2.8,9; Acts 26.18; and the believer should **live** by faith, 2 Corinthians 5.7; Hebrews 10.38.

[Read these verses and ask yourself, Who had faith: a man, a woman, or a child?]

Mark 5.34_____

Matthew 15.28_____

Luke 7.50_____

2

HOW CAN I KNOW that I am saved?

Some people say that they are saved and they know it. They are absolutely certain that God has saved them and given them eternal life because they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Can we be sure that we are saved while we are still in this world? We certainly can. The apostle John wrote that we know we have crossed over from death to life, 1 John 3.14. Paul told the Thessalonian Christians that he had brought them the Gospel with complete conviction that it is true, 1 Thessalonians 1.5. He knew that people can surely be saved if they believe this Gospel message. “Assurance” means to know for sure that you are saved.

Who can have this assurance?

Only those who have believed in Christ. These people have been born again by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God and have become members of God’s family, John 1.12,13. Some people trust in other things to save them rather than trusting in Christ, but they will find out later that these things cannot save them. Only the sheep (followers) of the Lord Jesus Christ can be sure that they have eternal life and rejoice in that fact, John 10.27,28.

How can a person obtain assurance?

First let us think of how we do NOT get assurance:

1. **Not by our feelings.** Our feelings can deceive us. A person may feel well even though he is seriously ill. The five foolish girls in Matthew 25.1-13 *felt* that they were ready to join in the wedding feast but they were left outside. This will also be true of the people we read about in Matthew 7.22,23 and Luke 13.25-27. It is possible for a person to feel that he is saved when he is really

trusting in his religion and not in Christ. Millions of people have been deceived in this way. Feelings can never make a person certain that he has eternal life, but when a person is *sure* he is saved he will probably feel happy.

Here is the right order:

- 1) We learn the facts about our sins and the salvation God has provided for us.
- 2) We believe these facts and accept Christ as our Savior.
- 3) We feel happy because we know we are saved.

So we have:

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. FACTS 2. FAITH 3. FEELINGS |
|--|

2. **Not by belonging to some church or obeying the rules of our own religion.** Neither of these things can save us or make us sure that we have eternal life. At the end of a Gospel service the preacher might ask people to put up their hand or stand up to show they want to believe in Christ, but doing this will not give anyone assurance that he is saved. Perhaps he will *feel* saved for a while, but when difficulties come he will soon begin to doubt that he was saved at all. Let us not allow Satan to make us think that we are safe when we are not really trusting in Christ.

Now let us think of how we CAN have assurance:

1. **The witness of the Word of God.** The apostle John wrote verses 9 to 12 of 1 John 5 so that we may believe on the name of the Son of God and be certain that we are saved, 1 John 5.13. Be sure to read these verses. Every day we believe the witness that men give when we believe the things they say. We should certainly believe what God says will happen when we believe in His Son. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. How do we know? Because God says so!

Abraham was certain that God would give him a son even though he and his wife were too old to have children. What made him so sure? He believed what God had told him, Romans 4.20,21. Noah

built an ark in which he and his family were saved. What made him think that there would be a flood? He believed what God had said, Hebrews 11.7.

Rahab asked the spies to swear that they would not destroy her father's family and to give her something to prove that they would keep their promise, Joshua 2.12. What did they give her? Their promise. They promised that she and her house would not be destroyed with the rest of the city. Rahab believed their words and they did what they had promised, Joshua 6.22,23.

The angel of the Lord went through all the land of Egypt to destroy the oldest son in every home. God told the angel not to enter any house where the father had put blood over the door on the outside. The first-born sons knew they were safe because God had said so, Exodus 12.13. The blood made them **safe**; God's Word made them **sure**.

[What does true understanding bring, Colossians 2.2? _____]

2. **The witness of the Holy Spirit.** In the New Testament we read of three ways the Holy Spirit confirms the fact that we are saved:

His witness TO us. The Holy Spirit gives us His witness, Hebrews 10.15. What does He witness about? He reminds us about the work which the Lord Jesus Christ completed on the cross for us and which is sufficient to save us. He tells us that believers are made perfect forever because of that sacrifice, Hebrews 10.14.

The Spirit does not often tell us about the work He does *in* us; He makes us think of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ *for* us.

His witness WITH us. The Holy Spirit joins Himself with our spirits to declare that we are God's children, Romans 8.16. The person who has been born again knows that he is a child of God and the Holy Spirit says so too. Our own spirits and the Holy Spirit agree that we are children of God.

Let us note again that the Holy Spirit joins His witness to that of our *spirits*, the part of us which thinks and judges things, not to our *bodies* or *souls* to make us feel good.

His witness IN us. Those who believe on the Son of God have the witness of the Holy Spirit in themselves to tell them that the value of Christ's death will last forever, 1 John 5.10. Those who believe on the Son of God have a witness *outside themselves*. This witness is the Word of God. They also have the witness *in themselves*, the witness of the Holy Spirit. This witness is not completely separate from the Word of God, because the Spirit makes the Word of God speak to their hearts and consciences.

3

MY TWO NATURES

Every believer has two natures and we must understand this if we want to grow and make progress as Christians. When we are born into this world we receive the old nature which is also called the *flesh*. We receive the new nature when we believe in Christ and are born again. This new nature is also called “spirit”. The Lord made this very clear when He said that the Spirit gives birth to spirit, John 3.6.

In the Bible the word “flesh” has two meanings. Sometimes it means the physical body as in John 3.6. At other times it means the old self, the sinful nature which we all received as descendants of Adam. In this lesson we will talk about the second meaning.

The word spirit is also used of man’s own spirit: every man has body, soul and spirit, 1 Thessalonians 5.23. The new nature is also called spirit, because it is the opposite to the flesh.

You will understand the difference between the two natures when you read the following verses:

FLESH

John 3.6

Ephesians 4.22

Romans 7.23

Romans 8.7,8

SPIRIT (not the Holy Spirit)

John 3.6

Ephesians 4.24

Romans 7.22

2 Peter 1.4

These two natures are always fighting against each other. Our old nature is opposed to what the new nature wants and the new nature is opposed to the desires of the old nature. The two natures are enemies and so we cannot do what we want to do, Galatians 5.17.

Many new believers do not have victory in their lives because they do not know:

1. what the flesh is;
2. what the new life is;
3. how to get the victory.

Let us see what the Scriptures teach about these things.

1. The flesh

Nothing can make the flesh or old nature any better. In Jeremiah 17.9 we read that our hearts are very evil and we cannot trust them. Evil ideas come from a man's heart and these ideas lead him to do all kinds of wicked things, Mark 7.21-23. The flesh is the enemy of God and does not and cannot obey God's laws. Some people do the things which their old nature wants; they cannot please God, Romans 8.7,8. In John 6.63 we read that the flesh is of no use at all. The unsaved person cannot obey, please, or understand God, Ephesians 2.3; 1 Corinthians 2.14.

We do not lose the flesh when we are born again. This is what the Bible teaches and our own lives show us that it is true. Paul knew that there was nothing good in his old nature, Romans 7.18; and he told us not to do anything to please or satisfy the flesh, Romans 13.14. He would not have said this if we did not have our old nature any more.

The flesh does not get any better after we are saved. The flesh can produce only flesh, John 3.6. It can never be changed into the new nature or be improved in any way. It is always the enemy of God, Romans 8.7, and seems to be even **more** evil after a person is born again than it was before. This is because the Holy Spirit has come to live in that person and reveals how evil the flesh is. It is the same even after a person has been a Christian for many years; his old nature is as evil as that of a wicked unbeliever. The flesh may show itself in a different way in a Christian, but it is the same old flesh.

The two sons of Abraham are a picture of the two natures. Ishmael speaks of a natural man or the old nature. Isaac is a picture of a spiritual man or the new nature. At first Ishmael did not cause any trouble in the home, but when Isaac was born the conflict started

Genesis 21.9. In the same way the old nature does not make me unhappy until I get the new nature. Then the fight begins.

2. The new nature

A true child of God does not go on sinning because he has God's nature in himself. He is not able to continue in sin because God is his Father, 1 John 3.9. Notice three things about the new nature:

1) *The new nature comes from God.* We received the old nature from Adam when we were born into this world and we receive the new nature from God when we are born again. The old nature is completely bad but the new nature is wholly good. It is also called the divine nature, 2 Peter 1.4.

2) *The new nature cannot sin,* 1 John 3.9 and 5.18. This is true of all believers, not only of a few who are especially spiritual. Of course it does not mean that a believer never sins (see 1 John 2.1), but that he does not *continue* to sin. God's own nature is in the Christian, and this nature is not able to sin. A tree can bear fruit only according to its own nature. For example, a fig tree can produce nothing but figs, James 3.12. In the same way, God's nature in me can produce only what is good.

Read Romans 8.8 and 1 John 3.9 and compare these two verses.

What is impossible according to 1 John 3.9? _____

What is impossible according to Romans 8.8? _____

3) *The new nature enjoys the things of God.* Paul said that his inner being delighted in the law of God, Romans 7.22. The new nature causes the believer to turn to God in prayer, as Paul did, Acts 9.11; and to the Word of God for food, like new born babies, 1 Peter 2.2. Those who have the new nature love other believers, 1 John 3.14, and this helps us to know we are saved. These are some of the ways in which the new nature shows itself.

3. How to have victory as a Christian

There are two kinds of Christians: those who do what the old nature wants them to do, and those who obey their new nature. Read 1 Corinthians 3.1-4 and 2.15. How can we obey our new nature and become spiritual Christians? We will answer this question now and also in Lesson 4.

When the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross, God judged my sins. These sins are the result of my sinful nature. He forgives my sins, but He condemns my sinful nature. I must do the same if I want to please Him. Think about the following three verses:

- 1) Philippians 3.3 tells us that we should not trust in the flesh or in anything we can do. The flesh is evil and will never produce anything that will please God.
- 2) Romans 13.14 commands us not to do things that will please our sinful nature.
- 3) In Romans 8.13 we are told to put to death the sinful actions of the old nature. To put to death means to judge ourselves. We will have victory in our lives only if we judge ourselves and our sins, 1 Corinthians 11.31. The people of Israel had to use sharp knives on themselves before they could hope to win the victory in the land of Canaan. They used these sharp knives at Gilgal, which became the camp for the victorious armies of Israel, Joshua 5.2,3,9; 10.23. This is a picture of the Christian who judges himself and his sins, then gets victory in his life.

We can do these things only in the power of the Holy Spirit. The next lesson will teach us more about this.

4

GOD'S POWER IN ME

We have already read three verses which show us how we can have victory over our old nature, the flesh. These verses were Philippians 3.3; Romans 13.14, and 8.13. Read them again and notice what two of them say about the Holy Spirit.

Only the Holy Spirit can give us the power to live as a Christian should. I am not able to overcome temptation or to win victory over sin just because I know God has forgiven my sins. If I want to have the victory I must get help from Christ who is now glorified in heaven. On the cross the Savior took the **punishment** for my sins. Now He has risen from the dead and as I fix my eyes on Him, the Holy Spirit sets me free from the **power** of sin. Christ did His work **for** me. Now the Spirit does His work **in** me. What does the Bible teach about God's Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is a Person. He lives in the believer, and His power can help the Christian live for God. Let us think a little more about these things:

The Holy Spirit is a Person

The Holy Spirit is God. He is a Person and we should never refer to Him as "it". He is eternal and equal with God the Father and God the Son, Matthew 28.19; 2 Corinthians 13.14; Hebrews 9.14. He has all the attributes of God. What do the following verses teach us about the Holy Spirit? Write your answer on the lines at the right.

Matthew 12.28 _____

1 Corinthians 2.10 _____

Psalms 139.7-10 _____

Hebrews 10.29 _____

The Holy Spirit teaches, John 14.26; speaks, Galatians 4.6; leads, Galatians 5.18, Romans 8.14; pleads with God, Romans 8.26; and can become sad, Ephesians 4.30. These are some of the verses which prove that the Spirit of God is a divine Person.

The Holy Spirit lives in the believer

The Holy Spirit came in a special way on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2. Before Pentecost the Holy Spirit came on certain people, but He did not live **in** them, John 7.39. Today He lives in every true Christian, **not** because of anything the Christian has done for God, but because he has believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. God sent the Spirit into our hearts to show that we are His sons, Galatians 4.6. Read also the following verses: 1 Corinthians 6.19; 12.13; 2 Corinthians 1.21,22. The New Testament teaches very plainly that the Holy Spirit lives in every true believer, Romans 8.9. God the Father gives Him to us to prove that we belong to Him, Ephesians 1.13; 1 John 2.18,20.

The Spirit **lives** in all true believers, but not all believers are **filled** with the Spirit. We are commanded to be **filled** with the Spirit, Ephesians 5.18. How can we obey this command?

To be filled with the Spirit, we must judge ourselves before God, we must yield our lives to God to do His will, and we must give the Lord Jesus Christ the most important place in our lives.

The power of the Holy Spirit

We need the power of the Holy Spirit in order to be set free from the law of sin and death, Romans 8.2, and to be able to witness for Christ. We can have this power if we feed our souls with the Word of God and pray as the Spirit leads, Jude 20; Ephesians 6.18.

Do you want the Holy Spirit to set you free from the law of sin, Romans 8.2? Would you like the Spirit to help you witness about the Lord without fear? 2 Timothy 1.7. He will do so if you offer yourself to God and do His will as He has revealed it in His Word.

The Holy Spirit will help us to glorify God

We should not do what our old nature wants us to do; we should allow the Spirit to direct and control our lives, Galatians 5.16,25. If we do this we will know God better and better and will glorify Him every day. Others will be able to see the Lord Jesus Christ in us no matter where we are: in school, at work, or in the home.

The Holy Spirit will help us to witness for Christ

We need the power of the Holy Spirit so we can tell others about Christ. The Lord Jesus promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit would be given to them, and then they would be witnesses for Him in all the world, Acts 1.8.

Fill in the names of these people who were filled with the Spirit:

Luke 1.67 _____ Acts 1.8 _____

Acts 2.4 _____ Acts 4.8 _____

Acts 4.31 _____

Let us also be filled with the Spirit so that others will see Christ in us and give glory to God.

BAPTISM and the LORD'S SUPPER

God gave the Jews many religious laws but to Christians He gave two commandments: we should practice Baptism and keep the Lord's Supper. These are called the *Ordinances*. Both Baptism and the Lord's Supper are only for believers and both remind us of Christ's death on the cross. God intended that these things should draw His people together, especially the Lord's Supper, 1 Corinthians 10.17, but Satan has succeeded in dividing us about these things.

Both Baptism and the Lord's Supper are very simple, but they are also very important because they speak of the Lord's death for us.

BAPTISM

Let us think about what Baptism means, how people should be baptized, and who should be baptized.

The meaning of Baptism

The Scriptures teach that we died with Christ when He died on the cross, Romans 6.6. The only way a person can get out of any family is by death. We got out of Adam's family when we died with Christ. Now we are members of God's family.

But *how* did we die? We died in the Person of our perfect Representative, the Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism is a picture of this truth. It pictures a person dying, and being buried. See Romans 6.1-4 and Colossians 2.12.

These things show very plainly that only true believers should be baptized as they are the only people who have died with Christ.

How people should be baptized

The Scripture teaches that a person’s body should be put completely under the water when he is baptized. Why do we believe this?

1. *The meaning of the word “baptize” in the language of the New Testament.* In this language the word means either to put something completely into the water, or to draw water by putting a pot into the water to fill it.

2. *Baptism is a picture of someone being buried.* We do not drop a little earth on a dead body but we put it completely into the ground so that we cannot see it any more.

3. *The examples we have in the New Testament.* Philip told an official how to be saved and the official wanted at once to be baptized. Both men went down into the water and Philip baptized him, Acts 8.38,39. They did not need to do this if Philip could have baptized the official by just putting a few drops of water on his head.

John the Baptist baptized people in a place called Aenon because there was *plenty* of water there, John 3.23. He would not need much water if he were putting only a little on each person’s head!

Who should be baptized

In the New Testament believers only were baptized. They were:

disciples - Matthew 28.19

believers - Mark 16.16

adults - Acts 8.12

people who had received the Holy Spirit - Acts 10.47

[Here are some other verses which tell us about people who were baptized. Write down the number of the verse in each chapter which says they were **believers**.

Acts 16.33..... ;

Acts 18.8..... ;

Acts 19.5.....]

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Read the following Scriptures carefully: Matthew 26.26-30; Mark 14.22-26; Luke 22.19,20; Acts 20.7; 1 Corinthians 10.16,17; 11.23-30. These are all the verses in the New Testament which teach us about the Lord's Supper. Let us ask three questions about this feast:

WHY should we break bread?

The answer to this question is very simple: we should break bread because the Lord asked us to do so. It was the last thing He requested on that night when Judas turned Him over to His enemies. We do not think of it as a **command**, but rather as a **request**. The Lord Jesus said that those who love Him will obey His words, and will do anything He suggested they might do, and that includes keeping His commands, John 14.23. When He was back in heaven He again asked the believers through Paul to remember Him in this way, 1 Corinthians 11.23,24. So we break bread because our Lord asked us to do so and because we want to please Him.

WHO should break bread?

Only those who know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord should break bread. We do this in order to remember our Lord, but we cannot remember someone we have never known. The Lord Jesus gave this feast only to believers and in New Testament times only believers kept it. It is a very serious thing for a person to eat the bread and drink from the cup without really knowing what he is doing, 1 Corinthians 11.29.

Some Christians live in sin; others teach wrong doctrine. These Christians should not keep this feast. See 1 Corinthians 5.11-13 and 2 John 10,11.

HOW should we break bread?

We should break bread together with other Christians—not alone. The church comes together from time to time (1 Corinthians 11.26) in the Lord's Name alone (Matthew 18:20) to keep the feast of

remembrance. Any person can remember the Lord at the Lord's Supper if he has been born again and is therefore a member of the Body of Christ, 1 Corinthians 12.12. The one loaf of bread on the table is a picture of this Body, 1 Corinthians 10.17, and all believers are members of the Body of Christ. We see in the bread a picture of the Lord's human body on the cross, and in the cup we see a picture of His precious blood which He poured out.

So we eat a little of the bread and drink from the cup and associate ourselves with the sacrifice which the Lord made on the cross. Our hearts will be full of worship as we think of our Lord and of all He suffered there for us. In this gathering we do not meet to pray or to study the Word of God, but to worship our Lord. No one person is in charge of this meeting but any man should be able to lead the others in worship when the Holy Spirit guides him to do so.

BE SEPARATE from the world

The Lord commands every believer to separate himself from everything that is spiritually unclean. We see this in 2 Corinthians 6.17 (and other places in the Bible) and those Christians who obey this command are truly happy. Satan never wants Christians to be separated to God. He is always trying to divide what God wants to bring together, and to bring together that which God wants to keep separated. For example, God wants all true believers to be one but Satan knows that Christians are strong when they are all one. He has succeeded in dividing believers by giving them different thoughts and opinions about the teaching of the Bible. God also wants the Christian to be separate from the unbeliever, but again Satan tries very hard to prevent this.

In Romans 12.2 we read that we should not conform to the standards of this world. Just what did the Spirit mean by “the world”? Read 1 John 2.16 and write down the three things which belong to this world.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

In 1 John 5.19 we see that the whole world is ruled by Satan. The world is those people and places and pleasures and activities from which God is left out.

The attitude of the world was seen at the cross of Calvary where men of the world cried out, *Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him*. People belonging to the world crucified our Savior and have never repented of the crime. Because of this God has condemned the world and it will be destroyed when Christ returns as Judge, Acts 17.31; Revelation chapter 19.

God the Father has taken the Christian out of the world. Our bodies are still here but God has separated us from the world, John 17.6. The Lord Jesus Christ sends us back into the world to witness for Him, John 17.18, even though we do not belong to the world, John 17.16. We should live like strangers and refugees in the world, 1 Peter 2.11.

Pictures of separation in the Old Testament

There is a picture of separation in the very first chapter of the Bible where God divided between light and darkness, Genesis 1.4. Also read Leviticus 19.19 and Deuteronomy 22.9-11.

God told Israel not to do three things:

- 1) They should not plant two different kinds of seed in the same field.
- 2) They must not put an ox and a donkey into the same yoke together. One was clean, the other unclean, Leviticus 11.4-8.
- 3) They should not wear a piece of clothing made of two different materials, such as wool and linen.

We can learn from these verses that God does not want us to mix together things which are really different.

God Himself separated the Israelites from the Egyptians, Exodus 11.7, and told them not to marry the people of the nations around them, Deuteronomy 7.3,4.

God commands Christians to be separate from the world

It is impossible for a person to serve two masters at the same time. This means that we cannot serve both God and money, Matthew 6.24. Paul tells us not to have anything to do with people who do worthless, sinful things, but to rebuke them, Ephesians 5.11. He also told Christians to turn away from sin, 2 Timothy 2.19. [How can I love the world and God the Father also? 1 John 2.15]

There are many other verses which teach this truth, but the ones we have named are enough to show that God wants believers

to be separate from this world which refuses and rejects their Lord. Christians should not unite with unbelievers in their pleasures, in marriage, in business or in worshipping God. This does not mean that Christians should move away and live by themselves. We must live among the people of this world from day to day so that we can bring them to Christ, but we must not enter into any agreements or partnership with them.

There are two kinds of earthly things: 1) those that are sinful, and 2) those which are worthless. The first kind is always wrong. The second kind is wrong when these things become too important to us and we spend too much time on them.

Christians often ask themselves if certain things are right or not. The Bible does not plainly say that we should do them or not do them. What should we do about these things? Here are four simple questions by which we can test these things:

1. Is this thing for the glory of God? See 1 Corinthians 10.31.
2. If I do it, will I go against any general rule which the Scripture teaches?
3. Will it result in some good thing if I do it?
4. Can I ask God to bless it?

Our answers to these questions will show us plainly whether the thing is right or wrong.

The results of being separated from the world

Separated Christians enjoy the fellowship, power and blessing of the Lord. Perhaps they do not seem to get on very well here in this world, but God has promised them three wonderful things because they obey the command of 2 Corinthians 6.14-16. Read these verses.

1. *He promises to receive them.* He received them as sinners before (Luke 15.2), but now He receives them as saints to enjoy sweet fellowship with Himself.

2. *He promises to be a Father to them.* The separated believer knows and enjoys the fact that God is his Father.

3. *He, the Lord Almighty, says that they will be His sons and daughters.* This name for God, **the Lord Almighty** means that

by His power God will protect His obedient children and help them to serve Him.

In the Old Testament we read of a number of true believers who did NOT obey this command to be separate from the world.

Lot was a true child of God (see 2 Peter 2.7,8), but he lived in *social* partnership with the people of the world and was a good friend of the men of Sodom, Genesis 19.

Solomon joined with heathen women and married many of them but they drew him away from God, 1 Kings 11.1-4.

Jehoshaphat made a *commercial* agreement with wicked Ahaziah. The result was that he lost his ships and his spiritual blessings, 2 Chronicles 20.35-37.

It is possible for us to enjoy close fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. If we do we will refuse anything the world offers us because the Lord Jesus Christ Himself supplies all our physical and spiritual needs.

HOW TO PRAY

Most people pray even though many do not know HOW to pray. This shows that man has a spirit and is different from animals. A man in trouble will often cry to God to help him, but no animal will do this. Even unbelievers will pray to God when they are having difficulties, and sometimes God answers them and delivers them. He did this with the sailors who threw Jonah into the sea, Jonah 1.14-16. God hears the prayers of all men when they pray and confess their sins to Him, Psalm 65.1,2. However only true believers can really pray to their Father, the all-wise, all-loving and all-powerful God.

Examples of prayer

There are many examples of prayer both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Men began to pray to God in the days of Seth, Genesis 4.26, and in the last chapter of the Bible we read that the Spirit and the Bride (the Church) will pray for the Savior to return, Revelation 22.17,20. In Old Testament times prophets prayed, and so did priests and kings.

[Who was praying in the following verses? Write their names on the lines given.

1. 1 Samuel 12.23 _____
2. Numbers 6.24-26 _____
3. 1 Chronicles 17.25 _____]

Abraham prayed, and so did all of Israel's leaders, Moses, Joshua, Solomon, Elijah, Daniel and Nehemiah.

In the New Testament, our Lord was often seen speaking to His Father in prayer. We find Him praying seven times in Luke, the Gospel which tells about Him as a Man. During His whole life, the Savior prayed to His Father. Luke records His prayer at the time He was baptized, Luke 3.21, and at the time He placed His spirit in God's hands, Luke 23.46. In the book of Acts and the 21 epistles, there are many more examples of prayer.

The Pattern for Prayer

The Lord Jesus Christ gave us a perfect pattern in Matthew 6.9-13. He did not intend us to use the exact words of this prayer again and again, and we do not read that the Christians in the early Church did so. The Lord did intend that this prayer should be a pattern to teach us several important things:

1. We should start our prayer by worshipping God, v.9.
2. We should pray for the work of the Lord before praying for ourselves and our own needs and interests; *May your Kingdom come*, v.10.
3. From the start we should accept God's answer to our prayer even if He chooses not to do what we asked; *Your will be done*, v.10.

The Principles of Prayer

Christians are commanded to pray. Be sure to look up these verses: Matthew 7.7; 26.41; John 16.24; Philippians 4.6; James 1.5.

WHEN should we pray? We should pray at all times and on every occasion. It is wonderful to know that God always hears our prayer. Read 1 Thessalonians 5.17; Colossians 4.2; Ephesians 6.18.

WHERE should we pray? Paul said that men should pray everywhere, 1 Timothy 2.8.

HOW should we pray? Before Christ died on the cross, the curtain or veil in the temple separated the people from a holy God, Luke 1.10. Before that Israel stood at a distance while Moses approached the dark cloud where God was, Exodus 20.21. But the curtain in the temple was torn into two pieces when Christ died and believers no longer need to remain at a distance. God now invites them to come near, Hebrews 10.19-22. Every believer may now come directly to the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 2.18. God is satisfied with the payment for sin which Christ made and now we may approach His throne and find grace to help just when we need it, Hebrews 4.16.

We may come boldly, but we should also come humbly, judging ourselves. We must remember that our heavenly Father is also the

Eternal God and those who approach Him must do so with respect and fear, Psalm 89.6,7, and with clean hands and a pure heart, Psalm 24.3,4.

Romans 8.23,26,27 show that the Holy Spirit tells God about the burdens and groans of our hearts. We should allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in our prayers and we should always pray *in the power of the Holy Spirit*, Ephesians 6.18; Jude 20. Therefore a person is not really praying at all when he just reads a prayer which someone else has written.

We should pray *in Christ's Name*, John 14.13,14. This does not mean that we should just finish our prayers by adding the words, "in Christ's Name, Amen." When we pray in His Name we pray by His authority, with His permission. But this is only possible if our prayers agree with His will as revealed in the Word of God, 1 John 5.14,15. Let us also remember that God will answer our prayers only if we obey Him in our daily lives, John 15.7. We should not just pray in a general way but we should ask God for exactly what we want. For example the believers in Jerusalem prayed for Peter when he was in prison, Acts 12.5. We should keep on praying when God does not answer us immediately, Luke 11.5-10; 18.1-8.

The Power of Prayer

James tells us that the prayer of a righteous man has a great effect, James 5.16. Prayer in itself has no power and does not cause things to change, but as we pray the Holy Spirit can work and do the things we ask for. Elijah is a good example of this, James 5.17,18.

Unanswered Prayer

We know that God does not answer all our prayers and that He does not always answer them the way we desire. However let us remember that God might answer later if He does not do so right away. God loves us and will give us only what is best for us.

God will not answer a believer's prayer -

- 1) if there is sin in his life which he has not judged and confessed to God, Isaiah 59.1,2; Psalm 66.18; 1 John 3.20-22.

- 2) if he refuses to forgive others, Mark 11.25,26.
- 3) if he prays for things to use for his own pleasure, James 4.3.
- 4) if his attitude toward his wife is not right, 1 Peter 3.7.
- 5) if he prays without believing that God can answer his prayer, James 1.6,7.

Lord, teach us to pray.

The CHURCH and the BIBLE

Many people do not really know what the word “church” means. They talk about the “Protestant” Church or the “Catholic” Church, or different branches of the Protestant Church, such as the “Methodist” Church or the “Baptist” Church. Others think the Church is the building in which Christians meet. The Bible never uses the word “church” with these meanings. Let us see what God’s Word tells us on this subject.

The Greek word translated “church” is *ecclesia* and means *a gathering of people called out from among other people*. In the Bible the Church is made up of those who have been called out of the world to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. The world has rejected Christ and the Church should bear witness to Him. Therefore this word never refers to unsaved people or to a building.

The New Testament uses the word *church* in two ways:

- 1) It is used of all believers on earth. This is the Church which is called Christ’s Body, Colossians 1.18,24.
- 2) It is used of all believers in a certain place. This is the local church.

THE CHURCH IN THE WHOLE WORLD

Let us think about how the church began, who can belong to the Church, and what it will be like in the future.

The beginning of the Church

The Church is the Body of Christ; it did not exist in Old Testament times. It came into being when the Holy Spirit came from heaven to live in the believers on the day of Pentecost. God always planned to build His Church, but this plan was a secret which He had hidden through all the past ages, Ephesians 3.9-11; Colossians 1.24-26.

Our Lord was the first One to tell about it and in Matthew 16.18 He said that He would build His Church later on. He said, **I WILL build my church.** This shows plainly that the Church was not being built at that time. This verse and Matthew 18.17 are the only verses in the four gospels which mention the Church.

In Acts chapter 2 we read about the coming of the Holy Spirit after God had glorified the Lord Jesus Christ at His own right hand, v.33. There could be no Body of Christ on earth until the Head was in heaven, and Christ did not take His place there as Head until He rose from the dead and went back to heaven. These things prove that the birthday of the Church was the day of Pentecost. Read Ephesians 1.20-23.

Who can belong to the Church?

The Church is not an organization like a company or a government. It is a living body made up of many members who are all true believers. This truth is fully explained in Ephesians where the Church is compared to a Body, 1.23, and a Bride, 5.25. It is also seen as a Building in 2.20. A body makes us think of *life*; a building is a *place to live*; and a bride reminds us of *love*. The Holy Spirit formed the Church, 1 Corinthians 12.13, and He gives it unity, Ephesians 4.3. Christ is the Head of the Church, Colossians 1.18, and the Word of God teaches the Church what it should do. The epistles of Paul are specially important for the Church.

What will happen to the Church in the future?

God has planned that the Church will share in the eternal glory of Christ. Christ is going to present the Church to Himself in all its beauty without any imperfections, Ephesians 5.27. This will take place at the wedding feast of the Lamb when everyone in heaven will rejoice. Then the Lord Jesus Christ, the Divine Bridegroom, will reap the fruit of all His sufferings and will be satisfied, Revelation 19.7-9.

THE LOCAL CHURCH

The word “church” is also used for the believers in one place. Scripture never uses it of believers of a whole country such as “the Church of Canada.” We do read of the *churches* of Galatia, Galatians 1.2; the *churches* of God in Judea, 1 Thessalonians 2.14; not the *church* of Galatia or Judea. See 1 Corinthians 11.16; Romans 16.4,16.

These churches are not members of an organization which tells them what to do but they all have the same Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. They are all guided by the same Spirit and have the same duty. They are to witness for Christ, to tell others the truth of God, and shine as lights among the people of this world, Philippians 2.15,16.

Who are in the local church?

The assembly at Philippi consisted of all who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ including church leaders and helpers, Philippians 1.1. This verse and other Scriptures show clearly that an assembly of God includes **all** true believers in any place. In the beginning all believers in one place were in fellowship with the same group of believers and we read of *the church which was at Corinth* and so on. This is not true today because many true believers are associated with different groups or denominations whose thoughts on worship and other matters might be quite different. Even so all true believers in any place *are the church of God* in that place. Even a small group of believers meeting in a home can be called a church. See 1 Corinthians 16.19; Colossians 4.15. Such a group is not called the church *of God* there, but the church *in that house*.

The church in any place meets around the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is among even two or three who meet together in His Name, Matthew 18.20.

The Body of Christ is made up of all true believers. We are members of His Body - the only kind of members we read about in the Bible. The Lord’s Supper is a picture of this unity, 1 Corinthians 10.16,17. The Holy Spirit is able to guide the members of the local church in worship and to use them in teaching the Word of God.

The elders are responsible to guide the affairs of the assembly in an orderly way and to judge any believer who has fallen into sin.

The purpose of the local church

The gold lamp-stand in Revelation 1.20 is a picture of the local church. Gold speaks of divine righteousness and the lamp reminds us that the true purpose of an assembly is to be a light and to bear witness for Christ in this sinful world while He is away. The aim of that assembly is not to make this world a better place to live, but to tell the people of the world about the Lord Jesus Christ and the work He did on the cross so that all men might be saved. Therefore the assembly should witness to the people among whom it is located and should also send some of the Christians to take the message of salvation to people in other lands.

The power of the local church

The local church needs the power of the Holy Spirit who helps each believer to worship God, Philippians 3.3, and to witness for Christ, Acts 4.31; 13.2; 1 Corinthians 3.16. The local church needs the Holy Spirit to help it follow the principles which God has given us in His Word, and to witness for Christ.

[Read again what this lesson says about the local church and the whole Church in the world and be sure you understand the difference. Then look up these verses and decide whether each one refers to the local church or the whole Church in the world.

- 1 Corinthians 1.2 _____
- Ephesians 3.10 _____
- Colossians 4.15 _____
- 1 Corinthians 14.23 _____
- Colossians 1.18 _____]

PRIESTS who WORSHIP and SERVE

CHRISTIAN PRIESTS

The Israelites in the Old Testament were a nation of **soldiers**, Numbers 1.3.

One of their tribes was a tribe of **workers**, the Levites, Numbers 1.50.

One of the families of that tribe was a family of **worshippers**. They were Aaron and his sons, the priests, Exodus 28.1; Numbers 3.3.

These priests were different from the other people because they put up their tents in a special place in the camp and because their clothes were different from those of other people. They ate certain food which the others did not eat. God gave them special privileges and they had work which no one else was allowed to do. See Exodus 28; Leviticus 7.6-10; Number 8.2; 10.8-11.

Only the priests were allowed to go into the holy Presence of God. They went in to Him for the people, and they came out to the people for Him. They came between God and the people. Aaron was the only high priest; his sons were the ordinary priests. They alone offered the sacrifices on the altar and they were the only ones who could enter the holy place in the temple. Only they could decide if a person had leprosy or had been healed of that terrible disease.

The Old Testament priests are a picture of true priests today. Who are these priests? All true believers are priests. Be sure to read the only New Testament verses which teach about this subject: 1 Peter 2.5,9; Revelation 1.5,6; 5.10. Jewish priests did not get this position because they themselves chose to be priests or because they had special training but only because they were born into Aaron's family. No one else could be a priest, Ezra 2.62.

In a church which is following the New Testament pattern (in Christianity also) no one is a priest because he chooses to be one or because of the training he has had, each believer becomes a priest when he believes in Christ and is born again through the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 there are lists of gifts which the Holy Spirit gives, but being a priest is not among them. This is not a gift because all true believers are priests. Other persons call themselves priests but they are not priests at all. Only people belonging to Aaron's family were priests among the Jews and they served here on earth in an earthly temple. They were a picture of present-day priests. However today **all** who belong to God's family are priests. [How should we worship the Father? John 4.24. _____]

As a **holy priest** the Christian offers up spiritual sacrifices to God, 1 Peter 2.5. As a **priest of the King** he proclaims God's wonderful acts to men, 1 Peter 2.9. For example Paul and Silas acted as holy priests in Acts 16.25 and as the King's priests in verse 31 of the same chapter. Another example is found in Hebrews 13. Verse 15 tells us about the activity of holy priests and verse 16 about that of priests of the King.

Today some churches have priests who wear special clothes and have special privileges and duties. These priests follow the example of the Jewish priests. There are no such priests among true Christians today because all Christians are priests and all have the same privileges and all should worship God. Aaron and his sons are a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great High Priest, and all His people whom He has bought with His precious blood.

WORSHIPPERS

Let us think about the Meaning of worship, the Place of worship, and the Power for worship.

The Meaning of Worship

A person worships when his heart is full of praise as he thinks about what God is in Christ. He worships God the Father and God the Son because he has been set free from sin by the costly sacrifice of Christ. Only true New Testament priests can worship.

Let us understand that worshipping and teaching the Word

of God are two different things. Worship goes up to God, but those who teach the Word of God do so to help men, and so teaching comes from God to men. A believer teaches others the truths he himself has received from God the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Spirit. However when he worships, that worship goes up by the Spirit, through the Son, to the Father.

The Place of Worship

The people of Israel worshiped God in a building on earth and they offered various things as sacrifices. The Christian can come right into the presence of God to worship Him and does not have to be in any special building in order to do so. Read Hebrews 10.19-22 very carefully. The Old Testament priests could offer sacrifices to God and so can we. We should offer ourselves to God, Romans 12.1. We can also offer praise to God with our voices, and we can give our money to help others, Hebrews 13.15,16.

The Power for Worship

We can worship only by the power of the Holy Spirit, Philippians 3.3. He loves to make us think of the glories of God and of Christ instead of thinking about ourselves.

GOD'S SERVANTS IN THE CHURCH

Believers must be fed with the Word of God in order to walk close to the Lord. Christ is the Head of the Church and He alone feeds it and takes care of it, Ephesians 5.29. He does this through the Holy Spirit and by giving certain believers the gifts of preaching or teaching the Word of God or caring for the believers in other ways. All believers are priests because they have been born again, but all believers do not have the gift of teaching or preaching.

In Ephesians 4.11-13 we have a list of the gifts given to Christians today. They are evangelists, pastors, and teachers. (We do not have apostles and prophets today, but we still have the books they wrote.)

The Evangelist takes the Good News of salvation to sinners in the whole world. Philip is a good example of this, Acts 21.8.

The Pastor cares for those who have been saved. He brings them into the local church and leads them on in the ways of God.

We never read in the New Testament that only one pastor was appointed to look after a local church, but we see that in New Testament times one church might have several pastors. These pastors are appointed by the Lord Himself, not by other Christians, and they lovingly care for the people of God. See 1 Thessalonians 2.7,11.

The Teacher explains the Word of God in an orderly way and so strengthens the believers in the faith.

The Elder is a godly man who knows and walks with the Lord. His work is to care for the church, 1 Timothy 3.5; to feed the believers, 1 Peter 5.2; and to watch over them, Acts 20.28-30. The elder works in the local church and some have the gift of teaching or preaching publicly, 1 Timothy 5.17. In every New Testament church there were several elders, Acts 14.23; Titus 1.5.

HOW to serve the MASTER

This is a very important subject for every believer who loves the Lord and wants to please Him. It is necessary that we should understand this truth, but it is even more necessary that we should obey it.

God gives every Christian some work to do for Him. See Mark 13.34. Today many people think that only ministers or pastors can serve God, but this is not what the Bible teaches. The Word of God says the Church is like a human body with many different parts which all work together. The head directs all the parts: the hands, feet, ears, tongue and all the rest. Each has an important work to do which is different from that of all the other parts in the body, and each part helps the whole body. The different parts do not fight with each other but rather help one another. The body needs each part and the different parts depend on one another. The right foot needs the left foot, the fingers need each other, and they need all the other parts also.

Read the following verses very carefully: 1 Corinthians 12.12-31; Romans 12.4-8; Ephesians 1.19-23. These verses teach us at least three great facts:

1. Christ in heaven is the Head of the Church.
2. Christ's body on earth includes every true believer.
3. The Head gives to each believer some special work which he should do in the power of the Holy Spirit. God did not plan for idle members in the body.

Let us now consider the following:

1. The Master whom we serve
2. The reason for our service
3. The examination of our service by Christ

The Master whom we serve

The New Testament teaches very plainly that Christ is our Savior and Lord. Christ is our Savior and delivers us from the punishment of our sins. Christ is our Lord and has the authority to tell us what to do; He also expects us to do it. Many people accept Christ as their Savior so that they will not have to go to hell, but some do not understand that He is also their Lord. Many are hypocrites because they *call* Him “Lord” but fail to do the things He commands them to do. Only when we understand that Christ is the Lord of our lives will we be able to serve Him well. The apostle Paul called himself a slave of Jesus Christ, Romans 1.1, and wanted to do only His will in all things.

Read the following verses which teach very clearly that Jesus Christ is **Lord**: Luke 2.11; Acts 2.36; Romans 10.9; Colossians 2.6; 1 Peter 3.15.

Which of these five verses say that

Christ is Lord? _____

Jesus is Lord? _____

Christ Jesus is Lord? _____

The reason for our service

We always have a reason for doing any thing and the reason is more important than the act itself. God sees what is in our hearts and knows if we serve Him in order to please and glorify **Him** or so that men might praise **us**. The Lord Jesus Christ condemned the Pharisees because they acted as if they wanted to serve God but their true reason was so that men might speak well of them. Their acts were often correct, but their purpose in doing them was totally wrong.

God offers a reward to anyone who gives a drink of water to a Christian, Mark 9.41. A drink of water is only a small thing, but this person does it because he wants to show his love to the Lord. His purpose is right and this is what is important.

We see this also in the life of David, 2 Chronicles 6.8,9. David wanted to build a house for God because he loved God and

wanted to honor Him. God did not allow David to do this, but He praised him because he offered to do it.

It is very important for each one of us to serve God, but let us ask ourselves WHY we are serving Him. We should do everything only for God's glory, 1 Corinthians 10.31.

Only the Lord knows our thoughts and the reason we serve Him so we should not try to judge the reasons of others, 1 Corinthians 4.5. However these reasons will be very important in that coming day when the Lord will examine our service.

Christ will examine our service

We should not pass judgment on the service of others. The Lord Jesus will do this when He brings to light our secrets and exposes the hidden purposes of men's hearts. All Christians must appear before Christ to be judged by Him, 2 Corinthians 5.10. At that time every man will receive from God the praise he deserves, 1 Corinthians 4.5.

The Lord Jesus paid the price of my sins when He died on the cross and God will never judge me for them. However in the future the Lord will judge my service for Him as a believer. The Lord will not decide then whether I will be saved but whether I will receive a reward.

Our reward will depend on what the Lord thinks of our service for Him. The important thing is not how much work we do for the Lord but what kind of work. In that day the quality of each man's work will be tested by fire. If it passes the test the man will receive a reward, 1 Corinthians 3.13,14. Read also Hebrews 10.35; 11.26; 2 John 8; Revelation 22.12.

This judgment will take place after the Lord has taken the Church to heaven.

11

THE LORD will come again

The return of the Lord Jesus Christ is mentioned 318 times in the 260 chapters of the New Testament, or once in about every 25 verses. The first person who preached about it was Enoch, the seventh direct descendant from Adam, Genesis 5.21; Jude 14, and the last words of the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament are about His return, Revelation 22.20. Almost every one of the 27 books of the New Testament mentions it. It is, therefore, a very important subject.

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself will come again before He begins to rule over the earth for 1000 years.

The New Testament is divided into four parts: the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, and Revelation. Let us look at verses concerning the Lord's return in each of these parts.

Christ promised to return

He told His disciples that He was going away to prepare a place for them and that He would come back to take them to be with Himself, John 14.2,3. He made this promise to comfort them on the evening before His death. Some people believe that this promise refers to the day of Pentecost; others say it means that the Lord comes to each believer when he dies. We know that Christ was not thinking of Pentecost because most of the verses telling of His future coming were written *after* Pentecost. Read Acts 3.20 and 1 Corinthians 1.7 and answer these questions:

1. Who will send Jesus back to earth? _____
2. Who will be revealed? _____

Neither did the Lord mean death when He spoke about His return. Death is just the opposite to the Lord's return. Christ's coming will change all that death has done to the bodies of God's people for the past 6,000 years!

Our Lord must return Himself. He promised He would, and He cannot break His Word.

The Person who is coming again

We now turn to the Acts - the only book of history in the New Testament. In verses 9 to 11 of chapter 1 we see the One who is coming again. The Lord Jesus will come back the same way He went to heaven. Isaac went out to meet Rebecca, his bride, Genesis 24.63, and the Lord Jesus Himself will come again for His Church. This is what the Church is hoping for and looking forward to, Titus 2.13.

Why Christ will come again

There are three reasons:

1. to show that His claims were true.
2. to take the believers to heaven.
3. to rule over the earth.

1. **To show that His claims were true.** At His trial when the high priest put the Lord Jesus on oath, He said that He was the Son of God, that He would sit on the right hand of God, and that He would come again on the clouds of heaven, Matthew 26.64. He said these things several times while He was on earth, and He will come back to show that He spoke the truth.

2. **To take the believers to heaven,** both Old Testament saints and those of the present Church age. You will find more details about this in 1 Corinthians 15.51-58; Philippians 3.20,21, and 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18. Be sure to read these verses which explain the Savior's promise in John 14. This event is called the Rapture, and it will take place in secret and very suddenly. The Lord will select His own people and leave all others here on earth.

3. **To rule over the world.** The second coming of Christ will have two parts. He will first come in *private* and later in *public*.

His first coming was in two parts also, first in private and then in public. He came *privately* to Bethlehem and was welcomed only by some shepherds, the wise men and a few other people. Then He came *publicly* when He entered Jerusalem as King and thousands of people saw Him, Matthew 21.1-9.

At the private part of His second coming all dead saints will be raised; all living saints will be changed. The Lord will meet them in the air and take them to heaven with Him, 1 Thessalonians 4.17. Later when He comes in public He will come not only to the air, but also to the earth and He will stand on the Mount of Olives, Zechariah 14.4.

One day the Lord and His disciples were on the Mount of Olives and He told them that He would come again on the clouds of heaven together with all the angels and all His people, Matthew 24.30; 25.31; 1 Thessalonians 3.13. This will take place at the end of the Great Tribulation. The wicked rulers of the world will have to stop persecuting the small group of Jewish believers because Christ will save His people.

Christ will then judge all the nations of the earth, Matthew 25.31-46. All those who have rebelled against God will be sent off to eternal punishment, together with Satan, their leader. Then Christ will set up His Millennial Kingdom with Jerusalem as the capital city, and He will rule over the earth for at least a thousand years, Revelation 20.1-6. Read also Isaiah 2.1-5; 4.2-6; 11.1-9; 35.1-10; Amos 9.13-15; Micah 4.3. These verses will tell you more about the Millennium.

How can we be ready for Christ's coming?

We should always remember that the Lord might come at any minute. This will lead us to live pure and holy lives, 1 John 3.3. We hope that He will come soon and this hope makes us more patient, James 5.7,8, and helps us to pray, 1 Peter 4.7. It will help us to earn a crown, 2 Timothy 4.5-8. It will fill our hearts with peace, Philippians 4.5-7, and keep us preaching the message of Christ, 2 Timothy 4.1-2. We should always keep busy in our work for the Lord, for He is coming soon to examine us and to reward us for our service, 1 Corinthians 15.58.

CROWNS AND REWARDS

The New Testament tells us about at least four great judgments and it is important for us to understand the difference:

1. The judgment of the sinner's sins on the cross.
2. The judgment of the believer's works at the Judgment Seat of Christ.
3. The judgment of the living nations on earth when Christ comes back in glory, Matthew 25.31-46.
4. The judgment of the wicked dead at the Great White Throne, Revelation 20.11-15.

The first of these judgments is past, but the other three are still in the future. The second judgment will take place immediately after the Lord has taken the Church to heaven, the third just before the Millennium, and the fourth at the end of the Millennium. No true believer will be judged at the Great White Throne because the Lord Jesus Christ has already received the judgment for our sins when He died on the cross, John 5.24; Romans 8.1.

In Lesson 10 we saw that our works and our Christian service will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ. At that time, the Lord Jesus Himself will examine the life of every Christian and his reasons for what he did with his time, his gifts, strength and money while here on earth. Read 1 Corinthians 3.10-15 very carefully.

Every Christian is using his life either for God's glory or for himself. The Lord will test everything which we have done. Fire will destroy wood and grass, but gold, silver and precious stones cannot burn. So the Lord will destroy all that has not been for His glory. Some believers have served the Lord for many years; their work will last forever. Others have wasted their lives; they will see everything burned up and lost. However, they themselves will be saved.

It is clear that Christ will reward everything the Christian has done to please his Lord. On the other hand there will be believers who lived for themselves and not for Christ. They will feel very sorry when they find out how foolish they were. They will not lose their salvation, but they **will** lose their reward. Our salvation does not depend on our own works, but rather on the work of Christ on the cross for us. However, our reward depends on how we served the Lord and what our true motives were.

Someone has told a story to make this truth very clear:

A man sent his son to another town to do some work for him. He gave him enough money for the journey there and back and told him exactly what he should do. He also told him to work hard and to waste no time because he would be able to stay only a short time in that town.

The young man reached the town and started right away to do the work his father had told him to do. However, after a while he met some old friends. Before long he joined them in their talk, and forgot all about his father's work. Suddenly he remembered what he should have been doing, but the time had come for him to leave the town.

Was he *ready* for the journey home? Yes and no! He had the money to get back home because his father had given it to him, but he had not finished his assigned work. When he got home the father could not praise him for what he had done. However he was still his father's son and could live with his brothers in the father's house.

The Lord Jesus Christ on the cross paid the price for every true believer to get to heaven. He has justified them all and will share His glory with them, Romans 8.30, but they will not all get the same reward. God will reward each one according to the work he has done, 1 Corinthians 3.8. Still all believers are His sons and will live in heaven forever.

Let us consider four things as we think of the Judgment Seat of Christ:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ will **examine** the lives and work of His servants, Matthew 18.23; Luke 19.15.
2. He will **expose** the quality of each person's work. 1 Corinthians 3.13; 2 Corinthians 5.10.
3. He will **praise** those who have been good and faithful servants, Matthew 25.21; 1 Corinthians 4.5.
4. He will give them **rewards**. The Bible tells us about five different crowns:
 - 1) a crown of righteousness, for those who love the Lord and wait for Him to appear, 2 Timothy 4.8.
 - 2) a crown that will last forever, for those who serve the Lord with their whole heart, 1 Corinthians 9.25.
 - 3) a crown of life, which God will give to those who remain faithful under trial, James 1.12.
 - 4) a crown of glory, for leaders who are good examples to other Christians, 1 Peter 5.4.
 - 5) Paul spoke of the believers he had helped and called them his crown, Philippians 4.1; 1 Thessalonians 2.19.

The Lord also promised a reward if:

- 1) we sow goodness by doing kind little things for others, Proverbs 11.18;
- 2) we help those who cannot pay us back, Luke 14.14;
- 3) we pray earnestly and in secret, Matthew 6.6;
- 4) we give a drink of water to a Christian, Mark 9.41;
- 5) we suffer because we belong to Christ, Luke 6.22,23;
- 6) we please God in our home, Ruth 2.11,12;
- 7) we watch and take care of ourselves and others, 2 John 8.

[Where will we get our reward? Matthew 5.12. _____
 Where will show-offs or hypocrites get their reward? Matthew 6.2,5,16. _____]

So we have a wonderful Savior! When we were still sinners, He saved us by faith alone. He helps us to understand the Scripture so we can be sure we are saved. He gives us a new nature so we can please God. He supplies power so we can gain victory in our lives. Our Savior gave us the Lord's Supper so we will remember Him. He helps us to live separately from the world and He answers our prayers. He shows us how we should meet together to worship Him. He gives us the privilege of serving Him and He promises us great rewards when He comes back.

**WHAT A WONDERFUL SAVIOR
IS JESUS OUR LORD!**