

A MINISTRY FOR HUNGRY SAINTS

UNDER THE EXALTED CHRIST, THE GOSPEL BEGINS TO SPREAD

THE ACTS

† THE BOOK OF ACTS

OF THE APOSTLES

An overview of the Book of Acts, by Given O. Blakely

ACTS 5:31-32

"Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

Lesson # 15

COMMENTARY ON: 3:19-26

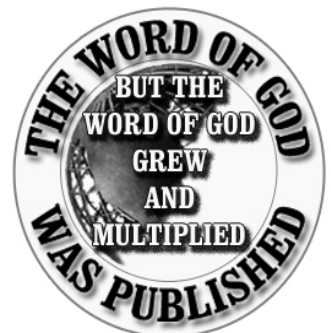
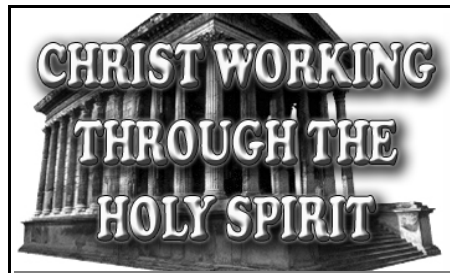
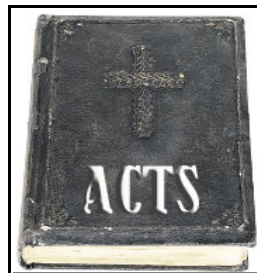
PETER SPEAKS TO THE PEOPLE, #2

Peter masterfully continues to lay the Foundation upon which Jesus is building his own church. His presentation has no corruption within it, and no moral or spiritual taints are upon it. He is governed by a heavenly agenda, and obviously is not interested in establishing his own greatness. Endued with the Spirit, he has been ably proclaiming the exaltation of Christ – an exaltation that took place in spite of the deeds of the people. Jesus was not elevated by the people, but by God Himself, and it is essential that men have a grasp of this. Men contribute absolutely nothing to the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ. His supremacy does not depend upon what men do. What men do, however, does depend upon His absolute preeminence. Now Peter will delineate the proper response to the Gospel. There is something that men are required to do, and no benefit will pass from Christ to them until it is done. There are no convenient shortcuts to Divine blessing, even though men have done their best to create some.

ACTS 17:26-27

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us."

" . . . and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

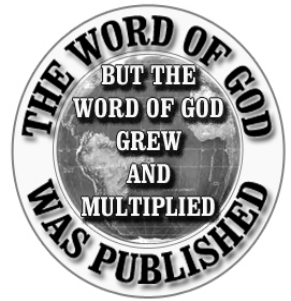


Since May, 1993, a ministry instituted for the encouragement of believers in Christ



The Book of Acts

Lesson Number 15



A MINISTRY INITIATED IN MAY 1993, AND DEDICATED TO STRENGTHENING THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST, BY BUILDING THEIR FAITH, ENHANCING THEIR JOY, AND STABILIZING THEIR HOPE, ENABLING THEM TO WORK OUT THEIR SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING.

TRANSLATION LEGEND: ALT = Analytical-Literal Translation (2005), AMPLIFIED = Amplified Bible (1965), ASV = American Standard Version (1901), BBE=Bible in Basic English (1949), DRA = Douay-Rheims (1899), ERV = English Revised Version (1885), ESV = English Stand Version (2001), GNB = Good News (1966), GWN = God's Word (1995), IE = International English, ISV = International Standard Version (1967), JPS = Jewish Publication Society (1917), KJV = King James Version (1611), L.ITV = Literal Translation of the Bible ((1976), LIVING = Living Bible (1971), MKJV = Modern KJV (1962), MONTGOMERY = Montgomery's New Testament (2001), MRD = Peshitta-James Murdock Translation (1852), NAB = New American Bible (2002), NASB = New American Standard Bible (1977), NAU = New American Standard Bible (1995), NIB = New International Bible, NIV = New International Version (1984), NJB = New Jerusalem Bible (1985), NKJV = New King James Version (1979), NLT =New Living Translation (1996), NRSV = New Revised Standard Version (1989), PHILLIPS = J B Phillips New Testament (1962), PNT = BISHOP'S New Testament (1595), RSV = Revised Standard Version (1952), TNK = JPS Tanakj (1985), Webster = The Webster Bible (1833), WEYMOUTH = Weymouth's New Testament (1903), WILLIAMS = William's New Testament (1937), TYNDALE = Tyndale's Bible (1526), WYCLIFFE = Wycliffe New Testament (1382), YLT =Young's Literal Translation (1862).

----- Lexicon and Bible Translation Codes with Identification -----
LEXICON LEGEND: FRIEBERG = Friberg Lexicon, UBS = UBS Lexicon, LOUW-NIDA = Louw-Nida Lexicon, LIDDELL SCOTT = Liddell Scott Lexicon, THAYER = Thayer's Greek Lexicon, LEH = LEH Lexicon, GINGRICH = Gingrich Lexicon

THE INSPIRED RECORD OF HOW THE ENTHRONED CHRIST, BY MEANS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WORKED THROUGH HIS HOLY APOSTLES AND GODLY MEN, TO SPREAD THE WORD OF THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE WORLD, AND TO BRING EDIFICATION AND STABILITY TO MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S BODY.

DISCLAIMER: The quoting of other translations is not to be taken as a condoning of them. My purpose is rather to show the remarkable diversity, and sometimes outright contradictions that exist among these various versions of Scripture. Our understanding of the Word of God ultimately depends upon our comprehension of the Lord Himself and His eternal purpose. Where this understanding is not present, we are shut up to scholasticism and conjecture, both of which are of the world, not of God.

PETER SPEAKS TO THE PEOPLE, #2

“^{3:19} Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; ²⁰ And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: ²¹ Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. ²² For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. ²³ And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. ²⁴ Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days. ²⁵ Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. ²⁶ Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” (Acts 3:19-26)

INTRODUCTION

Peter masterfully continues to lay the Foundation upon which Jesus is building is own church. His presentation has no corruption within it, and no moral or spiritual taints are upon it. **He is not moved along by any humanly devised agenda, but is governed by a heavenly order of business.** He is obviously not

interested in establishing his own greatness. They are no hoary religious traditions that have shaped the understanding he now possesses. He is *“filled with the Spirit,”* and the things that he says relate to what the enthroned Christ is doing. Endued with the Spirit, he has been ably proclaiming the

exaltation of Christ – an exaltation that took place in spite of the deeds of the people. Jesus was not elevated by the populous, but by God Himself, and it is essential that men have a grasp of this. **Their** attempted exaltation of Christ was seen in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The people shouted out,

Through the Holy Spirit, Peter preaches with power and focus, engaging the attention of his hearers – by Given O. Blakely

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- GOD SHOWED, AND HE HAS FULFILLED (3:18)
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“Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest” (Matt 21:9). Mark records them saying, *“And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest”* (Mark 11:9-10). Luke records them saying, *“Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest”* (Luke 19:38). Matthew says of this event, *“All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass”* (Matt 21:5).

It all sounded good, and the words they said were true. **However, the multitudes had not seen Jesus as He really was.** Just a few days later the same group was crying out *“Crucify him, crucify him”* (Lk 23:21).

The exaltation of Jesus had nothing whatsoever to do with popularity among men. Jesus had realized unparalleled prominence among the people, and it is often affirmed. *“There*

followed Him great multitudes of people . . . great multitudes followed Him . . .” (Matt 4:25; 8:1). There were times when the people, eager to see Jesus, ran on foot ahead of Him, reaching His destination before He did (Mk 6:33). Once, when He was teaching in a house, the crowd of people was so great there was not room to draw near to Him, even on the outside of the house (Mk 2:2). Frequently, when His enemies sought to lay hold on Him, they were *“afraid of the people”* because He was so popular with them (Mk 12:12; Lk 22:2). However, such favoritism is not what caused Jesus to be exalted, and Peter will not speak to men as though that was the means to His exaltation.

It is alarming to see how men will bend over backwards to make Jesus popular with the people. They will represent Him as something like a great sympathizer, who is desperately seeking some way to become a part of their lives. He is also presented as the means to domestic and social stability, and even personal health and wealth. No such approaches will be found in the Word of God. We will find that the real Jesus led those whom he sent to forcefully declare the transgressions of the people, and then to announce a remedy for sin – **not** for social maladjustment, financial deprivation, and physical debility.

Men contribute absolutely nothing to the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ. His supremacy does not depend upon what men do. What men do, however, does depend upon His absolute preeminence. In other words, what God now requires of men can **only** be achieved through the Lord Jesus, who is presently exalted and over all things.

Now Peter will delineate the proper response to the Gospel. **There is**

something that men are required to do, and no benefit will pass from Christ to them until it is done. It will not be something that is appealing to the flesh, for *“the flesh”* is quite content to sin, and does not want to die to it. Peter will declare that a response is necessary that involves the heart, attitude, conscience, and will. **He will not spell out a mere routine, easily memorized and codified for future generations.** If you are familiar with Peter’s instructions on the day of Pentecost, you will recognize that he does not here merely repeat them as though they were a formula. On Pentecost Peter admonished the people to do the following (Acts 2:38-40).

- ⇒ Repent.
- ⇒ Be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
- ⇒ Save yourselves from this untoward generation

You will find similarities in the text before us, but it is not precisely the same. Among other things, this confirms the absurdity of developing a “plan of salvation” that consists of a number of steps – most of which can be performed mechanically. In every case where such a “plan” is presented, there is a glaring absence of requirements for the heart. Rather, an emphasis is placed upon precisely conforming to a procedure.

The logic behind such an approach is that the examples of appropriating salvation that are provided in Scripture contain the essential points. I come from a five-point background – that is, of a “plan of salvation” that consisted of five points.

- ⇒ Hearing the Gospel.

It is alarming to see how men will bend over backwards to make Jesus popular with the people. They will represent Him as something like a great sympathizer, who is desperately seeking some way to become a part of their lives. He is also presented as the means to domestic and social stability, and even personal health and wealth.

- ⇒ Believing the Gospel.
- ⇒ Repentance from sin.
- ⇒ The public confession of Christ.
- ⇒ Baptism into Christ.

Some add an addition step: “faithfulness until death.” This is either chosen as a sixth step, or replaces the first step of hearing the Gospel.

As noble as this “plan” may

10:47; 18:8; 19:5; Rom 6:3-4; Gal 3:27). There is also no question about the necessity of being faithful until death (Heb 6:1-7; 10:36; 2 Pet 1:10; Rev 2:10).

However, formulating these into a **creedal presentation overlooks the involvement of Deity in the process of genuine conversion.** Once a person yields his attention to the Gospel, and focuses his heart upon the truth, there are

However, formulating these into a creedal presentation overlooks the involvement of Deity in the process of genuine conversion. Once a person yields his attention to the Gospel, and focuses his heart upon the truth, there are certain things that take place because of Divine working.

appear, it never occurs as such in Scripture. It is a “plan” that had to be constructed by men. It is also obvious that it is intended to contain, what is conceived to be, the bare minimum requirements. Glaringly absent from it are such things as conviction (John 16:8; Acts 2:37), being called by God (Acts 2:39; Rom 8:28,30), being pricked in the heart (Acts 2:37), inquiring what to do (Acts 2:37; 8:36; 9:6; 16:30), calling upon the name of the Lord (Acts 2:21; Rom 10:12-13), the circumcision of Christ (Col 2:11-12), conversion, or turning back to God (Acts 3:19), etc. Of course, it is exceedingly difficult to codify such things. **They require discernment on the part of the preacher or teacher.** In fact, there are some inquirers who have been rejected (Matt 3:7; Acts 8:21; 13:46).

Only a fool will deny the necessity of the responses outlined in the five step plan. Hearing the Gospel is a requisite (Rom 10:14-17). Believing the Gospel and believing on Christ is an absolute requirement (Rom 1:16; Acts 15:7). The public confession of Christ is also required, as is seen in the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:37), and the affirmation of Romans 10:9-10). Baptism into Christ is clearly involved in the appropriation of salvation (Acts 2:38,41;

certain things that take place because of **Divine working.** A recollection of a few of them will be helpful.

- ⇒ **THE SENDING OF A PREACHER.** “And how shall they preach, **except they be sent?** as it is written, *How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*” (Rom 10:15). “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, **even as the Lord gave to every man?**” (1 Cor 3:5).
- ⇒ **CONVICTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** “And when he is come, **He will reprove** [convict ^{NKJV}] *the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more*” (John 16:8-10).
- ⇒ **THE DRAWING POWER OF GOD.** “No man can come to Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44).
- ⇒ **OPENING THE HEART.** “And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira,

which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul” (Acts 16:14).

- ⇒ **BELIEVING BY GRACE.** “And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had **believed through grace**” (Acts 18:27). “For unto you **it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for His sake**” (Phil 1:29).
 - ⇒ **REPENTANCE IS GIVEN.** “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, **for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins**” (Acts 5:31). “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, **Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life**” (Acts 11:18).
 - ⇒ **CONFESSING JESUS AS LORD.** “Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that **no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost**” (1 Cor 12:3).
 - ⇒ **THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE SPIRIT UNTO OBEDIENCE.** “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, **through sanctification of the Spirit, unto** [for ^{NKJV}] **obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied**” (1 Pet 1:2).
- IS THIS RELEVANT TO THE TEXT?**
- It is not my desire to set sail on a mere tributary of thought. **I mention these things because our text is not a mere duplicate of Peter’s instructions to the inquirers on the day of Pentecost.** The background of Divine activity accounts for WHY the apostles did not present a stereotyped “plan of salvation.” They could perceive the working of the Lord and, in view of that, directed the people accordingly. Furthermore, we do not have a single example of any person who evidenced an inclination to the Gospel rejecting what the men of God

told them to do.

Something else will be quite evident in this text. There are no convenient shortcuts to Divine blessing,

even though men have done their best to create some. **The key matters of alienation from God and the guilt of sin must be addressed before Divine favor can be realized.** The people will be given

something to do – but not *merely* something to do. A deliberate, conscious, and sustained change of direction will also be required in their lives. They can no longer live the same.

REPENT THEREFORE

“ 3:19a **Repent ye therefore . . .** ”

So far as this text is concerned, Peter’s words have not been prompted by an inquiry – as occurred on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37). However, from the tone and substance of his words, as well as the staggering response to his words (Acts 4:4), he had obviously detected the presence of the same spirit that was demonstrated during that initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

REPENT

“Repent ye . . .” Other versions read, “let your hearts be changed and be turned to God.”^{BBE} “Be penitent.”^{DOUAY} “Amend your lives,”^{GENEVA} “Change the way you think and act.”^{GWN} “repent of your sins,”^{NLT} “reform ye,”^{YLT} “change your mind and attitude to God.”^{LIVING} and “repent (change your mind and purpose).”^{AMPLIFIED}

corresponding change in one’s manner of life.

Although we have done this before, I want to go over the meaning of repentance once again. This is a critical matter. Twice Jesus said, “except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Lk 13:3,5). “Repentance” is something, Jesus affirmed, that is to be “preached” (Lk 24:47). Paul told Agrippa he had preached to both Jew and Gentile “that they **should** repent and turn to God” (Acts 26:20). Even when Jesus first sent out His disciples, they preached “that men should repent” (Mk 6:12). One of the attributes of God Himself is that He is not “the son of man that He **should** repent” (Num 23:19), nor is He “a man, that He **should** repent” (1 Sam 15:29). One of the traits of the reprobate, who are depicted as suffering Divine judgment, is that “they **repented not** to give Him the glory” (Rev 16:9). Indeed,

against those who had “**not repented of the uncleanness and fornication, and lasciviousness which they have committed**” (2 Cor 12:21). Repentance is so critical, that if God does not give it, men cannot “recover themselves out of the snare of the devil” (2 Tim 2:25). **Thus, if men are repeatedly overcome by the devil, it is because they have not repented.** When addressing the matter of God’s longsuffering toward His people, it is affirmed that it is owing to the fact that God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all **should come to repentance**” (2 Pet 3:9).

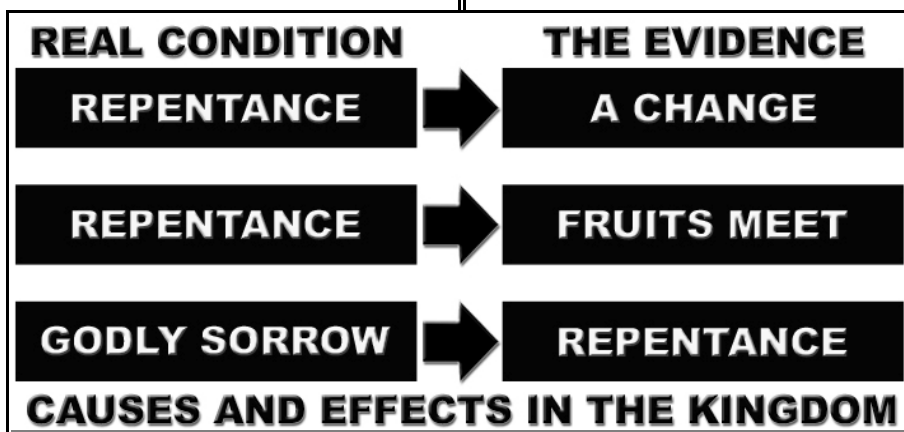
The fact that so very little is being said about repentance these days is evidence that “a falling away” is taking place (2 Thess 2:3).

Defining Repentance

This technical definition of repentance is as follows. “To change one’s mind (to feel sorry he has done this or that), of having offended someone; used especially of those who, conscious of their sins and with manifest tokens of sorrow, are intent; on obtaining God’s pardon; To change one’s mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one’s past sins,”^{THAYER} “predominately of a religious and ethical change in the way one thinks about or acts, repent, change one’s mind, be converted; as feeling remorse regret, feel sorry,”^{FRIBERG} “repent, have a change of heart, turn from one’s sins, change one’s ways,”^{UBS} “repent, have a change of heart, turn from one’s sins, change one’s ways,”^{LOUW-NIDA} “change one’s mind or purpose,”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT} “feel remorse, repent, lit. ‘change one’s mind.’”^{GINGRICH}

Repentance involves a number of fundamental and perceptible changes in one’s character.

- ⇒ A change of mind for the good.
- ⇒ Sorry over having offended God.
- ⇒ An acute consciousness of sin.



Repentance involves a fundamental change in the way a person thinks – a change that results in an alteration of conduct. Where the conduct is not changed, there has been no repentance, for there is no such thing as a change of mind that does not produce a

their hearts were so hardened by the deceitfulness of sin that they “**repented not of their deeds**” (Rev 16:11). The “goodness of God” is affirmed to lead men “to repentance” (Rom 2:4), so that **where there is no repentance, there is no sound view of God’s goodness.** Paul set himself

- ⇒ A condition produced by godly sorrow.
- ⇒ A hearty amending of one's ways.
- ⇒ An abhorrence of past sins.
- ⇒ Turning from one's sins.
- ⇒ The changing of one's ways.
- ⇒ A godly determination, or purpose, to please the Lord.

There is doubtless more involved in repentance than this. However, this provides a clear index concerning the direction and effectiveness of repentance.

This is not the kind of repentance found in Judas, when he *"repented himself."* Although he was much more aggressive than many who are professing to embrace Jesus, his was not a repentance unto salvation, and it was not induced by godly sorrow (Matt 27:3-5).

- ⇒ He "repented himself."
- ⇒ He brought back the money he had received for betraying Jesus.
- ⇒ He confessed, "I have sinned."
- ⇒ He knew what he had done: "I have betrayed the innocent blood."
- ⇒ He threw down the money in the Temple, disowning any commitment to it.
- ⇒ He went out and hanged himself.

"Godly sorrow" was not the impetus behind the repentance of Judas, nor did it lead to *"salvation."* He did not amend his conduct – in fact it is apparent that such amending did not seem possible to him.

A Controversy With Counseling

I am aware that I am attacking a *sacred cow* when I come against the modern religious concept of counseling. Professed Christian institutions of higher learning have reshaped their curriculum and degree programs to fit the modern concept of counseling. The reasoning behind counseling has been borrowed

from the world, who has bowed its knee to the pseudo-science of psychiatry. At its very foundation, psychiatry does not view man as the "offspring" of God, nor is it built upon the fact that man has sinned and comes short of the glory of God. As ordinarily conceived, it gives no weight to the sinfulness of man, the presence of the devil, or the direction of the Holy Spirit. I understand there are those within the Christian community who are engaged in counseling, and yet

THEREFORE

"... therefore..." Other versions read, *"then,"* ^{NIV} *"so then,"* ^{BBE} *"So,"* ^{GWN} *"Now you must,"* ^{NJB} *"Now,"* ^{NJB} and *"So now."* ^{WILLIAMS}

Peter is employing wisdom and spiritual understanding. In view of what the people did to Jesus, in consideration of God raising Him from the dead, and in light of Jesus healing this lame man, **the demand is for the people to repent.** It is

At its very foundation, psychiatry does not view man as the "offspring" of God, nor is it built upon the fact that man has sinned and comes short of the glory of God. As ordinarily conceived, it gives no weight to the sinfulness of man, the presence of the devil, or the direction of the Holy Spirit.

do acknowledge all of these realities. Yet, they have embraced a science (falsely so called) that makes no room for them. This forces them to trace deviate behavior to earthly circumstances, physiological conditions, fleshly genealogy, or matters of heredity.

In this context *"repentance"* is often wholly out of order. This is because the reason for sinful conduct is frequently imagined to be circumstances over which the individual has had no control – which circumstances are not considered to be fundamentally spiritual, and having to do with the powers of darkness and man's natural propensity to iniquity.

Turning Around

The word *"repent"* does have a secondary meaning of turning around – **but that is not its fundamental meaning.** The emphasis in repenting is a change of perspective, and the consequent change in conduct that, of necessity, results. There is also a condition of heart that is appropriately identified with sorrow, contrition, regret, remorse, and penitence.

evident that they sinned in killing Jesus, for God reversed their judgment, then confirmed He had raised and glorified Christ by the healing of a lame man who was well known to them.

More Than A Commandment

While repentance is certainly a commandment (Acts 17:30), it is more than a commandment. **Repentance is reasonable as well as essential.** Once the facts in the case are seen, it becomes totally unreasonable not to repent. Men **do** need to repent of fighting against God, rejecting His Son, and resisting the Holy Spirit. Those are matters with which men cannot be content to live. The flesh must be crucified, and those who are Christ's have done precisely that (Gal 5:24).

Those who continue in sin after they have heard how God has exalted Christ are guilty of the most heinous sin. They have **not** believed the record God has given of His Son. They have chosen their will over God's will. They have also resisted the Spirit of God. It is no wonder Peter tells them to *"Repent!"*

BE CONVERTED

“ 19b . . . **and be converted . . .** ”

Other versions read, “**and return**,”^{NASB} “**and turn to God**,”^{NIV} “**and turn again**,”^{RSV} “**and be turned to God**,”^{BBE} “**and turn back**,”^{CSB} “**and convert**,”^{PNT} “**and turn to Him**,”^{LIVING} “**Come back to God**,”^{IE} “**and reform your lives**,”^{WEYMOUTH} “**and reform**,”^{MONTGOMERY} and “**turn around and return [to God]**,”^{AMPLIFIED}

The word “converted” is one that blends well with the revealed purpose of God in Christ Jesus. It is translated from the Greek word ἐπιστρέφω (ep-ee-stref-at-aa). For those who are interested in the use of the word, it is in the imperfect aorist tense. “Imperfect” means the intended action is to be **continual**. It does not refer to a instant and fixed state. “Aorist” means the condition is something that has actually happened. It is not an objective or a mere idea, but an experience that really takes place. The “imperfect aorist” tense means that the matter under condition actually takes place, and continues to exist. **It is not something that wanes, or finally passes away.**

Lexically, the word means “to turn to, to cause to return, to bring back; to return, turn back, come back . . . to turn back morally, to reform,”^{THAYER} “moral change, to change one’s ways,”^{FRIBERG} and “to turn towards (God), to turn from error.”^{LIDDELL-SCOTT}

A technical definition of the word, as used in Scripture, is provided in the box below. This is precisely stated, and will assist us in approaching this subject in a proper frame of mind.

The fact that Peter tells the

CONVERT – CONVERSION
 In its more restricted meaning the word denotes the action of man in the initial process of salvation as distinguished from the action of God. Justification and regeneration are purely Divine acts, repentance, faith, conversion are human acts although under the influence and by the power of the Divine agency. Thus, conversion denotes the human volition and act by which man in obedience to the Divine summons determines to change the course of his life and turns to God. Arrested by God’s call man stops to think, turns about and heads the opposite way. This presupposes that the previous course was not directed toward God but away from Him.

people to “be converted” substantiates that this is an action in which they themselves are involved. Conversion is the moral change that results from faith and repentance. **While being born again involves a change of character, or the essential person, conversion has to do with a firm resolve to appropriate salvation.** Acting in faith, the individual sets out to do what is utterly impossible apart from Divine empowerment.

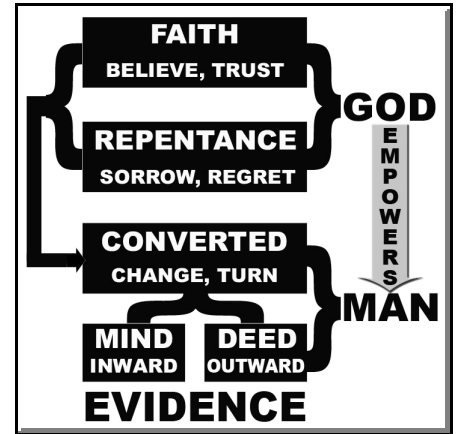
Now, what Peter declares is absolutely essential. There will be no Divine acceptance and remission if these things are not done by the people. **What is more, the changes that are made in the people must continue, else they will have no value before God.** Salvation is not a sporadic experience, and woe to those who represent it as though it was.

Conversion has to do with an abrupt change in the direction of life – a change that impacts upon both the inward and outward man. Inwardly, the mind is altered to think differently. There are new purpose and objectives, new loves, and new hates. Righteousness is loved and iniquity is hated, which is an expression of the Divine nature (Heb 1:9). These thoughts and sensitivities are carried out in deeds of righteousness – godly expressions in words and deeds. **If there is no change in conduct, there has been no inward change.** We know this is the case, for “*if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*” (2 Cor 5:17). Concerning the transformation of the individual it is also written, “*And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness*” (Eph 4:24). And again, “*And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him*” (Col 3:10).

Turning to God (being converted) is a consequence of a change of mind (repentance). It has to do with an actual forsaking of sin. It is turning from the course, or path, of wickedness.

The Greek word used in this text is frequently translated “turn” in the King James Version of the Scriptures.

⇒ “*And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and **turned** to the Lord*” (Acts 9:35).



⇒ “*And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and **turned** unto the Lord*” (Acts 11:21).

⇒ “*And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should **turn** from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein*” (Acts 14:15).

⇒ “*Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are **turned** to God*” (Acts 15:19).

⇒ “*To open their eyes, and to **turn** them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me*” (Acts 26:18).

⇒ “*But showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and **turn** to God, and do works meet for repentance*” (Acts 26:20).

- ⇒ “Nevertheless when it shall **turn** to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away” (2 Cor 3:16).
- ⇒ “For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye **turned** to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 Thess 1:9).
- ⇒ “For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now **returned** unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (1 Pet 2:25).

As will be confirmed in the next clause, conversion [as used in this text] is an action that precedes the remission of sins.



To “be converted” is to turn our attention and commitment from one thing to another. It is to redefine what men consider to be their “treasure” – i.e. what is worthy of their attention. There is an adjustment of values, and a change in priorities. **Divine acceptance and the**

remission of sins cannot be received until this change, or turning, occurs.

Even after one has been “added to the church” (Acts 2:47), if a person returns again to a self-centered life, that corrupt commitment must be abandoned if Divine acceptance is to be realized. This is not a matter for conjecture, for God has spoken directly to this matter. The following word was addressed to those who were once washed, sanctified, and justified (1 Cor 6:11). “Wherefore come 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 Cor 6:17-18).

Men must become conscious of God’s total intolerance of sin. Even when the sins of the world were laid upon His own Son, God cursed Him (Gal 3:13), condemning sin in the flesh of His Son (Rom 8:3). **Sin does have separating power, driving a wedge between men and God.** The Lord once said, “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear” (Isa 59:2). This is precisely why God had to deal with sin. It is the reason for the new birth.

Once a person comes into Christ, God does not relax His attitude toward sin. Jesus has not enabled God to look upon sin without it provoking His wrath! If there is any doubt about this, the record of Ananias and Sapphira should

make it clear to us (Acts 5:1-10).

In my judgment, the modern church is not making this clear to the people. **Peter’s words would actually be contested in the average church.** Doctrinal spears would be hurled at him, objecting that men can come to Jesus as they are, with no turning or changing required on their part. For that matter, the one God sent to prepare the way for Jesus refused to receive people who did not bring forth fruits “meet for repentance,” or “fruit in keeping with repentance” (Matt 3:8). The sophist will object, saying that such a message is no longer appropriate. It is different now. However, Paul gave testimony to Agrippa concerning what he preached several years after the events of our text. “Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but showed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, **that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance**” (Acts 26:19-20).

I realize that men can distort this word, teaching that men are saved by mere human effort. However, it must become clear to every person that God does not receive people only to allow them to return to their old manners, asking for some time to clean up their act, so to speak. When men turn to God, they will receive the strength that is required to implement their determination to “sin not.” **But that turning is absolutely essential.**

THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE BLOTTED OUT

“ 19c . . . **that your sins may be blotted out . . .** ”

If there is a codified “plan of salvation” – a revealed series of steps by which remission of sins is obtained – then it will be articulated in the book of Acts. If that is really the ordained way of leading people to Christ, then it will be expressed by Peter, who was given the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Later in this book, when Paul becomes the

prominent figure, he is sure to speak it out also. To be a legitimate “plan,” it must also be spoken consistently, with no inspired man deviating from it.

Some imagine that truth is always delivered in a prepackaged form – like the Law was delivered. In this view, the same God who gave Ten Commandments has also revealed five steps, or two steps, or three steps . . . etc. This all makes perfect sense to those

ensnared by a legal mind-set. But after all is said and done, the *plan* approach is never found in Scripture, and *how to be saved* is not presented in a perfectly consistent manner. **This does not mean that baptism is not necessary, or that confession can be ignored, or that there is no need to repent. It does mean that these things are not implement by means of, what men call, a plan.** If this is not true, then we will be confused by the instances of obtaining salvation in the

book of Acts, for they are not perfectly consistent.

⇒ **THE DAY OF PENTECOST** (Acts 2:38-40). The people were told to *“repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remissions of sins, and they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”* Those who *“gladly received his word were baptized.”*

⇒ **OUR PRESENT TEXT** (Acts 3:19; 4:4). The people were told to *“repent”* and *“be converted”* so their sins would be *“blotted out”* and *“times of refreshing”* would *“come from the presence of the Lord.”* Then God would *“send Jesus.”* Many of them that heard the word *“believed.”*

⇒ **THE CITY OF SAMARIA** Acts 8:5-6,12-13). There is no record of the people being told what to do. The people *“with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.”* When they believed Philip, *“they were baptized, both men and women.”*

⇒ **THE ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH** (Acts 8:35-38). Philip preached Christ to this man. There is no record of him being told what to do. The Gospel he heard provoked him to ask what was hindering him from being baptized. Philip said if he believed he could. The man confessed that he believed Jesus was the Son of God, and Philip baptized him.

⇒ **SAUL OF TARSUS** (Acts 22:10-16). When Jesus appeared to Saul, upon being asked by Saul He wanted him to do, He told Saul to go where another man would tell him what to do. When the man came (Ananias), he told Saul why Jesus had called him, and asked him why he was tarrying, saying that he should arise and be baptized, washing away his sins and calling upon the name of the Lord.

⇒ **THE HOUSEHOLD OF CORNELIUS** (Acts 10:44-48). Peter preached Jesus to this household, and while he was preaching to them the Holy Spirit fell on them in an evidential way. There

is no record of a plan being presented to them. However Peter did ask who could forbid water that these people should be baptized, He then commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.

⇒ **SERGIUS PAULUS** (Acts 13:12).

The book of Acts is the only place in scripture where we have a verbatim record of what was preached, inquiries that were made, and what men were told to do. No Epistle contains instruction concerning how to preach to sinners, or precisely what to say to those desiring to be saved.

There is no record of this man being told what to do. It simply states that he *“believed.”*

⇒ **LYDIA AND HER HOUSEHOLD** (Acts 16:14-15). There is no record of a plan being presented to Lydia and those with her. It is written that the Lord opened Lydia’s heart so she could respond to the things spoken by Paul. It is also written that she was baptized, together with her household.

⇒ **THE PHILIPPIAN JAILOR** (Acts 16:27-34). This is the only place in all Scripture where the question is asked, *“What must I do to be saved?”* The answer given was, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house”* (Acts 16:31). After Paul preached to the household, they were all baptized.

⇒ **CRISPUS AND HIS HOUSE AND MANY CORINTHIANS** (Acts 18:8). No record is provided concerning what was said to these people – only that Paul *“reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and Greeks.”* It is written that Crispus *“believed on the Lord with all of his house,”* and *“many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.”*

The book of Acts is the only place

in scripture where we have a verbatim record of what was preached, inquiries that were made, and what men were told to do. No Epistle contains instruction concerning how to preach to sinners, or precisely what to say to those desiring to be saved. Things such as “The Plan of Salvation,” “The Sinners Prayer,” “the

Roman Road,” and “Four Spiritual Laws” – or anything remotely similar to them – are nowhere stated or outlined in Scripture. Such are all constructed by men, and reflect human understanding. No one in Scripture was ever told to pray for salvation, or to ask Jesus into their heart. No one was ever asked to “repeat after me . . .” Those are just the facts in the case.

By no means does this suggest that every man can do that which is *“right in his own eyes”* (Judges 17:5; 25). I have said these things only to confirm that a codified or stereotyped approach to being saved is not presented in Scripture. Such an approach has been authored by men, and they must assume the credit for it. **The reason for the absence of a fixed procedure ought to be apparent. Coming to Christ involves Divine activity as well as that of men.**

⇒ There is a drawing of the individual (John 6:44).

⇒ There is conviction, in which the individual becomes acutely aware of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11).

⇒ There is the ministry of the Law, which is a schoolmaster that brings us to Christ (Gal 3:24).

⇒ There is the reception of *“the love of*

ACTS 2:37-40	ACTS 3:19-26
WHAT SHALL WE DO?	-----
REPENT	REPENT
-----	BE CONVERTED
BE BAPTIZED	-----
REMISSION OF SINS	SINS BLOTTED OUT
GIFT OF THE SPIRIT	SEASONS OF REFRESHING
SAVE YOURSELVES	-----
-----	HE SHALL SEND JESUS

truth,” so that the individual can be saved (2 Thess 2:10).

- ⇒ It is also given unto men to believe (Phil 1:29).
- ⇒ Jesus gives repentance to the coming one (Acts 5:31).
- ⇒ Hearts are opened by the Lord (Acts 16:14).

Instructing people in what to do to be saved involves some measure of discernment concerning the condition of the people. The spouting of a preconceived “plan” can cause none of the above things to take place. They are all the result of delivering **the Gospel of Christ**, not a plan of salvation. Those who have no understanding in these matters should confine their witness to what they know, and leave the rest to others who better know the manner of the kingdom.

THAT

“ . . . that . . . ” Other versions read, “so that,” NIV “for,” DARBY “to have,” GWN “that so,” MRD “so,” LIVING and “to have.” ISV

Thus far, Peter has told the people to repent and be converted, i.e., change, or turn to the Lord. Now, upon the basis of fulfilling those two requirements he places before the people a most wonderful benefit. Keep in mind, these are the people who “killed the Prince of life.”

SINS BLOTTED OUT

“ . . . your sins may be blotted out . . . ” Other versions read, “your sins may be wiped away,” NASB “your sins may be wiped out,” NIV “your sins may be

completely taken away,” BBE “for the blotting out of your sins,” DARBY “that your sins may be put away,” GENEVA “to have your sins removed,” GWN “your sins may be done away,” PNT “so He can cleanse away your sins,” LIVING “He may wipe out your sins,” IE “the record of your sins may be cancelled,” WEYMOUTH “your sins may be erased (blotted out, wiped clean),” AMPLIFIED and “so that He will forgive your sins.” GNB

A great number of preachers that I know could never say these words. They simply could not come out of their mouths. They would have insisted on a more thorough presentation. However, we will give no heed to such men. Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, they are not. Peter had the keys of the kingdom of heaven, they do not. Peter had discernment of the situation, they do not. The remission, or forgiveness of sins is traced to several things.

- ⇒ **BEING BAPTIZED.** “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ **for the remission of sins**, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and **wash away thy sins**, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).
- ⇒ **BELIEVING IN JESUS.** “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him **shall receive remission of sins**” (Acts 10:43).
- ⇒ **BELIEVING.** “And by him all that believe are **justified from all things**, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:39).

- ⇒ **FOR CHRIST’ SAKE.** “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph 4:32).
- ⇒ **CALLING UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD.** “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom 10:13).

It is challenging to compare Acts 2:37-40 with 3:19-26. **If there was a static procedure involved in obtaining the remission of sins, then they would undoubtedly read the same**—particularly since the same man is delivering the Word to the people. However the words that were said are not identical, as indicated in the chart below.

These are not two different approaches to obtaining remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. **They rather accent the personal nature of salvation, as well as the effects of discerning the Divine work that has occurred in the background.** No point of apostolic doctrine concerning repentance confession, or baptism is ignored. Rather than each account of people obtaining salvation being unique unto itself, they provide differing perspectives of salvation, and of its various involvements. In order to have this kind of view, being saved is not associated with a fixed procedure to be fulfilled by men. Participating in God’s “great salvation” involves His activity as well as that of men. **Further, we see throughout the book of acts that there is not a single instance of people refusing to do what they were told to do.** That fact explains why every word about the “How to” aspect of salvation is not recounted. The obstinance that has become so common among those who say they believe was not a problem at the time of our text.

Blotted Out

This is the language used by the holy prophets when speaking of the totality of Divine remission. David prayed, “blot out my transgressions” (Psa 51:1). Again he prayed, “Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities” (Psa 51:9). Through Isaiah God said, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins” (Isa 44:22). Translated from the

Greek word *ἐξαλειφθῆναι* (ex-al-i-fo-than-ai), “blotted out” means “removal, to wipe off, wipe away . . . to obliterate, erase, wipe out, blot out,” THAYER “do away with, erase, remove, eliminate,” FRIBERG “cancel, destroy,” UBS and “destroy utterly.” LIDDELL-SCOTT

The following Takes place when one’s sins are “blotted out.”

- ⇒ In heaven, the record of the sin is totally removed.
- ⇒ God remembers the sins no more (Heb 8:12; 10:17).
- ⇒ The sin is removed from the conscience of the transgressor (Heb 9:14).
- ⇒ The sin is removed from any association with the one who committed it (Psa 103:12; Num 23:21).

Those whose sins have been “blotted out” are said to have been “washed” (1 Cor 6:11), forgiven “all trespasses” (Col 2:13), and “justified from all things” (Acts 13:39). The action is so thorough that it is written, “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth” (Rom 8:33).

What About Forgiving Yourself

Adopting the jargon of psychiatry, some say they know they have been forgiven by God, but they find they cannot forgive themselves. **God’s people must avoid using such words, for they cannot contain the truth.** Words that find their genesis in human wisdom cannot convey the truth of God.

Scripture never speaks of people forgiving themselves, and neither should we. The Word of God does recognize a condemning conscience, i.e. one that is **not** purged. That is the kind of conscience that prevailed under the Law. As it is written, “Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that **could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience**” (Heb 9:9). Again it is written, “For since the Law has merely a rude outline (foreshadowing) of the good things to come—instead of fully expressing those things—it can never by offering the same

sacrifices continually year after year make perfect those who approach [its altars]. For if it were otherwise, would [these sacrifices] not have stopped being offered? Since the worshipers had once for all been cleansed, they would no longer have any **guilt or consciousness of sin**. But [as it is] these sacrifices annually bring a fresh remembrance of sins [to be atoned for], Because the blood of bulls and goats is powerless to take sins away”^{AMPLIFIED} (Heb 10:1-4).

In the above texts perfection does not speak of a moral condition, but of a cleansed conscience. Under the law, although there was a multiplicity of sacrifices, the offering of them had no effect upon the conscience. Instead of removing guilt, they actually accented it: “But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year,” or “there is a reminder of sins every year”^{NKJV} (Heb 10:3). This is the condition the psychiatrist attempts to explain by the phrase “forgive yourself.” The cleansing of the conscience is thus

it: “Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Rom 4:6-8). This state of blessedness belongs to the individual – “the man.” That is, **the person is blessed in the realization of this truth.**

In his First Epistle, Peter associates this initial condition with baptism. “. . . when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but **the answer of a good conscience toward God**.) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 3:21). In this statement Peter affirms that **baptism is not an empty ceremony.** The “putting away of the filth of the flesh” does not have to do with taking a

This approach to cleansing the conscience is a subtle form of idolatry – attempting to achieve appointed results independently of the God who ordained them. It represents a serious departure from the truth, and is not to be taken lightly.

sought through a therapeutic means.

This approach to cleansing the conscience is a subtle form of idolatry – attempting to achieve appointed results independently of the God who ordained them. It represents a serious departure from the truth, and is not to be taken lightly.

The blotting out of sins includes the purging of the conscience. As it is written, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, **purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?**” (Heb 9:14). The purging is experienced when the truth of justification registers upon the soul. David wrote of this, and Paul confirmed

bath, as some translations infer. It rather speaks of the ceremonial cleansing under the Law (Lev 16:30; Num 8:6-7). The “putting away” of First Peter 3:21 is the perfected conscience of the ninth and fourteen verses of the ninth chapter of Hebrews.

Peter is saying that in baptism a person is making an appeal for a purged, or good, conscience. The New American Standard version reflects this meaning: “an appeal to God for a good conscience.” He also means that God’s response to the obedient soul **is** the cleansing of the conscience. Thus the King James and New King James read “the answer of a good conscience.” The New International Version represents baptism as the response of a good conscience: “the pledge

[response]^{footnote} of a good conscience.” The New Living Translation does the same thing: “but as a response to God from a clean conscience.” This view does not comport with the rest of Scripture. When instructing Saul of Tarsus, Ananias said, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Peter made the same association in Acts 2:38: “baptized . . . for the remission of sins.” Thus the cleansing of the conscience occurs in the baptism itself. Baptism is not the response of a conscience that has already been

cleansed.

After our baptism, the blood of Christ continues to provide cleansing for the believer. We are told, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Again it is written, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

What I am saying is that this cleansing includes the purging of the

conscience. I will even wax bold and affirm that God is never represented as forgiving sin without notifying the conscience of the individual that He has done so. Nor, indeed, is any person represented as having been “washed” who, at the time, was not made aware of the cleansing.

This is the manner of the New Covenant. A person with a defiled conscience should not assume that they have been forgiven, but examine themselves to see if they are in the faith.

TIMES OF REFRESHING

“^{19d} . . . when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

The greatness of salvation is seen in the various perspectives of it. In Acts 2:38-39, Peter said the people, upon their repentance and baptism, would receive “the gift of the Holy Spirit.” This, he affirmed, was according to the promise of God. Now Peter refers to that benefit from the standpoint of its effects. In other words, this is what happens when a person receives “the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

TIMES OF REFRESHING

“ . . . when the times of refreshing shall come . . . ” Other versions read, “so that times of refreshing may come,”^{NKJV} “in order that times of refreshing may come,”^{NASB} “so there may come seasons of refreshing,”^{ASV} “and times of blessing may come,”^{BBE} “Then times will come when the Lord will refresh you,”^{GWN} “and times of rest may come to you,”^{MRD} “times of refreshment,”^{NAB} “the time of comfort,”

^{NJB} “and send you wonderful times of refreshment,”^{LIVING} “that there may come seasons of revival,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “that times of refreshing (of recovering from the effects of heat, of reviving with fresh air),”^{AMPLIFIED}

This is a most marvelous statement. The described experience is the appointed result of repenting and being converted, or changing and turning. The circumstance now described will never be found in those who do not repent and amend their ways.

Times

Here is a most interesting word. As you will note from the various translations, the word “seasons” is an alternative word. Coming from the Greek word καιροι (kai-poi), the word is plural: i.e., “times” or “seasons.” It is not in the singular. The lexical meaning of the word is, “a measure of time,”^{THAYER} “times, periods,”^{GINGRICH} As it is used in this text, this word occurs in two other texts.

⇒ “And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” (Lk 21:24).

⇒ “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come” (2 Tim 3:1).

The plural use of the term accents a lengthy period of time, not a series of random periods of time. The length of time depicted in this expression precisely parallels living by faith, life in this world, and walking in the newness of life. In other words, it refers to the period of time between our translation into the Kingdom of God’s Son (Col 1:13), and our disembarkment from this world, whether by death (Heb 9:27), or the coming of the Lord (1 Thess 4:17).

These “times” come only after we have repented and been converted – after we have been turned from the power of Satan unto God.

Refreshing

The word “refreshing” comes from a word meaning, “cooling, refreshing,”^{THAYER} “recovery . . . rest,”^{FRIEBERG} “Refreshment, spiritual strength,”^{UBS} “relief from distressful, burdensome circumstances – relief, breathing space,”^{LOUW-NIDA} “relief, respite,”^{LEH} “refreshing, relief, rest.”^{GINGRICH}

Spiritual life postulates a certain depletion of strength that attends it. The

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walk of faith produces a kind of wearing down, or eroding of durability. This is owing to having a heavenly treasure in an earthen vessel (2 Cor 4:7), and it is by design.

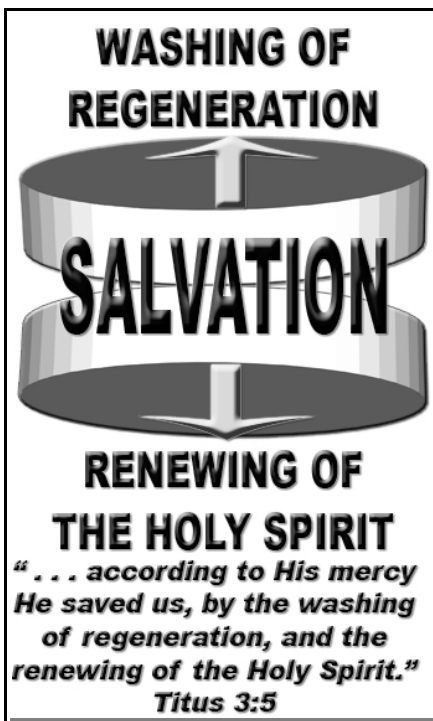
This condition requires a constant renewal, or refurbishment of our strength. This restoration of spiritual capability occurs in the fellowship of Christ, into which we were called (1 Cor 1:9). In other words, we are as dependent upon Christ to maintain spiritual life as we were when we first received it. Spiritual life does not continue on its own, but is maintained by faith. As it is written, "the just shall live by faith" (Hab 2:4; Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38).

This is a side of salvation that has been grossly understated. Somehow, people are being left with the impression that once we come into Christ we are locked into a state of strength and safety. This is a most serious error, for salvation, in all of its facets, is ever "by grace through faith" (Eph 2:8). Just as surely as Deity had to be involved in your reclamation from sin, so Deity must be involved in the maintenance of that condition.

There are two sides to salvation, and both are absolutely essential. One has to do with separating us from sin, and the other has to do with keeping us separate. One has to do with the creation of newness of life, and the other has to do with maintaining that life. One has to do with putting us into Christ's Kingdom, and other has to do with keeping us there, for we cannot be ultimately saved if we are not consciously under His very real rule.

The renewing of the Holy Spirit refers to the post-regeneration life – after we have been "added to the church." Renewing is reviving, revitalizing, refurbishing, or refreshing. It involves

comfort, encouragement, and the restoration of strength. It is what Isaiah spoke of when he said, "But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa 40:31). It is what David referred to when he said, "They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God" (Psa 84:7). Paul referred to this as knowing "the power of His resurrection" (Phil 3:10). The renewing ministry of the Holy Spirit accounts for Paul's testimony: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed" (2 Cor 4:8-9).



"Times of refreshing" do not refer to periods of mere exhilaration or excitement. These are times of spiritual productivity when the saved are enabled

to continue walking (2 Cor 5:7), running (Heb 12:1), fighting (1 Tim 6:12), wrestling (Eph 6:12), and striving (Col 1:29). No person can complete the race without these "times of refreshing." However, they will not come unless they are preceded by repenting and converting.

FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD

"... from the presence of the Lord." Other versions read, "from the Lord," NIV "from before the face of the Lord," MRD and "From the presence of God." PHILLIPS

In salvation, required resources are dispensed from heaven. "Times of refreshing" can come to the earth, but they cannot originate in the earth.

There is a place from which the Kingdom of God is being administrated – and it is not upon the earth. Before Jesus took the reins of the Kingdom, He was seated "on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb 1:3). The "times of refreshing" are sent from there. In order to receive them, one must be within the circumference of blessing, which is identified as "heavenly places in Christ" (Eph 1:3) – where Christ Himself has been seated (Eph 1:20). Believers are presently there by faith (Eph 2:6).

The phrase "from the presence of the Lord" involves not only the direct involvement of the Lord, but His willingness and forwardness to dispense "times of refreshing." This is part and parcel of the package of salvation, which means we cannot be saved without it. If it seems as though this is not the case, living by faith will confirm to your heart that you do need renewal, reviving, and revivifying. There are times when you need to have your strength "renewed," and when encouragement will be necessary. When those times come, take heart! There are "times of refreshing!"

HE SHALL SEND JESUS CHRIST

" 20a And He shall send Jesus Christ . . ." Other versions read, "And that He may send Jesus," NKJV "And that

He may send the Christ," NIV "and that He may send the Messiah," NRSV "and He shall send Him," DOUAY "He will send you

Jesus," GWN "and He may send to you Him," MRD "and send you the Messiah," NAB "Then He shall send you the Christ," NJB

“and He will again send you Jesus,”^{NLT}
“and He may send back Jesus,”^{WILLIAMS}
“and that He may send [to you] the Christ (the Messiah),”^{AMPLIFIED} and *“then He will send you Jesus, your long heralded Christ.”*^{PHILLIPS}

This promise embraces both “now” and “then” – when we first receive newness of life, and when we are finally gathered unto Him.

NEWNESS OF LIFE

appearing will be on a appointed day (Acts 17:31; 1 Cor 4:5; 2 Pet 3:7). It is wholly inappropriate to relate the coming of Christ “the second time” (Heb 9:28) with repenting and being converted. It is true that Christ’s second coming is, sequentially, the third of these three events: (1) sins blotted out, (2) seasons of refreshing, and (3) sending Jesus the second time. However, Peter is speaking of immediate benefits, not the grand scope of things.

put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph 4:20-24).

While some men say that we are to ask Jesus into our hearts, Peter says men are to repent and be converted so their sins may be blotted out. Then God will “send Jesus” to them.

THE SECOND COMING

In a **secondary** sense, this text can relate to the coming of the Lord, at which time those to whom Jesus has been sent will be “changed” outwardly, to fully bear the image of Christ (1 Cor 15:52; 1 John 3:1-2). **That sending, however, is not determined by whether or not men repent, are converted, have their sins blotted out, and receive times of refreshing.** For them, He will appear “without sin unto salvation” (Heb 9:28), but their acceptable condition is not the only reason for Jesus being sent back. Rather, men will be called into for their response in Christ. They will also be rewarded appropriately, reaping what they have sown, whether in blessing or cursing. He will come, in other words, “to judge the earth” (Psa 96:13; Acts 17:31).

In this world, when men repent, are converted, have their sins blotted out, and experience “times of refreshing,” **they commence the time or preparation for the return of the Lord.** However, God will not send Jesus the second time **because** of those experiences. Rather, they are required **because** He is coming back – in order to involve men in the required change from glory to glory (2 Cor 3:18). While this may appear to be a very small point, it is, in fact, one that has managed to elude many poor souls.

AND HE SHALL SEND JESUS	
TO DWELL IN YOUR HEART TO TEACH YOU OF GOD TO GUIDE AND SHEPHERD	TO GATHER TO HIMSELF TO PRESENT THE BRIDE TO BE HIM HIM FOR EVER
NEWNESS OF LIFE	BE LIKE HIM
PREPARATION	CULMINATION
CHRIST DWELLING WITH US	

Upon becoming a new creature, and being strengthened by the Holy Spirit in the inward man, Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. **That is, He takes up permanent residency in them.** The Word of God addresses this matter in these words: “That He would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; **that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith . . .**” (Eph 3:16-17). That is **primary** meaning of our text – and “He shall send Jesus.” The context seems to require this meaning, **for the second coming of Christ is in no way driven by human response.** That

In sending forth Jesus to the believer, God is providing for the tutelage required for men to walk in fellowship with Himself. John referred to this teaching in this way: “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, **that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life**” (1 John 5:20). Paul referred to this tutorship in these words: “But ye have not so learned Christ: If so be that ye have heard Him, and have been **taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye**

WHICH BEFORE WAS PREACHED UNTO YOU

“^{20b} . . . **which before was preached unto you.**” Other versions read, “the Christ appointed for you.”^{NASB}

“who has been appointed for you – even Jesus,”^{NIV} “who was marked out for you from the first, even Jesus,”^{BBE} “who has

been appointed Messiah for you,”^{CSB} “who was foreordained for you,”^{DARBY} “who was made ready for you,”^{MRD} “the Christ He

has *predestined*,”^{NJB} “*your appointed Messiah*,”^{NLT} “*the Christ appointed beforehand form you*,”^{WEYMOUTH} “*Who before was designated and appointed for you*,”^{AMPLIFIED} “*Jesus, your long-heralded Christ*,”^{PHILLIPS} “*who had been ordained to be your Messiah*,”^{EMTV} and “*who is the Messiah he has already chosen for you*.”^{GNB}

Here there is an apparent significant difference in the translations. Jesus is represented as being “before preached unto you,”^{KJV/NKJV/DOUAY/GENEVA/PNT/RWB/TNT/WEB/YLT/BISHOPS/LITV/MKJV} and “*appointed*,” “*foreordained*,” “*predestined*,” or “*chosen*.”^{NASB/NIV/NSRV/RSV/BBE/DARBY/NJB/NLT/WEYMOUTH/AMPLIFIED}



Briefly summarized, the Alexandrian manuscript copy reads “preached,” the Syriac and Arabic copies read “predetermined or prepared for you,” and the Ethiopic copy reads “anointed.”

This is another case of manuscript mania, where differing Greek

texts exist. Briefly stated, one set of manuscripts supports the translation “before was preached unto you,”^{ALEXANDRIAN} another supports the translation “predetermined, or appointed for you,”^{SYRIAC-ARABIC} and another “anointed for you.”^{ETHIOPIC}

There is no need to be pressed into choosing one of these statements over another, for there is a sense in which they are all saying the same thing. The sense of the text is this: “God will send the *Jesus* who was appointed and anointed for you, and then preached to you.” A “*Jesus*” that is appointed, but not declared, is of no value. Nor, indeed, is a “*Jesus*” that is anointed, yet is not proclaimed, effective for the people. “*Faith comes by hearing*,”^{ROM 10:17} not, by mere appointment or anointing.

The church, which is being initially formed in our text, is built “upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (Eph 2:20; 3:5; Rev 18:20). The “apostles” are first in rank, even though, compared with the prophets they were second in appearance and ministry. However, the *Jesus* they preached, as Peter will affirm, declared the *Jesus* that was foretold by the prophets (Rom 3:21; 16:26; Heb 1:1; 1 Pet 1:10).

The words “which before was preached unto you” refer to the words of the prophets “from Samuel” through John the Baptist, who most precisely identified the Christ. Peter will later state this to be the case (3:24).

The point of logic here, as will be confirmed by the reasoning that follows,

is that the Messiah was foretold by the Prophets in such details as allowed a ready recognition of Him when He actually began to walk among men.



In the interim – between John the Baptist and the death of *Jesus* – the people were exposed to the real *Jesus*, who precisely conformed to the proclamations of the prophets. John the Baptist also preached Christ (Matt 3:11; John 1:15,29,36; 3:26-36).

In measure, it is the preciseness of *Jesus*’ fulfillment of the prophets’ that verified to discerning people that He was Christ. Philip was able to say to Nathaniel, “*We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write*” (John 1:45). The woman at the well of Samaria said to those of the city of Samaria, “*Is not this the Christ?*” (John 4:29). After hearing *Jesus* speak, the Samaritans, “*Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world*” (John 4:42). There was no acceptable excuse for those standing before Peter failing to recognize *Jesus*.

HEAVEN MUST RECEIVE HIM

“^{21a} *Whom the heaven must receive until . . .*”

Peter will now declare that the sending of *Jesus*, whom he has just proclaimed, will not be a bodily one – as was His initial appearance during His earthly ministry, and His second appearance, when every eye shall see Him. **Those who repent, are converted, and have their sins blotted out will**

experience *Jesus* by faith. That is, He will dwell in their hearts “*by faith*” (Eph 3:17). While *Jesus* is within them “*by faith*,” His actual presence is in heaven. **Technically, He is not reigning from our hearts, but from His throne in heaven.** That is why believers are described as those who are waiting “*for His Son from heaven*” (1 Thess 1:10).

Having “*the keys of the Kingdom*

of heaven,” Peter will now establish a point of doctrine that is pivotal to the maintenance of faith. It will contrast sharply with certain teachings to which men are presently exposed – and that will become very apparent. This is, however, “*sound doctrine*,” and anything contrary to it is to be forthrightly abandoned (1 Tim 1:10; 2 Tim 4:3; Tit 1:9; 2:1). If we are going to continue “*steadfastly in the apostles doctrine*,”

then we must view their words as having greater weight than contradicting expressions of secondary expositors. As is characteristic of a real proclaimer of the truth, Peter will make his point with both precision and clarity.

THE HEAVEN MUST RECEIVE

"Whom the heaven must receive . . ." Other versions read, *"He must remain in heaven,"* NIV *"Who is to be kept in heaven,"* BBE *"heaven must welcome Him,"* CSB *"whom heaven indeed must receive,"* DARBY *"whom the haven must contain,"* GENEVA *"Heaven must receive Jesus,"* GWN *"whom the heavens must retain,"* MRD *"whom heaven must keep,"* NJB *"whom it behoveth heaven, indeed, to receive,"* YLT *But Jesus must stay in heaven,"* IE *"Whom heaven must receive [and retain],"* AMPLIFIED *"although for the time He must remain in Heaven,"* PHILLIPS and *"whom it is necessary [for] heaven indeed to receive."* ALT

This is a description of the present status of Christ, and our hearts must take hold of it. In order for the salvation of men to be accomplished, heaven had to receive Jesus back – **receive Him following His death and resurrection.** This is one of the key elements of the Gospel: *"So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God"* (Mark 16:19). When the time of Jesus' appointed death drew near, Jesus not only thought of the death itself, but also of being received up into heaven. *"And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem"* (Luke 9:51). In delineating the Gospel, which Paul referred to as *"the mystery of godliness,"* he cited Jesus being received up as one of the key points: *"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory"* (1 Tim 3:16).

From the subjective point of view, Jesus was *"carried up into heaven"* (Lk 24:50). John's dialog concerning the final hours of Jesus with His disciples began this way, *"Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that He should depart out of*



this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). That night He said to His disciples, *"I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father"* (John 16:28). When Jesus prayed extensively to the Father on the night of His betrayal He said, *"And now come I to thee"* (John 17:13).

Apostolic doctrine makes much of Christ's return to heaven, and His present activity there (Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20-22; 4:8-11; Heb 1:3; 4:14; 6:20; 7:25-26; 8:1; 9:24; 10:12-13, 19-22; 1 Pet 3:22).

The receiving of Christ in heaven commenced, for example, the following.

- ⇨ His governing of the Kingdom (Isa 9:6; Eph 1:22; Col 1:18; 1 Pet 3:22).
- ⇨ The mediation of the New Covenant (Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24)..
- ⇨ The building of His church (Matt 16:17; Acts 2:47; Eph 3:10).
- ⇨ His intercessory ministry (Isa 53:12; Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25).
- ⇨ His care and nourishment of the church (Isa 40:11; John 6:50-51; Eph 5:29).

No person can be repent, be converted, have their sins blotted out, or experience "times of refreshing," without Jesus being "in heaven." Those experiences are all administered by Jesus from heaven. That is the **only** reason they can be realized upon earth.

Must Receive

The word *"must"* has the following lexical meaning: "it is necessary, there is need of,

it behooves, is right and proper." THAYER In other words, as long as the world remains, and men are tabernacling in a body of flesh and blood, **the salvation of men requires the presence of Jesus in heaven.** He must be there, or men cannot be delivered from sin and duly prepared for glory.

The word *"receive"* covers the duration of the reception as well as its commencement. It involves receiving one into a specific environment and among certain personalities. THAYER It means to welcome into a place, not as a visitor, but as a resident. FRIBERG It involves taking and accepting. UBS It carries the idea of being transferred from one realm to another. LOUW-NIDA

As used in this text, *"receive"* carries the idea of **remaining** in heaven, as the words that follow will confirm. **The word "receive" includes the entire period covered by the present ministry of Jesus.** He was not received as a Visitor who was passing through, but One who was commencing an appointed work that must be carried out in heaven.

Thus the word is properly translated *"remain,"* NIV/NRSV/NJB/NLT *"be kept in,"* BBE *"must contain,"* GENEVA *"retain,"* MRD/WILLIAMS *"must keep,"* NJB *"must stay in,"* IE and *"receive [and retain]."* AMPLIFIED

Therefore, Peter is going to affirm that Christ's presence is required in heaven until a certain appointed time. That time will be specified with remarkable detail.

An Application

Those who emphasize this world and its experiences, by that very emphasis, obscure Christ's presence in heaven. Christ is remaining in heaven to fulfill certain appointed objectives. Those objectives required His sufferings, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. The

maintenance of our fleshly status did **not** require one of these things, much less all of them. **The utter absurdity of an earth-centric religion is worthy of nothing more than instant rejection.** If such an fatuousness was true, Jesus would have remained on the earth, governing the Kingdom from here, and conducting His ministry in stark contradiction of what He clearly affirmed to Pilate (John 18:36).

UNTIL

“... until...” All versions use “until” or “till.”

The word “until” identifies the duration of a condition. Thus the word “until” marked the conclusion of the time

be God’s pledge to us “*until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory,*” which will occur at the resurrection of the dead (Eph 1:14). We are told that God will continue to perform the work He has begun in us “*until the day of Jesus Christ*” (Phil 1:6). Paul admonished Timothy to resolutely “*keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Tim 6:14). The First Covenant is pointedly said to have been in force “*until the time of reformation*” (Heb 9:10).

There is no justifiable reason for being ignorant about what the word “until” means. Whether we consider it

- ⇒ Giving repentance and remission of sins (Acts 5:31).
- ⇒ Mediating the new Covenant (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24).
- ⇒ Interceding for those who come to God through Him (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25).
- ⇒ Sending the Holy Spirit (John 16:7; Acts 2:33).
- ⇒ Sending grace, peace, mercy, and faith (Eph 6:23; 1 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4; 2 John 1:3).
- ⇒ Bringing many sons to glory (Heb 2:10).
- ⇒ Expecting until His enemies are made His footstool (Heb 10:13).
- ⇒ Nourishing and caring for the church (Eph 5:29-30).
- ⇒ Teaching His people (Eph 4:10-21; 1 John 5:20).
- ⇒ Dwelling in our hearts by faith (Eph 3:17).
- ⇒ Speaking to us from heaven (Heb 12:25).
- ⇒ Giving God a reason to forgive men of their sins (Eph 4:32).



during which the waters of Noah covered the mountains (Gen 8:5). It also identified how long Noah’s raven flew “*to and fro, until the waters were dried up from the earth*” (Gen 8:7). When Rebekah providentially met Abraham’s servant who was in quest for a wife for Isaac, she told him she would “*draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking*” (Gen 24:19). When the Passover lamb was selected, it was to be kept “*until the fourteenth day of the same month,*” at which time it was to be killed (Ex 12:6).

Much is also made of the word “until” in the apostolic doctrine. Blindness has happened to Israel in part, “*until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in*” (Rom 11:25). We are to “*judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God*” (1 Cor 4:5). The gift of the Holy Spirit is said to

from the standpoint of the English language, the Greek language, the text of Scripture, or the apostles’ doctrine, it always means the same thing. **It marks the conclusion of something.**

Now, our text informs us that heaven must receive and retain Christ **until** a certain time. That clearly means that there is an appointed termination to what he is presently doing. **Christ’s current presence in heaven, with His people remaining in this world was never intended to be a permanent condition.** Surely, this is clear to all.

It now becomes necessary to accent what Jesus is doing now – His present activity, or ministry. Everything associated with Jesus currently being seated at the right hand of God will **cease** when Jesus leaves His seat, returning to gather His own unto Himself. So, what is Jesus declared to be doing in His present ministry? Here are a few examples for your consideration.

All of these things require the presence of Jesus in heaven. Jesus once said of the sanctifying presence of the Holy Spirit, “*if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you*” (John 16:7). Peter has, therefore, announced that Christ’s presence in heaven will continue **until** an appointed time. **After that, what Jesus is presently doing in heaven will no longer be done.** In fact, it will no longer be required. Christ’s present ministry is designed to accomplish the salvation of God in this present evil world. When He leaves heaven, that ministry will cease. All of this was foreshadowed by the ministry of the High Priest. When He went unto the Most Holy Place, his ministry began. When he left it, it ended (Ex 28:35; Lev 16). Now Jesus is a “*Minister of the sanctuary*” (Heb 8:2). That ministry

pertains exclusively to preparing the saints to be with Him. When He leaves to gather the saints, they will be made known, seeing Him as He is (1 John 3:1-

2). At that time, creation will be liberated from *“the bondage of corruption,”* which liberation that are eagerly anticipating (Rom 8:21-22). Then, being itself loosed

from mortality, the earth will no longer be able to be the residence for flesh and blood, or the place where fleshly activities take place.

THE TIMES OF RESTITUTION

^{“ 21b} . . . *the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.*”

At this point, Peter will speak in glaring contradiction of a host of church doctrines. He will throw down any notion of an earthly kingdom following Christ’s present ministry in heaven. Admittedly, this will oppose many cherished doctrines. Men will thus be faced with a decision – whether to embrace the words of the man who had the *“keys of the Kingdom of heaven,”* or whether to continue to hold to the cherished traditions of men. Admittedly, this may involve some difficulty, but do not think for a moment that God will be tolerant of any frame of mind that leads a person to ignore what Peter now declares.

THE RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS

“ . . . the times of restitution of all things . . . ” Other versions read, *“the times of restoration of all things,”* ^{NKJV} *“the period of restoration of all things,”* ^{NASB} *“the time comes for God to restore everything,”* ^{NIV} *“the time of universal restoration,”* ^{NRSV} *“the time for establishing,”* ^{RSV} *“the time when all things are put right,”* ^{BBE} *“the times of the restoring of all things,”* ^{DARBY} *“the times of the restitution of all things,”* ^{DOUAY} *“the time when everything will be restored,”* ^{GWN} *“the completion of the times of those things,”* ^{MRD} *“the times of universal restoration,”* ^{NAB} *“the time comes for God to restore everything,”* ^{NIB} *“the time for the final restoration of all things,”* ^{NLT} *“the time that all things . . . began to be restored again,”* ^{TNT} *“the final recovery of all things from sin,”* ^{LIVING} *“the time when all things will become whole again,”* ^{IE} *“the times of the reconstitution of all things,”* ^{WEYMOUTH} *“the time for the complete restoration of all,”* ^{AMPLIFIED} *“until that universal restoration,”* ^{PHILLIPS}

and *“the time comes for all things to be made new.”* ^{GNB}

There have been times appointed for certain things to cease. For example, *“until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled”* (Lk 21:24), or *“until ye be endued with power from on high”* (Lk 24:49), or *“until the Lord come,”* 1 Cor 4:5), or *“until the redemption of the purchased possession”* (Eph 1:14), or *“till we all come in the unity of the faith”* (Eph 4:15), or *“until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts”* (2 Pet 1:19). But this is not the kind of “until” in this text – an earthly “until!”

The Restitution

This will be disruptive of some very cherished theological views. However, there really is no question about Peter’s insight, spiritual expertise, or authority. We do well to give heed to what he proclaims, for we will eventually face these words once again.

Peter refers to *“the restitution.”* The manner in which he speaks makes clear that he is referring to something that is well known – something on which God has spoken with clarity.

The word *“restitution”* comes from the Greek word ἀποκαταστάσις. It has the lexical meaning, *“restoration . . . to a perfect state,”* ^{THAYER} *“to restore, to cause again to be.”* ^{LOWE-NIDA} Being led by the Spirit, Peter will not allow his listeners to speculate about the meaning of his words. He is not speaking of the restoration of Israel, but the restoration of *“all things.”* He is not referring to the restoration of fallen man, but to the restoration *“of all things.”* Paul referred to this as *“the creation*

itself” being *“delivered from the bondage of corruption,”* associating that deliverance with the *“manifestation of the sons of God”* in a state of *“glorious liberty”* (Rom 8:19-21). This refers to the time appointed by God when He will *“gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him”* (Eph 1:10). Even this language, however, is not precise enough, and may leave room for novices and charlatans to draw false conclusions. Thus Peter is very specific about *“the restoration”* to which he refers. This will be disruptive of some very cherished theological views. However, there really is no question about Peter’s insight, spiritual expertise,

or authority. We do well to give heed to what he proclaims, for we will eventually face these words once again.

SPOKEN BY THE MOUTH OF ALL HIS HOLY PROPHETS

“ . . . which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” Other versions read, *“about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time,”* ^{NASB} *“as He promised long ago through his holy prophets,”* ^{NIV} *“that God announced long ago through His holy prophets,”* ^{NRSV} *“whereof God spake by the mouth of His holy prophets that have been from of old,”* ^{ASV} *“of which God has given word by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have*

been *from the earliest times*,^{”BBE} “*which God spoke about by the mouth of His holy prophets from the beginning*,”^{CSB} “*of which God has spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets since time began*,”^{”DARBY} “*which God proclaimed, speaking through his holy prophets*,”^{NJB} “*as prophesied from ancient times*,”^{LIVING} “*God told about these things long ago when He spoke through His holy prophets*,”^{IE} “*of which God has spoken from the earliest ages through the lips of His holy prophets*,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “*that God spoke by the mouth of all His holy prophets for ages past [from the most ancient time in the memory of man]*.”^{AMPLIFIED}

The Prophets spoke of “*the times of the restitution of all things*.” It was a time when everything would be renewed, and all issues would be resolved.

⇨ **NEW HEAVENS AND EARTH.** “*For, behold, I create new heavens and a*

wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD” (Isa 65:25).

⇨ **THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.** “*Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead*” (Isa 26:19).

⇨ **DEATH SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY.** “*He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it*” (Isa 25:8).

the LORD hath spoken it” (Isa 40:5).

This is only representative of a host of prophecies having to do with final outcomes. **Peter affirms that Jesus will stay in heaven until these things begin to come to pass.** That is, when He leaves heaven, the heavens and the earth as they now are will be terminated. This was also revealed to John on the Isle of Patmos. “*And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them*” (Rev 20:11).

Paul also spoke of the climactic nature of Christ’s appearing. Here are some of the things that will occur, all of which have to do with the “*restitution of all things*.”

⇨ **THE DEAD WILL BE RAISED.** “*In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed*” (1 Cor 15:52). Paul said there would be a single resurrection, including the just and the unjust. “*And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust*” (Acts 24:15). Jesus Himself said that at the sound of His voice, all of the graves would yield up their dead. “*Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*” (John 5:29).

⇨ **ALL OF THE RIGHTEOUS WILL BE GATHERED TOGETHER.** “*And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other*” (Mat 24:30-31).

Peter affirms that Jesus will stay in heaven until these things begin to come to pass. That is, when He leaves heaven, the heavens and the earth as they now are will be terminated.

new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind” (Isa 65:17).

⇨ **A NEW HEAVENS AND EARTH THAT WILL REMAIN.** “*For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain*” (Isa 66:22).

⇨ **HEAVENS AND EARTH CHANGED.** “*Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed*” (Psa 102:25-26).

⇨ **NO HURT OR DESTRUCTION.** “*The*

⇨ **SATAN BROUGHT DOWN TO HELL.** “*Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit*” (Isa 14:12-15).

⇨ **PRESENT HEAVENS AND EARTH PASS AWAY.** “*Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish . . .*” (Psa 102:26).

⇨ **THE WORLD TO BE JUDGED.** “*But the LORD shall endure for ever: He hath prepared His throne for judgment. And He shall judge the world in righteousness, He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness*” (Psa 9:8).

⇨ **ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE GLORY OF THE LORD.** “*And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of*

⇨ **AT THE SAME TIME, THE WICKED AND ALL THINGS THAT OFFEND WILL BE GATHERED OUT OF THE EARTH.** *“The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth”* (Mat 13:41-42).

⇨ **THE ARCH FOE OF CHRIST WILL BE DESTROYED BY HIS COMING.** *“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders”* (2 Thess 2:8-9).

⇨ **THOSE WHO KNOW NOT GOD AND OBEY NOT THE GOSPEL WILL BE PUNISHED WHEN JESUS COMES TO BE GLORIFIED IN HIS SAINTS.** *“In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day”* (2 Thess 1:8-10).

⇨ **JESUS WILL RETURN WITH HIS REWARD, TO GIVE TO EVERY MAN.** *“And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man*

according as his work shall be” (Rev 22:12).

⇨ **AT HIS RETURN, JESUS WILL BRING TO LIGHT THE HIDDEN THINGS OF DARKNESS, AND MAKE MANIFEST THE COUNSELS OF THE HEART.** *“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God”* (1 Cor 4:5).

The words of our text – *“Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things”* – affirm that Jesus will not leave heaven until the time when these things are to be fulfilled – things that involve everything the prophets have spoken.

MOSES PROPHESED OF HIM

“²² For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you.”

Peter continues to anchor his proclamation in the preparatory word of the prophets, of which Moses was primary. As it is written, *“And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face”* (Deut 34:10). Now, Peter refers to one of Moses’ key prophecies. His reference is found in the book of Deuteronomy. *“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken . . . I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him”* (Deut 18:15,18).

RAISED UP BY GOD

“For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me . . .” Other versions read,

“The Lord your God will raise up for you from your own people a prophet like me,” ^{NRSV} *“The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up.”* ^{RSV} and *“A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up to you out of your brethren like me.”* ^{DARBY}

This *“Prophet”* would **not** be one cultured by the Jewish teachers. He would **not** be a product of the Temple or synagogue systems. He would not be one who rose to prominence through His own natural aptitude. The people would **not** put this Prophet in the position of prominence. **This Prophet would be**

“raised up” by God Himself. As far as human surroundings were concerned, He would be a *“root out of a dry ground”* (Isa 53:2). Concerning his birth, a *“virgin shall conceive and bear a son”* (Isa 7:14). As related to the commencement of His salvational work, God *“raised Him from the dead”* (Acts 13:30). If we consider His mission, *“the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world”* (1 John 4:14).

Raised Up FOR the People

“. . . raise up unto you.” Because *“the people”* were helpless in themselves, Jesus was *“raised up”* for them. They could not discern the mind of the Lord, so He raised up a Prophet for them – to

This “Prophet” would not be one cultured by the Jewish teachers. He would not be a product of the Temple or synagogue systems. He would not be one who rose to prominence through His own natural aptitude. The people would not put this Prophet in the position of prominence. This Prophet would be “raised up” by God Himself.

declare the Father to them (John 1:16). Because their perception of the Law was flawed and unprofitable, God raised Jesus up to “magnify the Law, and make it honorable” (Isa 42:21). If it was not for “the people,” there would have been no need for this “Prophet.” There would have been no need for Him on earth, and the Father would not have needed Him to be His “Lamb” (John 1:29,36) and “Christ” (Lk 2:26; Acts 4:26).

Raised up FROM the People

“ . . . of your brethren.” This “Prophet” would be a Jew, for “salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). He would be the “Seed,” or offspring, of Abraham, and through Him “all nations of the earth” would “be blessed” (Gen 22:18). His kingly lineage would be through David (Psa 89:35-36; Isa 9:7; Jer 23:5). It was through the nation of Israel that Jesus was given to the world (Rom 9:5).

Does pedigree or ancestry make a difference? When it comes to this “Prophet” it does! Moses told the people He would be “from your brethren.”^{NKJV}

not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?” (Num 12:6-8).

Like Moses, this Prophet would be called independently of the people themselves. He would not be called in the midst of the congregation, but in a solitary place (Ex 3:1-4:19).

HIM YE SHALL HEAR

“ . . . Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you.” Other versions read, “To Him you shall give heed in everything He says to you,”^{NASB} “you must listen to everything He tells you,”^{NIV} “You must listen to whatever he tells you,”^{NRSV} “You shall listen to Him in whatever He tells you,”^{RSV} “you will give ear to everything which He will say to you,”^{BBE} “Him you shall hear according to all things whatsoever He shall speak to you,”^{DOUAY} “You must obey Him in everything He tells you,”^{NET} “you will listen to whatever He tells you,”^{NJB} “You must listen attentively to everything He tells you,”^{WILLIAMS} “Him

will be accented in the next clause. **This word, however, declares the nature of the era of Christ – the time of the New Covenant.**

Take, for example, an obligation that the inspired Moses placed upon the people. “Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked” (Deut 10:16). That was, to be sure, something that had to be done. The circumcision, however, would actually be accomplished during the age of the Messiah. Thus Moses later said, “And **the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live**” (Deut 30:6). That was the prophetic sense of the word, just as “ye shall hearken” is in the prophetic sense.

I affirm that those who are of God **DO** hear His Prophet, Jesus Christ, just as Moses said they would. **I will further affirm that only those who are alienated from God do NOT hear the Prophet God has raised up.** Additionally, I will also declare that unless this condition is remedied, there cannot possibly be any hope of being saved. Here, in this world, men may learn to countenance an ignorance of God and a lack of appetite for His Word and will. **However, this is not the attitude maintained in heaven.**

A person may be able to be a member of a local congregation, yet remain fundamentally ignorant of God and essentially anchored to this present evil world. This condition may continue for years, even decades, with the individual being acknowledged as a “Christian” and a church member in good standing. **I will now establish that such a condition directly contradicts the prophecy of Moses, the words of Jesus and the doctrine of the apostles, and is therefore totally unacceptable.** Remember, we are considering the promise that the real people “shall hearken” to the real Prophet God has “raised up” – the Lord Jesus Christ.

The sheep and their exclusive identity with Christ. “And when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him: for **they know His voice.** And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from

I affirm that those who are of God DO hear His Prophet, Jesus Christ, just as Moses said they would. I will further affirm that only those who are alienated from God do NOT hear the Prophet God has raised up. Additionally, I will also declare that unless this condition is remedied, there cannot possibly be any hope of being saved.

A Prophet Like Moses

This would be a distinct prophet – like Moses was. Like Moses, God would speak “face to face” with Him (Ex 33:11; Deut 34:10). That is, He would not speak to this Prophet by means of dreams and visions, as He did to others. Like Moses it could be said of Him, “If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make Myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. **My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and**

you shall listen to and understand by hearing and heed in all things whatever He tells you,”^{AMPLIFIED} and “Him you will hear [or, pay attention to] in all [things], as many [things] as He shall speak to you.”^{ALT}

There are two ways in which this text can be taken. First, it can be seen as a **prophecy**: “you shall . . . you will.” Second, it can be seen as an **obligation**: “you must.” Both are true. **However in this text, the emphasis is on the prophetic, not the obligatory.** The responsibility for hearing this Prophet

him: for **they know not the voice of strangers**" (John 10:4-5). In this remarkable expression, the Lord Jesus reveals a number of things. First, **all** of the sheep are in the posture of following. They are not seeking their own will, and they have an unmistakable attraction to Christ. Second, in the capacity of a Shepherd, Jesus does not walk by the side of the sheep, but is in a leading stance, and the sheep **do** follow Him. Third, the sheep have no inclination to leaders other than Jesus. In fact, once they have identified Christ, they will withdraw from pretentious leaders, even running from them. Fourth, when they are summoned to follow other shepherds who do not themselves have the truth, the real sheep refuse to follow them, for there is a strange and offensive sound in their voice.

Even before they knew of Christ, the real sheep were not enamored of false shepherds. "All that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers: but **the sheep did not hear them**" (John 10:8). Throughout history, there have been self-proclaimed messiah's – men who affirmed they had the answer to the human dilemma. But they were only interested in what they could get from the sheep, not what they could give to them. Such men could not bring satisfaction to the sheep. Their words had a hollow sound to them, and could not divert the sheep from longing and looking for the Good Shepherd. Even when the sheep were within range of the voice of these shepherds, there remained in their words a tone of spiritual poverty. The sheep knew what they were hearing could not really enrich them, and thus

they could not give their undivided attention to these "thieves and robbers."

The singularity of both the fold and the flock is confirmed by the nature of the sheep. That nature is fundamentally revealed in their consistent response to the Good Shepherd. "And other sheep I

"voice." That is, the real sheep are attracted to Him because of what He says. This is **not** the attraction of intellectual intrigue or mere curiosity. Rather, there is a satisfaction realized when the "word of Christ" is embraced. That is why the real sheep allow it so dwell in them "richly" (Col 3:16).

The dividing line between the real sheep and the pretenders is found in spiritual hearing . . . A failure to believe is directly owing to the inability to hear Christ's "voice." That means that faith is not possible where men have not been drawn to Christ.

have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and **they shall hear My voice: and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd**" (John 10:16). The appointed means by which the sheep are gathered together is, in this perspective, the "voice" of the Lord Jesus – His words. They prove to be a rallying point for the real people of God.

The dividing line between the real sheep and the pretenders is found in spiritual hearing. "But ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep, as I said unto you. **My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me**" (John 10:27). A failure to believe is directly owing to the inability to hear Christ's "voice." That means that faith is not possible where men have not been drawn to Christ (John 6:44; 12:32). That drawing is accomplished through Christ's

It is not possible to have favorable identity with God if there is not a fundamental propensity toward His Word, particularly as it has been revealed through Christ. "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are **not of God**" (John 8:47). Men cannot "live by every word of God" out of a sense of mere obligation. Rather, life is realized through "every word of God" because of insight and preference.

In the New Covenant, God has no children who do not hear Christ's words. They ALL hear Jesus, and they ALL know God. The Father begets no sons who lack an appetite for His Word, or the aptitude to detect when He is speaking. Admittedly, this does have alarming implications.

THE OUTCOME OF FAILING TO HEarken TO HIM

"²⁸ And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people."

Do we dare to be casual about this matter of listening to and obeying Jesus? Is there some institutional quality that will make up for not listening to the One through whom god is speaking to us? The

words that follow confirm the gravity of the failure to listen to and disobey Jesus. Whatever men may think or say about "unconditional love," here is something that is absolutely without exclusion. If a person refuses to listen to Jesus, here is what will happen, and there are absolutely no exceptions to it.

IT SHALL COME TO PASS

"And it shall come to pass . . ." Other versions read, "And it shall be," NKJV "And it will be," NRSV "From it shall be," GENEVA "For the time will come," TNT and "The result will be." WILLIAMS

What follows will happen. It is based upon Divine determination. If the specified condition is found, there is no possible way to avoid the pronouncement

concerning it.

EVERY SOUL THAT WILL NOT HEAR

“. . . *that every soul, which will not hear that prophet . . .*” Other versions read, “*every soul that does not heed that prophet,*”^{NASB} “*Anyone who does not listen to Him,*”^{NIV} “*everyone who does not listen to that prophet,*”^{NRSV} “*every soul that shall not hearken to that prophet,*”^{ASV} “*every soul who does not give attention to that prophet,*”^{BBE} “*Those who won’t listen to that prophet,*”^{GWN} “*every soul that does not heed that prophet,*”^{NAU} “*Every person who does not obey that prophet,*”^{NET} “*Anyone who refuses to listen to that prophet,*”^{NJB} “*everyone, without exception, who refuses to listen to that prophet,*”^{WEYMOUTH} “*every soul that does not listen to and understand by hearing and heed that Prophet,*”^{AMPLIFIED} and “*every soul who does not hear [or, pay attention to] that Prophet.*”^{ALT}

Those who do not hearken to Jesus will not be accepted by God, and will be held in strict account for their failure to give heed to His words. The prophecy is very precise on this matter.

It is difficult to conceive of anything being more serious than refusing to listen to the One through whom God is speaking to us in these “*last days.*” However, when men listen to “*another Jesus,*” they fall into this class of people: “*whoever will not listen to My*

His mediation of the New Covenant, and His intercession for the saints. In such a case, all of those benefits would actually be received from another “*Jesus*” who was nothing more an imposter. Either that, or Jesus would administer the benefits through an imposter – which thought is utterly preposterous. **Men are held responsible for listening to the right Jesus – the Prophet of whom Moses spake.**

Moses said the Prophet would speak what God put into His mouth. That removes His words from the arena of interpretation, opinion, and philosophy. **It makes His words of the utmost importance, for God is not capable of conceiving or expressing vain, pointless, and irrelevant words.**

⇒ **“FOLLOW ME”** (Matt 16:24; Mk 8:34; Lk 9:23; John 12:26). If we desire the benefits Jesus brings, we have no alternative but to follow Him, pursue Him, and seek to be close to Him. Jesus said this involved denying self and taking up our cross every day. If a person is to serve Christ, He must be a follower of Him.

⇒ **“LAY UP FOR YOURSELVES TREASURES IN HEAVEN”** (Matt 6:20; Lk 12:33). This is not a suggestion. This word is preceded by another one: “*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth*” (6:19). At some point men must

⇒ **“SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS”** (Matt 6:33; Lk 12:31). Does anyone imagine that Jesus will allow a person to be His disciple, and be blessed by Him, who does have a prevailing interest in God’s Kingdom and the appropriation of His righteousness? This word from Jesus is heard by all of His people. Those who reject it, by that very rejection, confirm that they are not among His sheep, for His sheep “*hear His voice.*”

⇒ **“ENTER YUE IN AT THE STRAIT GATE”** (Matt 7:13; Lk 13:24). The “*strait gate*” is the one that makes no provision for the flesh (Rom 13:14). The real sheep follow the real Jesus. They are not seeking a religion that allows them to retain fleshly preferences and worldly status. They willingly enter the gate that does not allow “*the flesh,*” “*the carnal mind,*” or “*the natural man*” to enter.

⇒ **“TAKE HEED WHAT YE HEAR”** (Mk 4:24). The sheep hear this word and are careful about the stewardship of their minds. They do not allow every religious word to have free course in their mind. When words are spoken in the name of Christ, yet do not promote a fundamental interest in Christ, they turn away, hearkening to this warning word. When they hear a word that sharpens their consciousness of Christ, they give heed to it, having embraced this utterance.

⇒ **“COME UNTO ME”** (Matt 11:28; John 7:37). The sheep are glad to hear this word, because in this world they have become “*weary and heavy laden*” because of it’s inability to meet their primary needs and concerns. In Jesus they see a “*hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest.*” They find in Him “*rivers of water in a dry place,*” and the “*shadow of a great rock in a weary land*” (Isa 32:2). They come to Him because they desire to do so. Only those who are **not** His own fail to do this.

⇒ **“WATCH THEREFORE; FOR YE KNOW NOT WHAT HOUR YOUR**

Those who do not hearken to Jesus will not be accepted by God, and will be held in strict account for their failure to give heed to His words. The prophecy is very precise on this matter

words when He shall speak in My name” (Deut 18:19). It seems to me that this requires no further explanation. For God to receive those who have listened to “*another Jesus*” would be nothing less than a repudiation of His own Son, His death, His resurrection, His exaltation,

decide **where** they are going to make their investment. Will it be in a world that is perishing, or in heaven, that will remain? Jesus gives us no reason to expect that anyone will be in heaven who did not make preparations for it.

LORD DOTH COME" (Matt 24:42; 25:13; Mk 13:33). The people of God take this word seriously, because they know this world, and its "fashion," is passing away (1 Cor 7:31; 1 John 2:17). Their affection has been set on things above, and they are anticipating the return of their Lord – so they are watching. Only those who do **not** belong to Jesus remain dull and insensitive to this word.

⇨ **"IF YE LOVE ME, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS"** (John 14:15). It is one thing to boast of a love for Jesus. It is quite another to confirm it by maintaining a preference for, and a grasp of, His commandments. To the real people of God, Christ's commandments "are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). His "yoke is easy," and His "burden is light" (Matt 11:30). Only those who do **not** love Jesus fail to retain His commandments.

⇨ **"ABIDE IN ME, AND I IN YOU"** (John 15:4). Backsliding and departing from Jesus may be common in the professing church, but it is not so with the "sheep"—the real people of God. They give heed to this word, remain in Him, and experience the refreshment of Jesus remaining in them. Some people may view this as a goal. It is rather to be regarded as a point at which the profession of being joined to Christ is confirmed. Those who do **not** remain in Him cannot be identified with Him.

⇨ **"TAKE HEED THAT YE BE NOT DECEIVED"** (Luke 21:8). It is the responsibility of every person claiming identity with Jesus, or declaring themselves to be *Christian*, to see to it that they are "**not** deceived." This requirement exists even though "many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). The real people of God "hearken" to this word of Jesus, and therefore He helps them through the power of the Holy Spirit to avoid being swept away in the tide of delusion.

SHALL BE DESTROYED FROM AMONG THE PEOPLE

" . . . shall be destroyed from among the people." Other versions read, "shall be utterly destroyed from among the people,"^{NKJV} "completely cut off from among His people,"^{NIV} "will be utterly rooted out of the people,"^{NRSV} "shall be destroyed out of the people,"^{GENEVA} "will be excluded from the people,"^{GWN} "that soul shall perish from among the people,"^{MRD} "will be cut off from the people,"^{NAB} "will be completely cut off from God's people,"^{NLT} "he will die, cut off from God's people,"^{IE} "shall be utterly exterminated from among the people,"^{AMPLIFIED} and "shall be separated from God's people and destroyed."^{GNB}

Prophet," is speaking. When reference is made to Jesus speaking "from heaven," it always has reference to Him speaking to His people (Heb 12:25).

A Conclusion

This word dashes all theology to the ground that affirms the indestructibility of anyone who has been identified with God's people. Once a person comes into Christ, the absolute requirement to listen to Jesus does not cease, nor does the curse against such people come to an end. In fact, hearing, or listening to this "*Prophet*" is one of the appointed means of deciphering who is genuine and who is not. Although those refusing to listen to Jesus may wear the

Once a person comes into Christ, the absolute requirement to listen to Jesus does not cease, nor does the curse against such people come to an end. In fact, hearing, or listening to this "Prophet" is one of the appointed means of deciphering who is genuine and who is not.

The penalty for failing to listen to Jesus is so plain that one must be stubborn and rebellious to miss it. Note the clarity. Such a person will be "destroyed,"^{NKJV} "cut off,"^{NIV} "rooted out,"^{NRSV} "excluded,"^{GWN} "caused to 'perish,'"^{MRD} "spiritually 'die,'"^{IE} "be 'exterminated,'"^{AMPLIFIED} and "separated."^{GNB}

Notice that this will take place "from among the people," or "out of the people,"^{GENEVA} and "from God's people."^{NLT/GNB} That is, they will be removed from the class of individuals identified as **THE PEOPLE** – the ones who are associated with God. This is not speaking of the people of this world, or sinners in general. In the sense of our text, this is not the people to which Jesus, or "the

name "Christian," and be officially classed among His people, they are really nothing more than intruders. They are "tares" (Matt 13:38-39), "bad fish" (Matt 13:48), and have "neither part nor lot in this matter" (Acts 8:21). They "serve not our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 16:18), and are "plants" that the heavenly Father "hath not planted" (Matt 15:13).

If that seems too strong, please know that it is really rather weak. The announced judgment against such people confirms the seriousness of the transgression. Anyone and everyone who is not actively listening to Jesus, receiving His word, and responding in faith to it, stands in jeopardy of losing their soul. They are giving their soul in exchange for some worldly bauble.

ALL THE PROPHETS FROM SAMUEL AND THOSE FOLLOWING

^{24a} **Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after . . .** Other versions read, “from Samuel and his successors onward,”^{NASB} “all the prophets from Samuel on,”^{NIV} “from Samuel and those after him,”^{NRSV} “from Samuel and those who came afterward,”^{RSV} “from Samuel and them that followed after,”^{ASV} “from Samuel and thenceforth,”^{GENEVA} “Starting with Samuel,”^{NLT} “Samuel and every prophet since,”^{LIVING} “Samuel and all the other prophets after Samuel,”^{IE} “All the prophets . . . from Samuel down,”^{WILLIAMS} “all the prophets from Samuel and those who came afterwards,”^{AMPLIFIED} and “all the prophets . . . including Samuel and those who came after him.”^{GNB}

FROM SAMUEL

Samuel recorded the kingly aspect of the Messiah, declaring that He would come from David’s lineage and sit upon his throne. The words were actually spoken by Nathan, yet were recorded by Samuel. “I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for My name, and I

mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth” (Jer 15:1).

Commensurate with Samuel, God began to speak with greater clarity concerning the coming Messiah. From Samuel on, the promised Deliverer was associated with a covenant. Thus the 89th Psalm says of the promise delivered to David by Nathan, “**I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David My servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah . . . Also I will make Him My firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth . . . My mercy will I keep for Him for evermore, and My covenant shall stand fast with Him . . . His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and His throne as the days of heaven . . . My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips. Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and His throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah**” (Psa 89:3-4,

yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel: whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2; Matt 2:5).

- ⇒ **HE WOULD BE DESPISED BY THE PEOPLE.** “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; He was despised, and we esteemed him not” (Isa 53:3; Matt 27:25).
- ⇒ **HE WOULD BE HATED WITHOUT A CAUSE.** “They that hate Me without a cause are more than the hairs of Mine head: they that would destroy Me, being Mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away” (Psa 69:4; John 15:25).
- ⇒ **UNDER OPPRESSION, HE WOULD BE MEEK.** “He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street” (Isa 42:2). “The Lord GOD hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting” (Isa 50:5-6).
- ⇒ **HE WOULD BE CUT OFF, BEING PUT TO DEATH, BUT NOT FOR HIS SIN.** “And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself . . .” (Dan 9:26; Gal 3:13).
- ⇒ **WHEN YOUNG, HE WOULD BE CALLED OUT OF EGYPT.** “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt” (Hosea 11:1; Matt 2:14-15).
- ⇒ **HE WOULD BE CUT OFF WHEN YOUNG, HAVING NO FLESHLY OFFSPRING.** “He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my

Commensurate with Samuel, God began to speak with greater clarity concerning the coming Messiah. From Samuel on, the promised Deliverer was associated with a covenant.

will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever” (2 Sam 7:12-13).

Moses and Samuel are also mentioned together in the Psalms. “**Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the LORD, and he answered them**” (Psa 99:6). And again, Jeremiah makes mention of them as being powerful intercessors: “Then said the LORD unto me, Though **Moses and Samuel** stood before me, yet my

27:29, 34-37).

AND THOSE THAT FOLLOW

The role of “the prophets” who followed Samuel in the defining and announcing of the Savior of the world has been greatly neglected by the professing church. They “preached” the coming Messiah with remarkable precision.

⇒ **BORN IN BETHLEHEM.** “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah,

people was he stricken” (Isa 53:8).

- ⇨ **HE WOULD MINISTER IN GALILEE.** “Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined” (Isa 9:1-2; Matt 4:14-15).
- ⇨ **HE WOULD BE A REDEEMER.** “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth” (Job 19:25).
- ⇨ **HE WOULD HEAL THE SICK.** “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted” (Isa 53:4; Matt 8:17).
- ⇨ **HE WAS A STONE REFUSED BY THE BUILDERS.** “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner” (Psa 118:22).
- ⇨ **HE WAS FROM THE LINEAGE OF**

The abundance of revelation concerning Jesus confirms both the sureness and the greatness of salvation. All of the prophecies were, in a way, a challenge to Satan and his hosts to do their best to abort their fulfillment.

JESSE: “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots” (Isa 11:1).

- ⇨ **HE WAS NOTED FOR WISDOM.** “And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears” (Isa 11:2-3; Matt 13:54).
- ⇨ **HE WAS PRECEDED BY A VOICE CRYING OUT IN THE WILDERNESS.** “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a

highway for our God” (Isa 40:3).

- ⇨ **HE WAS A WITNESS TO THE PEOPLE.** “Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people” (Isa 55:4).
- ⇨ **HE WOULD RIDE INTO JERUSALEM ON A FOAL.** “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass” (Zech 9:9).

The abundance of revelation concerning Jesus confirms both the sureness and the greatness of salvation. All of the prophecies were, in a way, a challenge to Satan and his hosts to do their best to abort their fulfillment.

THEY FORETOLD THESE DAYS

“^{24b} . . . as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.”

Now Peter is even more specific, affirming that the prophets have foretold the times during which Jesus is administrating salvation – “these days.”

AS MANY AS HAVE SPOKEN

“ . . . as many as have spoken . . . ” Other versions read, “who spoke,”^{NAB} “that have ever spoken,”^{NJB} “as many as spake,”^{YLT} “who spoke for God,”^{IE} and “all who have spoken.”^{WEYMOUTH}

The phrase “as many as have spoken,” particularly relates to, what Peter called elsewhere, “the glory that

should follow” (1 Pet 1:11). As many as spoke of the coming Savior, referred of what would occur during His administration. In other words, the Spirit moved holy men to speak of the times during which men would be delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Col 1:13).

FORETOLD THESE DAYS

“ . . . have likewise foretold of these days.” Other versions read, “announced these days,”^{NASB} “also predicted these days,”^{NRSV} “also proclaimed these days,”^{RSV} “gave word of these days,”^{BBE} “spoke about these days,”^{GWN} “spoke about what is happening

today,”^{NLT} “have likewise told you about these days,”^{PNT} “did also foretell these days,”^{YLT} “talked about these days,”^{IE} “have also announced the coming of this present time,”^{WEYMOUTH} and “also promised and foretold and proclaimed these days.”^{AMPLIFIED}

Paul referred to the time as “the accepted time” and “the day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2). He also referred to this as the time when God is speaking through his Son (Heb 1:2). “These days” are those which followed “the fulness of the time,” when God “sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law” (Gal 4:4).

And, what did the prophets say of

“these days” – these days of salvation, and the open heavens? We will find their words to be most wonderful. They will also be words that will be a confirmation of the blessedness of the time. A few of them will suffice for verification of this.

⇒ **“In His days shall the righteous flourish: and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth”** (Psa 72:7).

⇒ **“They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power”** (Psa 145:11).

⇒ **“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).

⇒ **“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it”** (Isa 2:2).

⇒ **“And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem”** (Isa 2:3).

⇒ **“And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined”** (Isa 25:6).

⇒ **“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert”** (Isa 35:5-6).

⇒ **“And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness: the unclean shall not pass over it: but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools,**

shall not err therein” (Isa 35:8).

⇒ **“And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away”** (Isa 35:10).

⇒ **“I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles: To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house”** (Isa 42:6-7).

⇒ **“And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will**

remarkable recovery would be experienced (Isa 61:4). A way to God would be found in, what was conceived to be, impossible circumstances – like a way being made in the wilderness, and rivers in a desert (Isa 43:19). The people would receive a new identity (Isa 62:2). A new and better covenant would be put into place (Jer 31:31-34). Iniquities would be subdued, and sins would be cast “into the depth of the sea” (Mic 7:19). There would be “showers of blessing” (Ezek 34:26). “These days” are also referred to as “these last times,” and are described as the period during which Jesus Christ has been made “manifest” (1 Pet 1:20). They are also described as “these last days” during which God is speaking to humanity exclusively through His Son (Heb 1:2).

Self-centered living is wholly inappropriate during “these days” (2 Cor 5:15). Sin in all of its forms is out of order (1 John 2:1). No place has been made for an ignorance of God (Heb 8:11; 1 John

TIME OF PREPARATION FOR → →		THE PINNACLE OF TIME	CHRIST'S RETURN	E T E R N I T Y
UNIVERSALITY OF SIN CONFIRMED		SALVATION & CONFORMING		
ADAM TO MOSES	THE LAW	“THESE DAYS” - CHRIST	THE END	
2,500 YEARS	1,500 YEARS	33 AD	UNKNOWN	

remember their sin no more” (Jer 31:34).

⇒ **“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh”** (Ezek 36:26).

⇒ **“In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness”** (Zech 13:1).

According to the prophets, during “these days” of salvation the Gentiles will be called (Isa 49:22), Israel will be converted (Ezek 11:17-19), a unity among God’s people will be realized (Zeph 3:9), and the whole earth would be filled with the knowledge of the Lord (Hab 2:14). There would be a change in the character of the people (Ezek 36:25-27). The appointment of beauty, joy, and praise would be realized (Isa 61:3). A

5:20). These are days in which Divine leading has been provided (Rom 8:13). Access to God has been graciously provided (Rom 5:2; Eph 2:18; 3:12). Men can now “obtain mercy and find grace to help in the time of need” (Heb 4:16).

How can it possibly be that a weak and emaciated church could exist in “these days”? What possible excuse can be offered for continuance in sin? **We should discern from both the tone and content of Peter’s message that wholesome responses are expected from men, and he will press the people for such to occur.**

It is time for the professed church to cease being tolerant of sin. Let it discontinue its miserable explanations for sin and declare that remission itself proves that sin is always out of place, else it would not need to be forgiven. Let it purge from its ranks those sophists who spend their time promoting sympathy for sinners instead of calling

them repentance. We have before us the man with *“the keys of the Kingdom of heaven.”* Let us hear what he says. The Holy Spirit is speaking through him, and therefore he will speak with insight and depth, precision and power.

YE ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE PROPHETS

^{25a} ***Ye are the children of the prophets . . .*** Other versions read, *“the sons of the prophets,”* ^{NKJV} *“the heirs of the prophets,”* ^{NIV} *“the descendants of the prophets,”* ^{NRSV} *“descendants (sons) of the prophets,”* ^{AMPLIFIED} and *“The promises of God through his prophets are for you.”* ^{GNB}

The meaning here is not that the people were the offspring of the prophets, or that they were merely in their fleshly lineage. **The idea is that they were the proper recipients of the words of the prophets.** The prophets were like their instructors, and they were like children being directed by the prophet’s words. They were disciples, or pupils, of the prophets. The Jews, particularly the ones standing before Peter, lived among the people that were addressed by the prophets. They were in the family over which the prophets presided – and the prophets were sent to them by God

the prophets. Their word was actually God’s word to the people. God made this clear through Jeremiah. ***“And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear. They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever: and go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands: and I will do you no hurt. Yet ye have not hearkened unto ME, saith the LORD; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt”*** (Jer 25:4-7).

The failure of Judah to hear the words of God’s prophets was so serious that God sent Nebuchadnezzar against

the LORD” (Zech 1:4). The prophet cried out, ***“Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?”*** (Zech 7:7). **There was no acceptable excuse for not giving heed to the prophets.** That is because the prophets were sent to them – they were *“the children of the prophets,”* the ones they tutored. God did not give them the option of ignoring His prophets. It may have appeared as though they were free to do so, but they were not. They sinned in not hearing them, and thus were punished.

IN OUR TIME

In our time, it can be said that the churches are *the children of the Apostles.* God placed them *“first”* in the church (1 Cor 12:28), to ground and settle it in the truth. The *“apostles’ doctrine”* is the teaching of the church, and they, like the early disciples, are to continue in it (Acts 2:42). The church is *“build upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets”* (Eph 2:20). They have delivered to the church a message that was hidden from all previous ages (Eph 3:5). Peter said believers are to *“be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior”* (2 Pet 3:2). They are to remember *“the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (Jude 1:17).

Is there a person of sound mind in all of the world that is willing affirm that the church is free to ignore the apostles Christ has given to them? Are they at liberty to remain in ignorance concerning their message, or to fail to give heed to it? Jesus said, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me”* (John 13:20). Again He said to

In our time, it can be said that the churches are the children of the Apostles. God placed them “first” in the church, to ground and settle it in the truth. The “apostles’ doctrine” is the teaching of the church, and they, like the early disciples, are to continue in it

Himself (2 Chron 24:19; Jer 7:25; 25:4; Zech 7:12).

A PRINCIPLE TO BE SEEN

There is a principle seen here that requires brief elaboration. **When a word from God is sent to a person or people, they are under obligation to hear it – hearkening to and obeying it.** This is why God judged Israel for not giving heed to

them, to overcome, plunder them, and take them captive (Jer 29:19-23).

God also spoke through Zechariah years later, upbraiding the people for not hearing His prophets. *“Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto Me, saith*

His disciples, "He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me" (Luke 10:16).

Now, I must press this matter because of its seriousness. I am going to say that the professing church is rejecting the Apostles, refusing to hear them, and thrusting their word from themselves. Does that sound too strong? Then let us examine some of the things the Apostles have said.

⇨ **GO ON TO PERFECTION.** "Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God" (Heb 6:1).

⇨ **LET THERE BE NO DIVISIONS AMONG YOU.** "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor 1:10).

⇨ **SIN NOT.** "Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame" (1 Cor 15:34).

⇨ **BE NOT CHILDREN IN UNDERSTANDING.** "Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men" (1 Cor 14:20).

⇨ **GROW IN THE GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.** "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2 Pet 3:18).

⇨ **ADD TO YOUR FAITH.** "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness

charity" (2 Pet 1:5-7).

⇨ **DESIRE THE SINCERE MILK OF THE WORD.** "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet 2:2).

⇨ **LET THIS MIND BE IN YOU.** "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:5).

⇨ **HEAR WHAT THE SPIRIT IS SAYING TO THE CHURCHES.** "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

⇨ **LOVE ONE ANOTHER WITH A PURE HEART FERVENTLY.** "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see

together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? . . . Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Cor 6:14-17).

⇨ **SPEAK PROPERLY.** "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph 4:29).

Is there any person of faith who is not painfully aware of the poverty of the modern church in all of these areas? And if that assessment is correct, why does it exist? Has not the exalted Christ taken deliberate measures to see to it that these words are fulfilled? Did He not

Seeing that the Lord Jesus has fully provided for the church by giving it the gifts of "apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers" (Eph 4:11), how can a condition of ignorance and disobedience be so prominent? It is because those who lack these qualities have, in fact, rejected the apostles, even though they are, so to speak, their sons.

that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Pet 1:22).

⇨ **LET NO IMMORALITY BE ONCE NAMED AMONG YOU.** "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks" (Eph 5:3-4).

⇨ **LOVE NOT THE WORLD.** "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

⇨ **COME YE OUT FROM AMONG THEM.** "Be ye not unequally yoked

endue His "holy apostles" (Eph 3:5) with power, provide them insight into God's eternal purpose, and set them in the church to teach it?

Have you not personally encountered professing Christians without number that are not even aware of these words? Seeing that the Lord Jesus has fully provided for the church by giving it the gifts of "apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers" (Eph 4:11), how can a condition of ignorance and disobedience be so prominent? It is because those who lack these qualities have, in fact, rejected the apostles, even though they are, so to speak, their sons. This, in my judgment, is even more serious than the Jews rejecting the prophets.

YE ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE COVENANT

^{26b} . . . and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.”

THE COVENANT WHICH GOD MADE

“ . . . and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham . . . ” Other versions read, “of the covenant that God gave to your ancestors,”^{NRSV} “and of the agreement which God made with your fathers,”^{BBE} “and of the covenant that God made with your forefathers,”^{CSB} “and of the testament which God made to our fathers,”^{DOUAY} “and the heirs of the promise that God made to our ancestors,”^{GWN} “you are included in the covenant God promised to your ancestors,”^{NLT} “You have received the agreement which God made with your ancestors,”^{IE} “and the heirs of the sacred compact which God made with your forefathers,”^{WILLIAMS} “and the heirs of the covenant which God made and gave to your forefathers,”^{AMPLIFIED} “and of the covenant which God covenanted to our fathers,”^{ALT} and “and of the covenant which God appointed to

people at Mount Sinai (Gal 4:24). This covenant, we will find, is the very one that is presently being mediated by the Lord Jesus. Paul referred to it in this manner: “Now to Abraham and his seed were **the promises made**. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that **the covenant**, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make **the promise** of none effect” (Gal 3:17).

Notice that “the covenant” is also called “the promise.” **That is, this was a unilateral covenant – a one sided covenant.** It was not an agreement, where two parties agreed to terms involving the activity of both. Paul makes a point of this one-sided nature of “the covenant” God made “unto Abraham.” “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. **Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but**

Seed Paul says, “Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy Seed, **which is Christ**” (Gal 3:16).

Let it be clear that the coming of the Savior into the world depended ONLY upon God! There was no way in which this promise depended upon Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or the children of Israel – no way at all! **This covenant was a promise of what would be – even though all manner of sin was found among the offspring of Abraham.**

It is true that “salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). However, that it not owing to their excellence, but is rather according to Divine appointment. **The covenant presently being mediated by Jesus is not two-sided, and those who so represent it could not possibly be more wrong.** The “promise” given to Abraham was not conditioned upon what men would do, but upon what God had determined to do. This is the only reason these people could be called “the children” of the covenant God made “unto Abraham.” In every other sense, they were disqualified.

ALL KINDREDS OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED

“ . . . And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.” Other versions read, “And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed,”^{NKJV} “through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed,”^{NIV} “And in your descendants all the families of the earth shall be blessed,”^{NRSV} “And in your posterity shall all the families of the earth be blessed,”^{RSV} “Through your seed a blessing will come on all the families of the earth,”^{BBE} “And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed,”^{ESV} “through your descendant all people on earth will be blessed,”^{GWN} “to bless the entire world through the Jewish race – that is the promise God have to Abraham,”^{LIVING} “I will bless all nations of the earth. I will use one of your descendants to do this,”^{IE} “all families of the earth are to be blessed through your posterity,”^{WILLIAMS} and “And in your Seed (Heir) shall all the families of the earth

Let it be clear that the coming of the Savior into the world depended ONLY upon God! There was no way in which this promise depended upon Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or the children of Israel – no way at all! This covenant was a promise of what would be – even though all manner of sin was found among the offspring of Abraham.

our fathers.”^{LITV}

Peter tells the people they are also the “children” of the covenant God made with Abraham. **That is, they are heirs and recipients of it. It properly belongs to them, and they belong to it.**

As is apparent in the text, Peter is not speaking about the “First Covenant” (Heb 8:7; 9:1) that was made with the

God is one” (Gal 3:19-20). The Amplified Bible gives the sense of this latter verse. “Now a go-between (intermediary) has to do with and implies more than one party [there can be no mediator with just one person]. **Yet God is [only] one Person [and He was the sole party in giving that promise to Abraham.]**”

This is, of course, the promise of the coming Messiah, who was the “Seed” to which the promise referred. Of that

be blessed and benefited,"^{AMPLIFIED}

This is the covenant "made with Abraham" (Psa 105:9): "And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed" (Gen 22:18). As already confirmed, the "Seed" was the Lord Jesus, not the Jewish race.

There is something else to note here that is essential to an understanding of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. The promise [or covenant] was made with Abraham and his "Seed, which Seed is Christ" (Gal 3:16). **That means that the New Covenant, at the**

foundational level, has actually been made with Christ Himself. That is the only way the guarantee of blessing can be given. In confirmation of this, God spoke through Isaiah of the coming Messiah. "I the LORD have called Thee *in righteousness, and will hold Thine hand, and will keep Thee, and give Thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles*" (Isa 42:6).

It is this condition – the covenant being made with Christ – that accounts for expressions like "in Christ" (Rom 3:24; 8:1,39; Gal 3:26; Eph 1:10; 2:6,10,13; 3:11; Phil 3:14; 1 Tim 1:14), "by

Christ" (2 Cor 1:5; Eph 3:21; Phil 4:19; 1 Pet 5:10), and "through Christ" (2 Cor 3:4; Eph 2:7; Phil 4:7,13). **Everything related to salvation comes to us because of Christ.**

Peter will now confirm that what was promised to Abraham – *the blessing of all families of the earth* – belonged to those standing before him, and they were the people who had "killed the Prince of life." They were not workers of good deeds, yet were "children . . . of the covenant" of blessing. It belonged to them, as Peter now affirms. They could partake of the promised blessing!

GOD SENT HIM FIRST TO YOU

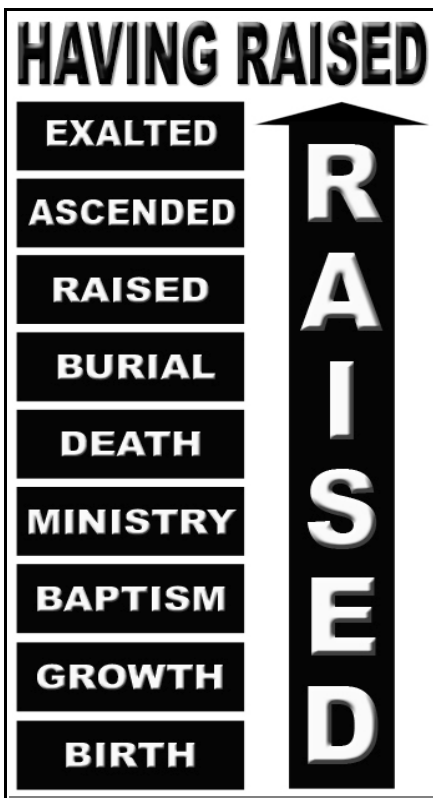
"^{26a} Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you . . ."

Peter now declares what is involved in being "the children . . . of the covenant" God made unto Abraham. He has already commanded them to act upon His word by repenting and being converted. Now he will give them a reason to do so.

RAISED AND SENT

"Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus . . ." Other versions read, "To you first, God having raised up His Servant Jesus,"^{NKJV} "For you first, God raised up His Servant"^{NASB} "When God raised His Servant, He sent Him first to you,"^{NIV} "God has brought His servant back to life and has sent Him to you first,"^{GWN} "It was for you in the first place that God raised up His servant and sent Him,"^{NJB} "When God raised up His servant, Jesus, He sent him first to you people of Israel,"^{NLT} "And as soon as God had brought His Servant to life again, He sent Him first of all to you,"^{LIVING}

This text does not refer to Christ's resurrection from the dead, but to Moses' prophecy: "thy God will raise unto thee a Prophet . . . I will raise them up a Prophet" (Deut 18:15,18). This has to do with the totality of Christ's manifestation – including His birth, ministry, death, burial, resurrection, and enthronement. It parallels what Paul referred to as "the



mystery of godliness" – "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Tim 3:16).

Also, "having raised up Jesus" includes His accomplishments in His humbled state. These include at the following, and much more.

- ⇒ Being made sin and enduring the curse of God (2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13).
- ⇒ The removal of sin (Heb 9:26).
- ⇒ The destruction of Satan (Heb 2:14).
- ⇒ The plundering of principalities and powers (Col 2:15).
- ⇒ The blotting out of what was against us (Col 2:14).
- ⇒ Making peace (Col 1:20).
- ⇒ Reconciling the world (2 Cor 5:18).
- ⇒ Satisfying God (Isa 53:11).
- ⇒ Sanctifying the way to God (Heb 10:20).
- ⇒ Sanctifying the people (Heb 13:12).

All of these, and more, are involved in God raising up Jesus – that is, bringing Him out of the human race in general, and Israel in particular, then exalting Him at his own right hand. Now, in the capacity of "the Man Christ Jesus," He can deal more directly with men, and they can thus have access to Him.

Through the Holy Spirit, Peter preaches with power and focus, engaging the attention of his hearers – by Given O. Blakely

God sent the exalted Christ “first” to Israel, for the promise was first to them. God spoke frequently to Abraham of his “seed” – the people that would come from him.

- ⇨ The Messiah would come through this people – the “seed” (Gen 21:12; 22:18).
- ⇨ Many of these references had to do with Canaan, the land of promise, and things relating to it. Thus God said He would give “this land” to his “seed” (Gen 12:7; 13:15; 15:18; 17:8; 24:6; 26:3; 28:4,13; 35:12; 48:4).
- ⇨ He also spoke of making his “seed” numerous, so that they would be a great people (Gen 13:16; 15:5; 16:10; 22:17; 24:60; 26:4,24; 28:14; 32:12; 48:4).
- ⇨ Additionally, he spoke of Abraham’s “seed” being in the land of Egypt for a season (Gen 15:13).
- ⇨ The covenant God established with Abraham would also apply to his “seed” (Gen 17:7).
- ⇨ There also the covenant of circumcision made with Abraham and his “seed” (Gen 17:9-12).

All of this confirms the absolute priority of the Israelites – the lineage of Abraham, through Isaac, and through Jacob. Everything from God pertained to them. As Paul well said, “*Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;*

Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen” (Rom 9:4-5).

Thus, we read of the Gospel being “*the power of God unto salvation, to the Jew first*” (Rom 1:16). The punishment of evil doers will also be “*of the Jew first*” (Rom 2:9). Glory, honor, and peace “*to every man that worketh good*” will also be “*to the Jew first*” (Rom 2:10). When Jesus commissioned His disciples to preach the Gospel “*among all nations,*” it was to be “*beginning at Jerusalem*” (Lk 24:47). When Paul and Barnabas went out preaching the Word of the Gospel, they told the Jews that “*It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you*” (Acts 13:46).

Therefore, Peter preaches with heavenly priorities in mind, thereby

Other versions read, “*blessing you,*”^{BBE} and “*to bring you great blessing.*”^{PHILLIPS}

This precisely fulfills the promise God made to Abraham: “*I will bless*” (Gen 12:2-3); “*thou shalt be a blessing*” (Gen 12:2); “*in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*” (Gen 12:3; 28:14); “*all the nations of the earth shall be blessed*” (Gen 18:18); “*in blessing I will bless thee*” (Gen 22:17).

The word “*bless*” means, “*to confer benefits,*”^{THAYER} “*act kindly toward,*”^{FRIBERG} and “*to provide benefits, often with the implication of certain supernatural factors involved,*”^{LOUW-NIDA}

Therefore, Peter announces, God has sent Jesus to the people to bless, benefit, and show kindness to them. And how will Jesus do this? What kind of benefit will He bring to the people. What

Therefore, Peter announces, God has sent Jesus to the people to bless, benefit, and show kindness to them. And how will Jesus do this? What kind of benefit will He bring to the people. What advantage will He give them? In the announcement that follows, we behold the heart and core of salvation.

fulfilling the will of the Lord. God had prepared this nation for the proclamation of this message.

Peter now provides a grand summary-reason for the raising up of the Lord Jesus.

TO BLESS YOU

“ . . . sent Him to bless you . . . ”

advantage will He give them? In the announcement that follows, we behold the heart and core of salvation. The chief or fundamental benefit will be affirmed, and everyone who believes will at once agree with what is said. Such individuals will therefore energetically seek to obtain the benefit. They will take the Kingdom with violence, seizing it as a prize to be obtained.

TURNING EVERYONE FROM HIS INIQUITIES

^{26b} . . . **in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.**” Other versions read, “*by turning every one of you from your wicked ways,*”^{NASB} “*in turning every one of you from your wickedness,*”^{RSV} “*by turning every one of you from his sins,*”^{BBE} “*by turning each of you from your evil ways,*”^{CSB} “*by turning each of you back from your sinful ways,*”

^{NLT} “*by turning each one of you from doing evil things,*”^{IE} “*by causing every one of you to turn from your wickedness,*”^{WEYMOUTH} and “*in turning every one of you from your wickedness and evil ways.*”^{AMPLIFIED}

Peter has already admonished the people to turn, or “*be converted*” (3:19). That is, they were to amend their ways,

and cease from their sinful expressions. However, though necessary, outward reform and inward resolve is not enough. There is a work required within men that can only be done by the exalted Christ. It is something that must be *caused* by Him! **If He does not make it happen, it will not happen.** What is more, this is a blessing, benefit, or advantage, of the

greatest magnitude.

What does it mean to turn a person away from their iniquities? **This is not a reference to forgiveness, even though forgiveness is surely integral to**

conquered a certain transgression, only to have it surface once again. They attempted various disciplines and routines to resolve the matter, but only to be frustrated with failure after failure. Why does this circumstance exist? **It is**

their very nature, can never be effective by spiritual definition – for, if they were effective, they would not be a habit.

Paul cuts to the chase, and explains why such an approach to moral and spiritual purity is nothing more than foolishness. *“Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh”*(Col 2:23).

⇒ They look wise, but they are not. They are characterized by *“will worship,”* or *“self-imposed worship.”*^{NIV} The individual does not serve God out of a basic preference for Him, and thus must be directed by rules.

⇒ Such an approach, because it is against the will and nature of the person, requires *“false humility”* and *“harsh treatment of the body.”*^{NIV} – mere external routines that appear smart, but are tedious and laborious.

The key factor, however, in this nonsensical approach to sinful inclinations, is that it is *“not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh.”* That is, such routines *“lack in value in restraining sensual indulgence.”*^{NIV} **They can stop neither the appetite for sin nor its expression.** They *“have no value for holding back the constant desires of your corrupt nature,”*^{GWN} and *“provide no help in conquering a person's evil desires.”*^{NLT}

What, then, is the answer? Peter sets forth the blessedness of the ministry of Jesus. **He turns men away from their iniquities, so that they are no longer attractive to them.** That, is a sorely needed blessing. It does what no other blessing can do! In this regard, of what value are health and wealth? Can they turn a person from their iniquities? Can they take away the desire to sin, or stop sin from constantly erupting – i.e. *“the superfluity of naughtiness”*(James 1:21)? Indeed not!

This is a work for the exalted Christ, and God has sent him to do it! If the work is not being done, it is not because God has failed to send Jesus. Nor, indeed, is it because Jesus refuses to do it. Every *“broken and contrite heart”* has reason to be of good cheer! God has

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salvation. This is the removal of an appetite for sin. It is the removal of a stony heart, and the granting of a soft and tender one (Ezek 36:26). It is what moves a person to truthfully confess, *“I hate every false way”*(Psa 119:104,128). It enables a person to fulfill the admonition, *“Ye that love the LORD, hate evil”*(Psa 97:10).

This is what moved Paul to say of the eruption of carnal thoughts by means of temptation, *“what I hate, that do I”* (Rom 7:15). It is what moves the regenerated soul to say of struggles with the flesh, *“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”* (Rom 7:24). **There is a requisite for this kind of mind-set within the walk of faith.** Therefore believers are exhorted, *“Abhor that which is evil”*(Rom 12:9).

Where this work is not made known, a fundamental deficiency exists that will lead a person to destruction. **No individual who “loves the world” loves God.** There is absolutely no question about this. The Holy Spirit has embalmed the word in print: *“If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him”*(1 John 2:15). It is therefore imperative that every person be turned away from *“HIS iniquities”* – the ones that *“so easily beset”* him (Heb 12:1).

Perhaps you have heard of someone, or knew one, who said they could not keep from doing this sin or that sin. It appeared to them that they had

because the person has not been turned away from their iniquity. It is still too close to them, too attractive, and too, powerful.

There is no discipline that can rectify this situation. Jesus Himself will have to bless them, in turning them away from their iniquities. Paul precisely addressed this matter in his epistle to the Colossians. They were being tempted to adopt a regimen, or systematic plan, to subdue the tendency to sin. Paul did not commend them for their disciplined approach, but rather sternly rebuked them. *“Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?”* (Col 2:21-22). Rather than their procedures being a display of excellent resolve, **it was a revelation of a possible failure of having died with Christ.** If, in fact, they were *“dead with Christ,”* precisely why were they subjecting themselves to rules of discipline? That is the world's approach, and has no place in the body of Christ – *“the rudiments of the world.”*

Further, such an approach requires *“the commandments and doctrines of men.”* Oh, the commandments may have a real show of intelligence. They may take the form of twelve steps, or forty days, or Journaling, or the culture of some other supposedly effective habits. **However, habits, by**

gone on record on this matter. *“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble*

spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones”(Isa 57:15). And how does He revive those precious souls? **It is by sending forth his exalted Son to turn them away**

from their wickedness – to cause sin to become detestable to them, and righteousness to be attractive! What a marvelous ministry this is, and how essential it is for we poor mortals.

CONCLUSION

We have been exposed to *“the mind of Christ”* – expressed through a man who was filled with the Spirit, chosen by Christ, and in possession of *“the keys of the Kingdom of heaven.”* The record was written by a man who had *“perfect understanding of all things from the very first”* (Lk 1:3). The words have been inspired by the God who has *“magnified”* His word *“above”* all His name, so that what *“is written”* is able to make *“the man of God . . . perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”*(2 Tim 3:17).

It is not possible for a theological view that is in any way at variance with this text to be right. It cannot possibly be right to embrace such a view, for God is *“a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He”* (Deut 32:4). No

perspective of life that makes sin tolerable, or even acceptable has so much as a grain of truth in it! **If men can learn to live with what God hates, they will do so without God and without hope.**

The fact that a person may have adopted a view that he does **not** realize is at variance with the truth does not make the condition acceptable. There is no sanctifying power in ignorance. In fact, ignorance alienates a person *“from the life of God”* (Eph 4:18). Therefore, wherever there are church leaders who fail to apprise the people of the truth *“as it is in Jesus,”* the entrance into the Kingdom of God is blocked, and both the leader and the people will fall into the ditch. It is the responsibility of every person to seek the Lord, love and pursue the truth, and prepare to meet God. The

Gospel addresses all of those matters.

Just as surely as it was the responsibility of the Israelites to know, understand, and yield to what their prophets said, so it is the responsibility of every *Christian* to know, understand, and yield to what the apostles have said. They are Christ’s ambassadors, and it is not possible that their word is incorrect, insufficient, or in some way beyond our reach.

To neglect their words is actually to neglect *“so great salvation,”* and there is no escape from such a dilemma. As it is written, *“How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him”* (Heb 2:3).

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 11/24/2006. We will continue our current series of lessons on the book of Acts. The Sixteenth lesson will cover verses 1 through 7 of the fourth chapter: “THE LEADERS GRIEVED WITH PETER AND JOHN.” The Temple has suddenly become a place where the sound of the Gospel is being heard, and it proves to be a source of aggravation to the religious leaders.. Our meeting will begin at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God. Refreshments are served afterward, with a time of extended fellowship for everyone.

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A place where believers can meet, fellowship, be edified, and express themselves.

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COMMENTARY on Acts: <http://wotruth.com/Acts.htm>

WHAT IS BEING SERVED AT THE WORD OF TRUTH FELLOWSHIP

Currently, the Lord is blessing The Word of Truth Fellowship with a marvelous feast of fat things. Consider the diversity of this feast, and the various gifts that are being employed for the glory of God and the edifying of His people. **In any given month, this is what we are hearing, receiving and discussing.**

- Sermons on the Churches of Revelation – brother Aaron Hutchcraft
- Sermons on the Eighth Chapter of Romans – brother Ricky Sims
 - Sermons on the Book of James – brother Robert Cobb
- Sermons on the Book of Philippians – brother Jeremy Williams
- Sermons on “Joseph, a Type of Christ” – brother Given O. Blakely
 - Classes on the Book of Ephesians – brother Aaron Hutchcraft
 - Classes on the Book of First John – brother Ricky Sims
 - Classes on the Book of Hebrews – brother Robert Cobb
 - Classes on the Book of Second Peter – sister June Blakely
- Lord’s Day Morning Introductions – presented by various brothers and sisters
 - Lord’s Day Morning Callings – presented by various brothers and sisters
- Lord’s Day Morning Lord’s Table Meditations – presented by various brethren
- Lord’s Day Evening Introductions – presented by various brothers and sisters
- Lord’s Day Evening Lord’s Table Meditations – presented by various brethren
 - Wednesday Lessons on the Book of Mark – brother Given O. Blakely
 - Friday Lessons on the Book of Acts – brother Given O. Blakely
- Men’s Fellowship Meeting [Valiant Men] on the Kingdom of God – led by various brethren
 - Women’s Fellowship Meeting on sundry Scriptural themes – led by various sisters
- Young Peoples Meeting [Heirs of Promise] on “What Is Jesus Doing Now?” – led by various younger brethren

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore” (Psa 133:1-3)