

Preaching
the Whole
Counsel of God
Volume 6

Sermon Outlines
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Table of Contents

ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR GOOD.....	5
BE YE HOLY	9
THE FAMILY THAT WORSHIPS TOGETHER.....	13
REMEMBER.....	17
THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST.....	20
THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST	26
THE BIRTH OF JESUS CHRIST	29
THE CHILDHOOD OF JESUS CHRIST.....	35
THE EARTHLY LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST	42
THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST	50
JESUS CHRIST: OUR EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY .	54
WHY WAS JESUS HATED?	58
TRAGEDY OF TRAGEDIES	60
LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE.....	63
OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION ...	68
GOD’S IMMUTABLE LAWS	75
BIBLE CHARACTERS WHO SERVED GOD.....	80
REDEEMING THE TIME	84
OBJECTIONS TO THE CESSATION OF MIRACLES.....	88
DOES BAPTISM SAVE?.....	95
SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY	101
PROBLEMS IN THE CORINTHIAN CHURCH.....	105
LIFE WITH THE RIGHT PURPOSE	116
MAILMAN FOR GOD.....	120
CHRISTIANITY’S SPECIAL DAY	124

SIT DOWN WITH DOGS; RISE UP WITH FLEAS!129
20 QUESTIONS OR DIVINE CHECKLIST 132
WASTED SERMONS IN THE BIBLE 137
THE CHURCH OF TOMORROW 141
THE KINGDOM OF GOD 145
PROPHETIC OVERVIEW OF THE KINGDOM.. 149
SIN IN THE CAMP 154

All Things Work Together for Good

Romans 8:28

Thesis: Exposition and application.

Introduction:

1. The apostle Paul penned his epistle to Roman Christians (“saints”) in about A.D. 58 (Rom. 1:1, 7).
2. Rom. 8:1 introduces the objective of the chapter in which Rom. 8:28 appears.
 - a. Throughout the chapter, the apostle contrasted man’s carnal pursuits with his spiritual pursuits.
 - b. Accordingly, Paul urged pursuit of Christianity instead of carnality.
 - c. Providentially, God has planned from eternity to save obedient souls.
3. Rom. 8:28 speaks to the benevolent providence of God toward faithful Christians.
 - a. However, Rom. 8:28 and God’s providence does not prevent bad things from happening to Christians.
 - b. Rather, it assures the child of God that the eternal good that God wills for his obedient children cannot be thwarted by either one’s fellow man or Satan.
 - c. Rom. 8:28-30 **do not** teach the denominational doctrine of predestination.
 - d. Instead, Rom. 8:28 and verses surrounding it teach about God’s eternal determination to save the obedient as a class or group of individuals who have obeyed and continue to obey the Gospel.

Body: (We will examine Rom. 8:28b first to see to whom Rom. 8:28a applies.)

- I. “...to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28b).
 - A. “To them.”
 1. This pronoun and the following clauses identify the group of people to whom it is said: “...all things work together for good...” (Rom. 8:28a).

2. The phrase "...all things work together for good..." is not applicable to any other group or individuals that are not included in Rom. 8:28b.
 3. While good and bad circumstances may confront both faithful children of God as well as others, God's providence is only works favorably toward faithful Christians.
- B. "That love God."
1. Rom. 8:28a, "all things work together for good" applies exclusively to those who love God, as opposed to those who do not truly love God.
 2. A mere academic or verbal pronouncement of love for God is inadequate to activate God's providence.
 3. True love for God manifests itself through obedience, John 14:15, 21; 1 John 5:3; 2 John 6.
 4. Everyone who is disobedient to God's Word does not truly love God and is not one to whom Rom. 8:28a is addressed.
- C. "To them who are called."
1. All accountable souls are called by the Gospel, Mark 16:15-16.
 2. However, not all who are called by the Gospel obey; therefore, the called of Rom. 8:28b are further identified by the clause "according to his purpose, Rom. 10:16.
 3. Likewise, the apostle Paul wrote to Christians at Thessalonica that they were called by the Gospel, 2 Thess. 2:13-14.
 4. Hence, Rom. 8:28a, "all things work together for good," applies only to those who have been called by the Gospel and who have obeyed it.
 5. Romans, the great New Testament book on faith, as well as references to the providence of God in Rom. 8:28, is sandwiched between "obedience to the faith," Rom. 1:5; 16:26.
- D. "According to his purpose."
1. This refers to the eternal purpose or design of God to save fallen mankind.
 2. The New Testament is full of references to the previously concealed in the Old Testament but now

revealed plan of God to save mankind, Rom. 16:25-26; Eph. 3:4-6; Col. 1:25-27; Titus 1:1-3; 1 Cor. 2:7.

3. The purpose of God includes being called by the Gospel, whereupon saved souls are added by Jesus to the one body or church, which church has the responsibility of to proclaim the Gospel to the world, Acts 2:47; Col. 3:15; Eph. 3:10-11.
 4. Combined, the clauses “who are called” and according to his purpose” identify faithful Christians only!
 5. The phrase “all things work together for good” applies exclusively to faithful Christians!
- E. Rom. 8:28a has a very narrow application.
1. The providence of God in Rom. 8:28 has no application to the unsaved!
 2. All things do not work together for good for non-Christians and delinquent Christians!

II. “And we know that all things work together for good,” Rom. 8:28a.

- A. “We know.”
1. The apostle Paul and the “saints” in Rome were aware of the providence of God.
 2. It was this providence of God that was calculated to offset the persecutions, afflictions and adversities enumerated a few verses later, Rom. 8:35-39.
- B. “All things.”
1. In context, “all things” refers to persecutions, afflictions and distresses, Rom. 8:35-39.
 2. “All things” does not refer to *sin*.
 3. Further, in context, “all things” does not refer to appreciable or good things Christians may experience.
- C. “Work together for good.”
1. Doubtless, it seems to us unlikely that distresses, persecutions or afflictions should benefit Christians.
 2. Indeed, physically, various adversities that a child of God may face do not promote earthly prosperity and happiness.
 3. However, spiritually, distresses and sundry trials in this life fortify Christians spiritually, 2 Cor. 4:17; Jam. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:7; Rev. 2:10.
 4. After the world has done all it can do to the child of

God, the world can only harm one's body but cannot adversely affect the soul, Matt. 10:28.

Conclusion:

1. Rom. 8:1 introduces a contrast between spiritually minded and carnally minded people.
2. God's providence in Rom. 8:28 pertains to the spiritually minded, i.e. faithful Christians.
3. God's providence does not especially pertain to the child of God's happiness on earth, but to the Christian's spiritual perseverance so that he can enjoy eternal happiness in heaven.
4. The context surrounding Rom. 8:28 comforts the child of God who faces earthly difficulties by reminding him of the eternal and heavenly goal, Rom. 8:18.

Invitation:

1. God's providence only contributes to the eternal reward of the faithful child of God.
2. Erring Christians operate outside the possibility of God's providence helping them prepare themselves for heaven, John 14:1-3; Acts 8:22.
3. Unbaptized believers are still in a lost state, and they, too, operate outside the possibility of God's providence helping them prepare for heaven, Mark 16:16.

Be Ye Holy

1 Peter 1:13-16

Thesis: Exposition and application.

Song: *Take Time to be Holy, More Holiness Give Me*

Introduction:

1. God has required that his people under both testaments acquire holiness in imitation of the holiness of God.
 - a. The phrase “Be ye holy” appears in Lev. 20:7.
 - b. The phrase “Be ye holy” appears in 1 Pet. 1:15-16.
 - c. Numerous additional passages in both testaments instruct the people of God to simply “be holy,” Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:26; Eph. 1:4; 5:27.
 - d. Today, God requires Christians to be a “holy priesthood” and a “holy nation,” 1 Pet. 2:5, 9.
2. However, to what degree and how can fallible mortals approach the infinite holiness of God?

Body:

- I. **“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ,” 1 Pet. 1:13.**
 - A. “Gird up the loins of your mind.”
 1. Anciently, long, loose robes were bound with a belt to allow either more rapid movement or greater agility.
 2. From this literal and then familiar activity, a figurative expression developed that referred to readiness and which could be applied to intangible things and circumstances, too, Eph. 6:14; Luke 12:35.
 3. The Holy Spirit through the apostle Peter taught with this expression that the Christian’s mind (the seat of “deep thought,” *Strong’s*) should be properly prepared to receive spiritual instruction.
 - B. “Be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”
 1. “Sober” means to keep oneself free from intoxicants and, generally applied, came to mean *self-control*.
 2. “Hope” means expectation and desire.

3. “To the end” in the ASV and the NKJV is connected with “hope” and appears, respectively, “set your hope perfectly” and “rest your hope fully.”
 4. “Grace” regarding God’s action toward humanity is usually defined as unmerited favor.
 5. “At the revelation of Jesus Christ” here refers to the Second Coming of our Lord.
- C. Summarized, 1 Pet. 1:13 addresses the necessity of readiness and confidence respecting the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

II. **“As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance,” 1 Pet. 1:14.**

- A. “As obedient children” or literally *children of obedience*.
1. “Obedient” means attentive and hearkening (*Strong’s*).
 2. One becomes a child of God through birth, which is the emphasis of the Greek word here for children, John 3:3-5.
 3. Obedience to God should characterize the relationship of the faithful child of God, which obedience saves, Heb. 5:8-9.
 4. Scripture calls non-Christians and erring Christians “children of disobedience,” Eph. 2:2; 5:6; Col. 3:6.
 5. The apostle Peter urges Christians to conduct themselves like Christians are supposed to conduct themselves, Eph. 5:8; 1 John 2:6.
- B. “Not fashioning yourselves according to the former lust in your ignorance.”
1. “Fashioning” here refers to forming or molding, which forming or molding in this verse is forbidden, Rom. 12:2.
 2. “Former lusts” equals previous forbidden desires that characterized Christians before they became Christians, Eph. 4:22, 24; 1 Pet. 4:2.
 3. “Your ignorance” means not knowing something and in this verse represents the condition of persons unaware of the Gospel.
- C. There has always been a contest within humanity between unrighteousness and righteousness, which contest still haunts the children of God and threatens to ruin holiness.

III. “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy,” 1 Pet. 1:15-16.

- A. “Be ye holy in all manner of conversation.”
1. With God, to be holy is to be sinlessly pure!
 2. With reference to humanity, the definition of “holy” includes the idea of “morally blameless” (*Strong’s*).
 3. “Conversation” means behavior and is translated “conduct” in the NKJV.
 4. One’s conduct is the manifestation of his heart, Matt. 15:19.
- B. “It is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”
1. The words “It is written” form a biblical pattern for asserting the authority of God.
 2. Immoralities associated with pagan gods were exemplified in the lives of pagan worshippers; likewise, God calls upon those who profess him as their God to exemplify his holiness in their lives.
 3. While mankind is incapable of achieving absolute holiness, through obedience to the Word of God, the grace of God makes up the difference whereby faithful Christians are deemed holy, Eph. 2:8; Rev. 22:14.
- C. God is absolutely holy, and he is the appropriate pattern of holiness after which the children of God should attempt to pattern themselves.

Conclusion:

1. The children of God today, just like those living under the Old Testament, must seek holiness.
2. Only God is completely and absolutely holy.
3. Only God, then, is a worthy example of holiness for humanity to imitate.
4. Through God’s grace, God makes up the shortfall in our own efforts to achieve holiness.
5. Therefore, with the help of God, obedient children of God can achieve their goal of holiness.

Invitation:

1. The road to holiness begins with one’s initial obedience of the Gospel, Acts 2:38; 10:48.
2. Holiness is maintained by obedience, Rev. 2:10; Heb. 5:8-9.

Works Cited

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The Family That Worships Together

Deuteronomy 31:11-13

Thesis: To encourage immediate and extended families to worship God together in God's own appointed way.

Introduction:

1. It seems that Adam and Eve were not worshipping with their children Cain and Abel, Gen. 4:1-7.
 - a. If Adam and Eve had been in the habit of worshipping God with their children, at least Cain would have more likely worshipped in God's own appointed way.
 - b. Imagine what could have been if Adam and Eve plus their extended family had practiced Patriarchal worship regularly and as God had dictated.
2. Noah, on the other hand, worshipped with his family in the way prescribed by God, Gen. 8:20.
 - a. Consequently, Noah conducted himself in a way with which God was pleased, Gen. 6:8-9.
 - b. Noah and his wife plus their three sons and their wives only were spared among humanity from the universal flood, Gen. 6:18; 7:7, 13.
 - c. This Patriarchal family would not have been spared had they not been accustomed to worshipping God together, living as God instructed and serving God.
3. The Bible contains much more detail about worshipping God under Judaism than the Bible contains respecting instances of worship under Patriarchy.
 - a. Men, women and children (the entire family) as well as servants, widows, orphans and visitors in one's house were to assemble to worship God, Deut. 16:11; Josh. 8:35.
 - b. One of the purposes of one's whole family and others in one's house assembling was to learn the Word of God, Deut. 31:11-13.
 - c. In this way, the Israelites were encouraged to obey the Word of the Lord, Exod. 24:7; Deut. 4:10.

4. Everyone now living lives under the rule of Christianity or the Gospel, Mark 16:15-16.
 - a. God still requires humanity to worship him as he has prescribed in his Holy Word, John 4:24.
 - b. The writer of Hebrews notes the Christian's obligation to assemble for worship and that God will punish those who willfully or purposely do not assemble for worship, Heb. 10:25-31.
 - c. However, one of the benefits of worshipping God is knowing the Word of God more thoroughly, whereby one can truly find salvation, 2 Tim. 3:15-17.

Body:

I. God wants one's whole family to worship him in God's own appointed way.

- A. God wants men, women, children and little ones to assemble for worship.
 1. God has always wanted moms, dads, sons and daughters to worship him together, Deut. 16:11.
 2. God expects even "little ones" who "have not known anything" to assemble with their families for worship, Josh. 8:35; Deut. 31:13.
 3. God expects others who may be in one's home to worship God along with the family in whose home they may be, i.e. orphans, widows and visitors, Deut. 16:11.
- B. Families worshipping God regularly adds to the teaching of children in the home about God and his Word.
 1. From times ancient through the present age, parents have been responsible for teaching their children at home about God and his Word, Gen. 18:19; Deut. 4:9; 6:6-9; 11:19-21; Eph. 6:4.
 2. One of the reasons for assembling to worship God has long been to learn God's Word more fully, Deut. 31:11-13.
 3. Learning God's Word and being reminded often of God's Word (at home and in worship) helps the whole family obey God and make ready for heaven, Exod. 24:7; Deut. 4:10; 2 Tim. 3:15-17.

II. The New Testament reveals how to worship God in his own appointed way.

- A. The New Testament authorizes five acts of worship for today.
 - 1. Assembling to worship God is obligatory—a must—from which God excuses no one who has the ability to assemble, Heb. 10:25-31.
 - 2. The New Testament authorizes one act of worship exclusively for practice during the assembly on the first day of each week, i.e. Lord's Supper or Communion, Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23-29.
 - 3. The other four acts of worship occur also on the first day of each week, but may be practiced also on additional days of the week, i.e. prayer, singing, contribution, preaching, 1 Cor. 14:15; 16:1-2; Acts 20:7.
- B. God desires preaching the Word of God to be the primary way by which the Gospel is taught.
 - 1. Preaching has long been the primary way by which God wants his Word to be proclaimed, Neh. 8:1-8.
 - 2. Just as God used prophets or preachers in the Old Testament to proclaim his Word, God wants preachers primarily to proclaim the Gospel of Christ today, Rom. 10:13-18.
 - 3. Beyond that, the Lord's church alone has the responsibility to present the Gospel to the rest of the world, Eph. 3:10-11.

Conclusion:

- 1. We need to learn from the failure of Adam and Eve's family to worship God together in God's own appointed way.
- 2. We need to learn from the success of Noah's family by worshipping God together in God's own appointed way.
- 3. Men, women, children and little ones in each family need to assemble to worship God together in God's own appointed way.
- 4. Families worshipping together in God's own appointed way will learn God's Word and know how to obey God's Word (resulting in a happier life and the assurance of eternal life in heaven).
- 5. Anyone who does not worship God in God's own appointed way can expect the wrath of God (resulting in a sinful life and the loss of eternal life).

Invitation:

1. One has everything to gain and nothing to lose by worshipping God in God's own appointed way.
2. However, one must become a Christian before he can worship God, Mark 16:16.
3. Further, an unfaithful child of God cannot offer acceptable worship to God, Acts 8:22.

Remember

1 Timothy 4:6

Thesis: To emphasize the importance of bringing to remembrance things already learned.

Introduction:

1. Remembering is as important today as at any time in the past (or the future).
 - a. Memorials remind us of significant events in the past and of the ones who made sacrifices respecting those important events.
 - b. Memory courses help us improve our memories to make us more proficient in business, etc.
 - c. Repetition (causing us to remember) has long been recognized as basic to successful education.
 - d. Any institution or nation that forgets to remember from whence it came and the struggles therein is headed for downfall.
 - e. Many people prefer to remember (and live in) the past than to deal with the present and anticipate the future.
 - f. Most people profess to remember the good old days.
2. “Remember” is also a significant word in the Bible.
 - a. Its meaning is not obscure; it means to bring back to mind or recall from memory.
 - b. The word appears 266 times in the Bible (KJV), 204 times in the Old Testament and 62 times in the New Testament.
3. The Bible has 31,173 verses.
 - a. Studying (as opposed to merely reading) each verse just once would take a long time.
 - b. Yet, preachers and teachers often cause their audiences to remember many things already learned from previous study.
 - c. Many areas in life as well as in religion require a fair amount of repetition to make one proficient.
4. Likewise, several familiar Scriptures contain the word “remember.”
 - a. One famous verse from the Ten Commandments contains the word “remember,” Exod. 20:8.
 - b. Ecc. 12:1 applies the word “remember” to youth.

- c. A reference in the New Testament to Lot's wife uses the word "remember," Luke 17:32.

Body:

I. The Bible exhorts man to remember God.

- A. The children of God need to remember the power of God and not be afraid of fellow men, Deut. 7:18; Neh. 4:14; Matt. 10:28.
- B. The children of God need to remember that God is their Rock upon whom they can rely, Psa. 78:35.
- C. Mankind should remember that God is Creator, Ecc. 12:1.
- D. Christians are to remember Jesus Christ through observance of the communion, Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24.
- E. Christians are called upon to remember that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to the Gospel, 2 Tim. 2:8.

II. The Bible exhorts man to remember God's Word.

- A. Old Testament passages exhort the children of God to remember and to obey the Word of God.
 - 1. Before one can obey the Word of God, he must know it and remember it, Josh. 1:13.
 - 2. Then, one must remember to obey the Word of God, Num. 15:40.
 - 3. If one fails to remember the Word of God and remember to obey the Word of God, God will punish him, Neh. 1:8-9.
- B. New Testament passages exhort the children of God to remember and to obey the Word of God.
 - 1. We need to remember the words of Jesus, Acts 20:35; Luke 24:6-8; John 2:17, 22.
 - 2. We need to remember the words of the apostles of Christ, Jude 17.
 - 3. It is better to remember the words of Jesus before remembering them they condemn us, Matt. 26:75; Luke 22:61.

III. The children of God must exhort their fellow man to remember.

- A. God's servants have always been responsible for calling their fellow man to remembrance, Neh. 4:14.
- B. Likewise, God's servants in the Gospel Age are responsible for calling their fellow man to remembrance.
 - 1. Christians need to remember from whence they came

- to be who they are, Eph. 2:11-13.
2. Especially Gospel preachers have the God-given responsibility to ever remind the children of God of God's truth and warn against doctrinal error, 1 Tim. 4:6; 2 Pet. 1:12-15 (preceding Christian graces); 2 Pet. 3:1-3.
 3. The Gospel faith must always be had in remembrance, 2 Tim. 1:5-6.
 4. The children of God must remember that though God rewards obedience, he punishes disobedience, Jude 5; Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.

Conclusion:

1. Let us remember God and his Word.
2. Let us cause our fellow man to remember God and his Word.
3. Especially as Christians, we need to remember from whence we came to be who we are.

Invitation:

1. As the children of God we must remember how we became Christians and inform others so they, too, can become children of God.
2. Remember the words of God rather than the uninspired words of men respecting salvation, Rom. 10:17; John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Acts 8:37; 22:16; Rev. 2:10.
3. If an erring child of God, remember that God still wants you to be saved, 1 John 1:9.

The Deity of Jesus Christ

Colossians 2:8-10

Thesis: To prove that Jesus Christ is divine or possesses the nature, character and attributes of God, and that he is, therefore, God or Deity.

Introduction:

1. Presumably, each person present today recognizes that the Bible is the final, absolute, complete, divinely inspired and inerrant Word of God.
 - a. As such, the Bible is the standard for the Christian by which he can discern between mortal and immortal or humanity and deity.
 - b. The Bible's testimony is sufficient to prove to every honest student of the Bible the deity of Jesus Christ.
2. Probably all or at least most present today already acknowledge the deity of Jesus Christ.
 - a. Therefore, the study today will reinforce the confidence of those who already admit the deity of Jesus.
 - b. In addition, any present who may be unsure or have reservations, the lesson will embolden one's confidence respecting the deity of Jesus Christ.
 - c. We are aware that since some religions deny the deity of Jesus Christ, it is possible for some present today to be confused about the matter, e.g. Jehovah's Witnesses.
3. A statement such as "Jesus is God" may be a difficult and confusing declaration for some people.
 - a. The phraseology or terms may be unfamiliar even to persons who readily acknowledge the deity of Jesus.
 - b. However, the word "God" is equivalent to the word "deity," respecting divinity.
 - c. Jesus Christ is one of three members of the Godhead, hence, God-the-Son, cf. God-the-Father and God-the-Holy Spirit, Matt. 28:18-20; 3:16-17; Eph. 4:4-6.
 - d. Hence, a word not appearing in our English translations (though not an anti-biblical reference), "trinity," commonly refers three persons in one Godhead.

Body:

I. Prophecies and fulfillment of prophecies concerning the Messiah prove that Jesus Christ is God or Deity.

- A. Prophecy foretold that God (“The Mighty God”) would appear as the Messiah through the lineage of King David, Isa. 9:6-7.
- B. The Gospel records confirm the fulfillment of such prophecies and apply them to Jesus of Nazareth, Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:31-33.
- C. The Isa. 9:6-7 prophecy occurred about 700 years before its fulfillment in the first century A.D.

II. The pre-fleshly existence of Jesus Christ proves Jesus Christ is God or Deity.

- A. Jesus claimed to have existed before the time of Abraham, John 8:58.
- B. Jesus existed before creation, participated in creation and maintains the created universe, Col. 1:14-17; John 1:1-3, 14; Gen. 1:26.
- C. At a time chosen by God, the second person of the Godhead came to earth in the form of mankind, Gal. 4:4.

III. Jesus Christ claimed to be God or Deity.

- A. Jesus Christ on several occasions claimed to be God.
 - 1. The first century religious leaders understood that Jesus affirmed that he was God, John 5:17-18.
 - 2. Jesus avowed to the Samaritan woman at the well that he is God, John 4:24-26.
 - 3. Likewise, Jesus clearly stated to the Sanhedrin that he was the Messiah, the Son of God, hence, Deity himself, Mark 14:61-62.
- B. Jesus could not have been a good prophet of God and not the Son of God (Deity), as some claim regarding Jesus of Nazareth.
 - 1. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and ascribed Deity to himself.
 - 2. Therefore, he was either all that he said that he was, or he was not a good prophet sent by God, but instead a liar or deluded person.

IV. The testimony of others affirms that Jesus Christ is God or Deity.

- A. The enemies of Jesus Christ testified that he is Deity or God,

which testimony because they were the enemies of Jesus is especially powerful testimony regarding the Deity of Jesus.

1. Despite claiming to be the King of a non-earthly kingdom, Pilate ‘found no fault in him at all,’ John 18:33-38.
 2. Judas who betrayed Jesus acknowledged that Jesus was innocent, Matt. 27:3-5.
 3. The centurion at the foot of the cross remarked that Jesus is the Son of God, Deity, Matt. 27:54.
 4. The demons acknowledged that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, Luke 4:34.
- B. Friends of Jesus Christ also avowed that he is God or Deity.
1. John the Immerser affirmed that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, Deity, John 1:29, 34.
 2. The apostle John wrote the words of Jesus claiming to be God or Deity, Rev. 1:8.
 3. The apostle Peter affirmed that Jesus is the Christ, hence Deity, Matt. 16:16.
 4. The apostle Thomas plainly referred to Jesus as “God,” John 20:28.
 5. On the road to Damascus, the apostle Paul acknowledged the Deity of Jesus Christ, Acts 22:6-10 (and subsequently as well, Phil 3:7-11).
 6. Angels declared that Jesus is Christ, hence, God or Deity, Luke 2:10-11.
 7. God-the-Father affirmed that Jesus is the Son of God, hence, Deity or God, Matt. 3:17; 17:5.
 8. Simeon the prophet declared that Jesus is God, Luke 2:25-32.
 9. Anna the prophetess also declared that Jesus is God, Luke 2:36-38.

V. Jehovah (ASV) of the Old Testament is God, some of which references either apply to the second person of the Godhead or are also true about him.

- A. Jehovah is the Creator, Isa. 40:28; John 1:3.
- B. Jehovah is the Savior, Isa. 43:11; John 4:42.
- C. Jehovah raises the dead, 1 Sam. 2:6; John 5:21.
- D. Jehovah is the great Judge, Joel 3:11-12; John 5:27; Matt. 25:31-33.
- E. Jehovah is the everlasting light, Isa. 60:19-20; John 8:12.

- F. Jehovah is the Great I Am, Exod. 3:14-15; John 8:58.
- G. Jehovah is the great Shepherd, Psalms 23:1; John 10:11.
- H. Jehovah is the glory of God, Isaiah 42:8; John 17:1, 5.
- I. Jehovah is the first and the last, Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; Revelation 1:17; 2:8.
- J. Jehovah is the Redeemer, Hosea 13:4, 14; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:7; Titus 2:14.
- K. Jehovah is the Bridegroom, Isaiah 62:3-5; Hosea 2:16-19; Matthew 25:1-13; Revelation 21:2.
- L. Jehovah is the Rock, Psalms 18:2; 1 Corinthians 10:4.
- M. Jehovah forgives sins, Jeremiah 31:34; Mark 2:7, 10.
- N. Jehovah is worshipped by angels, Psalms 148:1-2; Hebrews 1:6.
- O. Jehovah resides in heaven and is addressed by mortals there, Acts 7:59.
- P. Jehovah is the Creator of angels, Psalms 148:2, 5; Colossians 1:16.
- Q. Jehovah is confessed as Lord, Isaiah 45:21-23; Philippians 2:11.

VI. The resurrection of Jesus Christ proves that he is God or Deity.

- A. Jesus Christ is not the first to be resurrected from the grave.
 1. The son of the widow of Zarephath was raised from the grave, 1 Kings 17:22.
 2. The son of a Shunammite was raised from the dead, 2 Kings 4:35.
 3. A dead man who fell against Elisha's bones resurrected, 2 Kings 13:21.
 4. Jairus' daughter was raised from the dead, Matthew 9:18-25; Mark 5:22-43.
 5. The son of the widow of Nain was raised from the dead, Luke 7:11-15.
 6. Jesus resurrected Lazarus, John 11:44.
 7. The apostle Peter raised Dorcas, Acts 9:36-41.
 8. All of these, however, died a second time and returned to the grave—unlike Jesus Christ!
- B. Jesus Christ was the first to be raised from the grave never to die again, 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23.
 1. Jesus prophesied of his own death and resurrection, Matthew 16:21; Mark 9:9.
 2. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was announced by angels, Matthew 28:1-6; Mark 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-9; John 20:12.

- C. Hundreds of persons saw the resurrected Christ, Acts 3:14-15:
 - 1. Mary Magdalene, John 20:1-18; Mark 16:9.
 - 2. Another disciple named Mary, Matt. 28:9-10.
 - 3. Two male disciples, Luke 24:13-31.
 - 4. The apostle Peter, Luke 24:34.
 - 5. The apostles except for Thomas and Judas, John 20:19-24.
 - 6. Thomas and the disciples, John 20:26-28.
 - 7. More than 500 brethren at one time, 1 Cor. 15:6.
 - 8. The apostle Paul, 1 Cor. 15:8; Acts 9:3-8; 22:6-11.
- D. Our resurrected Lord sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven, Eph. 1:20.

VII. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ proves that he is God or Deity.

- A. The virgin birth was prophesied, Isa. 7:14.
- B. The prophecy of the virgin birth was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, Matt. 1:23.
- C. God brought about the virgin birth at a time suitable to him, Gal. 4:4.

VIII. The perfect, sinless life of Jesus Christ proves that he is God or Deity.

- A. Jesus committed no sin, Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22.
- B. Our Lord's enemies found him guiltless, Luke 23:4.

IX. Oneness with God-the-Father proves that Jesus Christ is God or Deity.

- A. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are persons of the one Godhead, Matt. 28:18-20.
- B. The Father and the Son are one, John 10:30; 14:9; 17:21.

X. The supernatural knowledge of Jesus Christ proves that he is God or Deity.

- A. Jesus possessed supernatural knowledge, John 1:47-49; 2:24-25; 4:28-29.
- B. Some others had supernatural knowledge because that information was given to them by God, Acts 9:10-17; 21:10-11.
- C. Having supernatural knowledge and affirming oneself to be God or Deity proves Christ's deity.

XI. The miracles of Jesus Christ prove that he is God or Deity.

- A. Jesus performed miracles, John 3:2; 5:36.

- B. Miraculous power was also given to various servants of God, Acts 2:4; 3:4-8.
- C. Having miraculous power and affirming oneself to be God or Deity proves Christ's deity, John 20:30-31.

Conclusion:

1. The Bible affirms repeatedly that Jesus Christ is God or Deity.
2. Jesus Christ, God incarnate, walked on the earth, died for us, resurrected from the grave and is now back in heaven.

Invitation:

1. Jesus Christ, God incarnate, who died for us and rose again, will save all who will obey him, Heb. 5:8-9.
2. Erring Christians need to repent and pray for the forgiveness of their recent sins, Acts 8:22.
3. Unbaptized believers need to repent and be immersed for the remission of their sins, Acts 2:38.

The Authority of Jesus Christ

John 12:48

Thesis: To show by the Bible the extent of the authority of Jesus Christ.

Introduction:

1. Presumably, each person present today recognizes that the Bible is the final, absolute, complete, divinely inspired and inerrant Word of God.
 - a. As such, the Bible is the standard for the Christian by which he ascertains the truth about spiritual or religious matters.
 - b. In this case, the Bible's testimony is sufficient to prove to every honest student of the Bible the authority of Jesus Christ.
2. Probably all or at least most present today already acknowledge that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that he possesses authority in religion.
 - a. Therefore, the study today will reinforce the confidence of those who already understand that Jesus has all authority regarding the church over which he is the head, Col. 1:18.
 - b. In addition, any present who may be unsure or have reservations as to who rules the church of the Bible, the lesson will embolden one's confidence respecting the authority of Jesus Christ.
 - c. We are aware that since many religions effectively deny Jesus Christ the authority to rule his church, it is possible for some present today to be confused about the matter, e.g. human creeds, earthly headquarters, denominational government.
3. Since all authority must be either absolute or delegated (or both), we will ascertain the type and degree of authority possessed by Jesus Christ as head of his church.

Body:

I. Jesus Christ possesses absolute authority.

- A. As the second person of Godhead, Jesus Christ is co-equal with the Father and the Spirit.
 1. The mention of the Godhead indicates a plurality of

- divine persons, Acts 17:29; Rom. 1:20; Col. 2:9.
2. A plurality of persons in the Godhead appears in Gen. 1:26.
 3. Three divine persons of the Godhead appear in Matt. 28:19.
- B. As co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ possesses the same absolute authority as the Father and the Holy Spirit.
1. Jesus Christ possessed glory, authority and all that is attributable to Deity from before the creation of the world, John 17:5.
 2. Jesus Christ possesses the form or essence of God, Phil. 2:6.
 3. Jesus Christ is the very image of Deity or God, Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3.

II. Jesus Christ possesses delegated authority.

- A. The heavenly Father's approval of Jesus Christ amounts to delegated authority, Matt. 3:16-17; 17:1-5.
- B. This delegated authority is the basis of the Great Commission, Matt. 28:18-20.

III. Jesus Christ claimed authority for himself, and the apostle Paul also attributed authority to Jesus.

- A. The early preaching of Jesus Christ evidenced his claim for at least much authority as a prophet of God, Matt. 4:17; cf. Matt. 3:1-2.
- B. Jesus Christ evidenced a claim of authority by expanding the Old Testament commandments of God, Matt. 5:20-48, "But I say unto you."
- C. Jesus Christ claimed authority for himself to pass eternal judgment on humanity, John 12:48; Matt. 7:21-23; 2 Cor. 5:10.
- D. The apostle Paul wrote that Jesus Christ has the authority to retrieve his followers and punish the wicked at time's end, 1 Thess. 4:16-17; 2 Thess. 1:7-9.

IV. The miracles of Jesus Christ confirmed his authority and validated his teaching.

- A. The purpose of miracles was confirm the Word of God.
 1. After listing miracles in Mark 16:17-18, Jesus stated that miracles were to confirm the Word of God, Mark 16:20.

2. The writer of Hebrews noted that miracles had already begun confirming the Word, Heb. 2:3-4.
- B. Jesus Christ performed miracles whereby he demonstrated authority over nature.
 1. Our Lord stilled a storm at sea, Matt. 8:23-27.
 2. Jesus Christ fed thousands by miracle, Matt. 14:13-23; 15:32-38.
 3. Jesus walked on water, Matt. 14:24-36.
 4. Our Lord miraculously healed sick people, John 4:46-54; Matt. 8:2-4; 9:2-8; John 5:1-16.
 5. Jesus turned water into grape juice, John 2:1-11.
- C. Jesus Christ performed miracles whereby he demonstrated his authority over the spirit world, Mark 1:23-26; Matt. 8:28-34; 9:27-34; 17:14-20.
- D. Jesus Christ performed miracles whereby he demonstrated his authority over death, Luke 7:11-17; Matt. 9:18-26; John 11:1-46.

Conclusion:

1. Jesus Christ has both absolute authority in religion as a member of the Godhead and delegated authority from the Father.
2. Jesus Christ has **all authority** in heaven and in earth, Matt. 28:18.
3. The authority of Jesus Christ will continue as long as the world stands, 1 Cor. 15:24-28.

Invitation:

1. Faced with the authority of Jesus Christ, we can either conform to the teachings of Jesus Christ or be condemned by them, John 12:48.
2. Conforming to the authority of Jesus Christ, non-Christians will heed our Lord's words, Mark 16:16.
3. Conforming to the authority of Jesus Christ, erring Christians will return to the fellowship of Jesus, 1 John 1:7-10.

The Birth of Jesus Christ

Luke 1:26-35

Thesis: To become better acquainted with our Lord and Savior.

Introduction:

1. Both the Bible and secular history provide information regarding the birth of Jesus.
2. We can appeal to some degree to secular history for information because Jesus Christ was an historical person.
 - a. He was a real human being (besides his divine side).
 - b. He lived in a real place.
 - c. He lived in a real, definite and identifiable time period.
 - d. Jesus Christ had and continues to have a real and a genuine influence on other people.
3. However, the Bible and secular history provide only a limited amount of information about the birth and life of Jesus Christ.
 - a. To the Christian, the Bible information about Jesus Christ is unimpeachable.
 - b. However, we must scrutinize carefully secular history to distinguish between fact and myth or unsubstantiated tradition. i.e. portraits of Jesus, reports of the boy Jesus miraculously repairing toys, etc. are not factual.

Body:

- I. **The birth of Jesus Christ was out of the ordinary; he was born of a virgin, Isa. 7:14.**
 - A. The Gospel writers confirmed the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy about the virgin birth of the Christ.
 1. Matt. 1:18-25 records the announcement by an angel to Joseph that the Isa. 7:14 prophecy about a virgin birth was about to be fulfilled through his betrothed, Mary.
 2. Luke 1:26-38 records the announcement by an angel to Mary of the impending fulfillment of the Isa. 7:14 prophecy about a virgin birth was about to be fulfilled through her.
 - B. The birth of Jesus Christ was miraculous or supernatural, but more than simply miraculous.
 1. A miracle is a supernatural event effected by God that

- is discernible.
2. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ was miraculous in a way that exceeded miracles connected with the birth of others, e.g. Isaac and John the Baptist, Gen. 12; 15; 17; 21:1-7; Luke 1:5-25, 36.
- C. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is a cardinal doctrine of Christianity.
1. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ pertains to the deity of Jesus.
 2. The virgin birth was the vehicle or means by which God came to this earth to live among men, John 1:1-3, 14; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 2:16-17; Phil. 2:6-8.
- D. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is the basis for God's plan to redeem fallen mankind.
1. Redemption of humanity has long been the subject of prophecy and associated with a Messiah or Savior, Gen. 3:15; 49:10; Isa. 7:14.
 2. The New Testament confirms that the mission of Jesus Christ was to save mankind from sin, Matt. 1:21; Luke 19:10.
 3. Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, which if these were removed from the Bible, the Bible would be reduced to a mass of unrelated and unimportant words.
 4. The virgin birth facilitated the delivery of a perfect sin sacrifice by which sins could actually be remitted, John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:21.
 5. Jesus Christ is the only way by which anyone can be saved from his sins, Acts 4:12; Rom. 10:13; Acts 2:38.

II. Enemies of Christianity object to and discount the truthfulness of the virgin birth.

- A. Enemies of the Christianity include atheists and modernists, the former denying the existence of God and his system of religion while the latter is a religionist who devalues the supernatural intervention of God recorded in the Bible.
1. Consequently, enemies of Christianity attack as fictitious every Bible miracle.
 2. Enemies of Christianity especially attack the virgin birth and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, since these two miraculous events are crucial to the validity of Christianity.

3. Enemies of Christianity would reduce the Bible to mythology and fairy tales.
 4. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ did not come under attack until the 18th century through so-called *higher criticism*.
- B. Modernists and liberals pose a greater threat than atheists.
1. Atheists such as Francis Voltaire and Thomas Paine are announced opponents of Christianity and therefore are more easily discernible.
 2. Modernists and liberals, though, purport to be proponents of Christianity while they actually undermine it.
 3. Modernists and liberals, through their covert and masked attacks on the Bible, are more dangerous because they do not announce their opposition to the Bible and Christianity.
- C. Modernists object to the virgin birth of Jesus Christ on the grounds that it is biologically impossible.
1. Parthenogenesis (reproduction without fertilization) is limited to lower plants and invertebrate animals, and it is impossible with higher life forms such as man.
 2. Therefore, since modernists disbelieve Bible miracles, they conclude the virgin birth could not have occurred.
 3. Christians, though, believe in the Bible miracles (including the virgin birth), for we know that nothing is impossible with God, Luke 1:37.
- D. Modernists argue that the Gospel of John, though speaking of the deity of Jesus Christ, says nothing regarding the virgin birth of Jesus.
1. Actually, every reference to the incarnation of Jesus Christ is a reference to the virgin birth, John 1:1-3, 10, 14-15, 18.
 2. The apostle John combines references of the incarnation of Jesus Christ with references to the deity of Jesus Christ, John 1:1-3, 10, 14-15, 18.
 3. Especially John 1:14 attests to the virgin birth, or harmonizes with other Gospel records (Matt. and Mark) respecting the incarnation of the second person of the Godhead.
- E. Modernists claim that neither Jesus Christ nor any apostle

referred to the virgin birth of Christ.

1. Rom. 1:3-4 refers to a member of the Godhead taking the form of a human (the incarnation) and implies a reference to the virgin birth.
 2. Likewise, Gal. 4:4 refers to the incarnation and therefore by implication refers to the virgin birth.
- F. Modernists claim that Joseph was the father of Jesus.
1. Modernists cite Mary saying Joseph was the father of Jesus, Luke 2:48.
 2. Modernists further remind us that the Jews commonly viewed Jesus as the son of Joseph, Luke 2:41; Matt. 13:55; Luke 3:23; 4:22.
 3. True, Joseph was the foster or stepfather of Jesus, and the world was unaware of the divine nature of Jesus until he began his miraculously accompanied ministry.
- G. Modernists argue that the birth of Jesus, like birth stories of famous or illustrious men, have been embellished or augmented with fables and myths.
1. The virgin Coatlicue clutched a ball of feathers that had fallen from heaven to her bosom and conceived a son, Huitzilopchi, war god of the Aztecs.
 2. The virgin mother of Quetzalcoatl conceived by swallowing a rare stone.
 3. Modernists claim that the virgin birth of Jesus Christ is comparable to these mythological birth stories.
 4. However, the virgin birth of Jesus Christ is substantiated by Old Testament prophecy, New Testament fulfillment, the expectation by Old Testament Jews and acceptance by Christians from the New Testament to the present.
 5. The Christian relies on biblical evidence to substantiate the virgin birth.
- H. Modernists claim that the early church did not believe in the virgin birth of Jesus Christ.
1. Nothing within the Bible or out of the Bible suggests that the early church did not believe in the virgin birth of Christ.
 2. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ only came under attack through higher criticism in the 18th century.

III. The birth of Jesus Christ is historical.

- A. The Bible predicted the birth of Jesus Christ.
 - 1. The virgin birth of the Messiah or Savior was the subject of Old Testament prophecy, Gen. 3:15; 12:3; 49:10; Isa. 7:14.
 - 2. The place of the Savior's birth was predicted through prophecy, Mic. 5:2.
 - 3. The time when the Savior was to be born was predicted through prophecy, Dan. 2:31-45.
- B. Bible history confirms the fulfillment of Bible prophecies respecting the birth of the Messiah.
 - 1. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Matt. 2:1; Luke 2:1-7.
 - 2. Jesus was born during the reign of Caesar Augustus, while Cyrenius was governor of Syria and Herod the Great ruled Palestine, Luke 2:1-2; Matt. 2:1.
- C. Secular history also confirms the birth of Jesus.
 - 1. Examples of history books that acknowledge the historicity of Jesus' birth include: *Italy* by John S.C. Abbott (301), *A History of Rome* by Arthur E.R. Boak (334) and *World Civilizations* by Edward Burns and Philip Ralph (360-363).
 - 2. Secular histories that are favorable toward Christianity as well as history books that are antagonistic toward Christianity both attest that Jesus of Nazareth was an historical person.

Conclusion:

- 1. That a man known as Jesus of Nazareth was born in Palestine in the days of the Roman emperors is a **fact**.
 - a. Both the Bible and secular history substantiate this fact.
 - b. The birth of Jesus of Nazareth is absolutely true.
- 2. That Jesus Christ was born of a virgin is a **fact**.
 - a. The Bible, through Old Testament prophecies and New Testament fulfillment, substantiates the virgin birth of Jesus.
 - b. Faithful Christians from the first century through the present have accepted the virgin birth of Jesus Christ.
 - c. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ is as factual as anything contained in the Bible and is absolutely true.
- 3. Incidentally, at least three English translations inaccurately and errantly represent the virgin birth of Jesus Christ.

- a. The Revised Standard Version, Good News for Modern Man and the New World Translation each replace the word “virgin” respecting the birth of Christ with the words “young woman” or “young maidens.”
- b. Young women have been bearing children for centuries, but only once did a virgin bear a child— Jesus Christ.

Invitation:

1. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth through the means of the virgin birth for the purpose of saving souls; unless we obey the Gospel, we make the virgin birth and mission of Jesus Christ respecting us void.
2. Jesus Christ came to earth to save unbaptized believers, Mark 16:16.
3. Jesus Christ is also willing to save erring Christians, 1 John 1:7-10.

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The Childhood of Jesus Christ

Luke 2:51-52

Thesis: To become better acquainted our Lord and Savior.

Song: *More About Jesus*

Introduction:

1. Given the little information available regarding the early life of Jesus Christ, today's lesson may more readily cause us to remember certain things about the early life of Jesus rather than provide new information.
 - a. Not much appears in the Bible about the first 30 years of the life of Jesus.
 - b. What little is known has been exploited through manmade holy days or holidays.
 - c. Often, biblical facts about the life of Jesus are overshadowed by baseless tradition, denominational doctrine and idle speculation.
2. The four Gospel records chronicle the life of Christ.
 - a. At least two of these historians were inspired witnesses.
 - b. The Holy Spirit, through divine inspiration, guided the sacred writers in the selection of the exact words to best depict the life of Christ.
 - c. Further, the Holy Spirit provided these holy historians with all the biographical material relating to Jesus Christ in addition to what they witnessed.
 - d. Matthew, a tax collector, was an apostle and an eyewitness of the life, death and resurrected Christ.
 - e. Mark, the evangelist, was a co-worker with the apostle Paul.
 - f. Luke, a medical doctor, was a Gentile who labored with the apostle Paul.
 - g. John was an apostle and an eyewitness of the life, death and resurrected Christ.
3. Secular history, though sometimes belligerent toward Christianity, also records information about the life of Jesus Christ.

- a. Flavius Josephus (37-93) was born in the generation after Christ and was contemporary with the apostles; he was a Jewish historian and not a follower of Jesus Christ, but he recorded part of the life of Jesus Christ.
 - b. Carius Cornelius Tacitus was a Roman historian who wrote about A.D. 100 and was contemporary with the generation following the death of the apostles; he was not a Christian, but mentioned part of the life of Christ.
 - c. More recent histories also acknowledge and record parts of the life of Jesus Christ.
4. The Gospel records together provide the sum of necessary information about the life of Christ.
 - a. Not much is recorded about the first 30 years of the life of Christ.
 - b. However, all we need to know about the life of Christ has been provided to us in the Gospel records, John 20:30-31.
 5. Secular history adds further confirmation to the sacred biography of Jesus Christ.
 - a. However, wherever secular history and the biblical biography of Christ may disagree, Christians have greater confidence in the biblical account.
 - b. Secular history is not for the Christian the ultimate source of information, and it is not always trustworthy.

Body:

I. Luke 2:1-7 records the birth of Jesus Christ.

- A. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ was prophesied in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament, Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38.
- B. The birth of Jesus occurred about 4 B.C.
- C. Joseph and Mary traveled from their residence in Nazareth to the ancestral home in Bethlehem by the decree of the emperor for a census.
 1. This incident over which Joseph and Mary had no control facilitated the fulfillment of prophecy respecting where the Messiah would be born, Mic. 5:2.
 2. The Roman census was for the purpose of compiling a corrected list from which to assess taxes.
- D. Nowhere remained for the couple to lodge once they arrived in Bethlehem, and hence Jesus was born in a stable.
 1. The humility with which the Son of God entered the

world is staggering when compared with the birth typical of the rich and famous.

2. Tradition reveres a cave in Bethlehem as the birthplace of Jesus; a church building stands over the spot with a star on the floor marking the supposed location of the manger.

II. Luke 2:8-20 pertains to angels and shepherds.

- A. Angels announced the birth of Jesus Christ to shepherds who were attending their flocks by night.
 1. The birth of Jesus Christ is celebrated by many as a holy day (holiday) on December 25.
 2. There has been much variation and dispute regarding the birthday of Jesus throughout history, and it has been observed at various times throughout the year.
 3. It is not likely that the birth of Jesus Christ occurred in the winter months since shepherds usually enclose their sheep at night from November through March.
 4. Bethlehem is on a parallel with Jackson, MS and has comparable weather in the winter (cold, rainy with some snow or ice).
- B. Subsequently, the shepherds went to see baby Jesus.
 1. The nativity scene usually pictured includes Joseph, Mary, baby Jesus, some animals, the shepherds, the wise men, angels over the stable and a star in the sky.
 2. In reality, the angels had gone before the shepherds left the fields seeking Jesus and the wise men (following a special star) had not arrived yet.

III. Luke 2:21-38 chronicles the circumcision and presentation of Jesus in the Temple.

- A. Eight days after his birth, Jesus was circumcised and named.
 1. Jesus Christ was a Jew of the tribe of Judah and of the family of David, Heb. 7:14; Luke 2:4.
 2. Our Lord was born under the Jewish covenant or Old Testament, to which he and his family were amenable.
 3. Lev. 12:1-3 required that Jewish males be circumcised on the eighth day after birth.
- B. Jesus Christ was presented before the God and redeemed, Luke 2:22-24.
 1. The presentation was made after 41 days of purification had past for the mother, Lev. 12:4-8.

2. A lamb was to be sacrificed unless the family were too poor to afford a lamb, then they could offer two turtledoves.
 3. God had decreed that the firstborn of man and beast was to be redeemed (excepting among sheep, goats and calves which not redeemed were sacrificed), Exod. 13:2, 12-13; 34:19-20; Num. 3:13; 8:17; 18:17.
 4. The sacrifice to redeem Jesus was a poor man's sacrifice.
- C. A prophet named Simeon and a prophetess named Anna both testified that Jesus Christ was the Messiah for which Israel had long waited, Luke 2:25-38.
1. Both Simeon and Anna had been recipients of divine revelation.
 2. Simeon mentioned the mission of Jesus Christ to save the Gentiles, cf. Isa. 62:2.
 3. Both attributed the redemption of Israel to Jesus Christ, cf. Matt. 1:21; Luke 19:10.

IV. Matt. 2:1-12 records the visit of the wise men.

- A. The wise men, at least two but an unknown number, came seeking Jesus Christ.
1. These easterners were likely non-Jews amenable to Patriarchy and may have recipients of divine revelation.
 2. They followed a star, probably some miraculous light resembling a star, which led them to Jesus Christ.
 3. The wise men inquired of Herod the Great about the location of the baby, King Jesus.
 4. Herod, fearing usurpation of his throne, planned to kill the baby Jesus.
 5. After consulting the Old Testament Scriptures about the prophecy of the Messiah's birth, the wise men were sent to Bethlehem, Mic. 5:2.
- B. The wise men found Jesus Christ.
1. Evidently, by the time of the arrival of the wise men, Jesus and his family were no longer lodging in the stable, but in a house.
 2. Some time but less than two years had elapsed since the birth of Jesus.
 3. Though the number of wise men is not revealed in the

Bible, three kinds of gifts were bestowed: gold, frankincense and myrrh.

4. Frankincense and myrrh were both resins from trees, possessing acute fragrances for which they were highly treasured.

V. Matt. 2:13-18 chronicles the flight to Egypt and the slaughter of babies.

- A. The wise men departed without reporting back to Herod, being warned in a dream to return another way home.
- B. Joseph was warned in a dream to flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus.
 1. Herod the Great wanted to kill Jesus Christ because he feared this spiritual King of the Jews would threaten his earthly kingdom.
 2. Joseph took Mary and Jesus to Egypt for safety.
 3. Herod had all children two years old and younger in the Bethlehem area murdered in his attempt to make sure he had killed Jesus.
 4. Going into Egypt from which they returned was a secondary fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy in Hos. 11:1.

VI. Luke 2:39-40 records the return to Nazareth.

- A. Upon further direction from an angel in a dream, Joseph took Mary and Jesus back to Palestine.
- B. Herod the Great had died, but because Archelaus, his son, was made King, the family of Jesus settled in Nazareth of Galilee (described as their own city).
- C. Hence, Jesus resided in Nazareth, whereby he was called a Nazarene, a fulfillment of Scripture, Matt. 2:23.
 1. Note, there is a difference between a Nazarite and a Nazarene.
 2. A Nazarite was set apart for special service to God and was bound by certain vows, Judges 13:5; 1 Sam. 1:11.
 3. A Nazarene was an inhabitant of Nazareth.
- D. For about a decade following there is no record of the life of Jesus.
 1. Sacred history is silent regarding this period of our Lord's young life.
 2. Secular history records nothing about this period in the life of Christ.

3. Mythology and tradition claim that Jesus performed miracles as a child, especially repairing by miracle toys of his playmates.
4. Evidently, nothing about the life of our Lord's childhood was out of the ordinary to the extent that anyone suspected he was the Son of God, Matt. 13:54-56.
5. Luke 2:40 is the only record of this intervening period in the young life of Jesus.

VII. Luke 2:41-60 chronicles attending the Passover at the age of 12.

- A. Jesus attended the Passover feast in Jerusalem with Joseph and Mary.
- B. Jesus lingered behind when Joseph and Mary began the journey home.
 1. Evidently, Joseph and Mary were traveling with a number of other individuals who were returning home to Galilee after the Jewish feast, and each thought Jesus was in the company of the other.
 2. Upon discovering that Jesus was not with their company, Joseph and Mary returned to Jerusalem to find Jesus, and they searched for him for three days.
 3. Finally, they found him in the Temple, discussing the Law with the doctors of the Law.
 4. The Jewish leaders were astonished at the skill of Jesus in the Scriptures.
 5. Joseph and Mary were surprised to find Jesus discussing Scripture with religious leaders.
 6. When chastened by his parents, Jesus spoke of his divine mission.
 7. Jesus returned to Nazareth with Joseph and Mary.

VIII. Luke 2:51-52 notes the maturing of Jesus to manhood.

- A. These two verses contain the only information regarding the maturation of Jesus over the next 18 years.
- B. Jesus was an obedient child.
 1. Under the Old Testament, obedience of children was emphasized, Exod. 20:12; 21:15, 17; Prov. 23:13-14.
 2. Under the New Testament likewise, obedience of children is emphasized, Eph. 6:1.
- C. Jesus Christ increased in wisdom and stature.

1. He gained knowledge along with common sense whereby he could exercise his knowledge properly.
 2. Respecting stature, he grew physically into manhood.
- D. Jesus increased in favor with God and man; we can safely surmise:
1. Jesus was a good moral man.
 2. He was honest.
 3. He was a hard worker.
 4. He was not lazy, filthy mouthed, a thief, etc.
 5. Our Lord possessed all the admirable characteristics that permit one to receive the approval of God and God-fearing men.

Conclusion:

1. After 400 years of no new revelation from God, both people amenable to Patriarchy and Judaism received new revelation about the birth of Jesus Christ.
2. Our Lord was reared in a family with a mother, a stepfather, stepbrothers and stepsisters, Matt. 13:54-46.
3. Apparently, Joseph died since he is not mentioned after a point in time and Jesus while on the cross entrusted the care of his mother to the apostle John.
4. The 30 years before Jesus began his ministry served to prepare Jesus for his ministry of three years.
5. Though little is recorded in the Gospel records about the first 30 years of Jesus' life, most of the Gospel records address the three years of his ministry.
6. All of humanity has been influenced by the final three years of the life of Jesus Christ on earth.

Invitation:

1. You have not been influenced enough by the life of Christ and his ministry if you are not at this moment in a saved relationship with God.
2. Erring Christians can take care of this lack by repenting and praying.
3. Unbaptized believers can remedy this tragedy by obeying the instructions of Jesus, Mark 16:16.

The Earthly Life and Ministry of Jesus Christ

Isaiah 40:3-5

Thesis: To learn more about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Introduction:

1. Much of the first 30 years of Jesus' life is obscure, only highlights of which appear in the Gospel records.
2. However, the last three years of Jesus' life and ministry on earth fill the Gospel records.
3. Obviously one sermon cannot adequately chronicle the earthly life and ministry of Jesus Christ, or even begin to note our Lord's masterful teaching.
4. We must content ourselves today with an overview of all that appears in the sacred record about the earthly life and ministry of Jesus Christ.
5. That sacred record records sufficient information for one with an honest heart to correctly conclude that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God, the Christ and the Savior of the world, John 20:30-31.

Body:

I. Preparation preceded the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ.

- A. The first 30 years of Jesus' life prepared him for his three years of ministry.
 1. At age 12, Jesus acknowledged his divine mission as the Son of God, Luke 2:49.
 2. For the next 18 years, the Incarnate Son of God grew to manhood physically and interacted with humanity and God, Luke 2:52.
 3. Jesus waited 30 years before undertaking his ministry, signaling that among mankind maturity must precede fruitful labors, Luke 3:23.
- B. The preaching and ministry of John the Baptist prepared the way for the ministry of Jesus Christ.
 1. Old Testament prophecies predicted a prophet like Elijah would arise and prepare the way for the Messiah's ministry, Isa. 40:3-5; Mal. 3:1; 4:5; Matt.

3:1-3; Luke 3:2-6.

2. John the Baptist prepared the way of the Lord by preaching that the kingdom was at hand, Matt. 3:2.
3. John the Baptist preached repentance followed by baptism for the remission of sins, Luke 3:3.
4. John the Baptist baptized penitent persons in prospect of salvation, Matt. 3:5-8; Acts 19:1-6.
5. John the Baptist preached that the Messiah would come and baptize some with the baptism of the Holy Spirit and others with the baptism of fiery punishment, Matt. 3:10-12.
6. John the Baptist baptized Jesus Christ (to fulfill all righteousness) and identified him as the long sought Messiah, Matt. 3:13-17.
7. John the Baptist condemned sin wherever he found it without regard to personal danger because of such preaching, Luke 3:18-20; Matt. 3:7-9; 14:3-12.

II. The events surrounding the beginning of Jesus' ministry prepared him for and set the backdrop for his ministry of three years.

- A. The baptism of Jesus Christ marked the beginning of his three years of earthly, public ministry.
 1. For everyone besides Jesus Christ, baptism with John's baptism was for the remission of sins, Matt. 3:5-6.
 2. Jesus, though, had no sins, 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:2.
 3. Jesus Christ was baptized to fulfill all righteousness, i.e. every Jew during the ministry of John the Baptist was required to be baptized, Matt. 3:15.
 4. Though he had no sins, Jesus Christ was baptized as a part of the obedience he rendered to the Father, Heb. 5:8-9.
 5. Of course, the baptism of Jesus serves as an example to the rest of humanity for all time.
 6. Shortly after the baptism of Jesus, he began preaching, Matt. 4:17.
- B. The temptation of Jesus Christ in the wilderness by Satan further prepared our Lord for his ministry.
 1. Immediately following his baptism, Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights, Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13.

2. Jesus successfully resisted each temptation of the devil by quoting Scripture, Matt. 4:1-11.
 3. Jesus Christ has been tempted in all points as we are tempted and yet he did not sin, Heb. 2:18; 4:15.
 4. Jesus Christ gave us the example that if we resist the devil he will flee from us, Jam. 4:7; Eph. 4:27; 1 Pet. 5:8-9.
 5. Sinlessly pure in the face of temptation, Jesus Christ thereby was prepared to commence his public ministry.
- C. The calling of some of his disciples was a significant preparatory event in the early ministry of Jesus Christ.
1. First, Jesus called Andrew and Peter, John 1:35-42.
 2. Next, Jesus selected Philip and Nathaniel, John 1:43-51.
 3. So far, Jesus only named four disciples who later became his apostles.
- D. Our Lord's miracle of turning water to grape juice was his first miracle and the first public demonstration of Jesus' divine ministry, John 2:1-11.
1. This miracle was the only one performed by Jesus Christ on a joyful occasion.
 2. After this miracle, Jesus abode in Capernaum on the western coast of the Sea of Galilee for a few days.

III. The first segment of our Lord's ministry could be labeled "The Judean Ministry."

- A. Jesus Christ first went to Jerusalem.
1. There he cleansed the Temple for the first time, casting out the moneychangers and their merchandise, John 2:13-22.
 2. Thereafter, Jesus performed miracles, leading many people to believe on him, John 2:23.
 3. Jesus Christ had his first recorded discourse (this one privately) with a Pharisee named Nicodemus, John 3:1-21.
- B. Jesus and his disciples left Jerusalem and went to the countryside of Judea.
1. There Jesus taught and baptized, John 3:22.
 2. This was the same area in which John the Baptist and his disciples had been teaching, and John the Baptist confirmed to his disciples that Jesus is the Christ, John

3:25-36.

- C. Jesus next left Judea and entered Samaria while en route back to Galilee, Matt. 4:12; Mark 1:14; John 4:1-4.
 - 1. Jesus left Judea after John the Baptist was imprisoned and after the Pharisees had heard that Jesus had made more disciples than John had made.
 - 2. Jesus entered Sychar of Samaria, meeting the woman at the well, John 4:5-26.
 - 3. The conversation with the woman at the well was Jesus' second recorded discourse (also private) and during which he identified himself as the Messiah.
 - 4. Many Samaritans believed Jesus was the Messiah, John 4:27-42.
 - 5. After staying two days in Samaria, Jesus and his disciples leave for Galilee, John 4:43.

IV. The next segment of our Lord's ministry could be called "The Galilean Ministry."

- A. The Galileans generally received Jesus as the Christ because they had already seen him perform miracles in Jerusalem during the days of the Passover, John 4:45.
 - 1. Jesus taught in the synagogues throughout Galilee and was "glorified of all," Luke 4:14-15.
 - 2. However, Jesus' hometown of Nazareth rejected him and tried to kill him, Luke 4:16-30.
 - 3. Jesus went to Cana and there was petitioned by a nobleman of Capernaum to heal his son, John 4:46-53.
 - 4. Jesus Christ resided in Capernaum, Matt. 4:13; Luke 4:31-32.
- B. Jesus called the four fishermen: Peter, Andrew, James and John, Matt. 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11.
 - 1. This was the second calling of Peter and Andrew.
 - 2. The occasion of the great catch of fish that threatened to break the nets and sink two ships preceded the willing departure of the fishermen to be disciples of Jesus.
- C. Jesus Christ continued to preach throughout Galilee, performing many miracles and healing the sick, Matt. 4:23-25; 8:2ff.
 - 1. People from Syria (north of Galilee), Decapolis (east of Galilee) and Judaea and Jerusalem came to Jesus

Christ in Galilee with sick to be healed.

2. Every sick person coming to Jesus Christ was healed.
- D. Several other events occurred during our Lord's Galilean ministry.
1. Jesus gave his famous Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5-7.
 2. Jesus healed a centurion's servant, Matt. 8:5-13.
 3. Jesus performed miracles at Capernaum, including healing Peter's mother-in-law and healing a man with an unclean spirit, Matt. 8:14-17; Mark 1:21-34; Luke 4:31-41.
 4. Jesus healed a leper, Matt. 8:2-4.
 5. Jesus stilled a storm on the Sea of Galilee, Matt. 8:18, 23-27.
 6. Jesus cast out demons in the country of the Gadarenes, Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20; Luke 8:26-40.
 7. Jesus called Matthew to be his disciple, Matt. 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17; Luke 5:27-32.
 8. Jesus raised Jairus' daughter, Matt. 9:17-26; Mark 5:22-43; Luke 8:41-56.
 9. Jesus healed a woman, healed the blind, healed the mute and cast out demons, Matt. 9:27-33.
 10. Jesus raised the widow's son at Nain, Luke 7:11-17.
 11. Jesus was anointed with spices by a penitent woman, Luke 7:36-50.
 12. Jesus told the Parable of the Two Debtors, Luke 7:41-42.
 13. Jesus selected his apostles, Matt. 10:2-4.
 14. The disciples of John the Baptist inquire of Jesus Christ if he is the Messiah, Matt. 11:2-30.
 15. Jesus healed a man's withered hand, Matt. 12:9-14.
 16. Jesus taught multitudes at the shore of Galilee, Matt. 13:1-2.
 17. Jesus told the Parable of the Sower, Matt. 13.
 18. Jesus told the parables of the Seed, Tares, Mustard Seed, Leaven, Hidden Treasure, Costly Pearl and Net, Mark 4; Matt. 13.
 19. The second rejection of Jesus Christ by the residents of Nazareth occurred, Matt. 13:54-58.
 20. John the Baptist was executed, Matt. 14:1-12.

21. Jesus miraculously fed 5,000 men plus women and children, Matt. 14:13-23.
 22. Jesus walked on the water of the Sea of Galilee, Matt. 14:24-36.
 23. Jesus went to the area of the cities of Tyre and Sidon (north of Galilee) where he cast a demon from a Gentile girl, Matt. 15:21-28.
 24. Jesus returned to the area surrounding the Sea of Galilee where he performed many miracles, Matt. 15:29-31.
 25. Jesus miraculously fed 4,000 men plus women and children, Matt. 15:32-38.
 26. Jesus healed a blind man near Bethsaida, Mark 8:22-26.
 27. The apostle Peter acknowledged Jesus as the Christ and Son of God—the Messiah, Matt. 16:13-20.
 28. The Transfiguration of Jesus Christ occurred, Matt. 17:1-13.
 29. Jesus Christ paid tribute money at Capernaum, Matt. 17:24-27.
- E. Jesus closed his Galilean ministry when he attended the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, John 7:1-52.
1. While in Jerusalem an adulterous woman was brought to him by his enemies to try to catch him in his words, whether he would condemn her to stoning or have her freed, John 7:53-8:11.
 2. Jesus Christ taught that he is the light of the world, John 8:12-30.

V. Another segment of our Lord’s ministry could be named “The Perea Ministry.”

- A. Jesus Christ left Galilee for the land on the far side of the Jordan, Matt. 19:1-2; Mark 10:1.
- B. Our Lord sent out the 70 disciples, Luke 10:1-24.
- C. Jesus Christ told the account of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37.
- D. Jesus healed a blind man, John 9:1-41.
- E. Jesus taught the lesson about the Good Shepherd, John 10:1-21.
- F. Jesus attended the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem, John 10:22-42.

- G. Jesus told the Parable of the Rich Fool, Luke 12:1-59.
- H. Jesus told the Parable of the Barren Fig Tree, Luke 13:1-9.
- I. Jesus healed a cripple woman, Luke 13:11-13.
- J. Jesus told the Parable of the Wedding Guest, Luke 14:1-24.
- K. Jesus taught about counting the cost, Luke 14:25-35.
- L. Jesus taught the parables of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin and the Prodigal Son, Luke 15:1-7.
- M. Jesus presented the Parable of the Unjust Steward, Luke 16.
- N. Jesus told about the rich man and Lazarus, Luke 16:19-31.
- O. The Lord discussed the unprofitable servant, Luke 17:1-10.
- P. Jesus raised his friend Lazarus from the grave, John 11:1-46.
- Q. Jesus no longer walked freely in public because the high priests, other chief priests and the Pharisees plotted to kill him, John 11:54.
- R. Jesus healed ten lepers, Luke 17:11-19.
- S. Jesus gave the Parable of the Unjust Judge, Luke 18:1-8.
- T. Jesus contrasted the penitent prayers of the tax collectors with the arrogant prayers of the Pharisees, Luke 18:9-14.
- U. Jesus presented the Parable of the Pounds, Luke 19:11-27.
- V. Jesus was anointed with precious ointment in Bethany, Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3; John 12:1-8.
- W. All that remained was for Jesus to lend himself a sacrifice on the cross to provide redemption to the world!

Conclusion:

1. Jesus was born about 4 B.C.; within a year or so he and his family fled to Egypt.
2. Upon returning from Egypt, his family settled in Nazareth where Jesus resided until he began his public ministry.
3. At age 12, Jesus attended the Passover in Jerusalem in about A.D. 8.
4. John the Baptist began his ministry in the spring of A.D. 26.
5. Our Lord's Judean ministry began about the time of the Passover in A.D. 27 (April 11-18) and continued until about A.D. 28
 - a. The Judean ministry lasted about nine months.
 - b. Jesus Christ talked with the Samaritan woman at the well about December of A.D. 27.
6. The Galilean ministry lasted about a year from the spring of A.D. 28 to the spring of A.D. 29.
7. The Perean ministry lasted from A.D. 29 to March of A.D. 30.
8. This brings the life and ministry of Jesus Christ up to the beginning

of the last week of his ministry.

- a. The Gospel records contain nearly as much information about the last week of Jesus' life as they do respecting the rest of his life and ministry.
- b. The last week included his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the second cleansing of the Temple, several parables, prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming, the institution of the Lord's Supper, the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus' arrest, his trials, his torture, crucifixion, resurrection and Ascension.
- c. Within two months following Jesus' final week leading up to his death, Jesus ascended to heaven, the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the church was established and about 3,000 converts were added to it.

Invitation:

1. The earthly life and ministry of Jesus Christ occurred so that he could be the sin-sacrifice for humanity on the cross, 2 Cor. 5:21.
2. Jesus Christ's life, death, resurrection and Ascension are meaningless to every soul who fails to put Jesus Christ on in baptism for the remission of his sins, Gal. 3:27; Acts 2:38.
3. Everything Jesus did to seek and save the lost is meaningless to every erring child of God who fails to repent, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Thesis: To learn more about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Introduction:

1. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, never to return thereto, is a critical aspect of Christianity.
2. Had Jesus Christ not resurrected from the grave, there would have been absolutely **no hope for sin-laden, lost humanity!**
 - a. Though Jesus Christ was the Son of God, without his resurrection human hopes would have been forever dashed.
 - b. Though Jesus Christ was the long prophesied Savior or Messiah, without his resurrection he could have saved no one.
 - c. Though Jesus Christ shed his precious blood on Calvary's cross, without the resurrection its purchase price would have been ineffective.
 - d. Though Jesus Christ had fulfilled all other prophesies, without the resurrection all of that would have been meaningless.
 - e. Though multitudes of souls under Patriarchy and Judaism faithfully obeyed God, without the resurrection of Jesus Christ none of that would have gotten anyone closer to an eternity in heaven with God.
 - f. All would be vanity without the resurrection of Jesus Christ!
3. The church could not have been established without the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
4. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was the ultimate climax of his mission to seek and save the lost, Luke 19:10.
 - a. Unlike others who had been resurrected from the death, Jesus Christ did not die again.
 - b. Other men's works cease at death, but not so with Jesus Christ whose work included his own resurrection from the grave.
 - c. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the mortal or deathblow to Satan and the assurance that we will be resurrected from the grave someday.
5. Failure to resurrect from the grave would have disproved Jesus of

Nazareth to be the Messiah and the Son of God.

6. Simply put, without the resurrection of Jesus Christ, there would be no Christianity!

Body:

I. Jesus Christ resurrected from the grave on Sunday, April 9, A.D. 30 (or A.D. 33 depending whether allowances are taken into consideration for an error in our calendar).

- A. Jesus Christ was crucified Friday, April 7.
 1. Many awesome events transpired that day: an earthquake, the veil of the Temple was torn in half, darkness engulfed the earth and dead saints walked throughout Jerusalem.
 2. Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus hurriedly buried Jesus Christ before the Sabbath began that evening at 6:00 p.m.
- B. Saturday, April 8, the Sanhedrin persuaded Pilate to seal and guard the tomb of Jesus Christ.
 1. The Jewish leaders did not expect Jesus Christ to resurrect, but they feared the disciples would steal the body of Jesus and claim that he resurrected.
 2. Pilate provided soldiers for the tomb to be guarded until after the third day.
- C. Sunday, April 9, Jesus Christ arose!
 1. The world calls this day “Easter Sunday,” but the Bible contains no religious instruction commemorating it as a holy day.
 2. An angel rolled back the stone sealing the tomb.
 3. The guards were frightened by the resurrection of the Lord but were bribed by the Jews to say Jesus’ disciples stole his body while they slept.
 4. Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene and other women went to the tomb while it was yet dark, but they found the tomb empty.
 5. They reported the empty tomb to Peter and John who ran to the tomb to see for themselves.

II. The resurrected Christ made several appearances on the day of his resurrection.

- A. Mary Magdalene was the first to see the resurrected Christ, Mark 16:9.
 1. Jesus had cast seven demons out of her.

2. She told the apostles but they did not believe her, Mark 16:10-11.
- B. A group of faithful women also saw the resurrected Lord, Matt. 28:9-10.
- C. Jesus Christ appeared to two disciples as they walked in the country, but when they were not believed when they told other disciples, Mark 16:12-13.
- D. Jesus Christ appeared to Peter, Luke 24:34.
- E. Jesus appeared to ten of the apostles, John 20:13-23.
 1. Judas who betrayed Jesus Christ was already dead.
 2. Thomas was not present with the rest of the apostles, John 20:24.

III. The resurrected Christ showed himself alive for 40 days after his resurrection, Acts 1:3.

- A. On April 16, Jesus Christ appeared to the remaining eleven apostles, including Thomas, John 20:26-28.
- B. Later, Jesus appeared to seven apostles at the Sea of Galilee, John 21:1-23.
 1. Another occasion of a great catch of fish occurred.
 2. Jesus impressed Peter with the need to be loyal and humble by repeatedly asking Peter if Peter loved Christ.
- C. Jesus Christ appeared to the eleven apostles at the Ascension, Luke 24; Acts 1.
- D. Obviously, the candidates for apostle to replace Judas had seen the resurrected Lord as that was one of the requirements to be an apostle, Acts 1:21-23.
- E. Over 500 brethren at one time saw the resurrected Christ, 1 Cor. 15:6.

IV. The resurrected Christ appeared to some after his Ascension.

- A. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, saw the resurrected Christ just before Stephen died from stoning, Acts 7:55-56.
- B. Saul of Tarsus (the apostle Paul) saw the resurrected Lord on the road to Damascus, Acts 9; 22; 26; 1 Cor. 15:8.

Conclusion:

1. The death and subsequent resurrection of Jesus Christ was prophesied.
2. Jesus Christ took the form of flesh, lived on the earth, died and was resurrected.
3. The enemies of the Jesus Christ tried in vain to keep him in the

- tomb, and they could offer no evidence that he had not resurrected.
4. The resurrection of Jesus Christ was proved by appearances in which:
 - a. He appeared at different hours of the day.
 - b. He appeared on several different days.
 - c. He walked, talked and ate food with his disciples.
 5. The disciples who had mourned his death and were skeptical concerning his resurrection were convinced that he resurrected and willing to die torturous deaths if necessary while defending the resurrection.
 6. Over 500 brethren had seen the resurrected Christ at one time, a sufficient body of witnesses to satisfy any judge and jury.
 7. The resurrection of Jesus Christ became the basis for the promotion of Christianity.
 8. Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Christianity would be empty and useless, 1 Cor. 15:19.
 9. The heart of Christianity is contained in 1 Cor. 15:1-4!

Invitation:

1. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for you and resurrected so that your sins could be remitted.
2. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is meaningless to you if you have either become an erring child of God or have never been baptized for the remission of your sins, Rom. 6:23; 1 John 1:9; Acts 2:38.

Jesus Christ: Our Example of Humility

Philippians 2:5-8

Thesis: To study the subject of humility through its demonstration in the life of Jesus Christ, and to apply what we learn about humility to our lives.

Song: *O to be Like Thee*

Introduction:

1. L.R. Wilson attributed to our Lord, “Jesus never proclaimed a single principle that he did not exemplify in his own life.”
2. Unlike the Pharisees, Jesus practiced what he preached, Matt. 23:3-5; 16:24.
3. Faithful Gospel preachers follow the example of Jesus Christ and encourage people to follow Jesus also, 1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1.
4. Among other virtues, Jesus Christ beautifully exhibited humility, Phil. 2:5-8.

Body:

- I. **Jesus Christ strikingly demonstrated and taught humility when he washed his disciples’ feet, John 13:4-17.**
 - A. Consider for a moment the history behind *feet washing*—**not foot washing!**
 1. About 4,000 years ago, Abraham hospitably offered water that his angelic guests might wash their feet, Gen. 18:1-5.
 2. Two centuries later, while Joseph ruled Egypt, he provided water for the washing of his brothers’ feet, Gen. 43:24.
 3. About 3,000 years ago, Abigail washed the feet of guests, 1 Sam. 25:41.
 4. About 2,000 years ago a woman washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and her hair, whereupon our Lord rebuked his host for not extending the customary and hospitable provisions for washing one’s feet upon entrance to a person’s home, Luke 7:44-46.
 5. A few years later, the apostle Paul listed washing the

- feet of saints (Christians) among the virtues of a widow, 1 Tim. 5:9-10.
- B. The Bible reveals the ordinary reason for washing feet.
1. Feet were washed then as now because they are dirty and need to be cleaned.
 2. Footwear being sandals anciently, plus unpaved roads in an arid part of the world, led to the custom of removing one's sandals and washing one's feet upon the entrance to someone's home.
 3. Gracious hosts provided water and a towel; a greater degree of hospitality was extended when servants washed guests' feet; and hospitality and humility was demonstrated when the host himself washed the feet of his guests.
- C. The backdrop preceding Jesus washing his disciples' feet is important to understanding that event.
1. After Christ's Transfiguration, the disciples disputed which of them was the greatest in the kingdom, and they finally asked Jesus to decide, Matt. 18:1-4.
 2. Then, the mother of James and John requested that Jesus appoint he sons to prominent positions in the kingdom; this request caused the other disciples to resent James and John, Matt. 20:20-28.
 3. The evening when Jesus and his disciples observed the last Passover and the institution of the Lord's Supper, our Lord's disciples were still arguing who was the greatest in the kingdom, Luke 22:24-30.
- D. It was while the disciples were feuding among themselves who was the greatest in the Lord's kingdom that Jesus humbly assumed the posture of the least esteemed in the gathering (or a servant—slave) and washed the disciples' feet.
1. A requirement for observance of the Passover was to have one's sandals on his feet, Exod. 12:11.
 2. After the Passover meal, Jesus and his disciples could remove their sandals and wash their feet, but the disciples were too busy arguing about who was the greatest to either wash their own feet or humble themselves to wash the feet of fellow disciples.
 3. Hence, Jesus was proactive and by humbling himself

to wash the disciples' feet, he halted the bickering among the disciples.

- E. There are several valid conclusions one can draw from Scripture about feet washing.
 - 1. Feet washing pertained to cleanliness and hospitality.
 - 2. The Lord did not institute feet washing, but it had been practiced for thousands of years before Christ.
 - 3. Feet washing was a menial task performed by servants.
 - 4. Jesus Christ washed the feet of his disciples to give them an example of humility, which example they desperately needed since they were feuding among themselves about greatness in the kingdom, John 13:15.
- F. Neither *foot washing* nor *feet washing* are ordinances in the church of the Bible.
 - 1. The Lord did not institute feet washing in the church, for the church was not established yet for another two months.
 - 2. Jesus commanded that his followers observe the Lord's Supper later in the church by saying "this do in remembrance of me," but he did not say that regarding feet washing, Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24-25.
 - 3. The church of the Bible can be viewed in Scripture observing the Lord's Supper, but Scripture does not show the church observing washing feet as a religious ordinance.
 - 4. Washing feet appears in the epistles as an act of hospitality, 1 Tim. 5:9-10.

II. Jesus Christ variously taught and served as an example of humility.

- A. Jesus Christ taught child-like humility, Matt. 18:1-4; Mark 9:33-37.
 - 1. The disciples were disputing who was the greatest among them.
 - 2. Jesus Christ taught them that child-like humility was the key to greatness in the kingdom.
 - 3. Furthermore, Jesus told his disciples that they could not even enter the kingdom of heaven without humility, Matt. 18:3.
- B. Jesus Christ humbled himself in his death upon the cross.

1. The Lord made a humble entrance into Jerusalem, Zech. 9:9; Matt. 21:5.
2. Jesus humbly allowed himself to be crucified on the cross, Acts 8:32-33; 2 Cor. 8:9; Phil. 2:7-8.

III. Jesus Christ especially taught religious leaders to exhibit humility.

- A. Jesus Christ condemned religious titles and encouraged humility between brethren, Matt. 23:1-12.
 1. The religious principle “all ye are brethren” was meant to characterize the disciples of Christ, Matt. 23:8.
 2. Religious **titles** such as Reverend, Doctor, Brother, Evangelist and Minister are no more acceptable to God today when used for religious distinctions between brethren than were “Rabbi” and “Master” in Jesus’ day (though brother, evangelist and minister may be used as *descriptive* words).
- B. The apostasy that overran the early church arose from a desire for greatness in the church’s leadership.
 1. Diotrophes loved the preeminence and attempted to rule the church, 3 John 9-10.
 2. The apostle Paul prophesied that apostasy would begin among elders’ desire for greatness, Acts 20:30.

Conclusion:

1. Jesus Christ is the supreme example of humility.
2. In order to be truly Christ-like, Christians need to practice Christ-like humility in their lives.
3. Meekness is not a sign of weakness, but meekness or humility is a virtue, Matt. 11:28-30.

Invitation:

1. To be saved, sinners must humble themselves enough to repent and obey the Gospel, Acts 2:38; Heb. 5:8-9.
2. To be saved, sinning Christians must humble themselves enough to repent, Acts 8:22.
3. To remain saved, every Christian must humbly worship, serve and continue to obey God.

Why Was Jesus Hated?

John 15:18-25

Thesis: To ascertain why Jesus was hated by some men and determine whether the church should similarly imitate Christ, even if that means the world will hate the church and Christians.

Song: *Lead Me to Calvary*

Introduction:

1. Though Jesus was loved by the masses, he was as passionately hated by many as well, leading to his crucifixion.
2. Jesus was hated chiefly because he taught that the differences in religion really matter.
3. The church for which Jesus died and over which he is the head was hated also in the first century.
4. The church was hated chiefly also because it taught differences in religion really matter.

Body:

I. Jesus Christ was hated because he taught that differences in religion really matter.

- A. Jesus did not win the *popular vote* in either of the two instances when he cleansed the Temple of moneychangers, John 2:13-17; Matt. 21:12-13.
- B. Jesus did not gain popularity among religious party leaders when he condemned them (scribes and Pharisees) for their sinfulness, Matt. 15:1-14; 23.
- C. The world hated Jesus because the light of the Gospel that he brought exposed the world's darkness of sin, John 3:19-20; 15:18-25.

II. The early church was hated because it taught that differences in religion really matter.

- A. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was hated for teaching that differences between Judaism and Christianity really matter, Acts 6:8-7:60.
- B. The early church was hated because it taught that the differences between idolatry and Christianity really matter, Acts 19:18-41.
- C. In the first century, some Christians hated the church and

fellow Christians because the apostles taught that the difference between Gospel truth and doctrinal error really matters, Gal. 1:6-9; 4:16; Rom. 16:17-18; 2 Thess. 3:6; 1 John 4:1; 3 John 9-10.

- D. The early church was hated because the light of the Gospel that it proclaimed exposed the world's darkness of sin, John 17:14.

Conclusion:

1. Jesus forewarned his apostles before he sent them on the Limited Commission that the world would hate them, Matt. 10:22-25.
2. Likewise, the early church was well aware that the world would hate it, 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:16.
3. Yet, the early church gladly accepted its charge to evangelize the world despite often-severe persecution, Acts 8:1-4; Rev. 2:10.
4. Even our own family members may oppose us, yet we must obey the Gospel and remain faithful, Matt. 10:34-39.

Invitation:

1. The world really hates God's plan of salvation or conditions on which he can and will save human souls.
2. Summarized, God will save the obedient and punish the disobedient, Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; 2 Pet. 2:9.

Tragedy of Tragedies

Matthew 16:24-27

Thesis: This world is no stranger to tragedies, but the greatest tragedy of all is for one soul to be lost.

Introduction:

1. This world is no stranger to tragedies!
2. Modern, catastrophic events bring to mind the tragic loss of human life.
3. However, untold millions anciently also died horrifically in natural disasters, widespread disease and military conflict.

Body:

I. Relatively modern history alone chronicles the tremendous and tragic loss of human life.

- A. Between 1918-1920, about 22 million people around the world died of a flu epidemic.
- B. A single earthquake in 1923 killed about 120,000 people in just two cities in Japan.
- C. A tornado ravaged southern states in our country in 1925, killing 689.
- D. More recently, within our lifetimes, an earthquake in Turkey killed over 17,000 people.
- E. The Twin Towers terrorism of 9/11 killed 3,000 people in one building complex, besides those who died at the Pentagon and the southwestern Pennsylvania airplane crash.
- F. About 50 million innocent babies are aborted around the world every year.
- G. Very recently, an estimated more than 160,000 people from 11 countries died from an earthquake and tidal waves in Asia.
- H. Truly, this world is no stranger to human tragedy and the heartbreaking loss of lives.

II. As awful as the catastrophic loss of human life is, the greatest tragedy of all is for one soul to be lost, Matt. 16:24-27.

- A. This, of course, does not minimize the human tragedies in either the recent or distant past.
 1. All loss of life is tragic.

2. Sometimes we are simply numbed the sheer number and horrific nature of human tragedy.
- B. However, it is important to prioritize spiritual things foremost in the lives of Christians and in congregations of the Lord's church, Matt. 6:33.
1. Every child of God is obligated to love God foremost, Matt. 22:37.
 2. God must be above family allegiances, too, Matt. 10:37.
- C. Christians and the church that they comprise have an overriding, God-given mission to evangelize the world, Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16.
1. That means that the primary mission of the Lord's church is to broaden the borders of the kingdom of God—'disciple the nations,' ASV.
 2. We spend too much time (and money) concerned with incidental and peripheral matters, i.e. padded pews, air conditioning, law care, etc.
 3. Yes, by biblical implication and correct inference, it is right to have church buildings with all of their trappings, but **Jesus commanded** that we take the Gospel to the whole world.
- D. The affect of Christians like the apostle Paul and those who labored with him was to 'turn the world upside down,' Acts 17:6.
1. That means that the early church saturated the world, one community at a time, with the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 2. Sometimes the church was called "that way," referring to the *way of life* characteristic of Christianity that was spreading around the first century Roman world, Acts 19:9, 23; 24:22.
 3. Christians and the church have the divine mandate of taking the 'whole counsel of God' to the whole world, Acts 20:27.
- E. Yet, though everywhere the apostle Paul went preaching the Gospel he normally had a great Gospel meeting or a riot (or both), comparatively few souls became Christians through Paul's efforts in Athens, Acts 17:32-34.
1. It is possible also that after the dust clears from

deliberate efforts to evangelize any community that few will obey the Gospel.

2. Yet, usually some will obey the Gospel of Christ as in Athens when Paul preached there.
 3. Still, it is the Christian's responsibility and the church's obligation to tell people about Christ, which if we do, we are successful as far as God is concerned, 1 Cor. 3:6-7.
- F. Consequently, Christians and the church need to be aware of the lost world and amply motivated to reach it with the Gospel.
1. As an apostle, Paul was gravely aware and concerned about many congregations in the first century, 2 Cor. 11:28.
 2. Since he had great dedication to the cause of Christ, he was willing to endure great persecution, affliction and deprivation for the advancement of the church, 1 Cor. 11:23-27; Phil. 3:4-8.
 3. Likewise, each elder, deacon, preacher, teacher and all other members need to have an unquenchable interest in and concern for the welfare of the church and those who comprise it, 1 Cor. 11:28.

Conclusion:

1. This world is no stranger to tragedies, but the greatest tragedy of all is for one soul to be lost.
2. What will really matter when this life is over is whether our souls are saved.
3. What will really matter when this life is over is have we tried to take any with us to heaven.

Invitation:

1. Surely, no one wants to be a statistical entry in either the catastrophic loss of human life or the unthinkable loss of souls in eternity.
2. Erring Christians can save themselves, whereby they can lead the way for other souls as well to find eternal salvation, 1 John 1:9.
3. Unbaptized believers can save themselves by humbly submitting to baptism for the remission of their past sins, Acts 2:38; Rom. 3:25.

Let Your Light So Shine

Matthew 5:16

Thesis: To learn to what extent the Gospel light should fill the Christian.

Song: *Let the Lower Lights Be Burning*

Introduction:

1. Matt. 5:16 is the concluding verse of the paragraph Matt. 5:13-16.
 - a. Verse 16 is an appropriate conclusion to the message in the paragraph.
 - b. It constitutes divine direction which when followed has a positive, calculated result.
 - c. The reverse must also be true, namely, if the divine instruction is not followed, there will not be a positive, calculated result.
2. Matt. 5:13-16 is also part of Christ's Sermon on the Mount, Matt. 5-7.
 - a. The Matt. 5:13-16 paragraph, then, pertains to the New Testament kingdom or church rather than to the Old Testament or Judaism.
 - b. The entire Sermon on the Mount pertained to the then coming kingdom, Matt. 5:20.
 - c. Jesus Christ exalted his teaching to a position higher than the Old Testament and tradition, though he spoke while living under the Old Testament, Matt. 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 34, 39, 44.

Body:

- I. **“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men,” Matt. 5:13.**
 - A. “Salt.”
 1. Salt in the first century was considered *legal tender* or a commodity of trade.
 2. Sometimes merchandise was purchased with salt or one could pay his taxes with salt.
 3. However, often impurities were added to salt as a way of counterfeiting to make the salt go further.

4. Salt was also deemed precious due to its nature ability to help preserve food.
- B. “Ye are the salt of the earth.”
1. The disciples of Christ in the first century were compared to precious salt, which analogy applies likewise today to Christians.
 2. Christians are the saving or preserving power (by carrying the Gospel of Christ) among people today.
 3. Christians, collectively the church, are responsible for taking the Gospel to the lost world, Eph. 3:8-12.
- C. “But if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?”
1. For salt to lose its savour is for it to lose its preserving quality.
 2. According to the analogy, if Christians lose their preserving quality (through evangelizing the world) the world will not be preserved (saved by the Gospel).
 3. Christians who fail to take the Gospel to the world are as useless as ruined salt, only human souls are more important than salt and the food it is supposed to preserve.
- D. “It is thenceforth good for nothing.”
1. Salt that will not do what salt is supposed to do is good for nothing.
 2. Likewise, Christians who will not do what Christians are supposed to do are worthless.
 3. These verses teach that Christians and the church are supposed to be evangelistic, and if they are not evangelistic, Christians and the church are seriously defective.
- E. “But to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of man.”
1. Worthless salt can only be discarded.
 2. Worthless Christians likewise will be thrust out of the kingdom into a devil’s hell, Matt. 13:50; 25:30.
 3. Impure salt will not preserve and can only serve as gravel in the streets and a deterrent to weeds.
- II. “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid,” Matt. 5:14.**
- A. “Ye are the light of the world.”
1. This phrase is comparable to the earlier phrase, “Ye

are the salt of the earth.”

2. Christians are pictured as the light of the world.
3. Without practicing Christians, there would be no light in the world; Christians are indispensable for promoting Christianity through the Gospel, Rom. 10:13-17; Acts 8:1-4.

B. “Light.”

1. Light dispels darkness; Christians as light dispel the darkness of sin.
2. Without Christians as light, the world would be in the utter darkness of sin.
3. The light of Christians is reflected (like moonlight) from Jesus Christ, Mal. 4:2.
4. Whereas “salt” works internally and limitedly, light has an external and farther-reaching affect.
5. Christians as salt affect those most with whom they have direct contact and frequent association.
6. Christians as light extend their influence to all humanity, i.e. benevolent institutions and morality are traceable to Christianity.

C. “A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.”

1. Anciently, cities were built on hills for protection against plunderers and hostile armies.
2. Such a city’s night lights were visible for a great distance in the dark of night.
3. Similarly, the light of Christians should be acutely visible in a world of spiritual darkness.

III. “Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house,” Matt. 5:15.

A. “Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel.”

1. The purpose of lighting a candle is to produce light.
2. Candles are not lit to be concealed.
3. Likewise, the light of Christians is not intended to be concealed or covered.
4. Incidentally, the “bushel” here is equivalent to our peck.

B. “But on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that in the house.”

1. “House” stands for the “earth” or the “world.”

2. The light has a high mission for which it is highly exalted.
3. As the candlelight was intended for all in the house, so the Gospel light radiating from Christians is intended for all souls.
4. The scope of the light is identical to the universal scope of the Great Commission, Mark 16:15.

IV. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,” Matthew 5:16.

- A. “Let your light so shine.”
 1. Christians are given this imperative or command to permit their light to shine in the world as a candle lights a house.
 2. The light that Christians should shine is bright and pure forasmuch as Jesus Christ is the origin of Christian light.
 3. Light may appear dimmed sometimes due to weak Christians and congregations.
 4. Christians are directed to “let your light shine,” rather than to “shine your light.”
 5. The Christian light is to shine as though it were a glaring torch in the blackest of nights.
 6. Christians have the **immense responsibility** of illuminating the world with the Gospel of Christ.
- B. “Before men.”
 1. Christians are not directed to shine in corners or secretly.
 2. The Christian light must shine in the presence of or in front of the human race.
 3. The Christian must be recognizable in the midst of a wicked world, Phil. 2:14-16; 1 Thess. 5:5.
- C. “That they may see.”
 1. The calculated result of Christians allowing their lights to shine is that men will see.
 2. Seeing means a discerning look and applied spiritually as here, it means those seeing will come to know God and his saving Gospel.
- D. “Your good works.”
 1. Works are deeds or actions.

2. Works are the manifestation of Christian light.
 3. No works evidences an extinguished light and nothing that men might see by which they could be prompted to glorify God.
 4. Scripture furnishes us to every good work, 2 Tim. 3:16-17.
 5. Christians are to establish themselves in good works, 2 Thess. 2:17; Titus 2:14.
- E. “And glorify your Father which is in heaven.”
1. Good works on the part of Christians are calculated to cause men to glorify or acknowledge God.
 2. Such may or may not lead to conversions, but even unconverted souls will be favorably impressed by the light radiating from Christians.
 3. “Your Father” refers to our heavenly Father where we are the children of light, Eph. 5:8.
 4. “Heaven” is the abode of the Father, whose home we as the children of light want to share.

Conclusion:

1. Christians have been called from the darkness of sin into the marvelous light, 1 Pet. 2:9; Col. 1:13.
2. Christians must walk in that light and be guided by that light of the Gospel, John 12:35-36; 1 John 1:5-7.
3. As the apostle Paul was set to be a light to the Gentiles, Christians are set to be a light to all men throughout the world, Acts 13:46; 26:17-18; Matt. 5:13-16.
4. Every child of God needs to ask himself whether the light of Jesus Christ is reflected from him, John 8:12; 12:46; 1:4, 9; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 5:14; 1 John 2:8; Rev. 21:23.

Invitation:

1. The light of the Gospel of Christ does not radiate from erring Christians, Acts 8:22.
2. The light of the Gospel of Christ does not radiate from unbaptized believers, Mark 16:16.

Overview of the Book of Revelation

Revelation 1:3

Thesis: To briefly review the Book of Revelation with an emphasis on the passages that are the easiest to understand and that appear to affect us the most.

Introduction:

1. The Book of Revelation deserves serious consideration by students of the Word of God because it, too, is an inspired book of the Bible, 2 Tim. 3:16-17.
 - a. Some people are drawn to the Book of Revelation because of the *mystery* that surrounds it due to its prophetic nature and often-diverse *interpretations*.
 - b. However, Rev. 1:3 declares the usefulness of reading and applying prophecy that makes up the book.
 - c. Actually, several passages in Revelation are easy to understand, timeless and apply to souls today as well.
2. Of course, the difficulty associated with understanding the Book of Revelation pertains to its prophetic nature, Rev. 1:3; 22:18-19.
 - a. Prophetic books of the Old Testament also challenge the understanding of the Bible student, e.g. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel, Malachi and others.
 - b. Often Old Testament prophecies were not fully comprehended until they were explained by New Testament passages.
 - c. Unlike Old Testament prophecies, the Book of Revelation cannot be interpreted with the aid of subsequent divinely inspired texts—unequivocally confirming its meaning.
3. Many commentators, though, readily teach *what they think it means* and variously attempt to harmonize its prophecies with secular history.
 - a. Some commentators suppose the prophecies in the Book of Revelation were fulfilled largely within the generation or so after the volume was penned.

- b. Other commentators see the fulfillment of the Book of Revelation throughout human history between the first century and the present.
- c. There are, however, several passages that one can confidently explain and apply today because those verses of Scripture contain timeless divine principles.
- d. Further, though it may be difficult to confidently ascertain 2,000 years since they were penned what some verses in the Book of Revelation teach, some things erroneously ascribed to Revelation can be shown to be false, because they conflict with other Bible doctrine over which there is no doubt respecting its meaning.

Body:

I. Chapter 1.

A. Verses 1-3.

- 1. These three verses introduce the Book of Revelation.
- 2. The volume is attributed to a divine source—from Jesus Christ delivered by an angel.
- 3. The human penman was the apostle John.
- 4. Especially verse 3 ascribes great value to reading and applying the content of the book.

B. Verses 4-6.

- 1. The original addressees of Book of Revelation are identified—the seven churches of Asia (Minor), i.e. today, Turkey.
- 2. The volume begins with a cordial salutation.
- 3. Attributes of Jesus Christ are pronounced; Jesus is praised.
- 4. The connection between the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross and human redemption is effected by the blood of Christ.

C. Verse 7.

- 1. Verse 7 announces the manner of the Second Coming—visible in the clouds and a universal appearance, i.e. to every past as well as the then present generation, Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thess. 4:13-18.
- 2. Reactions to the Second Coming will be mixed, with many terrified at his return, 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 6:16; 1 Thess. 4:18.

D. Verse 8 acclaims the divine nature of Jesus Christ.

- E. Verses 9-20.
 - 1. The kingdom of Christ already exists as the volume is penned, and John is in the kingdom, cf. Matt. 16:18-19; Col. 1:13; 1 Cor. 15:24-28.
 - 2. Verse 10 sanctions the Lord's Day or the first day of the week, cf. Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2.
 - 3. The specific congregations to which the Book of Revelation was penned are named.

II. Chapters 2-3.

- A. Chapter 2:1-7 pertains to the church at Ephesus.
 - 1. Verses 1-3 list admirable qualities of the congregation.
 - 2. Verse 4 notes the sin of the church—"left thy first love."
 - 3. Verses 5-7 include an ultimatum—**repent or else!**
- B. Chapter 2:8-11 pertains to the church at Smyrna.
 - 1. This church was only praised and encouraged—no condemnation.
 - 2. Rev. 2:10 is the outstanding verse of encouragement with which we are the most familiar in these four verses.
- C. Chapter 2:12-17 pertains to the church at Pergamos.
 - 1. Jesus Christ praised the congregation in areas where it deserved praise.
 - 2. However, our Lord also condemned the congregation for its sin and issued an ultimatum—**repent or else!**
- D. Chapter 2:18-29 pertains to the church at Thyatira.
 - 1. Jesus Christ again praised the congregation wherein it deserved praise.
 - 2. Yet, our Lord also condemned the congregation for its sin (a fairly lengthy condemnation) and issued an ultimatum—**repent or else!**
- E. Chapter 3:1-6 pertains to the church at Sardis.
 - 1. The congregation had a reputation for being a faithful church, but the reputation was false.
 - 2. Most Christians at Sardis were guilty of sin; only a few Christians at Sardis were approved of God; there may be faithful Christians in an unfaithful congregation.
 - 3. Jesus Christ condemned sin at Sardis and issued an ultimatum—**repent or else!**
- F. Chapter 3:7-13 pertains to the church at Philadelphia.

1. The church at Philadelphia received only praise and no condemnation from our Lord.
 2. They were exhorted to continue listening to the Spirit (the Word of God).
- G. Chapter 3:14-22 pertains to the church at Laodicea.
1. This congregation received no praise from Jesus.
 2. The prominent sin in the church at Laodicea was apathy or indifference.
 3. Apparently affluence contributed to the sin of lukewarmness at Laodicea.

III. Chapter 4:1-11 pictures heaven's throne.

IV. Chapter 5.

- A. Discussion revolves around a book sealed with seven seals.
- B. Jesus Christ, the Lamb, is the only one worthy to open it.
- C. Divine qualities of Jesus Christ are enumerated, and Jesus Christ and God the Father are praised.

V. Chapter 6.

- A. Prophecy in the book begins with this chapter.
 1. From this point forward, commentators variously attempt to harmonize Revelation with history.
 2. Some view Revelation pertaining to immediate history at and following the close of the first century or so.
 3. Others correlate Revelation to history throughout several centuries, perhaps nearly to our own time.
- B. Verses 9-11 refer to avenging the blood of martyrs.
- C. Verses 12-17 are typical of the terror of humanity that is unprepared to meet God in Judgment.

VI. Chapter 7.

- A. Verses 1-10.
 1. It appears that mankind is being called together for Judgment.
 2. Included is the verse (4) that mentions 144,000 over which premillennialists and Jehovah's Witnesses make a great ado.
 3. However, Scripture mentions a great, innumerable host of saints in addition to the 144,000—disarming both premillennialists and Jehovah's Witnesses.
- B. Verses 11-12 record praises and worship to God.
- C. Verses 13-15 depict formerly persecuted saints in heaven worshipping God continually.

- D. Verses 16-17 reveal the quality of heavenly life will be extended to the saints (Christians).

VII. Chapter 8.

- A. This chapter depicts punishment of wicked persons and the destruction of the earth.
- B. What here transpires in several words over several chapters will apparently take place in a relatively short space of time.

VIII. Chapters 9-11.

- A. These chapters are highly figurative.
- B. Chapter 9 addresses punishment of the wicked.
- C. Chapter 10:7 may be a reference to God's decision to end the Christian Age by sending Jesus Christ the second time.

IX. Chapter 12 is highly figurative and seems to refer to a war that once occurred in heaven.

X. Chapter 13 is highly figurative and may be applicable to the historical rise of Catholicism in the Roman Empire and subsequent inquisitions.

XI. Chapter 14.

- A. This chapter likewise is highly figurative and may refer to what are now past historical events.
- B. Verses 10-11 describe the wrath of God executed forever against the unrighteous.
- C. Verses 12-13 describe the happy, heavenly habitation of the saints as opposed to earthly life and service.

XII. Chapter 15.

- A. This chapter is highly figurative and refers to the seven plagues of God's wrath.
- B. The chapter also contains glory attributed to God.

XIII. Chapter 16.

- A. This chapter also is highly figurative and may refer to now past historical events.
- B. The vials of God's wrath are emptied.
- C. Verse 15 seems to caution humanity to watch (or make ready always) for the Second Coming and Judgment.

XIV. Chapter 17 is highly figurative with possible references to historical events and the Catholic Church.

XV. Chapter 18 is highly figurative.

XVI. Chapter 19 also is highly figurative.

- A. Verses 1-7 contain praises to deity.
- B. The marriage supper of the Lamb appears in verses 7-9.

- C. Angel worship is forbidden in verse 10.
- D. A description of Jesus Christ arrayed for war appears in verses 11-21.

XVII. Chapter 20.

- A. Verses 1-3 include the binding of Satan for 1,000 years.
- B. Verses 4-6 mention martyred saints being honored for a 1,000 years.
- C. Verses 7-10 chronicle the devil causing Gog and Magog to gather the earth to battle.
- D. Verses 11-15 depict the Great White Throne Judgment.

XVIII. Chapter 21.

- A. Verses 1-3 speak of new heavens and a new earth.
- B. Verses 4-5 depict the qualities of the heavenly life.
- C. Verses 6-7 announce comfort and blessings for the righteous.
- D. Verse 8 lists the types of sins for which the lost will be banished from God to a devil's hell.
- E. Verses 9-27 provide a detailed description of heaven.

XIX. Chapter 22.

- A. Verses 1-6 continue a description of heaven.
- B. Verses 7, 11-14, 17 contain exhortations to faithfulness.
- C. Verses 8-9 warn not to worship angels.
- D. Verses 10, 20 declare the timeliness of the Book of Revelation.
- E. Verses 11-12, 15 contain warnings to the wicked.
- F. Verses 13, 16 cite qualities of Jesus Christ.
- G. Verses 18-19 warn not to tamper with the Holy Scriptures.
- H. With verse 21, the Book of Revelation concludes with a parting salutation.

Conclusion:

1. The Book of Revelation shares a similar mission with the rest of the books of the Bible.
2. A number of the passages in Revelation contain prophecies that have historical reference to things that transpired after the volume was penned and before our time.
3. Certainly, some of the prophecies have not been fulfilled yet, i.e. Second Coming, final Judgment.
4. Apparently, figurative language was used for the same reasons for which proverbs and parables were employed in the Bible, i.e. to conceal truth from those who would misuse it and reveal truth to those who would use it correctly, Luke 8:9-10.

5. Doubtless, the original recipients of the Book of Revelation were better able to comprehend it than can we 2,000 years later understand it.
6. The Book of Revelation lacks a divine commentary to confirm the correct interpretation of figurative language.
7. However, there are several passages in the book that we can easily understand.
8. We can understand enough about Revelation and the rest of the New Testament to recognize and refute doctrinal errors that some would promote based on their misapplication of figurative language and prophecy.

Invitation:

1. Overall, the Book of Revelation assures the child of God that God and his people will ultimately triumph.
2. However, unbaptized believers and erring children of God will not enjoy an eternal triumph in heaven if they enter eternity unprepared to meet God in Judgment, Mark 16:16; 1 John 1:9.

God's Immutable Laws

Galatians 6:7-8

Thesis: To acquaint us with God's two immutable systems of law and how each affects mankind.

Introduction:

1. Immutable law is law that does not change, irrespective of circumstances or persons.
 - a. The immutable law of God with which man is most acquainted (regardless of whether he realizes God is its author) is *physical law*.
 - b. God's second immutable law (*spiritual law*) is more important and probably less attended by humanity.
2. Physical law pertains to the material universe in which we live.
 - a. We might refer to physical law as the laws of nature.
 - b. The study of physical law falls under what we call the sciences.
 - c. Though God created physical law, mankind does not have to learn it from God; it can be observed, Rom. 1:20; Psa. 8:3; 33:6-9.
3. Spiritual law pertains to the souls of men rather than to their fleshly existence.
 - a. Spiritual law envelops all of one's thoughts and conduct.
 - b. Spiritual law, unlike physical law, can only be learned from God through revelation.
4. Mankind is unique among all of God's creation.
 - a. Only man is amenable to physical **and spiritual law**.
 - b. Animals, plants and humans live or die in accordance with physical or natural law.
 - c. Only humans live or die spiritually respecting spiritual law, Rom. 6:23; 8:12-13.

Body:

- I. **Physical law pertains to the material universe in which we live.**
 - A. God established physical law miraculously at creation.
 1. God created the physical universe, before which there could be no physical law, Gen. 1:1-28.
 2. Jesus Christ participated in the creation, and he

- presently sustains creation and physical law that regulates it, John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16-17.
3. Physical law, though established miraculously, continues to operate according to natural law or nature, i.e. everything living thing came into existence through *creation* but its kind continues to exist through *procreation*, Gen. 1:26-27; 2:21-22; 4:1.
- B. Humans primarily learn about physical law, not by approaching God but through observation and experience.
1. From childhood, humans learn to avoid whatever produces pain or threatens life and to seek what brings pleasure or satisfies his appetites.
 2. The accumulation of knowledge that brings about technological advancements is traceable to grasping how physical or natural law works.
 3. Unfortunately, many people lose sight of the Designer of the universe in their quest to discover design in the universe and put it to work for them.
- C. Violation of physical law results in failure, whereas compliance with physical law results in success.
1. For instance, using electricity improperly can result in injury or death, but using electricity properly can provide light, heat, etc.
 2. Appropriate application of physical law can produce an engine that powers an automobile, but failure to apply physical law correctly could result in a messy, very heavy paperweight instead of an engine.
 3. The correct use of physical law in agriculture will result in bumper crops, but failure to observe physical law regarding farming may not produce a crop at all.
- D. Physical law is completely dependable; there are no exceptions.
1. Planting pumpkin seed never results in growing an apple tree.
 2. Electricity will always react the same way under the same circumstances.
 3. Mammals that are drowned die, but fish kept out of water die.
 4. Physical law, then, is immutable.
- E. Physical law does not respect persons.

1. Physical law affects alike the good and the evil, the rich and the poor, the unlearned and the wise, the humble and the proud, etc.
2. The innocent child who grasps a live electric wire will die as assuredly as the criminal who dies in the electric chair; physical law does not discriminate.
3. The infant who swallows poison will die just anyone who does the same will die.
4. Everyone who violates immutable physical law is affected alike without respect of persons.
5. Ignorance (not knowing any better) does not prevent physical law from affecting all alike.

II. Spiritual law pertains to the souls of humanity.

- A. Spiritual law came into being through miracles.
 1. Each of the religious dispensations or law God gave humanity (Patriarchy, Judaism, Christianity) were introduced through miracles and miraculous revelation, 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4.
 2. The miracles through which the Gospel or Christianity was given to humanity have ceased, 1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:11-14.
 3. Just as physical law came into being through miraculous creation and continues through procreation, spiritual law (for us, Christianity) came into being miraculously and continues without the use of miracles.
- B. Spiritual law today can be learned exclusively from God through the Bible (especially the New Testament).
 1. Observing creation, one ought to realize that a Creator created it; noticing design everywhere around us in the universe, we ought to realize that a Designer designed it.
 2. However, one cannot discern from observing the created universe religious instruction or spiritual law.
 3. Man dare not turn to himself for religious instruction and spiritual law, Matt. 15:9, 13.
 4. We must turn exclusively to God through the Bible for religious instruction or the spiritual law, 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3.
- C. Violation of spiritual law results in failure, whereas adhering

to spiritual law assures success.

1. Violating spiritual law is disobeying the revealed law of God, for which punishment will be forthcoming, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
 2. Adhering to spiritual law is obeying the revealed law of God, for which reward will be forthcoming, Heb. 5:8-9.
 3. Eternal destinies will be determined by one's compliance with or failure to comply with God's spiritual law.
- D. Spiritual law is completely dependable; there are no exceptions.
1. Sowing the Bible only in honest hearts will produce Christians only, but sowing sectarianism will produce sectarians, Luke 8:11.
 2. Both physical law and spiritual law rigorously adhere to the *sow and reap principle*, Gal. 6:7-8.
 3. Spiritual law is reliable because the Godhead is reliable, Heb. 13:8.
- E. Spiritual law does not respect persons.
1. God, the author of spiritual law, is no respecter of persons, Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9.
 2. All men are saved or lost alike respecting the dispensation in which each live or lived, Rev. 20:12-15.
 3. All souls living in the Gospel Age will be judged by the words of Jesus Christ, John 12:48; 2 Cor. 5:10.
 4. Ignorance (not knowing any better) does not prevent spiritual law from affecting all alike, Matt. 7:21-23.

Conclusion:

1. There are similarities between physical law and spiritual law.
 - a. God is the author and administrator of both.
 - b. Both physical law and spiritual law came about miraculously, but both continue without miracles.
 - c. Violation of either physical or spiritual law results in failure, whereas compliance with either physical or spiritual law results in success.
 - d. Both physical law and spiritual law are completely dependable, reliable, immutable or changeless.
 - e. Neither physical law nor spiritual law is a respecter of persons.

2. There are also contrasts between physical law and spiritual law.
 - a. Physical law is learned primarily through observance and experience without consulting God, but spiritual law can only be learned from God through the Bible.
 - b. Physical law and spiritual law occupy different realms.
3. Salvation, physically as well as spiritually, depends on obedience to God's laws.
 - a. Stepping into the path of an oncoming bus will result in injury or death, because whether one intends to or not, he violates God's physical law.
 - b. Sinning is the violation of God's spiritual law, the end of which if one dies in that condition or Jesus returns while one is in that condition is spiritual death, 1 John 3:4; Rom. 6:23.
 - c. No one ever suffered the ill affects of God's physical or spiritual laws except he, whether intentionally or unintentionally, violated those laws.
 - d. Contrariwise, everyone who abides by the physical and spiritual laws of God does well.
4. God enforces both his physical law and his spiritual law.
 - a. That is why God's laws are said to be immutable.
 - b. The holy essence of deity demands that God enforce his laws.
 - c. God cannot despise his laws by becoming a respecter of persons through selective enforcement of those laws.
5. Humans who despise the laws of God are despised by God, Prov. 28:9.
 - a. To despise part of God's law reaps the same reproof as despising all of it, Jam. 2:10.
 - b. Humanity has mutilated the immutable spiritual law of God through the introduction of false plans of salvation, spurious churches and manmade doctrines, Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Cor. 1:10-13; Matt. 15:9, 13.

Invitation:

1. Violation of either of God's immutable laws results in death!
2. Rather, become a Christian by being baptized for the remission of sins and repenting of sins that thereafter may be occur in one's life, Acts 2:38; 8:22.

Bible Characters Who Served God

Hebrews 12:1-2

Thesis: To show that every child of God can and must serve God.

Introduction:

1. God used many different men and women from varying backgrounds throughout Bible history.
2. These Bible characters were real mortals, neither mythical nor divine.
3. They occupied various secular and religious positions.
4. The Bible, like no other document, portrays their successes **and failures**.
5. Both young and old served God.
6. God fitted each Bible character to some service.

Body:

I. Men and women of worldly distinction served God.

- A. Job, Abraham and Sarah, Joseph, King David, Daniel, Nehemiah, Esther, and the apostle Paul are some of the Bible characters who, though enjoying some worldly distinction, served God.
- B. Abraham and Sarah.
 1. Abraham was a rich man who had faith to obey God when he was told to leave home for the unknown.
 2. At times, he made mistakes and sinned, but overall, he was a useful servant of God.
 3. We, too, though sometimes frail and sinful, can be useful servants of God.
- C. Joseph.
 1. Joseph rose from humble circumstances as a slave in prison to second ruler over Egypt.
 2. Thereby he served God and nations facing famine.
 3. Irrespective of our circumstances, like Joseph, we need to determine that we will serve God, Col. 3:22-25.
- D. King David.
 1. David rose from a humble shepherd boy to be King of

God's people.

2. He was not selected because of his physique.
3. He was a diligent servant of God, though sometimes he sinned and later repented.
4. Overall, he was a man after God's own heart, and we can be, too.

E. Nehemiah.

1. Nehemiah was the king's cupbearer, a trusted and high responsibility by which he guaranteed the food served to the king was free of poison.
2. He became governor of Jerusalem.
3. He served God by rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and rebuilding the people of God.
4. There may be some great undertaking in our lives whereby we can serve God.

F. Esther.

1. Esther was lifted up to be queen in a foreign land and used her influence to serve God and save her people from annihilation.
2. Women today can seize opportunities to serve God, too.

G. Saul of Tarsus (the apostle Paul).

1. Paul was a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee.
2. He had been the chief persecutor of the church.
3. After his conversion, he became an ardent promoter of Christianity, even suffering numerous persecutions while promoting Christianity.
4. We also can be useful tools in the hands of God even if previously we have been injurious to the Lord's church.

II. Men of humility and little in their own eyes served God.

A. Moses, King Saul, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, the apostles, Lois, Eunice, and Aquila and Priscilla are some who, though humble and of low esteem in their own eyes, served God.

B. Moses.

1. Moses was an outcast, literally, from the time of his birth.
2. Though reared in the midst of royalty, he chose to identify with his people who were slaves in Egypt.

3. Initially, when chosen by God for service, he angered God with his excuses.
4. Lacking confidence in himself as an old man, he relied on his brother, Aaron, to speak for him.
5. At 80 years old he delivered his people from slavery in Egypt.
6. Moses led a rebellious nation for 40 years in a hostile desert, environment.
7. He died at the age of 120, himself unable to enter the land toward which he had been leading the nation of Israel for 40 years because of sin in his life.
8. Moses was a humble man who served God for many decades.
9. Moses' life is evidence that even the elderly can be useful servants in the service of God.

C. Samuel.

1. Samuel was a youth when he began serving God.
2. He was a faithful servant of God throughout his entire life.
3. Samuel's life is evidence that a young person can begin serving God and serve God faithfully for a lifetime.

D. King Saul.

1. Saul was selected to be king because of his humility as he hid himself in the baggage.
2. He served God vigorously at first, but finally he served himself more than God.
3. Saul'

E. John the Baptist.

1. John the Baptist wore clothes of camel hair and a leather girdle.
2. He ate wild honey and locusts.
3. John lived in the wilderness of Judaea.
4. He was the forerunner of Jesus Christ and prepared the way for Christ's ministry.
5. John baptized Jesus and then withdrew from public notice.
6. Finally, he was executed because of his righteous preaching.
7. John the Baptist was a picture of humility and

faithfulness throughout his life and died in the service of God.

8. We, too, can serve God in out of the way places and without a lot of personal resources.
- F. Jesus Christ, Heb. 12:1-2.
1. Jesus was great Teacher and Example of humility and tireless service to God.
 2. He was born under the most humble circumstances.
 3. As a youth of 12 he worshipped God.
 4. At the age of 30, Jesus began a preaching ministry.
 5. Through noting the life of Christ, we know that youth can begin serving God while young and perform even greater service later in life.
- G. The apostles.
1. The apostles were humble men who served God in spite of severe persecutions and hazards to their lives.
 2. They represented men from various walks of life who turned their attention to serving God.
 3. Regardless of one's vocation, Christians today can serve God.
- H. Lois, Eunice, Aquila and Priscilla.
1. Grandmothers, mothers, and husbands and wives served God in the first century.
 2. Likewise, grandparents, parents, and husbands and wives can render valuable service to God today.

Conclusion:

1. God wants all of his children to serve him.
2. Humility must characterize the servants of God.
3. If you look at yourself as a Daniel, a John the Baptist, an Esther or a Priscilla, etc., you can serve God faithfully as long as you live.
4. If you look at yourself as one enjoying some worldly distinction or as one of God's lowliest creatures, you can and must serve God.

Invitation: Service to God begins with becoming a child of God and continues through continuing to be a faithful child of God, Mark 16:16; Acts 8:22.

Redeeming the Time

Ephesians 5:15-17

Thesis: To encourage Christians to earnestly and wisely use their time profitably in the service of God.

Introduction:

1. The words “redeem,” “redeemed” and “redeeming” and the Greek word for them appear four times in the New Testament.
 - a. Eph. 5:16 and Col. 4:5 pertain to redeeming time.
 - b. Gal. 3:13 and 4:5 pertain to redeeming our souls.
2. “Redeeming” means “to buy up, ransom or rescue from loss.”
 - a. Human souls have been ransomed by Jesus Christ (i.e. those souls who will permit the ransom of Christ’s blood to save them).
 - b. Christians are to ransom or rescue from loss the very minutes and hours of time afforded them.
3. The apostle Paul demonstrated in his life the principle involved in “redeeming the time,” 1 Cor. 15:9-10.
 - a. He tried to live every present moment as though by using time judiciously he could make up for the ill-spent time before when he persecuted the church.
 - b. Likewise, we need to use present moments as though by using time wisely we could make up for wasted time in the past.
4. There are several practical ways by which we can learn to use our time for the Lord more effectively.

Body:

- I. **“Redeeming the time” is all about *time management*.**
 - A. Every Christian needs to manage his or her time for the Lord to accomplish good works for the Lord, Titus 2:14.
 1. One way to do this is to have a weekly “*To Do List*.”
 2. Another more intensified “To Do List” is to keep an appointment book that has enough space to list several items daily that one hopes to accomplish.
 3. Anyone who has little structure to his daily schedule (e.g. a preacher, especially who has an office in his home) needs to plan his days and appear to God as well as to his fellow Christians that he is working for

the Lord.

- B. Hence, “To Do Lists” and appointment books suggest that the Christian should have goals relative to Christian service.
 - 1. We will not accomplish much unless we **plan** to serve God in certain ways
 - 2. Many of those goals will be **near goals**, able to be accomplished weekly or in a little amount of time.
 - 3. Some of our goals should be **distant goals**, which will take time to accomplish—maybe weeks, months or even years.
- C. After awhile, it may become necessary to prioritize things we plan to do for the Lord.
 - 1. Triage developed on the battlefield to recuperate first the soldiers who could more rapidly return to warfare.
 - 2. Triage in domestic life is directing medical attention to patients who need it the most desperately.
 - 3. Christians who have undertaken many works for the Lord need to apply triage to the candidates for their time—attend to the most important works first or whatever is due next.
 - 4. Triage in the life of Christians is more than simply putting spiritual matters first, because that we were supposed to do when we became Christians, Matt. 6:33.
- D. Family time and recreation need inclusion in one’s time management program.
 - 1. The natural tendency is to spend time with family or engage in recreation (including favorite TV programs) or sports, leaving little or any time for serving the Lord.
 - 2. Instead, Christians need to exercise self-discipline and plan works for the Lord.
 - 3. However, Christians also need to make allowances for family and recreation—one’s time for serving the Lord and for self needs to be budgeted.

II. *Time management pays big dividends.*

- A. More work for the Lord occurs when the children of God plan to serve God.
 - 1. Jesus Christ taught the necessity of fruitfulness in the kingdom of God, John 15:2.

2. Christian labors are not limited to what Christians may do on a congregational basis.
 3. Christians who manage their time wisely can complete many fruitful works in a lifetime.
 4. Profitable service to God pays big dividends, Mark 8:36; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 2:10.
- B. Working for the Lord has double-duty benefits.
1. Each item that can be crossed off one's "To Do List" or in one's appointment book, no matter how little the task, brings a sense of accomplishment—a psychological pat on the back.
 2. The work we do for the Lord often benefits others (e.g. through benevolence, evangelism or edification) as well as rewards the church and us personally, Matt. 25:31-46.
 3. The effort we expend can be reapplied to other opportunities (e.g. a preacher's sermon can be adapted to an article, a newspaper lesson, a radio message or with other material into a book).
- C. In a real way, one's work can be an extension of himself.
1. Particularly we grow older and realize more our own mortality, we want our lives to have meant something to those who come after us than that we simply took up space and occupied time on earth.
 2. Good works for God make a suitable legacy to leave behind when we no longer draw breath.
 3. Imagine leaving behind the example of being a dynamo for the Lord, whereby family members and church members may be encouraged to also serve the Lord vigorously in their lives.

Conclusion:

1. The Bible is full of Scripture that depicts praiseworthy service of the living God, Heb. 11.
2. The Bible often exhorts and encourages the children of God to conscientiously work for the Lord, 1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:3; 14:13.
3. If we work for the Lord in this life, we will have ample opportunity to rest in heaven with God, Heb. 4:9-11.

Invitation:

1. We can begin redeeming the time by making sure that we are in a saved relationship with God.

2. Erring Christians can begin redeeming the time by acknowledging the sin in their lives, 1 John 1:9.
3. Unbaptized believers can begin redeeming the time by being immersed in water for the remission of their sins, Col. 2:12; Acts 22:16.

Objections to the Cessation of Miracles

1 Corinthians 13:8

Thesis: To examine Pentecostal and charismatic proof texts that they say prove that biblical miracles occur today.

Introduction:

1. Confusion arises when various people appeal to the Bible both for proof that biblical miracles continue to occur today and for proof that biblical miracles no longer occur today.
2. The Bible is the absolute, complete, divinely inspired, standard of authority in religion to which everyone ought to appeal for definitive answers to religious questions, 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3.
3. The Bible contains the Truth by which any religious question can be definitely ascertained, John 17:17.
4. The Bible not supposed to be the object of private or convenient interpretations, 2 Pet. 1:20-21.
5. Earnest, honest Bible study will lead one to the truth on any biblical matter, 2 Tim. 2:15; John 8:32.
6. A fair and correct treatment of 1 Cor. 13:8-13 undeniably teaches that miraculous gifts were never intended to be permanent, but that they would end.
7. This passage even reveals **when** miracles were to end, though Pentecostals and charismatic persons reject the when of 1 Cor. 13:8-13.

Body:

- I. **“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever,” Heb. 13:8.**
 - A. No one denies that the statement of Heb. 13:8 is true with respect to the subject under consideration in its context.
 1. However, Pentecostals and charismatics apply this verse to miracles and imagine that this text implies that Bible miracles continue today.
 2. The verse really pertains to the character and nature of Jesus Christ rather than to the methods that he

- employed.
3. Jesus Christ is dependable to save the obedient, Heb. 5:8-9.
 4. Jesus Christ is dependable to punish the disobedient, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
 5. We know what to expect of Jesus Christ now and in the future because his character is changeless!
 6. However, some things have changed regarding Jesus Christ, such as the priesthood and especially the high priest office, Heb. 7:12; 1 Pet. 2:9.
- B. If Heb. 13:8 applied to Christ's performance of miracles, then notice what that misguided line of reasoning would also include.
1. Since Jesus Christ created all creation, he must still be creating by miracle (trees, animals, people, etc.), John 1:1-3, 14; Col. 1:16-17
 2. Since Jesus Christ miraculously made wine, he must still be making wine, John 2:1-11.
 3. Since Jesus Christ miraculously walked on the Sea of Galilee, he must still be walking on the Sea of Galilee and will continue to do so.
 4. Since Jesus Christ miraculously fed thousands of people, he must still be using miracles to feed thousands of people, Matt. 14:15-21.
 5. Since Jesus Christ raised the dead, he must still be raising the dead, Matt. 9:18-26; Luke 7:11-17; John 11:1-46.
 6. Since Jesus Christ miraculously healed the sick, then he must still be miraculously healing the sick, John 4:46-54; Matt. 8:14-15.
 7. Since Jesus Christ miraculously caused fishermen to catch an overflowing net of fish, he must still be miraculously helping fishermen catch overflowing nets of fish, Luke 5:1-11.
 8. Since Jesus Christ cast out demons, he must still be casting out demons, Matt. 8:28-34.
- C. The highlight of Pentecostalism and charismatics is so-called speaking in tongues.
1. However, Jesus did not speak in tongues.
 2. So a reference to Jesus Christ in Hebrews 13:8 proves

nothing for the Pentecostals respecting their favorite miracle—speaking in tongues.

II. Pentecostals link the phrase “I will be with you alway” of Matt. 28:19-20 with the miracles listed following the Great Commission of Mark 16:15-20 that Jesus said would follow them that believe.

- A. The “always” of Matt. 28:20 has no contextual reference to miracles in Matt. 28.
- B. Jesus listed several kinds of miracles in Mark 16:17-18 and then stated the purpose of miracles in Mark 16:20—to confirm the Word or new revelation.
 - 1. Miracles have already confirmed new revelation, Heb. 2:3-4.
 - 2. The miracles that Jesus performed proved that he is the Christ, the Son of God, John 20:30-31.
 - 3. Hence, through miracles, the Word of God—the Bible—has been validated as inspired and is the basis of faith, 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Rom. 10:17.
- C. Miracles have already served the purpose for which they were designed, and they are no longer needed.
- D. The apostle Paul taught that miracles were temporary and to end when the completed Word of God preserved in place of partial, piecemeal revelations from God, 1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:11-14.

III. Pentecostals believe that Acts 2:38 promises miracles for every child of God.

- A. The phrase “ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” is construed as a promise that every child of God will receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
- B. Interestingly, though many of the people who believe Holy Spirit baptism is promised to all, **do not** believe from the same verse that everyone must repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.
 - 1. Peter was teaching about water baptism, 1 Pet. 3:20-21.
 - 2. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was only promised to the apostles, John 14-16; Acts 1:8.
 - 3. The apostles receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-4.
- C. The “gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38 does refer to

miracles, but it neither tells in that verse **how** or **when** that miraculous power was to be received.

1. Miraculous power was received in the first century by the laying on of apostles' hands after baptism, Acts 8:14-18; 19:1-7.
 2. Cornelius was the exception to the rule to show Jewish Christians that non-Jews were also to be accepted into the church, Acts 10-11.
- D. Miracles were to end when the revelation of the New Testament was complete, 1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:11-14.
1. Miracles certainly ended when the last apostle died or when the last one on whom an apostle had laid hands to give miraculous power died, and no one remained to pass on miraculous power.
 2. Miracles were provisional and when they served their purpose, they were no longer needed and ceased.

IV. Pentecostals point to Acts 19:1-7 to show that believers received miraculous power.

- A. In that context, the believers did not receive miraculous power until:
1. After they were baptized, and
 2. An apostle laid hands on them to give them miraculous power.
- B. Any accountable soul can be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, but no one today can have an apostle's hands laid on him to give one miraculous power.
1. Without genuine apostles today, there is no source of miraculous power today.
 2. Acts 19:1-7 provides no proof for Pentecostal or charismatic miracles today.

V. Pentecostals claim that the baptism of the Holy Spirit received by the apostles is for all, Acts 2:1-4; Joel 2:28.

- A. The only ones in Acts receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit were the apostles, Acts 1:26-2:4.
1. The pronouns in Acts 2:1-4 refer to the apostles, Acts 1:26.
 2. All those who received the baptism of the Holy Spirit were from the Roman province of Galilee, Acts 2:7.
 3. The apostle Peter and the other eleven apostles were the ones who demonstrated miraculous power because

of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:14.

- B. The baptism of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles was a partial fulfillment and the beginning of the fulfillment of Joel 2:28.
 - 1. The apostle Peter explained the baptism of the Holy Spirit by referring to Joel 2:28.
 - 2. However, Joel 2:28 and Peter's quotation of it in Acts 2:16-21 includes more than the apostles.
 - 3. Old and young, men and women were to receive miraculous power.
 - 4. Acts 2 only reveals the apostles receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
 - 5. Other Christians were promised the gift of the Holy Spirit.
 - 6. Other passages in Acts show the reception of miraculous power, Acts 8, 10-12, 19.
- C. The words "all flesh" and "afar off" refer to the Gentiles as included in the blessings of the Gospel as well as miraculous power.
 - 1. "All flesh" and "afar off" do not refer to every person who ever becomes a Christian, but to every class of people—Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles.
 - 2. Acts 2:39 compares to Acts 1:8 respecting the different groups of people to whom the Gospel would be taken and who when they became Christians they would receive miraculous power.

VI. Acts 5:32 is viewed by Pentecostals as a promise for miraculous power always to all children of God.

- A. The past tense appears in this verse.
 - 1. There is no certainty that what God has done in the past he will repeat in the future, e.g. creation, universal flood.
 - 2. Acts 5:32 does not prove the Pentecostal claim of miracles today.
- B. Even were the present tense used, Acts 5:32 would not prove that Bible miracles occur today.
 - 1. Miracles did exist in the first century.
 - 2. Over 2,000 years have transpired since Acts 5:32 was penned.
 - 3. Remember, miracles were temporary and had purpose,

which once they fulfilled, they were no longer needed and did not continue, 1 Cor. 13:8-13; Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4.

VII. Pentecostals claim that the episode at the house of Cornelius proves that Bible miracles occur today, Acts 10-11.

- A. Pentecostals claim the events of Acts 10-11 are typical examples of the Holy Spirit baptism they think is promised to all.
 - 1. Acts 10:1ff shows plainly that the context involves the acceptance of the first Gentiles into the church.
 - 2. Peter was reluctant to accept the Gentiles and would not have preached to them the Gospel, etc. except that the miracle on Cornelius and those with him proved to Peter that God permitted Gentiles to be church members, too.
 - 3. The purpose of the activity of the Holy Spirit at Cornelius' home was to prove Gentiles were to be recipients of the Gospel, too.
- B. What occurred at the home of Cornelius was not the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
 - 1. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was promised exclusively to the apostles, John 14-16; Acts 1:8.
 - 2. The baptism of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles enabled them to demonstrate miraculous power that exceeded the miraculous demonstrations of non-apostles, 2 Cor. 12:12.
 - 3. Cornelius and those with him received what the text twice calls the "gift," Acts 10:45; 11:17.
 - 4. Had Cornelius and those with him actually received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they would have been equal to the apostles in miraculous power and perhaps even apostles.
- C. Acts 10-11 offer no proof that Bible miracles continue today.

VIII. Pentecostals believe that the fact that the Holy Spirit indwells Christians proves that Bible miracles occur today, 1 Cor. 6:19; Gal. 4:6.

- A. The Holy Spirit indwells Christians through the agency of the Word of God, Gal. 3:2; Rom. 10:17; Jude 3; 2 Cor. 5:7; Jam. 1:25.
- B. The Holy Spirit indwells Christians as do also the Father and

Jesus Christ, Eph. 3:17; 1 John 4:12; John 17:20-21.

- C. It was never the indwelling of the Holy Spirit by which first century Christians performed miracles, but by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, bestowal of miraculous power by the Holy Spirit on the day Gentiles were admitted to the church or through the laying on of hands by an apostle.

Conclusion:

1. The Bible does not teach that Bible miracles occur today.
2. On the contrary, the Bible teaches that miracles ceased when the completed revelation from God was delivered to mankind.
3. Further, no one living today can or has performed a Bible miracle, which is itself proof miracles do not exist since Bible miracles were undeniable, Acts 4:16.

Invitation:

1. Miracles are irrelevant to the salvation of souls today.
2. Every erring child of God must repent and pray, Acts 8:22.
3. Every unbaptized believer needs to be immersed for the remission of sins, Acts 2:38.

Does Baptism Save?

1 Peter 3:21

Thesis: To show by the Bible the proper place of baptism in God's plan for human redemption.

Introduction:

1. Our task today is to show where God has placed baptism in the plan for human redemption.
 - a. However, it profits no one to make assertions about baptism that are not clearly and definitely specified by God in the Bible.
 - b. It is also important to note that the Bible nowhere teaches that anyone is saved by baptism only or alone.
 - c. Yet, we will show that the Bible definitely teaches that baptism is the point at which one's sins are removed, **after** one has already heard the Word of God, believed it, repented of sins and acknowledged Jesus Christ as the Son of God.
2. The religious community despises baptism and inadvertently despises the Bible and God who authored it.
 - a. The religious community accuses those who recognize the biblical significance of baptism of worshipping the baptistery, i.e. the baptistery is our God.
 - b. These same denominational people sometimes deride us with unsavory name-calling, e.g. waterdogs.
3. Our religious neighbors portray us as unnecessarily consigning millions of believers in Jesus to a devil's hell.
 - a. If baptism is not essential to salvation, then the churches of Christ are guilty of causing religious division by binding laws on humanity that God did not author.
 - b. However, if baptism is essential to salvation, then denominations are responsible for religious division and leading countless millions of souls to an angry God in Judgment.
4. The key to properly understanding this religious issue is having appropriate appreciation for the Bible as the final, complete and absolute authority in religion.

- a. The facts will show that most denominations do not have sufficient respect for the Bible and God who authored it regarding baptism.
 - b. The facts will show that the Bible clearly teaches that salvation occurs at the point of baptism, which is preceded by hearing the Word of God, believing it, repenting of sin and acknowledging Jesus Christ as the Son of God.
5. The subject of baptism is so important that those who misconstrue it adversely affect salvation from past sins and the prospect of spending forever in heaven with God.
- a. Either baptism saves or baptism does not save.
 - b. Millions of souls hang in the balance respecting attitudes and beliefs about baptism.

Body:

I. Which baptism is effective today?

- A. Before the establishment of the church, John the Baptist baptized penitent Jews in the Jordan River, Matt. 3:1-11.
 1. John's baptism pointed people toward the Savior, Jesus Christ, Acts 19:1-7.
 2. John's baptism was no longer valid after the establishment of the church, Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16.
- B. The baptism of the Holy Spirit was promised exclusively to the apostles, John 14-16; Acts 1:8.
 1. Only the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Acts 1:26-2:1-4, 7, 14.
 2. The purpose of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was to bring to remembrance what Jesus had formerly instructed the apostles and to guide the apostles into all truth, John 14:26; 16:13.
- C. The baptism of fire mentioned by John the Baptist and attributed to Jesus Christ pertains to external, fiery torment following Judgment, Matt. 3:10-12; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 20:14-15; 21:8.
- D. The baptism now valid is the baptism of the Great Commission.
 1. Jesus instituted this baptism immediately before his Ascension, Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16.
 2. This baptism is for the remission of sins and was first preached on the birthday of the church, Acts 2:38.

3. This baptism is portrayed as washing away sins, Acts 22:16; Rev. 1:5.
4. This is the one baptism of which the apostle Paul wrote in A.D. 63, Eph. 4:5; 1 Pet. 3:20-21.
5. Remember, John's baptism was no longer valid, Holy Spirit baptism was for the apostles only and the baptism of fire is still future.

II. What is the so-called *mode* of Bible baptism?

- A. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* states that baptism is performed by sprinkling, pouring or immersion.
 1. Dictionaries reflect the common and current usage of words.
 2. Therefore, the definitions of words change over time.
 3. Therefore, a modern dictionary is inadequate to provide the definition of an ancient, biblical word.
- B. The English words "baptism" and "baptize" are transliterations rather than translations of Greek words.
 1. The Greek noun "baptisma" was not translated but given English letters and brought into our language.
 2. The Greek verb "baptizo" likewise was not translated but given English letters and brought into our language.
 3. The Greek words for baptism and baptize mean to immerse, dip and submerge.
 4. Completely different Greek words mean to sprinkle (*rhantizo*) and to pour (several different words).
- C. Anyone can easily discern the biblical meaning of "baptism" and "baptize" in our English Bibles from the contexts in which the words appear.
 1. Bible baptism is a burial or immersion, Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12.
 2. Bible baptism is a planting, Rom. 6:5.
 3. Bible baptism requires much water and is indicative of immersion rather than applying water to someone, John 3:23.
 4. Bible baptism included enough water to allow the one being baptized and the baptizer both going into the water, unlike sprinkling and pouring, Acts 8:38-39.
 5. The uninformed could misconstrue Bible baptism as a bath, which could not happen regarding sprinkling and

pouring, 1 Pet. 3:21.

6. Sprinkling was not introduced until about A.D. 250 as “Clinic Baptism,” far too late to be Bible baptism (*McClintock and Strong*).

D. Obviously, Bible baptism is immersion in water and neither sprinkling nor pouring water qualify as Bible baptism.

III. How does Bible baptism save?

A. Baptism saves by remitting sin, Acts 2:38.

1. Some opponents of immersion for baptism claim the word “for” (*eis*) means “because we already have” rather than “in order to receive.”

2. However, Jesus used the exact phrase “for the remission of sins” in Greek and English in Matt. 26:28.

3. Were *eis* to mean “because we already have,” our Lord would have avowed at the time he instituted the Lord’s Supper that he was about to die on the cross because mankind already had the remission of sins—absolutely absurd!

B. Baptism saves by washing away sins, Acts 22:16.

1. Hearing God’s Word, faith, repentance and acknowledgement of Jesus as the Son of God implicitly preceded the baptism of Saul of Tarsus (later the apostle Paul).

2. Nowhere before his baptism and only at his baptism does Scripture note the removal of Saul’s (Paul’s) sins as they were washed away by baptism.

C. Baptism saves by properly cleansing one’s conscience of sin, 1 Pet. 3:21.

1. The blood of animal sacrifices was incapable of cleansing the conscience, but the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses the conscience, Heb. 9:9, 14; 10:1-4

2. Scripture attributes procedure through which one’s conscience is cleansed (by the blood of Christ) to baptism, 1 Pet. 3:21.

D. Only through baptism does one figuratively contact the blood of Jesus Christ.

1. One is buried into the death of Jesus through baptism, Rom. 6:3-11.

2. Jesus Christ shed his blood in his death, John 18:34.

E. Any two things equal to the same thing are equal to each

other.

1. Redemption and salvation are equivalent.
 2. The blood of Jesus redeems, Eph. 1:7.
 3. Baptism saves, 1 Pet. 3:21.
 4. One contacts the blood of Jesus Christ through baptism (immersion) in water for the remission of sins.
- F. Baptism puts one into Jesus Christ where are all spiritual blessings.
1. Baptism places one “into” Jesus Christ, Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3.
 2. All spiritual blessings are in Jesus Christ, Eph. 1:3.
 3. Therefore, salvation is only attainable in Jesus Christ through baptism.

IV. Additional Scriptures indicate that salvation is only attainable through baptism.

- A. Jesus taught that faith plus baptism results in salvation, Mark 16:15-16.
1. Mark 16:16 resembles a mathematical equation: belief + baptism = salvation.
 2. Denominational doctrine often reverses the order: belief = salvation + baptism.
 3. The difference between the two representations of Mark 16:16 involve **eternal consequences**.
- B. The apostle Peter commanded baptism, Acts 10:48.
1. Baptism is not optional, and therefore, baptism is essential.
 2. Since baptism is essential, it has a part in the salvation of souls.
- C. The apostle Peter wrote through inspiration of the Holy Spirit that baptism saves, 1 Pet. 3:21.
1. This is exactly the opposite of what most of the religious community teaches.
 2. Should we believe uninspired contemporary persons, or should we believe the inspired apostle?
 3. Anyone who claims to believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God is obligated to believe 1 Pet. 3:21.

V. Who needs to be baptized?

- A. Infants and unaccountable souls do not need to be baptized for the remission of their sins, Acts 2:38.

1. Babies are born sinless and do not inherit the sin of anyone else, Ezek. 18:20; 28:15.
 2. Only those who can hear the Gospel with understanding, believe it, repent of sin and acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Son of God can voluntarily submit to immersion in water for the remission of sins, Rom. 10:17; Mark 16:16; Luke 13:3; Romans 10:9-10; Acts 22:16.
 3. Therefore, babies, young children and other unaccountable souls are not candidates for baptism, and they do not need baptism.
- B. Anyone guilty of sin who has never been immersed into Jesus Christ needs to be baptized.
1. Every accountable soul has committed sins, Rom. 3:23; 1 John 1:8.
 2. The wages of sins for which forgiveness is not obtained is spiritual death, Rom. 6:23.

Conclusion:

1. Baptism equals immersion in water for the remission of sins.
2. Baptism is the point at which one's sins are taken away.
3. Baptism is preceded by hearing God's Word, believing it, repenting of sin and acknowledging Jesus Christ as the Son of God.
4. Baptism must be followed by faithful obedience and spiritual maturing for it to be effective in our lives, Rev. 2:10; Heb. 5:11-14.

Invitation:

1. The question with which we leave you today is, "Have you been baptized into Jesus Christ for the remission of yours sins?"
2. If you have been immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins, "Is your baptism ineffective because of sin in your life?" 1 John 1:7-10.

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Spiritual Immaturity

Hebrews 5:11-14

Thesis: To encourage Christians to grow spiritually in the service of God.

Introduction:

1. The apostle Paul used a familiar illustration to teach an important spiritual lesson.
 - a. God's prophets throughout the ages often used illustrations with which people were familiar when teaching and preaching.
 - b. Jesus Christ himself resorted frequently to parables.
2. The reference to spiritual immaturity in Heb. 5:11-14 was directed to Jewish Christians of the first century.
 - a. The spiritual immaturity addressed in general epistle of Hebrews did not represent an isolated but general problem in the first century church.
 - b. The church at Corinth exhibited spiritual immaturity as well, 1 Cor. 3:1.
 - c. The general epistle of 1 Pet. also addressed the problem of spiritual immaturity in the church of the first century, 1 Pet. 2:2.
3. There is every reason, then, to expect a degree of spiritual immaturity in the Lord's church in each generation.
 - a. We should not be surprised to find spiritual immaturity in our own generation, too.
 - b. Hence, biblical information addressed to the first century church regarding its spiritual immaturity can help us today overcome spiritual immaturity in the Lord's church.

Body:

- I. **Spiritual immaturity interferes with comprehension of the Word of God, Heb. 5:11.**
 - A. The words "of whom" refer to Jesus Christ from the preceding verses.
 1. One cannot properly understand Jesus Christ that we are supposed to serve if we are spiritually immature.
 2. Neither can we adequately understand the doctrine or teachings attributable to Jesus Christ if we are

spiritually immature.

- B. The difficulty in comprehension was not attributable to some failing upon the part of inspired, first century teachers, but the fault lay with spiritually immature Christians.

II. The complaint in this context pertained not to new babes in Christ, but to longtime members of the Lord's church who had not grown spiritually, Heb. 5:12.

- A. While it is not sinful to be spiritually immature (as new Christians), it is sinful to remain spiritually immature.
- B. The spiritually immature are dependent on someone reminding them repeatedly of the first principles of the Gospel of Christ.
 - 1. One could say that these immature Christians were “ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth,” 2 Tim. 3:7.
 - 2. Rather, we are supposed to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” 2 Pet. 3:18.
- C. The writers of Heb., 1 Cor. and 2 Pet. did not relegate first principles to irrelevance and the unimportant.
- D. Obviously, spiritual maturity does not occur simply because of passing time.
 - 1. Time had passed, according to the writer of Hebrews and spiritual maturity had not developed among those addressed therein.
 - 2. Had those addressed by Heb. 5:11-14 diligently studied God's Word, they could have taught new Christians the first principles of the Gospel, 2 Tim. 2:2.
- E. The words “are become” suggest that Christians who do not consciously endeavor to grow spiritually actually retrogress to earlier spiritual immaturity.
 - 1. First century Jews began abandoning Christianity and returning to Judaism.
 - 2. Today, Christians often turn their back on Christianity by turning back to the ungodly world from which they were rescued by the Gospel.
- F. The Hebrew Christians were guilty of not progressing beyond the alphabet of Christianity!

III. The spiritually immature are obviously babes in Christ and recognizably so to everyone often except the babes in Christ themselves, Heb. 5:13.

- A. The proper use of the milk of the Word of God is to grow babes in Christ into healthy, mature Christians, 1 Pet. 2:2.
 - 1. Every Christian has the responsibility to study the Word of God, 1 Tim. 2:15.
 - 2. Every child of God must assume his rightful place in the work of the Lord's church; there are no non-participating memberships available in the church.
 - 3. No perpetual babe in Christ is approved of God.
- B. As in the home, in the church, babies are liabilities.
 - 1. Babies in one's family consume resources without giving back materially to the family, Matt. 24:19.
 - 2. Babes in Christ consume time and resources without contributing to the stability and growth of the Lord's church.

IV. Only the spiritually mature can discern effectively between good and evil, Heb. 5:14.

- A. The "strong meat" represents the weightier matters of doctrine, whereas "milk" represents basic principles.
- B. The words "full age" represent spiritual maturity.
- C. The "spiritual exercise" of Heb. 5:14 is more important than physical exercise for the body.
- D. Heb. 5:14 teaches that the spiritually immature cannot distinguish adequately between good and evil.
 - 1. Therefore, new Christians need to be taught the Word of God, milk of the Word followed by the meat of the Word.
 - 2. Spiritual immaturity underlies virtually all the problems affecting local congregations.
 - 3. Only a spiritually mature church can prosper for the Lord and prevent apostasy.
 - 4. Evidently, right and wrong is not always as easily discernible as black and white.

Conclusion:

- 1. Elders, preachers and teachers must be about the business of teaching both first principles and meatier matters in the Word of God.
- 2. Every child of God must feast on the Word of God to become

spiritually mature that he may discern truth from error.

3. Every Christian must do his or her part to grow from babes in Christ to mature Christians to the work of the church can go forward.

Invitation:

1. Anyone who has not been baptized into Jesus Christ for the remission of his sins is not a babe in Christ yet.
2. However, through the new birth (baptism) one can become a babe in Christ, John 3:5.
3. Erring Christians need to repent, pray and remain faithful, Acts 8:22; 1 Cor. 15:58.

Problems in the Corinthian Church

Revelation 2:1-7

Thesis: (1) To show that sinful problems in the Lord's church are not new, (2) To learn from the Corinthians' problems and (3) To note that sin in the church today is no more acceptable to God than it was in the Corinthian church.

Songs: *More Holiness Give Me, Have Thine Own Way Lord, I Surrender All, Let Him Have His Way With Thee.*

Introduction:

1. The epistle of 1 Corinthians was penned to correct several sinful problems in the first century church at Corinth.
 - a. The Corinthian church was no more acceptable to God in its sinful condition than were the five churches of Asia that Jesus rebuked, Rev. 2-3.
 - b. If the Corinthian church had failed to correct the sins of which they were guilty, the Jesus would have ceased to recognize it as a church for which he died and for which he would return to take to heaven, cf. five of the seven churches of Asia.
 - c. The epistle of 2 Corinthians would have been much different had the Corinthian church not heeded the instructions of 1 Corinthians!
2. It should be of little surprise to Christians today that sinful problems also affect the churches of Christ today.
 - a. A wide range of sinful problems have buffeted and continue to buffet the Lord's church even in the little time it has had a presence in North America.
 - b. Many well-meaning brethren have troubled and continue to splinter the churches of Christ by imposing laws where God made none; this movement within the churches of Christ is commonly called antism.
 - c. Still other brethren liberally interpret the Bible so as to set aside some laws that God did make, e.g. marriage and divorce, religious fellowship, worship, grace, hell, the Holy Spirit,

- miracles, inspiration of the Bible, the role of women in the church, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, etc.
- d. Occasionally, a movement within the churches of Christ will arise, trouble the Lord's church for decades and separate itself from us, e.g. Christian Church, Crossroad congregations (later, Boston Church plantings; still later, the International Churches of Christ).
3. There are many origins of local church problems.
 - a. Some church problems come in the **back door** when converts bring denominational habits and thoughts with them.
 - b. Some church problems arise from **ignorance**, traceable to a lack of Bible study.
 - c. Other church problems are the direct result of impenitent false teachers, Rom. 16:17-18.
 - d. Still other church difficulties are growth problems that occur due to a lack of adequate forethought.
 - e. Yet, some church problems are directly attributable to the denial of a part or the entirety of the Word of God.
 4. There are consequences that follow for persistent, sinful problems in the Lord's church.
 - a. The otherwise spotless bride of Christ—the church—is blemished, Eph. 5:27.
 - b. The Gospel becomes ineffective.
 - c. The lives of God's children become corrupted.
 - d. The congregations apostatize and become a part of denominationalism.
 5. Sinful problems in the church can be and must be resolved.
 - a. The balance of the sermon pertains to noting the sinful problems in the Corinthian church plus the corrective measures that the apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians.
 - b. Today, we can identify sinful problems in the church and seek resolution for them by consulting the Word of God, 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Jude 3; Phil. 1:17.
 - c. Essentially, each child of God can obey or disobey God's revealed will, Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Matt. 7:21-23.

Body:

I. The Corinthian church experienced division over church leadership, 1 Cor. 1:10-13.

- A. The Corinthian church developed a bad case of *preacheritis*.
 1. These preachers, though, were not at odds with each

- other.
 - 2. Preacheritis is a frequent problem in the church today as well.
 - B. The Corinthian church had a sectarian or denominated spirit within the congregation.
 - 1. The Corinthians had separated themselves into groups that are not authorized in the New Testament.
 - 2. While it is true that Christians must separate themselves from sin, Christians are supposed to demonstrate love toward each other, 2 Cor. 6:17; John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:10; 1 Pet. 2:17.

II. The Corinthian church had a problem with a Christ-centered message, 1 Cor. 1:18-27.

- A. The Gospel was a “stumblingblock” to Jews who sought miraculous signs.
- B. The Gospel was foolishness to the Greeks who sought wisdom.
- C. Today, sometimes churches of Christ and their programs appear to purposely avoid Christ-centered messages, e.g. radio and TV programs, newspaper articles, reliance on gimmicks, etc., Rom. 1:16; Acts 4:12.

III. The Corinthian church had a problem with spiritual immaturity, 1 Cor. 3:1-4.

- A. Spiritual immaturity was not confined to Corinth in the first century.
 - 1. Jewish Christians generally were spiritually immature and in danger of abandoning Christianity, Heb. 5:12-14.
 - 2. Through a general epistle, apostle Peter addressed first century spiritual immaturity, 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18.
- B. Spiritual maturity is no less sinful today than it was in the first century.
 - 1. The Word of God is the spiritual bread by which God’s children are nourished, Matt. 4:4;
 - 2. Everyone needs to study God’s Word regularly, and there is no time when it will no longer be necessary to study God’s Word, 2 Tim. 2:15.
 - 3. Only through spiritual maturity can one discern between good and evil, Heb. 5:14.
- C. The responsibilities of elders include feeding the church.

1. Elders must oversee and feed the flock of God, Acts 20:28.
2. Elders are the undershepherds who must give an account to Jesus Christ, our Chief Shepherd, 1 Pet. 5:1-4; Heb. 13:17.

IV. The Corinthian church had a problem with policing itself of sinful members, 1 Cor. 5:1-13.

- A. The Corinthian church allowed sin to continue among its members without objection.
 1. A Christian man was committing fornication with his stepmother, a sin that even the non-Christians would not do.
 2. Evidently, the church in Corinth thought that it was very open-minded by not disciplining the erring church member.
 3. However, the apostle Paul charged the church at Corinth with sin for its inaction.
- B. Allowing sin to continue among its members unchallenged, the Corinthian church permitted the congregation to suffer.
 1. The church was reproached before an unbelieving community.
 2. Sin is contagious and influences others to sin when sinful lives are not challenged.
- C. The churches of Christ today often fail to exercise church discipline when it is needed.
 1. Scripture demands that the Lord's church police itself when necessary, 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15; Rom. 16:17-18; Titus 3:10-11.
 2. Much of what adversely affects the church today could have been *nipped in the bud* were church discipline faithfully practiced when necessary.
 3. Refusal to enact church discipline when it is biblically warranted amounts to rebellion against God!

V. The Corinthian church experienced the sin of brethren unable to get along with brethren, 1 Cor. 6:1-8.

- A. It was necessary for the apostle Paul to command Christians not to bring civil suits against other Christians.
 1. These lawsuits were between brethren and over things that could have been settled out of court.
 2. However, there are matters that according to the law of

the land that must be handled through the courts, e.g. pertaining to death, auto accidents, etc.

- B. Matters of personal disagreement between Christians should be reconciled with the aid of other brethren when necessary.
 - 1. Private matters between brethren may be handled privately if possible, Matt. 18:15-17.
 - 2. However, doctrinal matters that affect the church need to be addressed with haste and publicly, Titus 3:10-11; 1 Cor. 5:4-5.

VI. The Corinthian brethren experienced problems in their marriages, 1 Cor. 7.

- A. The overriding instruction of the chapter occurs in verse one, namely that Christians must avoid fornication.
 - 1. Consequently, marriage is represented as an honorable alternative to lust and to fornication.
 - 2. Married people are commanded to remain married, 1 Cor. 7:10.
 - 3. Divorced people are warned to remain single or to be reconciled to their former spouses, 1 Cor. 7:11.
 - 4. Only Matt. 19:9 grants divine permission for the innocent party of a divorce because of adultery to remarry.
- B. Some Christians force an erroneous interpretation on 1 Cor. 7 to ease the marriage law of Christ in Matt. 19:9.
 - 1. God assures the deserted Christian that he does not hold him guilty of sin, 1 Cor. 7:15.
 - 2. Were 1 Cor. 7:15 to grant more than that, Paul would have contradicted himself between 1 Cor. 7:10-11 and 1 Cor. 7:15, as well as have contradicted Jesus Christ in Matt. 19:9.
 - 3. Even the Lord's church as it becomes more worldly has the tendency to re-evaluate Scripture to exempt its members from biblical condemnation for their sins, John 17:14-15; Jam. 4:4.
 - 4. Christians are supposed to evaluate themselves compared to the Word of God, rather than to re-evaluate Scripture (rationalizing it to allow the sins we commit), 2 Cor. 13:5.
- C. Some portions of 1 Cor. 7 pertain to special circumstances attributable to troubled times.

1. The “present distress” was the reason for which the apostle Paul advised Christians then not to assume new responsibilities such as young people getting married, 1 Cor. 7:26.
2. Similarly today, wars, famine, financial depression, etc. would be ill-advised occasions to accept new responsibilities, such as getting married and rearing children.
3. However, to avoid lust and fornication, anyone biblically eligible to marry may marry.

VII. The Corinthian church had weak members, 1 Cor. 8:9-11.

- A. Knowledgeable Christians must not abuse their liberties by which weak Christians are unnecessarily harmed.
 1. The specific reference was to eating food that had been dedicated to idols.
 2. Though the idolatrous dedication was meaningless, the consciences of Christians who formerly participated in those idolatrous dedications would be troubled when they saw other Christians eating those foods, or weak Christians might eat the food with conscience toward the idols.
 3. This problem was widespread enough in the first century for Paul likewise to caution the church at Rome, Rom. 14:1-23.
- B. Both weak and stronger Christians should preserve their good influence.
 1. Every type of evil or sin must be avoided, 1 Thess. 5:22.
 2. Paul plainly declared the need for Christians to maintain godly reputations, Rom. 14:16.
 3. Faithful Christians will be careful not to unnecessarily offend anyone, 1 Cor. 10:32.
- C. Weak members have a responsibility to grow, 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18.
 1. Weak members do not have a right to remain weak.
 2. Weak members do not have a right to impose their weakness on others.

VIII. The Corinthian church had a problem with supporting preachers, 1 Cor. 9:1-18.

- A. The apostle Paul claimed the right of congregational support

for himself and for every other Gospel preacher.

1. He also claimed the right to support for a preacher's family, using the apostle Peter, "Cephas," and his wife as an example.
 2. Paul further referred to Deut. 25:4 and the Old Testament priests before the altar as additional illustrations.
- B. The apostle did not compel the Corinthians to support him, however.
1. Paul did not exercise his right to support from the Corinthians while working among them.
 2. While in Corinth, the apostle Paul accepted support from churches in Macedonia, 2 Cor. 11:7-12.
- C. It is an important responsibility for a congregation at least to help support its own preacher.
1. Since the apostle Paul did not require the Corinthian church to financially support him, the congregation denied that churches of Christ were obligated to support preachers.
 2. Hence, Paul penned 1 Cor. 9 to correct the congregation's erroneous doctrine about supporting the preaching of the Gospel.
 3. The apostle mused in 2 Cor. 11:7 whether he had harmed the Corinthian church by not requiring support from them.
- D. Many churches of Christ today are completely irresponsible when it comes to the support of preachers and their families.
1. Some restoration era preachers set a bad precedent by not taking support from the congregations to which they preached.
 2. Preachers are frequently embarrassed to preach about money lest someone should demean their dedication, and so there is little teaching about the congregation's responsibility toward its preacher.
 3. Consequently, most of our preachers endure meager financial circumstances and have no prospect of earthly retirement.
 4. In view of the fact that preachers invest their whole lives into preaching the Gospel, the churches of Christ should do better by their faithful preachers and their

families.

IX. The Corinthian church experienced sin, worldliness and apostasy, 1 Cor. 10.

- A. Paul rehearsed Jewish history with the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 10:1-10.
 - 1. He noted Jewish successes and failures.
 - 2. Paul reasoned that contemporary people can learn from and avoid the sins of past generations.
- B. The apostle illustrated with two sins, 1 Cor. 10:11-22.
 - 1. Idolatry, corruption of true worship, has been a besetting sin of humanity.
 - 2. Sinful pride also has snared many souls, even from among God's people.

X. The Corinthian church made sinful changes to the worship, 1 Cor. 11:17-34.

- A. The Corinthian church corrupted the Lord's Supper.
 - 1. Apparently, the church combined a fellowship meal with the Lord's Supper.
 - 2. The Corinthians even erred respecting a fellowship meal because they would not share their food with the poorer members.
- B. The apostle Paul required the Corinthians to take corrective action.
 - 1. Paul taught about the origin of the Lord's Supper, cf. Matt. 26:26-28.
 - 2. Paul prohibited the Corinthians from observing the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner ("unworthily"); they were not charged to discern if they were sufficiently *worthy* or *sinless* before taking the Lord's Supper.
- C. Misconceptions about verse 22 have divided brethren.
 - 1. The word "church" refers to the assembly and not to a meetinghouse in which the church or assembly of believers came together.
 - 2. There were not church buildings at this time and for another 200 years; the church often met in members' homes, 1 Cor. 16:19.
 - 3. Paul could not have been regulating the use of church buildings in this context since they did not exist yet.
 - 4. Paul, though, was separating physical meals from the

spiritual feast of the Lord's Supper.

5. It would have been unbearable for the early Christians had been the case if they allowed the church to meet in their homes, they could never again eat, etc. there.

XI. The Corinthian church had sinful problems with the misuse of miracles, 1 Cor. 12-14.

- A. Chapter 12 acknowledges differing miraculous gifts.
 1. Not everyone received the same miraculous gifts.
 2. Every gift had its purpose and for that reason was not superior or inferior to any other gift.
- B. Chapter 13 informed the Corinthians that spiritual gifts were all inferior to love.
 1. Miracles without proper love equated to a deficiency within Christians.
 2. Miracles were inferior to love.
 3. Miracles were temporary and designed to end when they served the purpose for which they were given, Eph. 4:11-14.
- C. Chapter 14 taught the Corinthians that edification through teaching is superior to excitement accompanying miracles.
 1. Edification was the overlooked **purpose of miracles**, Mark 16:20.
 2. Miracles were never intended to be an end of themselves!
- D. The Corinthians overlooked the instruction that miraculous revelation provided.
 1. Miracles were supposed to end when written revelation was available to the churches, 1 Cor. 13:8-13; Jam. 1:25; Eph. 4:11-14.
 2. Tongues were foreign languages that through the aid of miracles preachers and teachers could speak without having to learn those languages, Acts 2:4-11.
 3. Since God is not the author of confusion, everything in the assembly should be done decently and in order, contrary to what those claiming miracles today do in their assemblies, 1 Cor. 14:33, 40.
 4. Biblically, women are forbidden to teach, preach or lead singing in the worship assembly, but those claiming to have miracles today do so anyway, 1 Cor. 14:34.

XII. The Corinthian church had problems with the resurrection, 1 Cor. 15.

- A. Evidently, some of the Corinthians disbelieved in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, so the apostle Paul proved to them the resurrection.
 - 1. The resurrected Christ was seen repeatedly by eyewitnesses.
 - 2. All the apostles, including Paul, saw the resurrected Christ.
 - 3. Over 500 brethren saw the resurrected Christ at the same time.
 - 4. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the fundamental or cardinal doctrine of the Gospel, 1 Cor. 15:1-4.
- B. Some evidently doubted the resurrection of the dead.
 - 1. The resurrection from the dead is essential to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - 2. Likewise, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is essential to the resurrection of dead saints and the forgiveness of sins.
- C. The resurrection offers great hope and comfort to Christians.
 - 1. Eternal hope in heaven overshadows the woes of this life.
 - 2. Eternal hope in heaven removes the possible hopelessness and hapless short span of earthly life.
 - 3. The Thessalonians also desired comfort that comes from confidence in the resurrection, 1 Thess. 4:14-17.

XIII. The Corinthian church had problems with benevolence and cooperation between congregations, 1 Cor. 16.

- A. The apostle Paul encouraged financial cooperation between congregations.
 - 1. Gentile congregations in what is today the country of Greece cooperated to finance benevolence to the needy saints in Jerusalem, 1 Cor. 16:3; 2 Cor. 8:4.
 - 2. Gentile congregations in what is today Italy and Turkey also cooperated to finance benevolence to the needy, Rom. 15:26; 1 Cor. 16:1.
- B. The apostle Paul also commanded that regular contributions be made in the Lord's Day assembly, 1 Cor. 16:1-2.
 - 1. This giving was to be according to one's prosperity, 1 Cor. 16:1-2.

2. This giving was to be according to one's purpose or personal decision and with cheerfulness, 2 Cor. 9:7.
- C. Some churches of Christ today are troubled with cooperation, benevolence and giving.
1. Some churches refuse to cooperate with other congregations and deem as unfaithful any that cooperate; wherein Paul taught cooperation, these churches forbid cooperation and make their doctrine a test of fellowship.
 2. Some churches refuse to be benevolent toward non-Christians, despite apostolic instruction to extend benevolence to non-Christians, 2 Cor. 9:13; Gal. 6:10.
 3. Churches and the members who comprise them often fail to contribute as they should and inhibit the work of the church.

Conclusion:

1. None of the problems experienced in the Corinthian church resulted from a failure on the part of God, Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit; **man failed**.
2. None of the problems experienced in the church today results from a failure on the part of God, Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit; **man fails**.
3. The solution for problems that afflict the church is the study of and strict adherence to the Word of God.
4. The Lord's church must learn to discipline itself!
5. The Lord's church must learn to select biblically qualified leaders to lead it, i.e. elders, preachers and teachers.

Invitation:

1. The greatest human problem is sin for which one has not received forgiveness.
2. Unbaptized believers can remedy the problem of sin in their lives by being baptized into Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, Gal. 3:27; Mark 16:16.
3. Erring Christians can remedy the problem of sin in their lives by repenting and praying, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

Life with the Right Purpose

1 Corinthians 10:31

Thesis: To emphasize that the right purpose of one's life is to glorify God, and that even good pursuits are not themselves the right purposes for which to live one's life.

Song:

Introduction:

1. The inquiring minds of adults ask young children, "What do you want to be or do when you grow up?"
2. Persons of any age may sometimes express the need "to find themselves."
3. Presidents nearing the end of their terms in office seek legacies by which they will be defined in history books of the future.
4. People growing older and contemplating their own mortality ponder whether they have lived useful lives and interacted sufficiently with their children and their children's children, by which they will be remembered fondly.
5. Of course, many people appear to have no aspirations in life (or eternity), but these we just listed are all essentially about living lives with purpose.
6. What is the right purpose for which everyone, and especially God's people, must live their lives to please God?

Body:

I. Immediate, legitimate objectives can obscure the right purpose for living one's life.

- A. What is the right purpose for which one needs to live his life?
 1. Jesus Christ came to this sin-forn planet "to seek and save that which was lost," Luke 19:10.
 2. However, technically, this **was not** the ultimate purpose for which Jesus Christ came to this earth, and even saving souls **is not** the ultimate purpose for which Christians should live their lives either, Mark 16:15-16; 1 Cor. 1:17.
 3. Because God deserves glory, especially mankind needs to glorify God, Rev. 15:4.

- B. The overriding purpose of the ministry of Jesus Christ was to glorify God the Father, John 14:13.
1. The very death of Jesus Christ on the cross glorified God, John 17:1; 21:19.
 2. The redemption of mankind was merely a means of glorifying God, John 17:4.
 3. Neither the death of Christ nor even the salvation of souls, though important, was a satisfactory goal apart from the glorification of God the Father.
- C. Consequently, a long list of *church work*, though noble pursuits harmonious with inspired biblical instruction, cannot *substitute* for glorifying God.
1. The following quotation from brother T. Pierce Brown underscores this often overlooked biblical principle.

I am persuaded that whenever a person does **anything** without any concern about whether it pleases God, he fails to glorify him as God. ...It may shock you, but I assert that even programs like the ones with which I have been heavily involved for the past 40 years, of personal evangelism, correspondence Bible courses and world evangelism may become so important that one may let them take central place in his life rather than the glory of God. Surely every person who reads this is aware that some persons get so “high” on their own plan, program or effort that they lose sight of the central purpose of life, and even go so far as to try to damage or undermine some other activity which is planned to advance the cause of Christ. ...**The ultimate purpose for which Christ came, and the ultimate purpose of everything he did was to glorify God** (emphasis added). It is true that the most effective way to glorify God is to help in the salvation of a soul. But to make the means to an end **the** end itself is to pervert the truth and put ourselves in the same position those Gentiles were, about whom Paul speaks [Rom. 1:21]. ...But when **any** project, person or thing, no matter how worthy, becomes the center of our concern rather than the glory of God being the center, we are in mortal danger. (Brown)

2. No congregational program or church edifice deserves

- more attention than glorifying God.
- 3. Unfortunately, while church programs are established presumably to glorify God, it is quite possible and often happens that “we cannot see the forest for the trees!”
- 4. When this occurs, the overall goal of glorifying God disappears in the shadows of the means at hand by which we propose to glorify God.
- 5. Any innocent venture or program by which we may glorify God can, unless we keep our focus where it belongs on God, actually glorify man instead of God.

II. Every aspect of one’s life needs to be evaluated respecting the right purpose for living one’s life—which is to glorify God.

- A. The children of God must glorify God, Psa. 22:23.
 - 1. Anciently, God has required the child of God to glorify his name, Psa. 86:12.
 - 2. The child of God needs to glorify God in troublesome times, Psa. 50:15; 1 Pet. 4:14, 16.
 - 3. The faithful child of God glorifies God through his fruitful labors, John 15:8.
 - 4. Fruitful labors by the child of God prompts non-Christians to also praise the heavenly Father, Matt. 5:16; 1 Pet. 2:12; Acts 4:21.
 - 5. Christians are supposed to glorify God as though they do it with one mind and one mouth, Rom. 15:6.
- B. It has been God’s longstanding desire that all of mankind glorify him, Psa. 86:9.
 - 1. The apostle Paul referred to God’s longtime plan for the Gentiles to participate in glorifying God, Rom. 15:9.
 - 2. Right-thinking Jewish Christians in the first century glorified God when they realized that God included Gentiles in his plan of redemption, Acts 11:18; 13:48; 21:20.
 - 3. Jewish Christians also glorified God later respecting Gentile Christians when Christianity led the Gentile Christians to provide famine relief for Jewish Christians, 2 Cor. 9:13.
- C. Every waking moment should be evaluated to see if it glorifies God.

1. Christians are obligated to glorify God in both physical and spiritual pursuits, 1 Cor. 6:20.
2. Even what the child of God “does on his own time” falls under the requirement of glorifying God.
3. Every right thing that may be done (i.e., including how we use our time and money, our vocations, family and home responsibilities, our recreation, marital intimacy, etc.) glorifies God because we are Christians and because we conduct ourselves according to the revealed will of God, 1 Cor. 10:31.
4. Hence, every thing that one may do that is either sinful or some right practice we do outside the instructions of God detracts from glorifying God.

Conclusion:

1. Some Christians’ whose lives are so obviously amok of the purpose for which God wants them to live their lives may have to be disciplined by other Christians, 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6.
2. For the rest of us, we need to honestly examine the purpose for which we live our lives and make whatever adjustments are necessary to make sure we glorify God in everything we do, 2 Cor. 13:5.

Invitation:

1. You are not glorifying God if you are not a baptized believer—a Christian, Mark 16:16, but you can remedy that shortfall in your life at this very hour.
2. You are not glorifying God if you are not a faithful, fruitful child of God whose life’s focus is on actively glorifying God with his or her whole life, 1 Cor. 10:31; 1 John 1:9.

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Mailman for God

Romans 10:13-15

Thesis: To examine the role of Gospel preachers.

Introduction:

1. I am a **prophet of God**, and so is every other Gospel preacher to the extent that he delivers a message for God.
2. I am a **mailman from God**, obligated to deliver God's mail to humanity.
3. I am **God's public herald** with a message that is not my own—from the Great King, to which message everyone who hears is obligated to obey (so long as the message is in fact the Word of God).
4. I am an **angel of God** to the congregation with which I labor in the Lord, as is every other faithful Gospel preacher.

Body:

I. The biblical prophet's duties often were two-fold.

- A. Sometimes, God's prophet has been a *foreteller*.
 1. The fulfillment of future events according to one's predictions was a way that one could discern if a man was a prophet of God, Deut. 18:22.
 2. Typically, we think of a prophet as a *foreteller* of the future.
 3. However, essentially and frequently the prophets of God spent more time *forth telling* than *foretelling*.
- B. Fundamentally, God's prophet has always been a *communicator*.
 1. "Prophet (Greek) means the interpreter... 'speak forth' truths for another, as Aaron was Moses' prophet, i.e. spokesman: Ex 7:1 of God's will..." (*Fausset's*).
 2. "The primary idea of a prophet, therefore, is a declarer, announcer, one who utters a communication" (*Unger's*).
 3. "A person who spoke for God and who communicated God's message courageously to God's Chosen People—the nation of Israel" (*Nelson's*).
 4. "According to the uniform teaching of the Bible the

prophet is a speaker of or for God” (*ISBE*).

II. A New Testament preacher was essentially a mailman from God.

- A. The Greek word translated preacher is *kerusso* (kay-roos'-so) or *kerux* (kay'-roox).
 - 1. It means “to herald (as a public crier), especially divine truth (the gospel)” (*Strong's*).
 - 2. Kittel remarks respecting the history of heralds: “A strong and resonant voice is the basic requirement, since the herald has to issue summons, keep the peace, and make announcements. ...it is important that heralds deliver news or pass on messages strictly as these are given to them. In negotiations they seldom act on their own initiative but simply deliver short messages, put a few questions, and report back for further instructions.”
 - 3. The further instructions to which God’s faithful heralds today resort is the Word of God, 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Eph. 4:13-14; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 3.
- B. God’s mailmen, just like the mailmen with whom we are familiar, just deliver somebody else’s mail.
 - 1. The mailman is not the sender; he is not the author of what he delivers.
 - 2. The mailman delivers both mail that we welcome as well as mail we dread receiving, but he still is not responsible for the content of the mail.
 - 3. God’s mailmen, likewise, deliver God’s mail to humanity, some of which man delights to receive and some that man refuses, 2 Tim. 4:1-4; 1 Thess. 2:13.

III. Preachers are, in one sense, angels from God to the churches with which they labor in the Gospel.

- A. The letters to the seven churches of Asia were addressed to the angels of the respective congregations, Rev. 2-3.
 - 1. The Greek word for “angel” is *aggelos* (*ang'-el-os*), which means “messenger.”
 - 2. The messengers to these churches were the preachers that labored in the Word with them.
 - 3. The message, of course, for which these angels or preachers are responsible is from God—via the Word of God—to humanity.

- B. The angels or preachers in Revelation 2-3 were not completely faithful to their charge to deliver messages for God.
 - 1. Preachers and teachers have a great responsibility to represent God correctly and completely, Jam. 3:1.
 - 2. Preachers must only speak the Word of God, 1 Pet. 4:11.

IV. Those who hear Gospel preachers, likewise, have an important responsibility respecting the preachers and the messages they proclaim.

- A. Christians must discern whether a preacher is actually preaching the pure Word of God.
 - 1. Preachers must be inspected as to whether they are faithfully, fully and correctly presenting the Word of God, 1 John 4:1.
 - 2. Preachers who inadvertently err in the proclamation of the Word of God should be exhorted privately, Acts 18:24-26.
 - 3. However, impenitent false teachers must be publicly identified so others will be forewarned (i.e., the proverbial cowbell or belling the cat).
- B. However, if the preacher's preaching fairly, accurately and completely represents the Word of God, those who hear that preaching have an awesome responsibility to accept it—apply it.
 - 1. God has determined that irrespective of what other ways the Gospel may be published around the world, he primarily wants preachers to preach that Gospel to the world, Rom. 10:13-15.
 - 2. Consequently, anyone who refuses to abide in the Gospel as it is faithfully proclaimed by preachers of the Gospel is out of step or disorderly and a worthy recipient of church discipline, 2 Thess. 3:6.
 - 3. Too often, even Christians assess Bible preaching and categorize as the Word of God what they like and categorize what they refuse as merely the preacher's opinion.

Conclusion:

- 1. Brethren, I am a prophet of God with a message from God for you every time I purport to preach or teach a Bible lesson—heed it!

2. Brethren, I am a mailman from God with pleasant and unpleasant mail from God—receive it!
3. Brethren, I am a herald of God who speaks by the authority of God the very words of God—do not despise the authority of God!
4. Brethren, I am an angel of God to this congregation with good news from God—do not spurn God’s good news!
5. Preaching is serious business, both from the preacher’s end and the listener’s end—do not disregard it lightly!
6. Brethren, I am not a novice preacher, but well experienced in the Word of God, but what will you do with the Bible message (i.e. over 30 years preaching, 10 years training preachers to be preachers, avid writer of religious articles and books, editor of several religious journals)?

Invitation:

1. The New Testament is God’s mail to this generation, and it has something to say respecting human redemption.
2. Unbaptized believers need to be immersed in water for the remission of their sins to be added to the church by Jesus, Acts 2:38; Col. 2:12; Acts 2:47.
3. Erring Christians must cease and desist committing sins or else face an eternal penalty of hell, Acts 8:20-22.

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Christianity's Special Day

Acts 20:7

Thesis: To emphasize the significance of worshipping God every first day of the week rather than only on manmade, special days such as Easter, etc.

Introduction:

1. Almost everyone knows that because the New Testament replaced the Old Testament as God's law, Jewish feast days are no longer authorized by God as special days on which to worship God under Christianity, Rom. 7:6-7; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14-17.
2. However, many good people today are misinformed respecting the day or days under Christianity, which God has authorized through the New Testament, on which God wants to be worshipped.
3. Does it matter on which day or days of the week that people today assemble to worship God?
4. What special day or days are biblically authorized under Christianity for people to assemble and worship God?
5. On what day or days has God biblically authorized people to assemble to partake of the Lord's Supper?

Body:

- I. **Biblically, the first day of the week has special significance under Christianity.**
 - A. Many significant events leading up to the establishment of Christianity pertain to the first day of the week.
 1. Our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem occurred on the first day of the week (Wuest).
 2. Jesus Christ arose from the grave on the first day of the week, Matt. 28:1-6.
 3. Our Lord's first appearance after the resurrection was that same day, the first day of the week, John 20:19.
 4. The second appearance of the resurrected Christ was on the next first day of the week (eight days later), John 20:26.
 5. The Lord's church was established on the first day of the week (Pentecost refers to the fiftieth day and is seven Sabbaths plus one day from the Passover), Acts

2:1ff.

6. The special day of worship for the early church when it observed the Lord's Supper was the first day of the week, Acts 20:7.
 7. The early church also especially contributed of its means upon the first day of the week, 1 Cor. 16:1-2.
 8. Uninspired writers, both who favored and who did not favor Christianity, some stretching back to contemporary and near contemporary times with the apostles, acknowledge that Christians observed the first day of each week as the special day under Christianity.
 9. *The McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia* concludes from the much evidence it lists: "...the Lord's day is a purely Christian institution, sanctioned by apostolic practice, mentioned in apostolic writings, and so possessed of whatever divine authority all apostolic ordinances and doctrines (which were not obviously temporary, or were not abrogated by the apostles themselves) can be supposed to possess."
 10. The historian, Schaff, writes: "The universal and uncontradicted Sunday observance in the second century can only be explained by the fact that it had its roots in apostolic practice."
- B. The unique quality of worship on the first day of the week is the observance of the Lord's Supper.
1. The cited purpose for worshipping on the first day of the week in the first century was to observe the Lord's Supper, Acts 20:7.
 2. The Lord's Supper was considered "...the focal point of the meeting of the early Church" (Karleen).
 3. The apostle Paul and Christians traveling with him waited in Troas seven days for the church to assemble again and to observe the Lord's Supper (indicating that the first century church was accustomed to assembling for worship and observance of the Lord's Supper each first day of the week), Acts 20:6-7.
 4. The Lord's Supper, also called in Scripture "breaking bread," "communion" and "Lord's Table" is a timeless memorial to the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ for

the redemption of humanity, Matt. 26:26-28; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 10:16, 20; 11:20, 23-29.

- C. Only one day of the week is correctly and biblically styled as the “Lord’s day.”
 - 1. The expression “on the Lord’s day” appears only once in the Bible, Rev. 1:10.
 - 2. Not otherwise defined in the Bible, the Lord’s Day is defined indirectly by numerous biblical references to a special day of the week under Christianity—the first day of the week.
 - 3. The Lord’s Day is further identified respecting the Lord’s Supper that biblically is authorized exclusively on the first day of the week, 1 Cor. 11:20; Acts 20:7.
 - 4. Hence, the Lord’s Day is the first day of the week.
- D. The Bible authorizes and the first century church under apostolic guidance worshipped God every first day of the week.
 - 1. At least one Bible version translates 1 Cor. 16:2 as “every first day of the week” (*Expanded Translation*).
 - 2. Vincent indicates that the Greek in 1 Cor. 16:2 means “every first day of the week.”
 - 3. The inspired writer of Hebrews warned especially Jewish Christians of the first century to assemble each time the church convened for worship, Heb. 10:25.

II. Additional contemporary religious holidays are manmade, and they are not biblically authorized, Col. 2:14-17.

- A. The Bible knows nothing of a religious holy day called Christmas.
 - 1. *McClintock and Strong* notes that “[t]he observance of Christmas is not of divine appointment, nor is it of N.T. origin. The day of Christ’s birth cannot be ascertained from the N.T., or, indeed, from any other source. The fathers of the first three centuries do not speak of any special observance of the nativity.”
 - 2. The word “Christmas” means “Christ’s Mass” and “Christmastide” extends from Christmas Eve through January 6 (12 days of Christmas); both were borrowed from Catholicism (*Unger’s*).
 - 3. While it is never wrong to worship God, it is biblically forbidden to add additional holy days to Christianity,

Col. 1:14-17; Rev. 22:18-19.

- B. The Bible knows nothing of a religious holy day called Easter.
1. The *King James Version* is the only standard Bible translation that has the word “Easter” in Acts 12:4; the others correctly translated the Greek to “Passover.”
 2. No Bible translation teaches anything about Easter; “There is no trace of Easter celebration in the New Testament...” (*ISBE*).
 3. Easter does not originate with Christianity, but comes from paganism: “The word Easter is of Saxon origin, Eastr, the goddess of spring, in whose honor sacrifices were offered about Passover time each year. By the eighth century Anglo-Saxons had adopted the name to designate the celebration of Christ's resurrection” (*Unger's*).
 4. Vine adds: “The term Easter is not of Christian origin.”
- C. Other religious holy days on which to worship God are no more biblically authorized than these we have briefly noted.

Conclusion:

1. Christianity has a special day on which to worship God.
2. That special day is not Easter, Christmas, etc.
3. Christianity's special day on which to worship God is **every first day of the week**.
4. What human tradition has relegated to so-called Easter Sunday, the Bible assigns to every first day of the week, at which time the Lord's Supper is supposed to be observed.

Invitation:

1. Just as it is necessary to worship God exclusively according to biblical instructions, it is essential for people to seek salvation exclusively according to biblical instructions.
2. Jesus said belief and baptism results in salvation, Mark 16:16.
3. Peter likewise instructed an erring child to repent and pray for forgiveness of sin, Acts 8:22.

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Sit Down with Dogs; Rise Up with Fleas!

1 Corinthians 15:33 ASV

Thesis: To caution Christians respecting their associations and affections with the surrounding world.

Song: *We're Marching to Zion*

Introduction:

1. The Bible repeatedly cautions especially the children of God respecting their associations and affections with the surrounding world.
2. Both testaments of the Bible address the dangers of associating with the sinful world.
3. Some of these biblical warnings are positive directives, whereas other biblical warnings are negative prohibitions.
4. Our God only has our best spiritual interest in mind.

Body:

I. Companionship with sinful people leads to apostasy from God.

- A. The principle of the corrupting influence of the ungodly upon the godly is a well-established principle in the **Old Testament**.
 1. God prohibited the nation of Israel to intermingle with the heathen nations of Palestine because of their corrupting influence toward apostasy from God, Deut. 7:1-6.
 2. The multitude usually pursues evil, Exod. 23:2; Matt. 7:13-14.
 3. The companionship of sinners often influences the godly to sin also, Prov. 1:10-16; 4:14.
- B. The principle of the corrupting influence of the ungodly upon the godly is a well-established principle in the **New Testament** as well.
 1. The New Testament repeatedly cautions the children of God about the corrupting influence of the ungodly world, 1 Cor. 15:33 ASV; Jam. 4:4.

2. Christians are forbidden to fellowship ungodly brethren because of their corrupting influence, 1 Cor. 5:6; 2 Tim. 2:16; 2 Pet. 2:18-20.
3. The calculated result known ahead of time for fraternizing with ungodliness around us is that the children of God will imperil and quite possibly lose their souls, 2 Cor. 6:14-18.

II. Companionship with faithful children of God guards against spiritual apostasy.

- A. The Old Testament charged the people of God in those past ages to seek the company of the godly.
 1. This is first accomplished by seeking to serve God foremost, Josh. 24:15.
 2. Old Testament Scripture also admonishes the children of God to associate with faithful children of God rather than ungodly children of God who will lead one to destructive ends, Prov. 13:20.
- B. The New Testament charges Christians to prefer fellowship with other Christians.
 1. Christians must exhibit the highest form of love for the brotherhood, 1 Pet. 2:17.
 2. Christians must demonstrate brotherly love toward fellow Christians, bestowing esteem upon and giving deference to them, Rom. 12:10.
 3. Though Christians should conduct themselves kindly toward all of humanity, Christians are obligated to esteem brethren in Christ first, 2 Cor. 9:13; Gal. 6:10.

Conclusion:

1. If we sit down with dogs, we will rise up with fleas!
2. If the children of God spend more time with the ungodly world than we do with the people of God, the children of God will be infected with the sinful ways of the ungodly world.
3. If the children of God love the world, the world will corrupt them and make them also the enemies of God, 1 John 2:15-17; Jam. 4:4.
4. We must determine that though we live in the world we will not be of the world, knowing full well that the world will hate us, John 17:14-16.

Invitation:

1. Jesus will return one day exclusively for his faithful followers, but who will be ready, John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:13-18?

2. However, if we sit down with dogs, we will rise up with fleas!
3. Erring Christians and unbaptized believers alike need to be cleansed from the fleas of sin, 1 John 1:9; Acts 2:38.

20 Questions or Divine Checklist

2 Corinthians 13:5

Thesis: Self-examination respecting fundamental Bible doctrines.

Introduction:

1. It would difficult to impossible to ascertain how long the childhood game of 20 questions has been around.
 - a. That's the game where one person either holds something in his closed hand or simply thinks of an object, and one or more other persons ask a series of questions until they think they know the answer.
 - b. The first question was usually, "Is it animal, vegetable or mineral?"
2. From 1946 to 1954, 20 questions was made into an immensely popular radio show by the Van Deventer family from New Jersey ("Twenty").
3. Today, the "Twenty Questions" persists in the form of an electronic game shaped like an orb and selling for under \$20.
4. However, the phrase "twenty questions" has passed into our language as a sort of proverb that represents the *nuts and bolts* or essential information about any subject.
 - a. For instance, journalists are portrayed as posing their 20 questions.
 - b. Many knowledge-based Internet sites and pieces of printed literature resort to a 20 questions format to define themselves or that for which they stand.
5. The concept of 20 questions has its place in religion as well.
 - a. Essentially, God through the Bible calls on each person to pose "20 questions" to himself, 2 Cor. 13:5.
 - b. Further, essentially, God will pose to each soul at the Judgment his list of "20 questions," Ecc. 12:13-14; John 12:48; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 20:12.
 - c. Please number a sheet of paper from one to 20, and then answer "yes" or "no" for each question as we address it.

Body:

I. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God, born of a virgin, who died for our sins and who was raised from the dead (Yes or No)?

- A. Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God, John 3:16.
- B. Scripture affirms Jesus was virgin born, Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23.
- C. Jesus died for our sins, Rom. 5:8.
- D. Belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is fundamental to Christianity, Rom. 10:9; 6:4.

II. Have you repented or are you willing to repent now of your sins (Yes or No)?

- A. All accountable souls sin, Rom. 3:23.
- B. Repentance is a universal requirement, Acts 17:30.
- C. God requires everyone to repent to avoid eternal ruin, Luke 13:3, 5; 2 Pet. 3:9.

III. Have you professed your faith in Jesus Christ before your fellow man (Yes or No)?

- A. Confession of faith in Jesus Christ leads to salvation, Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9-10.
- B. Two outstanding examples of confessing Jesus Christ appear in the New Testament, Matt. 16:16; Acts 8:37.

IV. Have you been baptized (Yes or No)?

- A. Jesus intended for people of all nations to be baptized, Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16.
- B. Baptism is a command that must be obeyed, Acts 10:48.

V. Have you been baptized by immersion in water (Yes or No)?

- A. Bible baptism is a burial (in water), Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12.
- B. Examples of Bible baptism utilize much water and imply immersion, John 3:23; Acts 8:37.

VI. Have you been baptized for the remission or forgiveness of your sins (Yes or No)?

- A. The object of baptism is the remission or forgiveness of sins, Acts 2:38; 22:16
- B. Consequently, Bible baptism is associated with salvation and the proper cleansing of one's conscience, 1 Pet. 3:21.

VII. Are you a Christian (Yes or No)?

- A. A Christian is someone who has put on Christ in baptism, Gal. 3:27.
- B. A Christian is someone who forsakes sin and practices righteousness according to the Word of God, Rom. 6:16-18.

- C. A Christian is someone who is in Christ and hence a new creature, 2 Cor. 5:17.

VIII. Do you love God with all of your being (Yes or No)?

- A. Both testaments record God's requirement that mankind love him first and foremost, Matt. 22:37; Deut. 6:5.
- B. To be approved of God, we must love God more than we love family, Matt. 10:37.
- C. The Christian's love is evident through obedience to God, John 14:15.

IX. Have you been faithful in attendance to the appointed assemblies of the church (Yes or No)?

- A. Failure to attend the appointed assemblies is willful sin, for which God will severely punish offenders, Heb. 10:25-31.
- B. Those who separate themselves from the rest of the brethren, inclusive of the assemblies, are sensual and lacking the Holy Spirit, Jude 19.
- C. The early church "continued stedfastly" in their assemblies for worship, Acts 2:42.

X. Is your life characterized by purity of life (Yes or No)?

- A. Only the pure in life will see God, Matt. 5:8.
- B. Even our thoughts must be pure, Phil. 4:8.
- C. The Christian life is not immoral, 1 Tim. 5:22; 2 Tim. 2:22.
- D. The Christian's pure life is accented with faithful service (activity), Jam. 1:27.

XI. Are you dedicated to spreading the Gospel (Yes or No)?

- A. We cannot successfully claim to be the disciple of Jesus Christ unless we share the burden of his mission, Luke 19:10; 14:27.
- B. If we are not furthering the will of Jesus Christ, we are working against him, Matt. 12:30.

XII. Do you pray regularly (Yes or No)?

- A. Christians always must possess the willingness to pray, 1 Thess. 5:17.
- B. The prayers of devoted Christians are effectual, Jam. 5:16.

XIII. Do you study the Bible regularly (Yes or No)?

- A. Christians have the obligation to regularly study the Word of God, 1 Tim. 2:15.
- B. Learning the Truth through the Word of God sanctifies one and enables him to be free from sin, John 17:17; 8:32.

XIV. Are you a faithful Christian (Yes or No)?

- A. Nothing short of faithfulness will permit one to receive an eternal reward, 2 Tim. 4:6-8; Rev. 2:10.
- B. Not everyone will hear the words, “Well done thou good and faithful servant,” Matt. 25:21.

XV. Have you presented your body and life as a living sacrifice (Yes or No)?

- A. Every Christian is supposed to be a living sacrifice, Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Pet. 2:5.
- B. Christians are supposed to be blameless, harmless and not deserving rebuke amidst a sinfully crooked world, Phil. 2:15.
- C. Christians are supposed to be drawn to God rather than to the ungodly world, Heb. 10:22.

XVI. Are you following the steps of Jesus Christ (Yes or No)?

- A. Jesus Christ is man’s supreme example, 1 Pet. 2:21.
- B. Christians must choose the walk that Jesus walked, 1 John 2:6.

XVII. Do you seek God and his kingdom first in your life (Yes or No)?

- A. Jesus plainly said that we must seek him and spiritual things before we concern ourselves with worldly matters, Matt. 6:33.
- B. The child of God’s primary pursuit in life must be service rendered to God, John 6:27.

XVIII. If you are a Christian, have you sinned publicly or privately, for which you have not sought forgiveness (Yes or No)?

- A. The erring child of God must repent and pray, Acts 8:22.
- B. Happily, God desires to forgive our sins, 1 John 1:9.

XIX. Are you a light on a hill, salt with savor and a fruit-bearing branch (Yes or No)?

- A. Do men see our good works and glorify God, Matt. 5:16?
- B. Except we bear fruit for the Lord, we cannot be saved, John 15:1-8.

XX. Do you want to go to heaven (Yes or No)?

- A. Jesus promised to prepare a home in heaven for a prepared people, John 14:1-3.
- B. Jesus will return for his people, 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

Conclusion:

1. Obviously, this list could be expanded or modified to include every

biblical requirement invoked on the children of God through the Bible.

2. Did you pass the test of 20 questions; a single “no” constitutes failure!
3. You ascertained your current eternal destination by your “yes” and “no” answers.

Invitation:

1. Are you happy with the outcome and what it reveals about your eternal destiny; if not what are you going to do about it?
2. Jesus Christ will punish the disobedient and save the obedient, 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Heb. 5:8-9.
3. Unbaptized believers need to obey the Scriptures relevant to the forgiveness of past sins, Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:9-10.
4. Erring Christians need to acknowledge their sins and pray for forgiveness, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

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Wasted Sermons in the Bible

Matthew 13:13-17

Thesis: To encourage auditors of Gospel preaching when faithfully proclaimed to acknowledge and apply it to their lives.

Introduction:

1. Any sermon that is not heeded is a wasted sermon, at least for those who fail to take it seriously.
2. Yet, in both testaments of the Bible, God has determined that preaching is the primary way by which he wants his will taught to humanity, Neh. 8:1-8; Rom. 10:13-17.
3. However, under both testaments, even God's people often disregarded God's message that was proclaimed through his preaching servants, Isa. 53:1; 1 Thess. 2:13.
4. Hence, the Bible records many sermons that were wasted on many who heard them.

Body:

I. Some wasted sermons in the Old Testament.

- A. Evidently, Noah preached many wasted sermons.
 1. Scripture calls Noah a preacher of righteousness, 2 Pet. 2:5.
 2. Noah had the opportunity to preach for 120 years from the time God announced the impending universal flood until it came to pass, Gen. 6:3.
 3. Despite all of the preaching by Noah, only eight souls were saved, Gen. 6:10; 7:7; 1 Pet. 3:20.
 4. Noah's countless wasted sermons led to the destruction of all humans except those eight souls.
- B. Moses also preached many wasted sermons.
 1. God's words through Moses were wasted on Pharaoh, and consequently, God visited the Ten Plagues on Egypt, which culminated with the death of the firstborn children and animals, Exod. 7-13.
 2. Throughout the 40 years of wilderness wandering, Moses sermons were wasted on the disobedient people

of Israel, so that all of the adults who left Egypt died in the wilderness (except Joshua and Caleb), Exod., Lev., Num. and Deut.

- C. The prophet Elijah preached wasted sermons.
 - 1. Elijah triumphed for God on Mt. Carmel in the confrontation with the prophets of Baal, 1 Kings 18.
 - 2. After Queen Jezebel threatened his life, Elijah fled, leaving his post as a preacher of God, 1 Kings 19:1-10.
 - 3. Elijah thought that all his preaching and efforts were in vain or wasted, 1 Kings 19:9-10, 14, 18.
 - 4. Though Elijah's sermons were largely wasted on ungodly Israel, God sent Elijah back to work as a preacher of God, 1 Kings 19:15.
- D. Many of Isaiah's sermons were wasted, Isa. 6:9-10.
- E. Jeremiah, likewise, found himself preaching wasted sermons, Jer. 6:16.
- F. Ezekiel's sermons were wasted on the house of Israel, Ezek. 3:4-7.
- G. The prophet Hosea's sermons were often wasted as well, Hos. 4:6.
- H. Amos' sermons were largely wasted on his generation, Amos 2:4-6.
- I. Zechariah and Malachi's sermons were wasted on God's people in their day, Zech. 7:8-14; Mal. 3:7.
- J. Essentially, the whole Old Testament was a sermon from God, which, however, most of mankind rejected, Zech. 1:3-4..

II. Some wasted sermons in the New Testament.

- A. Many of the sermons and parables of Jesus Christ proved to be wasted sermons.
 - 1. Especially the Jews from the region where Jesus lived previously were offended at Jesus, and on them his words essentially were wasted, Matt. 13:53-58.
 - 2. The rich young ruler turned from Jesus, to whom our Lord's words were wasted, Matt. 19:16-22.
 - 3. Obviously, the words of Jesus were wasted upon those who were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.
 - 4. Likewise, the words of Jesus are wasted on everyone who rejects him and his Holy Word, Matt. 10:33; John

12:48.

- B. The apostle Peter was another preacher whose sermons were often wasted on his auditors.
 - 1. Peter's sermon recorded in Acts 2 was not wasted on about 3,000 who responded, but that historic Gospel sermon was wasted on the approximate one million others present in Jerusalem that day.
 - 2. The apostle Peter's sermons were wasted on the religious leaders of his day who hindered his preaching, imprisoned him and beat him, Acts 4:1-3; 5:17-18, 40.
- C. Stephen preached wasted sermons, especially on the religious leaders of his day who caused him to be stoned to death, Acts 7:58-60.
- D. More appears in the New Testament regarding the apostle Paul, and he accomplished more good than perhaps any other preacher in the first century, but many of his sermons proved to be wasted as well.
 - 1. Soon after his conversion, Paul's preaching in Damascus was wasted on those who sought to kill him (escaping in a basket over a wall).
 - 2. Paul's preaching was wasted on the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia, after which Paul preached the Gospel to the Gentiles there, Acts 13:44-49.
 - 3. Citizens in Iconium were divided over Paul's preaching, and Paul had to flee for his life again, Acts 14:1ff.
 - 4. Paul's preaching in Macedonia was wasted upon those who caused him to be imprisoned for his preaching, Acts 16:16-24.
 - 5. Despite the several instances when Paul's preaching was not readily received, he nevertheless was unashamed of the Gospel, Rom. 1:16.
- E. The New Testament itself is essentially God's sermon to mankind today, but it largely is wasted on most who come in contact with it.
 - 1. The New Testament is wasted toward those who will be condemned by it, 2 Thess. 1:7-9.
 - 2. The New Testament is not wasted toward those who it saves and perfects, 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jam. 1:25; 2 Tim.

3:15.

Conclusion:

1. Preachers, like everyone else, want to feel a sense of accomplishment in their chosen vocation.
2. Whereas it is a great discouragement to a preacher for his preaching to be ignored, every preacher is amply encouraged when he knows people appreciate and apply his preaching of the Gospel.
3. Doubtless there are some in every preacher's audience for whom the sermon is wasted.
4. Yet, every faithful preacher of God senses a great compulsion to preach the Word of God, Ezek. 3:10-11, 27; 1 Cor. 9:16.

Invitation:

1. How many sermons have been wasted on you?
2. Is the Gospel message to the unbaptized believer a wasted sermon here today, Mark 16:16?
3. Is the Gospel's second law of pardon for erring Christians a wasted sermon here today, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9?

The Church of Tomorrow

1 Corinthians 15:58

Thesis: To reflect on the conditional propagation of the Lord's church from one generation to each successive generation in any given community.

Introduction:

1. Will the Lord's church be visible in this or in any other community in the future?
2. The appearance of the Lord's church in a community today is no guarantee that it will be meeting in the future.
3. The invisible, universal church from the birthday of the church in Acts 2, throughout all time thereafter and which Jesus Christ will take to heaven, of course, always exists.
4. However, will the visible, local church exist in the community for future generations?
5. We know that many of the congregations mentioned in the Bible as well as congregations in our lifetimes have either closed or apostatized away from truth.

Body:

- I. If the Lord's church in any community apostatizes, the church for which Jesus died will no longer be visible there.**
 - A. Were all the churches of Christ around the world to turn from God's Word and fashion themselves into a denomination, the Lord's church would not be visible anywhere on the planet.
 - B. However, wherever a congregation remains true to the Scriptures only, the Lord's church will continue to be visible on earth.
 - C. Following the death of the apostles, the Lord's church widely apostatized, just as it was prophesied would occur, 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Thess. 2:1-4; Acts 20:29-30, i.e. Roman Catholic Church.
 1. There was also widespread apostasy following the restoration of New Testament Christianity in America, i.e. missionary society (1849), instrumental music in worship (1859).

2. Likewise, many churches of Christ in our lifetimes have apostatized, e.g. Belmont church of Christ (Nashville), International Churches of Christ.
- D. A number of methods have been and continue to be employed by which the Lord's church has been and is being led into apostasy.
1. Disunity and internal division has ruined many churches, 1 Cor. 1:10-13.
 2. Partial perversions of the Gospel threatened the first century church and are no less threatening to the Lord's church today, Gal. 1:6-9.
 3. False teachers leading off disciples after them threatens the Lord's church in any generation, Acts 20:29-30.
 4. Good words and fair speeches instead of the plain, unadulterated Word of God has corrupted the purity of many churches, Rom. 16:17-18.
 5. Liars, hypocrites and makers of new laws threaten the Lord's church in every generation, 1 Tim. 4:1-3.
 6. Twisting and perverting the doctrines of Christ ruin the church, too, 1 Cor. 15 (resurrection); 1 Thess. 4; Matt. 24 (Second Coming); 2 Thess. 1 (Catholicism, denominationalism).
- E. Once any congregation of the Lord's church ceases to abide by the authority of God expressed in the Bible, it then ceases to be a manifestation of the church for which Jesus died.
- F. Therefore, the New Testament warns against apostasy, 1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Pet. 3:14; Rev. 2:10; 2 Pet. 2:20-22.

II. If the Lord's church in any community fails its mission to evangelize its community, the church for which Jesus died will no longer be visible there.

- A. Without evangelization (in our own families and in the community), within one generation the Lord's church can cease to be visible in a community or throughout the whole world.
- B. However, anywhere a congregation successfully evangelizes its own family members and the community, the Lord's church will be visible in that community in the future.
 1. Once in the first century, evangelism by the churches of Christ extended throughout the world, Col. 1:23.
 2. Once in parts of the two preceding centuries, the

churches of Christ were the fastest growing religion in our country.

3. Lack of evangelism will greatly diminish the number of congregations meeting in communities throughout the world.
- C. Each individual Christian is either part of the solution or part of the problem respecting, “Will the Lord’s church be visible in the future in the community?”
- D. All of the churches of Christ mentioned in the Bible vanished, e.g. Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, Corinth, Thessalonica, Rev. 2-3, 1 Cor.; 1 Thess., etc.

Conclusion:

1. Any congregation is susceptible to apostasy whereby it will no longer contribute to the visibility of the Lord’s church in the future, 1 Cor. 10:12.
2. Every local congregation must fortify itself with the Word of God to avoid potential apostasy.
 - a. Christians must vigorously pursue spiritual maturity, Heb. 5:14; 2 Tim. 2:15.
 - b. Everyone who fails to attend as many Bible classes and worship services as he or she can and fails to study at home is a threat to the existence of the Lord’s church in the community in the future, Heb. 5:12-13.
 - c. Every congregation has spiritual babies in it who never seem to mature, and each of us needs to ask ourselves, “Am I a baby in Christ whose immaturity threatens the future existence of this congregation?”
3. Every local congregation must evangelize its community to ensure the Lord’s church will be visible in the community in the future.
 - a. The Great Commission to evangelize the world was not merely a suggestion that Jesus made, it remains a solemn command, Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16.
 - b. Every congregation is one generation away from non-existence, owing to whether it evangelizes its families and its community.
4. The church of tomorrow in any community is dependent on the church of today in the same community.

- a. Each Christian is personally responsible for the existence or non-existence of the local church in this community in the future.
- b. Ask yourselves this question, “Am I personally contributing to the visible existence of the local church tomorrow in my community?”

Invitation:

1. Only faithful Christians can contribute to the propagation of the church today in the world of tomorrow, by telling the world about the biblical plan of salvation.
2. Unbaptized believers must be immersed in water for the remission of their sins, Acts 2:38.
3. Erring Christians must repent and pray for forgiveness, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9; Jam. 5:19-20.

The Kingdom of God

1 Corinthians 15:24-28

Thesis: To show that Jesus Christ is King of his kingdom now.

Introduction:

1. Four necessary components comprise every kingdom.
 - a. This is true respecting earthly kingdoms.
 - b. This is true respecting the devil's kingdom of darkness.
 - c. This is even true respecting the Lord's kingdom.
2. The four necessary components of every kingdom are:
 - a. Territory,
 - b. Subjects,
 - c. A king,
 - d. Law.

Body:

I. Our Lord's kingdom has territory.

- A. Our Lord's kingdom encompasses the entire world, Mark 16:15-16.
 1. Our Lord's kingdom is international.
 2. Our Lord's kingdom is universal.
 3. There is no place on the planet where humans live to which the Gospel does not need to go.
- B. Hence, the Gospel of our Lord's kingdom needs to be taken to the uttermost part of the earth, Acts 1:8.
 1. Every class of people must hear the Gospel.
 2. No culture is exempt from responsibility to the Gospel of the kingdom.
- C. Human hearts comprise the territory of the Lord's kingdom, irrespective of whether they are receptive to the Gospel of the kingdom, Luke 8:4-15.

II. The kingdom of God has subjects.

- A. The kingdom of God reaches all nations.
 1. Isaiah prophesied that "all nations shall flow into it," Isa. 2:2.
 2. The Great Commission charged the apostles to teach and baptize the nations, Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:46-47.

3. The apostles of Christ understood that it was God's plan for all nations to be beneficiaries God's blessings, Acts 10:34-35; Rom. 16:25-26.
- B. Every creature is a subject amenable to the kingdom of God, Mark 16:15-16.
1. If there were men of no nation, they are still subjects amenable to the kingdom of God.
 2. If there were men of no particular race or family, they are still subjects amenable to the kingdom of God.
 3. Every human is a subject amenable to the kingdom of God.
- C. "Whosoever will" can be a faithful subject in the kingdom of God.
1. While all souls are subjects amenable to the kingdom of God, not all souls are citizens in the kingdom of God.
 2. "Whosoever will" can be saved and become a faithful subject of the kingdom of God, Rom. 10:13; Rev. 22:17.

III. The kingdom of God has a King.

- A. Prophecies foretold of the coming of the King.
1. Jeremiah prophesied of the coming King, Jer. 23:5-6.
 2. The Wiseman inquired of the one born "King of the Jews," Matt. 2:2.
- B. Jesus Christ was to reign on the throne of David.
1. Isaiah foretold that the Christ would reign on the throne of David, Isa. 9:6-7.
 2. An angel informed Mary the mother of Jesus that Jesus would reign on a throne as God, Luke 1:31-33.
 3. Peter in the first recorded Gospel sermon avowed that Jesus Christ was sitting on the throne of David in fulfillment of prophecies, Acts 2:29-36.
- C. Jesus Christ is now reigning as King of the kingdom of God.
1. Jesus has been reigning as King on the throne of David since at least Acts 2:30-33.
 2. Jesus is now reigning as King and will cease to reign as King upon his Second Coming, 1 Cor. 15:24-28.
- D. Jesus Christ is King of the kingdom at the same time he is Head of the church.
1. Jesus used the terms "church" and "kingdom"

- interchangeably, Matt. 16:18-19.
2. Jesus promised that the kingdom would come with power within that generation, and it was the church that came with power in that generation, Mark 9:1; Acts 2:1-47.
 3. John the Baptist and Jesus Christ preached that the kingdom was to come shortly, and it was the church that came shortly, Matt. 3:1-2; 4:17; Acts 2:1-47.
 4. Jesus Christ is the head of the church, Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18.

IV. The kingdom of God has law.

- A. The Word of God is the Law of the God's kingdom.
 1. Mankind is supposed to live in accordance with every word of the Lord, Matt. 4:4.
 2. Only Jesus has the words of eternal life, John 6:68.
 3. The Word of God is called by James "the perfect law of liberty," Jam. 2:12.
- B. The law of the kingdom of God is perfect.
 1. The perfect law converts the soul, Psa. 19:7.
 2. Practitioners of "the perfect law of liberty" are blessed thereby, Jam. 1:25.
- C. The law of the kingdom of God is sufficient.
 1. It is the basis of doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction and all good works, 2 Tim. 3:16-17.
 2. God has provided mankind all things that pertain to life and godliness, 2 Pet. 1:3.
- D. The law of the kingdom will judge humanity.
 1. The words of Jesus will condemn those who have rejected our Lord and his words, John 12:48.
 2. At Final Judgment, the law of the kingdom will judge all those who lived under it, Rev. 20:12.

Conclusion:

1. All souls reside in the territorial reach of the kingdom of God.
 - a. The universal scope of the kingdom of God spans space, time and the spiritual realm.
 - b. There are no havens from the jurisdiction of the kingdom of God.
2. All souls are amenable to the to the kingdom of God and its laws.
 - a. Obviously, not all mankind is obeying the laws of the kingdom of God.

- b. Nevertheless, all men are bound by the law of God's kingdom.
- 3. Jesus Christ is the King of his kingdom.
 - a. He has all authority on earth and in heaven, Matt. 28:18.
 - b. Every soul will appear in Final Judgment before "the judgment seat of Christ," 2 Cor. 5:10.
- 4. The law of the kingdom applies to all men.
 - a. There is not an accountable soul living who is not subject to the law of the kingdom.
 - b. Those who do not obey the laws of the kingdom are transgressors or sinners, 1 John 3:4.

Invitation:

- 1. Everyone can be a faithful citizen in the kingdom of God just as Christians were in the first century, Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:9.
- 2. Non-Christians can put Jesus Christ on in baptism, Gal. 3:27.
- 3. Erring Christians can return to God, Luke 15:11-32.

Prophetic Overview of the Kingdom

2 Samuel 7:12-16

Thesis: To survey what the prophecies about the kingdom promised.

Introduction:

1. The purpose of this lesson is to survey the prophecies about the New Testament kingdom of God.
2. In several instances, prophecies concerning the kingdom cannot be separated from prophecies about the King of that kingdom.
3. Surveying several kingdom prophecies paint a picture of that kingdom.
4. The New Testament kingdom or church should correspond to the kingdom prophecies, and they do!

Body:

- I. **Several Old Testament prophecies pertain to the New Testament kingdom of God.**
 - A. The first prophecy relative to the New Testament kingdom of God is Genesis 3:15.
 1. Genesis 3:15 is a veiled prophecy, about which we would understand little or nothing except for other passages throughout the Bible, Gal. 4:4.
 2. Genesis 3:15 foretells the victory of Christ over Satan that occurred at the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which pertained to the establishment of the church or New Testament kingdom, Matt. 16:18-19.
 - B. A promise that God repeatedly made to Abraham was a prophecy about the New Testament kingdom of God, Gen. 12:1-3; 18:18; 22:17-18.
 1. God promised that through a descendant of Abraham all nations would be blessed.
 2. By inspiration, the apostle Paul identified that seed or descendant as Jesus Christ alone, Gal. 3:8, 13-18.
 3. The way through which Jesus Christ blessed all nations was through the establishment of the church or kingdom, Acts 2:47.

- C. The Old Testament prophecy respecting raising another prophet-lawgiver pertained to Jesus Christ and the establishment of the church or kingdom, Deut. 18:15, 18-19; cf. Acts 3:19-26.
 - 1. The apostle Peter quoted Deuteronomy 18 and applied the prophecy to Jesus Christ, Acts 3:22-23.
 - 2. The apostle Peter preached that “these days,” representing the New Testament era of the church and the kingdom of God, was the subject of all of the Old Testament prophecies, Acts 3:24.
 - 3. Peter further affirmed that the church or kingdom was the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham, Acts 3:25.
- D. God promised King David that a descendant of his would establish an eternal kingdom, 2 Sam. 7:12-16.
 - 1. On the birthday of the church, the apostle Peter proclaimed the fulfillment of the prophecy made to King David, Acts 2:29-36.
 - 2. References to the “throne” of David respecting Jesus Christ pertain to the New Testament kingdom of God, Acts 2:30.
 - 3. Once more the correlation appears between the prophecy of Jesus Christ in Matthew 16:18-19 about the kingdom and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Acts 2:31-32.
- E. Psalm 2:6-7 promised that God would establish a King in Jerusalem, referring to the New Testament kingdom.
 - 1. References to a King indicate a kingdom.
 - 2. The apostle Paul identified the King of Psalm 2:6-7 as Jesus Christ, Acts 13:33.
- F. Psalm 45:6 contained a prophecy that the New Testament assigned to the New Testament kingdom of Jesus Christ, Heb. 1:8; Luke 1:32-33.
- G. Psalm 89:3-4, 29, 36-37 teaches the eternity of the New Testament kingdom and that it would come to pass through the seed of David.
- H. Psalm 132:11-13 declared that God would establish an eternal kingdom in Zion (Jerusalem) through a descendant of David.
- I. Isaiah 2:2-3 is a primary prophecy about the establishment of

the New Testament kingdom.

1. The kingdom of prophecy was to be established in the “last days,” Acts 2:17; 2 Tim. 3:1; 2 Pet. 3:3.
 2. The city in which the kingdom was to be established is Zion or Jerusalem, Acts 2:1-5.
- J. Isaiah 9:6-7 affirmed that the “throne of David” would be established in the New Testament kingdom with God on that throne.
- K. Isaiah 40:3-5 announced preparation for the kingdom to be established, which pertained to John the Baptist, Matt. 3:1-3.
- L. Isaiah 62:1-2 made announcements pertaining to the New Testament kingdom.
1. Reference to the Gentiles or the nations being the recipients of God’s saving message is mirrored in Luke’s account of the Great Commission, 24:46-47.
 2. A new name for God’s people was promised also after the Gentiles received the blessings of God’s message, Acts 11:26.
 3. Zion or Jerusalem, again, is noted as the beginning place of the New Testament kingdom.
- M. Jeremiah 23:5-6 prophesied of the King of the New Testament kingdom who would be a descendant of King David.
- N. Daniel 2:31-45 revealed the time during which the eternal kingdom of God was to be established, i.e. Roman Empire.
- O. Daniel 7:13-14, 27 proclaimed the universal kingdom that would affect all nations.
- P. Joel 2:28-32 chronicled the beginning of the New Testament kingdom in Zion or Jerusalem.
1. The beginning would be accompanied with miraculous power, Acts 2:16-21.
 2. Salvation was to be a primary characteristic of the New Testament kingdom, Rom. 10:13.
- Q. Micah 5:2 identified Bethlehem as the birthplace of the King of the New Testament kingdom.
- R. Zechariah 6:12-13 prophesied that the King of the kingdom would not only rule on his throne but that he would be priest as well.
1. Jesus Christ could not be priest under the Old Testament, Heb. 7:12-14; 8:4.

2. Jesus Christ is the High Priest in the New Testament kingdom of God, the church, Heb. 3:1.
- S. Zechariah 9:9 prophesied that the King of the kingdom of prophecy would arrive on a donkey, Matt. 21:5; John 12:14-15.
- T. Malachi 3:1 and 4:5-6 prophesied that God would send a prophet like Elijah to prepare the way of the great King, Matt. 3:1-3; cf. Isa. 40:3-5.
- U. Matthew 3:1-3 itself prophesied of the impending arrival of the kingdom of Old Testament prophecy.
- V. Jesus Christ preached the same message of the impending arrival of the kingdom of prophecy, Matt. 4:17.
- W. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he included instructions to pray for the coming kingdom, Matt. 6:10.
- X. In Matthew 16:18-19, Jesus Christ promised to build his church, the kingdom.
- Y. In Mark 9:1, Jesus promised that the kingdom would come with power within the lifetime of those to whom he was speaking.
- Z. The penitent thief on the cross was well aware of the kingdom that had been preached, and the kingdom had not yet been established, Luke 23:42-43.
- AA. The New Testament kingdom had not been established by the time of the Ascension of Jesus Christ, but the apostles were told to go to Jerusalem, whereupon ten days later, the kingdom was established, Acts 1:4-12.

II. These kingdom prophecies were fulfilled in the establishment of the New Testament church or kingdom.

- A. All of the Old Testament prophecies about the New Testament kingdom were fulfilled on the birthday of the church in about A.D. 33, Acts 2:1-47.
- B. That the church was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies concerning the eternal kingdom continued to be the subject of Gospel preaching, Acts 3:19-26.
- C. Both Stephen and the apostle Paul summarized Old Testament kingdom prophecies and New Testament fulfillment through the church, Acts 7; 13.
- D. The apostle Paul affirmed about A.D. 57 that Jesus Christ was reigning over the eternal kingdom and would cease to reign at the Second Coming, 1 Cor. 15:24-28.

- E. The apostle Paul affirmed that the church or kingdom was in the eternal purpose of God, Eph. 3:4-12.
- F. In about A.D. 62, the apostle Paul noted that he and the Colossian Christians were members of the kingdom or the church, Col. 1:13, 18.
- G. In about A.D. 95, the apostle John recorded that he and Christians then living were members of the kingdom, Rev. 1:9.

Conclusion:

1. Old Testament prophecies adequately predict the eternal kingdom of the New Testament.
2. The New Testament church or the kingdom corresponds in minute detail to Old Testament prophecies about the eternal kingdom.
3. Jesus Christ is King of his kingdom and Head of the church now!
4. Jesus Christ will continue to rule as King until the Second Coming.

Invitation:

1. True salvation is a primary characteristic of the New Testament kingdom or the church, Rom. 10:13; Acts 2:47.
2. Jesus stated God's redemptive plan simply, Mark 16:16.
3. Further, the apostles Peter and John wrote about salvation for erring Christians, Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:9.

Sin in the Camp

Joshua 7:11-13

Thesis: To alert brethren to the consequences of sin, not only for sinners, but to alert brethren to the effect of sin upon the children of God as well.

Song: *There's a Great Day Coming*

Introduction:

1. Though not the law by which people living today will be judged, the Old Testament provides invaluable information and principles that are applicable to Christians, Rom. 15:4.
2. "Sin in the Camp" is a classic statement that many a preacher over several decades has either included in a sermon or with which he has titled his sermon.
3. "Sin in the Camp" is derived from the sad account of Achan's sin, Josh. 6:18-19; 7:11-15, 24-26.
4. Consider an excerpt from the writings of the late William S. Cline, Gospel preacher and Editor of *Firm Foundation*:

The contrast between chapter six and chapter seven of Joshua is striking. ...God was not with them at Ai because they were no longer with God—there was sin in the camp. ...When that covenant (sic) was violated (7:11), his [God's] wrath was set ablaze, and he would no longer bless them until they had obtained his pardon. Only then would they again enjoy victory (8:1). ...only one was directly guilty. ...Yet, the trespass of Achan was imputed to the whole congregation, and the entire nation of Israel was soon to suffer shame, disgrace, and defeat...Being one body, God attributed the crime of the individual to the entire congregation until the trespass was discovered and public discipline carried out. It was not that the nation approved of the action of Achan, but that he had robbed the people of the purity and the holiness which they possessed before God. Israel had to purge itself of the iniquity, and until the sinner was separated from them and disowned by them there would be sin in the camp. ...the sins of others may very well result in damage to ourselves. ...there are multitudes of clowns that call themselves preachers who make pretensions of peace and optimistically prate the philosophy that love will make right all of the wrongs that are in existence. ...God's proposition of Israel's

restoration to his favor was not on the basis of excusing and overlooking the sin. ...Joshua made the statement that Achan's sin had been a great trouble to Israel and that on that day the Lord would trouble Achan. (116+)

5. Beyond the tragedy of the affect of Achan's sin on himself and on his family, his sin adversely affected the congregation of Israel.
6. God refused to commune with Israel until Israel removed sin from the camp.
7. God styled Achan as "the troubler of Israel," 1 Chron. 2:7.

Body:

I. Sin in the camp defiles the people of God.

- A. Achan made himself and Israel "accursed" before God when he stole from God, Josh. 6:18.
 1. Sin always separates between man and God, Isa. 59:1-2.
 2. Achan as well as Israel became unacceptable to God, Josh. 7:11.
 3. The Lord's church in first century Corinth likewise became unacceptable to God because it allowed one man's sin to go unchallenged, 1 Cor. 5:1-13.
- B. Israel could not defeat the city of Ai without God on its side, Josh. 7:12.
 1. Neither can the Lord's church win against Satan without God on its side, John 15:5.
 2. Israel in Joshua's day had to sanctify itself and remove the sinner from among itself to regain God's favor, Josh. 7:13-15.
 3. Likewise, spiritual Israel must sanctify itself and remove sinners from its midst to regain God's favor, 1 Cor. 5:4-5, 11-13.

II. Sin in the camp occurs because of the transgression of God's Word.

- A. Sin is the transgression of God's Word, 1 John 3:4.
 1. God had instructed Israel sufficiently before Achan's sin, Josh. 6:17-19.
 2. Likewise, the Corinthian congregation had received sufficient instruction from God through the apostle Paul in a previous epistle, 1 Cor. 5:9-10.
 3. Achan had no excuse for—he could not justify—his sin, Josh. 7:20-21.

4. Likewise today, Christians have no excuse and cannot justify sin in the camp, 2 Thess. 3:14.
- B. Achan's sin brought harm to Israel, his family and himself, Josh. 7:5, 24-26.
1. Likewise, the erring Christian harms the Lord's church, his family and himself, 1 Cor. 5:2, 6.
 2. Already out of fellowship with God, Achan was removed from the fellowship of Israel.
 3. Already out of fellowship with God, impenitent, erring Christians must be removed from the fellowship of spiritual Israel today, 1 Cor. 5:4-13; 2 Thess. 3:6.

III. What excuse is satisfactory for not removing sin in the camp?

- A. Some suppose that the Parable of the Tares teaches against the exercise of church discipline, Matt. 13.
1. The proof-text for this theory is: "Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn," Matt 13:30.
 2. The "field," though, in which the tares were sown is the "world"—not the church!
- B. Some suppose that all judgment is forbidden, and therefore humans cannot exercise church discipline toward erring Christians, Matt. 7:1-2.
1. However, the context contrasts unrighteous judgment with righteous judgment, Matt. 7:1-5.
 2. A few verse later, Jesus instructed his auditors to make correct judgments, Matt. 7:15-20.
- C. Some suppose that because no one is perfect, no one can exercise church discipline toward ungodly Christians, Rom. 3:23; 1 John 1:8, 10.
1. The church's responsibility to police itself is not about "perfection," but about "obedience" versus "disobedience," Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rom. 6:17.
 2. Church discipline, when needed, is commanded by God, Rom. 16:17-18; Titus 3:10; 1 Cor. 5:4-5; **2 Thess. 3:6.**
- D. Some suppose that because they sense that an unfaithful Christian has already withdrawn himself from the congregation that it is not necessary for the church to take

any action.

1. Have we forgotten that the Lord adds the saved to the church, Acts 2:47?
 2. God, through Scripture, commands his children to do the taking away; God did not command some action by the erring child of God.
- E. Some suppose that church discipline must be avoided because the church might split if church discipline is exercised.
1. A faithful church will never split when it does anything that God through the Scriptures tells it to do!
 2. When there is sin in the camp, either God's people must remove the sin from the camp or God will remove his approval upon spiritual Israel.

Conclusion:

1. The Old Testament contains valuable insights through indelible principles whereby the Lord's church can conduct itself with God's approval, Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:1-11; Josh. 7.
 - a. Just as in the days of Joshua, the people of God must police themselves when there is sin in the camp.
 - b. Sin in the camp harms the sinner, his family and the church of God.
2. Achan could not hide his sin from God, and people today cannot hide their sins from God either.
 - a. Impenitent Achan could not quietly slip back into worship and service with God's approval.
 - b. Likewise, erring Christians today cannot quietly slip back into worship and service with God's approval either.
3. Achan's sin had far-reaching consequences.
 - a. Achan's sin brought grave consequences upon Israel, his family and himself.
 - b. The sin of erring Christians today brings grave consequences upon spiritual Israel, their families and themselves today, Luke 16:27-31.

Invitation:

1. God severely punished Achan for his sin.
2. Erring Christians today can avoid God's severe punishment by acknowledging their sins and prayer, Heb. 10:26-31; 1 John 1:9.
3. Unbaptized believers can avoid God's severe punishment by obeying the Gospel, 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Mark 16:16.

Works Cited

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