



BIBLE DOCTRINES

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“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” – John 5:39.

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INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE DOCTRINES

Doctrine to the church is what a foundation is to a building. It is the article of faith on which a believer's faith is anchored. A building with a weak foundation will collapse under intense unfavourable weather and environmental conditions while a building with solid foundation will weather through storms (Matthew 7:24-27). A believer's steadfastness and stability in the Lord is dependent on a firm grasp of the Truth revealed in the Bible (Ephesians 4:13,14). Whereas, lack of knowledge leads to backsliding and destruction (Hosea 4:6). In a world of error and deceit engineered by Satan and his hosts (John 8:44), a believer needs to be well grounded in the truth in order to frontally attack every lie of Satan if he is to remain in faith (Matthew 4:3,4).

The early believers understood perfectly the need to be grounded in the doctrines. Both old and young engaged in spiritual activities that built up their Christian character and convictions. They studied the doctrines, prayed and celebrated the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:41-47). It should be observed that, the study of the doctrines took a place of pre-eminence in their ministry. These Spirit-directed activities of the early saints led to the phenomenal growth of the early Church. Apart from this, it brought about boldness, steadfastness, and growth (Daniel 11:32; Acts 4:19,20), to the extent that the whole of Jerusalem was filled with Christ's doctrine (Act 5:28).

Paul understood the centrality of Bible doctrines to Christian maturity, hence he counselled the Ephesian Christians that spiritual gifts were endowed them in order to teach doctrines that will bring about Christian perfection (Ephesians 4:11-14). His counselling to Timothy, his son in the Lord was: "Take heed unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shall both save thyself and them that hear thee" (I Timothy 4:16). Paul's counsel to Titus who was left in Crete to set things that are wanting in order was that he should hold "fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9).

As believers, workers, preachers, missionaries, and leaders like Paul, Timothy and Titus, our steadfastness to the end is dependent on the understanding of the doctrines (I Timothy 4:16). Also, the salvation of our congregation depends on their understanding of the doctrines. A thorough understanding of the doctrines then is indispensable to all members of the church. The strength or weakness of the church depends to a large extent on the members attitude to the doctrines (I Peter 3:15; 2 Timothy 2:15; Colossians 3:16; John 5:39; Deuteronomy 4:4-9). The doctrines which the church stands upon are not mere dogmas or the opinions of men. They are inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:15,16).

The Bible clearly teaches on Repentance, Restitution, Marriage, New Heaven and Hell among others. These Bible doctrines explicitly reveal treasures that a Christian cannot do without. The reason and hope of our faith are embedded in these doctrines (I Peter 3:15).

Every believer today in the church, old or young needs to benefit from the doctrines of Christ. This can only come about through indepth study, prayerful meditation and internalisation of truths studied and a faithful practice of these teachings (2 Timothy 2:15).

Neglect of doctrines and the pursuit of superficiality has done incalculable damage to the church in our generation. Emphasis on activities with the attendant neglect of personal Bible

study has ruined many lives. Thus, superficial Christian living, backsliding, lukewarmness, worldliness and entertainment of false teaching are rampant in christendom (Hosea 4:6).

We are in perilous times (2 Timothy 3:1-5); and to be able to hold our heads above the water, we must earnestly contend for the faith. Believers are on the battlefield and we must do violence with Satan and his hosts before we can have entrance into heaven (Matthew 11:12). Our chief weapon of warfare is the truth which is embedded in the doctrines. Knowledge of the truth will set us free from the lies of Satan, and it will also guarantee our true freedom in Christ (John 8:32). In order to counteract Satan's strategies, we need to dig deep into the doctrines.

The mission of the church as light to the world (Matthew 5:16) is only achievable with a grasp of the foundational truth or God's word. A church that is ignorant cannot teach the world, as the blind cannot lead the blind. Clearly stated, the unchanging mission of the church is to evangelise and teach the world (Matthew 28:19,20). This responsibility falls on individual believers within the fold today. It is the aggregate that makes the whole; and without a well informed congregation, the church would be unable to fulfil this goal. Knowledge of the basic foundational truths greatly helped the early church to fulfil its mission. They were able to establish new converts, confront the errors of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and endure the persecution of their opposers.

The time has come to accomplish Christ's mission to the world. But the battle for truth can only be fought by the enlightened believer. As individual members of the church, we ought to arise today and fill the gap left by the saints of old.

1 The Holy Bible

God's Word teaches;

That the Holy Bible, consisting of 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament, is the inspired Word of God. We take the Bible as final authority in all matters concerning Christian conduct and work - 2 Timothy 3:16,17; Proverbs 30:5,6; Revelation 22:18,19.

The Holy Bible is the inspired Word of God and is the only source of knowledge of the Almighty God to all mankind. It is the contact point between finite man with the infinite God; and its prime purpose is to give mankind the revelation of God (2 Timothy 3:15-17). The Bible is severally referred to as the Holy Scriptures (Romans 1:2; 2 Timothy 3:15), the oracles of God (Romans 3:2; Hebrews 5:12), the Book of the Lord (Isaiah 34:16), the word of God (Mark 7:13), the word of Christ (Colossians 3:16) and the word of life (Philippians 2:16). It is in two major parts: the Old and the New Testaments. It consists of 66 books: 39 of which are in the Old Testament, 27 in the New Testament. The Bible was originally written predominantly in Hebrew and Greek. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and Aramaic, while the New Testament was written in Greek language. Over 40 authors drawn from disparate generations spanning a period of over 1600 years, were used by God to write the Bible. Even though their occupations, education and social classes were divergent, their theme was the same as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:20). The inspiration of the authors can be attested to by some peculiar characteristics of the Bible, which are not found in any other book written by man. Such characteristics include its wonderful unity despite the fact that the authors lived at different ages; its versatility as it meets the needs of all people irrespective of race, and language (Matthew 4:4); its superiority to other books, the influence on individuals and nations; its preservation over the centuries, its fulfilled prophecies (Isaiah 7:14; Ezekiel 36:19; 2 Chronicles 7:19,20) and its perfection (Psalms 19:7; James 1:25).

The pre-eminence of the Bible (Isaiah 8:20; Psalms 119:89) makes it indispensable to all men today. While other books have limited influence on man, because they are products of finite minds, the Bible which is God's revelation to man has solution to every problem today. Therefore, no man's education is complete if he is ignorant of the provisions of the Bible. No Christian can live successfully without an adequate grasp of the Bible, and no Christian minister is really qualified for the ministry of the church of Christ without a thorough knowledge of the Bible (2 Timothy 2:15). Without a ready knowledge of the Bible, the Christian worker cannot be effective.

The central theme of the Bible is CHRIST and HIS WORK OF REDEMPTION (John 20:31; Luke 24:25-27; Revelation 1:1). He is the Old Testament concealed, and the New Testament revealed. To fully understand the Bible and to rightly interpret its messages, we must first receive Jesus Christ as Saviour and have a clear and definite experience of conversion. Those who do not know Christ and those who have wrong conceptions about Christ cannot interpret the Bible appropriately because the carnal man cannot understand the things of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14).

The Bible has a ministry to unbelievers as well as to believers. To unbelievers, the Bible brings conviction of sin which leads to repentance and faith in Christ Jesus. To believers, the goals of the Bible are various. It is to make believers perfect (Psalm 119:9,11), to reveal the condition of their hearts (Hebrew 4:12; Jeremiah 17:9,10); it is a light to the believers' feet or way of life (Psalms 119:105;130), food for the soul (Deuteronomy 8:3, John 21:17; Psalm 19:10; Matthew 4:4), a medicine to the body and soul (Proverbs 4:20-22; Psalm 107:20; Matthew 8:8) and the Sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17; Matthew 4:1-11). It is a mirror to reflect (James 1:23); a hammer to convict, and fire to refine (Jeremiah 23:29); seed to multiply (1 Peter 1:23); water to cleanse

(Ephesians 5:26; John 15:3); rain to refresh (Isaiah 55:10); gold to enrich (Psalm 19:7-10); and power to create life and faith (I Peter 1:23; Romans 10:17).

The Bible is God's inspired revelation of the origin and destiny of all things. It is the power of God unto eternal salvation and it is the source of present help for the body, soul and spirit (Romans 1:16; John 15:7). It is God's will and testament to man in all ages, revealing the plan of God for man here and now, and in the next life. It is the record of God's dealing with men; past, present and future. It contains God's message of eternal salvation to all who believe in Christ and of eternal damnation to those who rebel against the gospel (John 3:18,36).

The purpose of the Bible then is to reveal God to man, reveal man's need of God and show man the way to God. Man, by searching, cannot find God except God makes Himself known to him (Job 11:7). The Bible also reveals to man how to live, and through the fulfillment of its prophecies, all human needs are met. We receive salvation, sanctification, Holy Ghost baptism, healing, deliverance, protection, etc.

To profit maximally from the study of the Bible, we must remove all hindrances to spiritual receptivity, such as hardened heart (Matthew 13:3-6, 18-21), double mindedness (James 1:8; Mark 4:15-17), pride (Deuteronomy 8:11-14; Psalm 101:5; Proverbs 18:12), carnality (I Corinthians 3:1-5), and unbelief (Matthew 13:58).

Every believer in the church today can benefit from the hidden treasures in the Bible. But this would require sacrifices on our part. Treasures are not found except by searching or digging earnestly. Likewise, deep Bible truths need be sought for, and in doing this, we will discover Christ the more (Colossians 2:3; John 5:39). Certain spiritual preparations are required from believers in order to discover these treasures that would make them develop into the fullness of the stature of Christ. There must be earnest love for the truth for its own sake (Psalm 119:40,47,54,72,103); supreme love for God (Matthew 22:37; Deuteronomy 30:6; Psalm 73:25); and an intense desire to know more of Him (Psalm 42:1,2; 63:1). Also, there should be a strong desire to make Him known to others (Proverbs 11:24-26; Romans 9:1-3), willingness to make personal sacrifice to study (Matthew 13:44-46; 12:42), a fixed purpose to know, and a willingness to practice the whole truth you have learnt (Psalm 119:60,101,106; James 1:22-25; Ezra 7:10; Psalms 119:63; 57:7; 108:1), and cultivating a state of mind that will not be diverted to make provision for the flesh (Romans 13:14; Matthew 26:41).

Above all, you need too, a regular habit of prayer, resignation to the whole will of God and His word that will make you discover the treasures hidden in the Bible.

2 The Godhead

God's Word teaches;

That the Godhead consists of three separate, distinct, and recognisable personalities and qualities, perfectly united in one. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are different Persons in the Godhead, not merely three names for one Person - Matthew 3:16,17; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Matthew 28:19,20.

The Godhead consists of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Bible clearly teaches that each member of the Godhead is God; separate, distinct and recognisable personalities and qualities perfectly united in one. The Father is called God (I Corinthians 8:6; Psalm 89:26; I Chronicles 29:10; Matthew 6:9), the Son, Jesus Christ, is called God (Isaiah 9:6,7; John 20:28), and the Holy Ghost is called God (Acts 5:3,4; I Corinthians 3:16,17; 6:19,20; Hebrews 3:7-9; 10:15,16). From the foregoing scripture references, it is clear that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are three distinct Persons, co-eternal, co-existent and co-equal in power and divine attributes. The word "GOD" in Genesis 1:1 means Elohim and in Hebrew language this is the plural of El (The Strong One). "Elohim" (The Strong Ones) appear more than 2,700 times in the Old Testament and this plurality is seen in: "Let US make man in OUR image, after OUR likeness"; "The LORD said ... let US go down, and there confound their language" (Genesis 1:26; 3:22; 11:6,7). The Godhead (Romans 1:20) is also referred to as the Holy Trinity.

The unity of the Godhead is scripturally evidenced in the execution of all divine plans and purposes. At creation, a significant fact about the Godhead emerged with the use of the plural noun "us", by God Himself (Genesis 1:26). Elementarily, this implies the involvement of more than one personality in the creation of man. The same word continued to recur first, after the fall of man (Genesis 3:22), and on the threshold of God's perfect desire to curb the foolish excesses of man, by wisely confounding him with diverse languages (Genesis 11:7).

The testimony of scriptures on the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ reveals the perfect unity of the Godhead. It was God's anointing and the power of the Holy Ghost that enabled Jesus to fulfil His ministry (Acts 10:38).

The divine-human relationship also confirms God in three persons perfecting the relationship of man with the Triune God (Ephesians 2:18). The complementary functions of the Trinity are referred to in almost all books of the New Testament (Matthew 3:16,17; 28:19; Mark 1:10; John 16:7-15; 6:37,44; Romans 8:16; I Thessalonians 5:23; Ephesians 5:25; I Peter 1:2; Acts 10:38).

The three personalities in the Godhead acted together in the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. God the Father did not just make His Son available to assume the garb of human flesh preparatory for His vicarious mission (John 3:16). This was a supernatural work made possible by the power of the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:35).

Further proof of the truth about the Godhead became clear at the baptism of Jesus Christ, when the Father sent the Holy Ghost in bodily form as a dove upon Christ, and God Almighty Himself made a public proclamation of Jesus as His beloved Son (Matthew 3:16,17). Even at the outset of His ministry, Jesus affirmed the companionship of God the Father and the Holy Ghost with Him. It was only by their combined workings that He was to fulfil His multi-pronged ministry of preaching the gospel, healing the sick, delivering the captives, etc. (Luke 4:18).

Truly, the work of redemption which Jesus Christ completed by submitting Himself to die on the cross, was a joint venture with the Father and the Holy Ghost (Hebrews 9:14), as was the second work of grace,

sanctification or holiness, by which man is cleansed from his in-bred depravity, the fallen nature he inherited from Adam (Romans 15:16). Also, the Godhead is at work in empowering believers through the baptism in the Holy Spirit, to discharge the duties handed them by God (John 15:26; 16:7-15; Luke 11:13).

Christ's command as He handed down the Great Commission to His disciples was to baptise all that repent and believe the gospel, in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19).

Even today, our prayer involves the three personalities in the Godhead. We direct our prayers to God the Father (Luke 11:2; 22:42; 23:34,46; John 17:1,5,24-26; James 1:5) through Jesus Christ, the Son (John 14:13,14; 15:16); and of course, without the help of the Holy Spirit all our prayers will be in vain (Romans 8:26).

The Godhead is the universal testimony of the scriptures, for "there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word (Son) and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one" (I John 5:7). It is only the perfect work of the Godhead that has continued to sustain us on a day-to-day basis as believers (2 Corinthians 13:14).

The Godhead is a great mystery which is clearly beyond the finite mind of the unsaved natural man (I Corinthians 2:14). The believer accepts the gospel truth of the Trinity by faith, recognising that God remains the eternal repository of all mysteries (Deuteronomy 29:29); that with respect to His being or essence, God is one; with respect to His personality, God is three; and the essence must neither be divided nor the persons confused. In spite of the great mystery surrounding it, the doctrine of the Godhead has always proved to be eminently rich in spiritual and practical values. And for all those willing, the Lord Jesus Christ promises the advent of a blissful reign by the Godhead (John 14:23).

3 The Virgin Birth of Jesus

God's Word teaches;

The virgin birth of Jesus, the only begotten Son of God as well as His crucifixion, death, burial and bodily resurrection - Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25; Romans 1:4; I Corinthians 15:3,4.

One of the most important facts concerning Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is that He was born of a virgin. The virgin birth confirms Christ's Deity and clearly distinguishes Him as the only sinless man conceived without Adamic depravity.

The virgin birth is thus an essential doctrinal truth which must be upheld for its fact and significance. Disputing this cardinal doctrine is by implication, denying Christ's Deity and His distinctive nature. It was this distinctive spotlessness that disqualified every other man from satisfying God's demand for substitutionary death. He therefore became the spotless Lamb of God found in fashion as a man. Men say – can there be such things as miracles? Is there not an antecedent improbability that the order of nature, as we know it, should ever be changed? To receive and believe the record of Christ's birth by a virgin-mother is to settle the whole question of the miraculous.

God was the first to unveil the virgin birth of Christ, when He referred to Him as the "seed of the woman" (Genesis 3:15). This was God's allusion to the fact that Christ would be conceived by a woman who had never known a man. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son..." (Isaiah 7:14). The word 'virgin' as used in this reference has obvious meaning and can be nothing else but a woman that has not known a man. Luke, in his gospel narrative, recorded that the angel Gabriel was sent to Mary, a virgin betrothed to a man (Luke 1:26,27). Matthew, in his gospel, narrated that after Mary had been espoused to Joseph, she was found with a child of the Holy Ghost before they came together (Matthew 1:18). He further recorded that Joseph knew her not till she had brought forth her first born son, and he called his name JESUS.

Jesus, during His earthly ministry, sometimes referred to people as His mother, His brothers and sisters, but never referred to any mortal man as His father – not even Joseph (Matthew 12:49,50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21). He always referred to God as His Father and this is another proof of His virgin birth. The Bible says that Joseph was a just man (Matthew 1:19). If Joseph had known Mary before Christ was conceived or was responsible for the conception, he would not have been thinking of putting her away, nor would he have qualified to be referred to as a just man. On the other hand, if Mary as an espoused virgin had conceived through a strange man, it would have been right for Joseph to have her out of the way (Deuteronomy 22:13-21; Matthew 19:9). The angel also would not have prevented Joseph from putting her away. The angel even bore witness that what was in her was conceived of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 1:20). "And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). That was the announcement of the coming of the one only true virgin's child.

God bears witness to His approved ministers in various ways. Some of the signs that were recorded concerning Christ were also recorded concerning a few other messengers of God. A voice from the cloud witnessed to the ministry of Christ, but that was not as unique as the virgin birth because we see a similar witness in the ministry of Moses (Numbers 12:5-8; Matthew 17:5). An angel announced the conception of Christ, but we also know that the birth of Samson and John the Baptist were announced by angels (Judges 13:2-5; Luke 1:11-15,26-33). However, Moses, Samson and John the Baptist had earthly fathers. They were all descendants of Adam's fallen race. The virgin birth is therefore a unique sign from the Lord, conferred on Christ and Him alone. No other living soul had ever or will ever be conceived by a virgin. The virgin birth is not the only historical event

that confirms the deity of Christ. His crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection from the dead do even more. The Old Testament is replete with prophecies concerning Christ's crucifixion. And these prophecies found fulfilment in the event on the cross (Genesis 3: 14,15; Psalm 22:6-8,16,18; Isaiah 53:3-6). Christ also foretold His crucifixion and death while He was yet with His disciples before it came to pass. Christ was despised and rejected of men. As He hung on the cross; passers-by railed, and wagged their tongues at Him. Even His supposed friends forsook and abandoned Him at the darkest hour of His life. A crown of thorns was plaited and placed on His head; stripes from barbed whips were laid on His back. He was wounded all over. His crucifiers drove long spikes through his hands and feet and pierced His side because of our transgressions. Apostle Peter brought the verity of His crucifixion on the religious sadists that perpetrated the act in His defence of the healing of the impotent man (Acts 4:5-10). Apostle Paul also preached it (1Corinthians 15:1-4). His crucifixion opens the floodgate of temporal and eternal blessings for man.

Jesus Christ, the Pascal Lamb of God hanged on the cross of Calvary until His life expired. His death became a reference point of events, time and date for the past, present and future. The soldiers on guard certified Him dead to Pilate before His body was released to Simon of Arimathea for burial. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses witnessed His burial in a sepulchre (Mark 15:43-47). The event on the cross is important to every man (Hebrews 2:9). Broadly stated, there are seven things Christ purchased for us through His death at the cross: forgiveness and full salvation (Luke 23:33,34), sanctification and holiness (Hebrews 13:12), a home in heaven (Luke 23:43), healing for all (Isaiah 53:5), deliverance from, and defeat of principalities and powers (Colossians 2:14,15), cancellation of every curse (Galatians 3:13), full and perfect redemption (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14).

The bodily resurrection of Christ is mentioned 104 times in the New Testament. But did Jesus rise from the grave? First, the soldiers who were detailed to watch the tomb following the fear that the disciples might "come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead" (Matthew 27:64), knew that Christ's resurrection was a physical reality. Second, the Jews knew that the resurrection was not a concocted story. It cost them a great deal of money, in their attempt to stop soldiers from spreading the news (Matthew 28:11-15). Third, for years, the apostles proclaimed the resurrection in Jerusalem, the very city where Jesus was crucified and where three days after, He rose from the dead. The story of the resurrection has since the historic event spread unchallenged. Speaking to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, Peter said, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:32) and nobody rose up to challenge him. Fourth, in Mark's gospel, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, who went and told Peter and other disciples "as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not" (Mark 16:10,11). Again, Jesus appeared to two of the disciples (on their way to Emmaus). Yet, when "they went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them" (Mark 16:13). In fact, their fear and unbelief was such that Jesus, on one occasion, upbraided them (Luke 24:25-27). By far, the greatest proof of Christ's resurrection is His bodily appearance to His disciples at different times. It puts to rest the erroneous doctrine of spiritual resurrection.

Jesus is incomparably greater than any other prophet either before or after Him. Why? Because He (Jesus) was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4). If teaching was the only thing that made Jesus the Son of God, He would not be different. Founders of other religions taught good human principles as well. If ascetic life, miracles, wonders and signs were the only things that made Thomas to call Jesus, "My Lord and my God," founders of other religions would also be qualified to be called "God" because they too lived ascetic lives and worked signs and wonders. But, no, it is the resurrection that made all the difference. Because of the resurrection, Jesus has been declared to be, not only the Son of God but also, the Saviour and Judge of the whole world, of the living and the dead, the Jews and the Gentiles, the Barbarians and the Greeks, the Hindus and the traditional worshippers. Whoever therefore shall call upon Him today shall be saved.

4 Total Depravity, Sinfulness and Guilt of All Men

God's Word teaches;

The total depravity, sinfulness and guilt of all men since the Fall, rendering them subject to God's wrath and condemnation - Psalm 51:5; Job 14:4; Romans 3:23; 5:12-17; Mark 7:21-23; Ephesians 2:1.

The total depravity, sinfulness and guilt of all men since the Fall render all sinners subject to God's wrath and condemnation (Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-6; Romans 5:17,19; Psalm 51:1-5). Man was created in the image of God, and he was righteous and holy. Man was the crown of God's creation (Genesis 1:26,27; Psalm 8:4-8). Through voluntary disobedience and transgression, man fell into the depths of sin. As a consequence, everyone born through our first parents (Adam and Eve) became sinners, shapened in iniquity and utterly void of the holiness of God. Every man became totally inclined to evil (Psalm 51:1-5; Romans 3:10-18,23; 7:14-21; 5:12-17; Job 14:4; Isaiah 48:8). As a result of the fall of man (Adam and Eve), all men born through man and woman became sinners through inheritance. By inheriting the nature of sin, man became depraved. There is nothing in the natural man that has not been affected by the power of sin.

The entire nature of man, mentally, physically, morally and spiritually, has been affected by sin. The testimony of the scriptures is that the image of God in man has been seriously marred by this great fall. As a result of the fall, and the nature of sin inherited, man became separated from God, totally alienated from the perfect, holy and pure God. This separation is the cause of man's sorrow, shame, fear, heartaches and manifold problems, spiritually and mentally. Man became a transgressor (Romans 1:32; 6:23). All these have brought man under the wrath and condemnation of God, "for the soul that sinneth it shall die." There is nothing we can do for ourselves to commend us to a righteous and holy God. There is nothing the natural man (fallen away from grace) can offer to appease God in order to escape His righteous judgement.

The Bible describes the fallen nature of man in various terms. Jesus Christ referred to sinners outside the Kingdom of God as swine and dogs. "Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you" (Matthew 7:6). He also referred to them as goats (Matthew 25:33). Paul in his epistle to the Philippian church warned them to beware of evil workers as dogs (Philippians 3:2). Also, in his epistle to the Romans, he referred to the fallen nature of man as "there is none righteous, no, not one", "they are together become unprofitable", "their throat is an open sepulchre", "whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness", "for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:10-18,23). Jesus and John the Baptist described men as vipers (Matthew 3:7;12:34). Variously, the unregenerate man is characterised with reprobate mind filled with all unrighteousness - immorality, covetousness, envy, murder; man is defiled and polluted (Romans 1:28-32; Mark 7:21-23), treacherous, violent and destructive (Isaiah 48:8; 59:5-8), cunning and crafty, full of wickedness, blind, foolish, with darkened understanding, children of wrath, (Ephesians 2:3; 4:14). The Bible says that the whole man is sick. The heart devises wicked imaginations, and has come far short of the glory of God. All men have become enslaved to sin: conceived in sin, born in sin, and lives in sin. By nature and habit, he is a sinner. The natural man cannot resist sin.

The consequence of the Fall is that man became totally depraved, and the immediate effect was his separation from the Holy God, and the coming into effect of a curse upon Adam and his descendants (Genesis 3:1-6,14-19,23,24; Romans 5:12; 8:22). God's judgement also came upon all men: "The soul that sinneth it shall die," "for the wages of sin is death" (Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 6:23). The human race has rebelled against God and broken His law, but the love of God constrained the holy God to plan for man's redemption to fulfil the law that "without the shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). Therefore, God undertook the

redemption work for man by sending Jesus Christ to die for him. Jesus Christ became the divine provision of a Perfect Substitute and Sin-bearer (Genesis 22:7,8,14; Hebrews 9:22; Matthew 1:21). By the perfect sacrifice of His blood (I Corinthians 5:7) and through His blood, man has complete protection from the eternal consequence of the Fall, from the curse of the broken law (Exodus 12:13; Galatians 3:13); complete removal of the guilt and condemnation of sin, and full redemption by faith in Him (Isaiah 53:4-8; Acts 8:32-35; I Peter 1:18-21; 2:24).

The atonement is the reconciliation of sinful, fallen man to God made possible through the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The vicarious death of Jesus Christ is the substitution of the sufferings of Christ for the punishment of all sinners in the world. The prime purpose of this is the full redemption of fallen mankind. Through this “mercy-seat”, sinners are reconciled to God. The power of sin over the natural man can only be broken by the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:12; Romans 5:17-19): “For as by one man’s disobedience, many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one man shall many be made righteous.”

God demands repentance from all sinners to avail themselves of the provision of redemption (Isaiah 53:5-7; Matthew 20:28; 26:28; John 3:14,15; I Corinthians 5:7; John 1:12; 3:18,36) made in Jesus Christ. Repentance is the change which takes place in the penitent’s attitude towards sin. It is turning away from sin to God. Sincere and total repentance and godly sorrow for sin through the agency of the Holy Spirit are important prerequisites for salvation. Repentance is the deep inward experience which makes the sinner turn from sin to God. Therefore, God demands repentance from all men (Mark 1:15; Matthew 4:17; Luke 13:3,5; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30). When a sinner hears the gospel empowered by the Holy Spirit, the sinner will have deep, godly sorrow for his sins and acknowledge them by confessing all manner of sins. He goes before God on the merit of the atonement made by Jesus Christ through His vicarious death and accepts the sacrifice as a substitute for the punishment of his own personal sins. On the basis of this genuine repentance, the sinner asks for forgiveness and pardon based on the promises of God in the scriptures (Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 55:6,7; I John 1:9; Ezekiel 18:21,22). As the sinner repents genuinely through the agency of the Holy Spirit he receives pardon (Luke 24:47; John 2:23).

5 Repentance

God's Word teaches;

That Repentance is a complete turning away from all sins and its deceitful pleasures and that it is required from every sinner before he can truly and effectively believe in Jesus with saving faith - Proverbs 28:13; Isaiah 55:7; Ezekiel 18:21-23; Mark 1:15; Luke 24:46,47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 20:20,21; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Hebrews 6:1-3.

Repentance is a conscious turning away from evil, disobedience, sin or idolatry (Jonah 3:8-10; Proverbs 28:13; Mathew 12:41). It is also turning from Satan unto the Living God. Repentance evokes a change from one's mind and purpose in life. It elicits a form of godly sorrow (2 Corinthians 7:10) which makes an erstwhile sinner regard sin with utter revulsion. Godly sorrow makes the sinner or backslider to turn away from sin. It also causes an abhorrence or hatred for sin. The need for repentance is the heartbeat of a deeply compassionate God (2 Peter 3:9). Repentance is the genesis of the process of restoration for backsliders and salvation of sinners. It differs from tearful remorse which is merely an expression of sorrow over an embarrassing outcome of sin. It is a universal command by God to all people (Ezekiel 14:6; 18:30; Acts 17:30,31).

Repentance is the central theme of the gospel. The doctrine and teaching of repentance is fundamental to the propagation of the gospel. It is a foundation stone in the cardinal doctrines of the New Testament Church. Its vital place in Scripture, particularly in the New Testament, is underscored by the regularity of its usage. "Repentance", "repent" or "repenting" occurs over sixty times in the New Testament alone.

It was the key note of Christ's preaching as well as the sum and substance of evangelistic, apostolic message. He repeatedly emphasised that His mission was providing repentance for the sinner (Matthew 9:13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32; Acts 3:18,19,26; 11:18). Also, John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord, anchored his fiery messages in the wilderness on repentance (Luke 3:3-8).

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus preached repentance (Matthew 4:17). His valedictory message to His disciples shortly before He was taken to heaven, was hinged upon repentance (Luke 24:45-47). This was principally because repentance is cardinal to the sinner's reconciliation with God. From His eminent position in glory, the Lord yet admonished the backslidden church to repent (Revelation 2:4,5; 3:3). Peter and other Apostles took a cue from the Lord and made the doctrine of repentance the fundamental theme of their gospel homilies (Acts 2:38; 3:19). Paul the Apostle, sent to preach to the Gentiles, did not differ from either the Lord or the other Apostles on the necessity of repentance for the sinner or backslider to gain the mercy of God (Acts 17:30,31; 20:20,21).

Repentance must therefore be preached to all men in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 24:47). Sinners and backsliders must be made to know that no one is excluded from the challenge of the gospel to repent, for it is only through it that the manifold blessings arising from the remission of sins, could be appropriated.

Repentance, however, does not exist in isolation of faith. Saving faith is taken as implying the change of mind which is repentance (Hebrews 11:6; Acts 20:21). Both are a response to grace, creating a completely different orientation for the erstwhile sinner. Works do not elicit repentance (2 Timothy 1:9; Romans 3:27,28; 4:1-8; Ephesians 2:8). Paradoxically, repentance must necessarily produce works otherwise it is unreal (James 2:14-26; Ephesians 2:9,10; Titus 3:8).

True repentance manifests in a proper attitude towards sin (2 Corinthians 7:10,11; Psalm 38:18; 51:17; 2 Samuel 12:13). The repentant heart henceforth treats sin with disdain. No sinner or backslider can be said to

have genuinely repented if he still condones sin. This is because essentially, sin is exceedingly abominable. Consequently, the need for repentance by the sinner must be the pivot around which redemption messages must be woven.

The practical side of repentance is restitution, which is the act of correcting all past wrongs and having a conscience void of offence towards God and man. God expects the repentant sinner or backslider to correct every wrong committed against others. Restitution is incontrovertibly an integral part of true repentance (Genesis 20:1-18; Numbers 5:6-8; Ezekiel 33:14-16; Matthew 5:23,24; Acts 24:16). Through repentance, self-centredness gives way to God or Christ-centredness. The forgiveness of sin is available only to those who repent, for they alone are worthy of God's mercy.

Repentance opens the way and makes us to receive the grace of God. It provides pardon and remission of sins (Isaiah 55:7; Proverbs 28:13; Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19). Through it, sinners receive justification and acceptance (John 1:12,13; Galatians 3:8; 2:16; Romans 8:1; 5:12). Above all, there is joy in heaven, joy to God, Christ and heavenly hosts when a sinner repents (Luke 15:7,10). Repentance is a profitable doctrine that makes inward change and life a reality while activating a life of faith.

6 Restitution

God's Word teaches;

That Restitution is making amends for wrongs done against our fellow- men, restoring stolen things to their rightful owners, paying debts, giving back where one has defrauded, making confessions to the offended and apologizing to those slandered so as to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man - Genesis 20:1-8,14-18; Exodus 22:1-7; Leviticus 6:1- 7; Numbers 5:6-8; 2 Samuel 12:1-6; Proverbs 6:30,31; Ezekiel 33:14- 16; Matthew 5:23,24; Luke 19:8,9; Acts 23:1-5; 24:16; James 4:17.

Restitution is an act of making amends for wrongs done against our fellowmen; restoring stolen or misappropriated things, properties or persons to their rightful owners; paying back just debts, giving back where one has defrauded, making confessions to the offended and apologizing to those slandered so as to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men. This is done whether the person injured knew or not, for God knows (Hebrews 4:13).

We receive forgiveness when we confess and forsake our sins. Then, we are cleansed by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ (Proverbs 28:13; I John 1:9). When a man sins against God, we often find that other people suffer as a result of that sin. It is also true that when a man sins against his neighbour, he sins against God in the same act, because one of God's commandments has been broken. God willingly forgives the sins committed against Him when there is repentance and forsaking of sin. However, God requires that a man make amends to any person he has injured or wronged as a mark among other things, that the repentance is genuine. We need to bear fruit that signify to all that we have become new creatures indeed (Luke 3:8- 14; Romans 8:1,2; Acts 24:16; 2 Corinthians 5:17). Making restitutions ensures that we have right relationship with our fellowmen after we are reconciled with God.

The Bible doctrine on restitution in precept and practice spans virtually all the dispensations of God's dealings with men till the present day. The revelation of God's will and word before the Mosaic laws demands that we make restitution (Romans 1:19-20). Therefore, this teaching or doctrine of God's word which had been established many years before the law cannot be abolished by the law.

Restitution is part of the moral law. Most sins committed by men are against God as well as their neighbours. So, repentance toward God for the children of Israel included restoration to man of all properties gained by fraud, lying or pretence of whatever kind (Exodus 21:18,19,22,26-36; 22:1-15; Leviticus 6:2-5; Numbers 5:6-8).

Rulers in Israel reflected and embraced this teaching on restitution. It is vital today for rulers-temporal and spiritual- to reflect on this commitment to God's moral requirement for all men (2 Samuel 16:5-8 with 19:16-23; Proverbs 6:30,31; I Kings 20:34).

The prophets in Israel also preached, explained and emphasised the need to make restitution by every backslidden Israelite who is returning to God (Nehemiah 5:6-13). The prophets proclaimed and prophesied much of the coming of Christ and the atoning sacrifice. They were quick to recognise the need for the blood of the lamb to cleanse sins; yet, they did not lessen God's requirement of the necessity of restitution. The ministry of preachers today is akin to that of the Old Testament prophets.

Restitution is a doctrine of Christ, confirming His Word that “till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled”. Every believer must earnestly and whole-heartedly contend for, and practice all that Christ taught (Matthew 18:15-17; Luke 17:3-4; Luke 19:8-10).

Zacchaeus’ encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ is an object lesson. Zacchaeus wanted nothing to stand between himself and his salvation - not even his wealth, especially the ill-gotten part of it. Though the people murmured that Jesus was going to be a sinner’s guest, Jesus pronounced that salvation has come to Zacchaeus’ house since he, as a son of Abraham, not only by birth but now also by faith, is ready to make right his life and wholly follow the Lord. The salvation experience makes a person feel like returning all possessions that rightfully belong to another.

The Apostles in the early church also practised and taught restitution. In fact, the whole church of God lived by this teaching (Matthew 28:19,20; John 14:26; Acts 2:42; 16:4,5; Philemon 7-21). The rules of righteous living are just as high (or even higher) under the dispensation of grace as those in the Old Testament. Restitution is as much a part of the Gospel as conversion or water baptism. It is not a self-righteous act to merit pardon. When a man is saved, he will not only make right matters of money such as theft, dishonest gains and unpaid bills; he will also confess his lies, slanderous reports, unjust criticisms, hatred, malice - those things in which one may have injured others in word or deed. One may say, “my brother or sister does not know that I talked evil of him.” But what about the person to whom you talked? Without doubt, you have harmed him, and perhaps he repeated it to others. You should go to the one to whom you talked and confess it. It is better that we make right all previous wrongs here and now than face it in eternity (I Timothy 5:24).

Making restitution can be likened to a spiritual warfare in which we need God’s help and wisdom to undertake for us and quench all the fiery darts of the wicked (Ephesians 6:10-12,16). Some restitutions are delicate. These are restitutions that may implicate or bring injuries or harm to others that may be unsaved; or the need to settle issues with individuals or organisations that may affect other people in an adverse way. It also includes cases in which we don’t have clear leading from God’s word as to what steps to take. For delicate restitutions, we need fervent prayerfulness, wisdom and counselling from Spirit-filled preachers of God’s word who believe and teach the whole counsel of God (Proverbs 11:14; 15:22; 24:6).

The civil laws in a country may not always govern in matters of restitution. For example, the law may provide a time limit for certain classes of debts and obligations, after which they become lapse; but no debts are outlawed with God. Time cannot cancel moral obligations.

Restitution is usually considered at the time of salvation because God will only forgive when a man is willing, so far as it lies within his power, to make right every wrong that he has committed against others. There would be need however throughout life as a Christian to be ready to make restitution where need be when others are offended, for example, out of human error of judgment (Acts 23:1-5, Matthew 5:23,24).

God demands that restitutions be made. A far reaching benefit in God’s plan as regards restitution is that an undeniable testimony is directed to people who otherwise might never seriously hear the story of the gospel. A religion that compels a man to pay his just debts, restore back the things he has stolen, and uncover his crimes demands confidence from men of the world.

When restitutions are made, and past wrongs are settled, the peace of God floods the believer’s heart. There is confidence towards God in prayer and the believer makes progress in the Christian life as sense of guilt is removed (Romans 8:1,2).

7 Justification

God's Word teaches;

That Justification is God's grace through which one receives forgiveness and remission of sins and is counted righteous before God, through faith in the atoning blood of Jesus. Having thus been cleared of every guilt of sin, the regenerated stands before God as though he had never sinned, not on the basis of any personal merit but in the light of what Christ had accomplished for mankind by His substitutionary death on the cross at Calvary (Psalm 32:1,2; Isaiah 1:18; Micah 7:19; Acts 13:38).

Justification is the act of God's grace through which one receives forgiveness and remission of sins and is counted righteous before God, through faith in the atoning blood of Jesus. Having thus been cleared of every guilt of sin, the regenerated stands before God as though he had never sinned, not on the basis of any personal merit but in the light of what Christ had accomplished for mankind by His substitutionary death on the cross at Calvary (Psalm 32:1,2; Isaiah 1:18; Micah 7:19; Acts 13:38).

In order to fully appreciate the benefits of salvation in Christ Jesus, the utter helplessness and hopelessness of man should be noted. The need for justification becomes necessary as man is incapable of personally providing a solution to his problem of sin or change his eternal destiny of damnation (Isaiah 59:8).

To meet the standard of divine justice, due price needed to be paid. Man lacked both the capacity and purity to afford this. It therefore required the sacrifice of the spotless Lamb of God, to pay the necessary ransom with His blood for the expiation of man's sins.

It is instructive here to note that the nature of sin is not such that man could handle on his own or by the merit of his works (Ephesians 2:8,9). Just as circumcision cannot justify the Jew nor water baptism the Gentile, so can church membership or confirmation not justify anyone by the standards of God's righteousness and holiness. Only faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross can assure a penitent soul of full justification. Three aspects of the doctrinal question need be examined closely namely, redemption by the blood of Christ, necessity of faith, and evidence of justification.

Though physically present in the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve died spiritually and became alienated from God and from the commonwealth of His kingdom, after eating the forbidden fruit. Christ therefore became the sin-Bearer, based on the fact of God's provision and promises of the Scripture (Romans 3:24,25). And He is "the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2; Acts 4:12). By Christ's finished work of grace, solution was provided to the problem of sin to ensure man's reconciliation with God (Isaiah 44:22; Romans 5:9).

Although Christ's atonement on the cross guarantees universal provision of salvation for all mankind, this could only be appropriated on personal basis through faith in Christ Jesus. The sinner who seeks salvation must take the necessary step of exercising faith in the blood of Jesus. Apostle Paul gives proof of it in his Epistle to the Romans 5:1. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ". And to the Jewish Christians he writes "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Hebrews 4:2).

Having been saved through faith in our Lord Jesus, the redeemed should have evidence to show for his justification (2 Corinthians 5:17). Before he was justified, the sinner was plagued by the works of the flesh as catalogued in Galatians 5:19-21. But in those that have been made a new creature, the fruits of the Spirit

become manifest (Galatians 5:22,23). Therefore, in life- style, speech, conduct and disposition, the redeemed is more like Christ, hav- ing been quickened by the Spirit of God.

The misleading conception of justification by works as an article of man's religion is opposed to justification by faith because it denies the grace of God and dishonours the blood of Christ.

The reference in the General Epistle of James 2:14-26 may be interpreted amiss by a cursory reader of Scriptures, where it asks: "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without work is dead?"

The underlying point being stressed by James is that 'works' as referred to, in this context are a complement of justification by faith. Whereas Apostle Paul's epistle to the Romans, chapter 4, is essentially doctrinal, and the prac- tice is based upon the doctrine; that of James is essentially practical, the doctrinal element being purely incidental.

So, though in one sense a man is justified by faith without works, in an- other sense, we see "how by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." Justification is by faith before God but by works before men. Properly understood, none is really mutually exclusive.

8 Water Baptism

God's Word teaches;

That water Baptism is essential to our obedience after reconciliation with God. Water Baptism is one immersion (not three) "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost", as Jesus commanded - Matthew 28:19; 3:13-17; Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38;8:38,39; 19:1-5; Romans 6:4,5.

Water baptism is one of the cardinal doctrines of the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet one of the most misunderstood teachings by contemporary teachers and preachers. Some, at one extreme, believe that it is not necessary because of its abuse by nominal Christians while on the other extreme, others believe that without water baptism, one cannot be saved. In the middle is yet another group that believes that, though it is necessary, it must be administered in the name of Jesus only.

All of them are wrong because Jesus Christ commanded that water baptism should be administered in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19). Doing otherwise, therefore, is to disobey Jesus Christ.

The word 'baptize' is a Greek word 'baptiso' which means to immerse, 'dip inside liquid'. This shows the proper form of baptism by immersion inside water. The immersion signifies identification with the burial of Christ in His death and rising up in newness of life with Him at His resurrection (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12). In baptism, the believer shows his faith that Christ died for his sins and rose again for his justification: that if he dies he will be raised again in the resurrection; and that he dies to his old life and rises to walk in the new life with Christ.

The immersion is done only ONCE and not THRICE. Jesus Christ was dipped inside River Jordan only once (Matthew 3:16); the Eunuch of Ethiopia was immersed in water once (Acts 8:38).

When we submit for water baptism, it is an acknowledgment of Christ in a public way. Therefore, it is a public ceremony which witnesses to all that one has put on Christ (Galatians 3:27).

Jesus commanded that sinners be preached to, and as they repent and believe the gospel, they should be baptized. This confirms that water baptism is for those who fully repent of their sins (Acts 2:38). This also confirms that it is only adults who can exercise faith to believe that can be baptized (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; Romans 10:9,10; Acts 20:20,21; Mark 1:14,15). It is fundamentally wrong to baptize infants who have not reached the stage of accountability, as it's being practised by some orthodox churches.

The pages of the New Testament are filled with references on water baptism. In Matthew 3:13-17, Jesus Christ submitted Himself to John the Baptist for water baptism to fulfil all righteousness. The testimony of God the Father to the ministry of His Son, Jesus Christ, through the descent of the Holy Ghost on Him as He came out of the water after the water baptism was in agreement with it. Christ's command of Matthew 28:19 was re-echoed in Mark 16:16. The Apostles also continued to baptize in obedience to the command of Christ: the converts on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37-42,47); Eunuch of Ethiopia (Acts 8:36,37), Samaritan converts (Acts 8:12,13), Cornelius and his kinsmen (Acts 10:47,48); the Philippian Jailor (Acts 16:30-33); the Ephesian disciples (Acts 19:5).

Salvation does not come through water baptism but by grace through faith in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ (Ephesian 1:7; 2:8,9; I John 1:7,9; Hebrews 9:22; Matthew 26:28; John 1:12; 3:16,17; I Peter 3:21). The

Scripture records a catalogue of those who got saved without water baptism being a pre-condition: the sick of the palsy healed by Jesus Christ (Matthew 9:1-7); the woman who washed the feet of Jesus with her tears and cleansed them with her hair (Luke 7:36-50); Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10); the thief on the cross (Luke 23:39-43); Eunuch of Ethiopia (Acts 8:30-37); those who believed in Antioch (Acts 11:20,21). Saul of Tarsus was addressed as 'Brother Saul' by Ananias before he submitted himself for water baptism (Acts 9:17)

Jesus has laid down the standard for water baptism and it is to be carried out in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19). Every believer, in obedience to Christ's command, should therefore submit to this ordinance of water baptism. The importance of water baptism was expressed by Jesus Christ in His parting words. He said, "**He that believeth and is BAPTIZED shall be saved**".

The opinion of men cannot contradict the stand of the Scripture (Matthew 28:19). Once a person repents of his sin, it is mandatory that he submits himself for water baptism as provided for in the scriptures (Romans 6:3,4). The practice was upheld in the early church. Converts were baptized in water soon after their salvation experience (Acts 2:41; 8:37,38; 16:30,31,33). Every convert is therefore enjoined to yield to this important injunction. God-ordained church leaders must do their utmost best to encourage their flocks to attach great importance to this practice (Acts 20:28). Like Peter did, church leaders must encourage their hearers to "**repent and be BAPTISED ... for the remission of sin ...**".

9 The Lord's Supper

God's Word teaches;

That the Lord's supper was instituted by Jesus Christ so that all believers (all members of the family of God) might partake thereof regularly, to "shew the Lord's death till he come". The emblems used are "unleavened bread" and the juice of "fruit of the vine". Anyone who eats and drinks unworthily brings "damnation", punishment and chastisement upon himself - Matthew 26:29; Luke 22:17-20; I Corinthians 11:23-30.

The institution of the Lord's Supper is clearly shown in the gospels (Matthew 26:17-30; Luke 22:1,7-20). Paul amplified the doctrine in I Corinthians 11:20-30. In the gospel according to Saint Luke, we see the links between the Feast of Passover or Unleavened Bread and the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:15-20).

The Lord's Supper in the New Testament is a type of the Feast of the Passover or Unleavened Bread in the Old Testament (Exodus 12:1-28,40-51). This implies that just as the vicarious death of the Lord Jesus Christ replaced the sacrifice of the Aaronic or Levitical priesthood for atonement of sin, for us Christians, the Lord's Supper has replaced the Feast of the Passover, as an ordinance.

Some churches refer to the Lord's Supper as the "SACRAMENT" (Latin - sacramentum, meaning Holy Ordinance (I Corinthians 11:2)). The Theologians call it the "EUCCHARIST" (Greek - GIVING OF THANKS), still others name it "THE LORD'S TABLE" or the "HOLY COMMUNION" (I Corinthians 10:16). Those who participate in eating of the Lord's Supper are called the "Communicants". The universal name is the Lord's Supper as used by our Lord.

In spite of the fact that the Lord's Supper has replaced the Feast of the Passover, if we apply the LAW OF FIRST MENTION as a means of studying the doctrine at hand, vital lessons and inspiration can be drawn from critically looking at the pattern of the celebration of the Feast of Passover in Exodus 12:1-51; Deuteronomy 16:1-8 and 2 Chronicles 30:1-27.

This can be accomplished if we ask ourselves and answer the following questions: (i) When and why was the Passover instituted? (ii) Who was qualified to partake in the ordinance? (iii) What were the tokens or emblems employed in the service? (iv) Who officiated in the service and how did they prepare for the ordinance i.e. place, provision, cost and personal sacrifices? (v) What was the spiritual impact and how often was it done? Parallel questions and answers apply to the Lord's Supper.

The PASSOVER (Hebrew 'Pesah') means "to pass over" i.e. "to spare" (Exodus 12:13,27). The Israelites were in bondage in Egypt (Exodus 2:11). They cried unto the Lord for deliverance (Exodus 3:7-10). Pharaoh did not set them free until God sent vicious plagues upon Egypt. The Passover ordinance was instituted the night when the destroyer killed Egyptians' first born but "passed over" or spared the Jews because of the blood on the lintel and side posts of their doors (a type of Calvary's Cross). The Feast of Unleavened Bread was co-joined with that of the Passover. The two then became known as "The Passover" (Deuteronomy 16:1-8). Sanctified elders and the priests handled the emblems (the blood of pure lamb and unleavened bread). The lamb was to be roasted and not eaten raw. No bone of the lamb was broken (Exodus 12:46; John 1:29; 19:36). This typifies Christ. The defiled, uncircumcised strangers and Gentiles did not participate (Exodus 12:43-49).

However, a qualified person would be cut off from among the Israelites if he refused to eat the Passover (Numbers 9:13). The Jews who did not observe it in the first month because they were not levitically pure, a

second chance of eating the Passover was offered in the second month, if they were clean (Deuteronomy 16:1-8; 2 Chronicles 30:1-27).

The preparations made in terms of personal and corporate cleansing, provision of the emblems and the place for the ordinance were elaborate and thorough. History tells us that in the New Testament, a candle light search was made to root out any trace of leaven (impurity) from the location of the Passover. The HALLEL, Psalm 113 to 118 was sung (Matthew 26:30) and the story of Exodus 12:1-14 recounted, bringing to remembrance the deliverance from Egypt. Prayers were also offered. It was a holy convocation. For the Jews, the dates for the Passover now became the beginning of months. It is to be observed forever as a memorial. It brought joy and renewed strength to God's people (2 Chronicles 30:25,26).

However, by the deeds of the law no man shall be justified. By the time of Christ, the Passover activities had been commercialised (John 2:13-17).

Jesus Christ instituted the Lord's Supper at the last Passover, for New Testament believers, thus signifying the end of the latter (Luke 22:1-20). Our Lord Jesus Christ is our Paschal Lamb or Passover (I Corinthians 5:7). He has delivered us from all bondages, sin, sickness and Satan.

In I Corinthians 11:27-32, no unbeliever, fornicator, polygamist or drunkard could join in the breaking of bread. The syncretic and the occultic did not have part in it. Some become unworthy because of fighting, keeping malice, divisive attitude, and having unforgiving spirit. Any restitution should be settled before the hour of the ordinance (Matthew 5:23,24).

The Lord's Supper is not the common love feast or marriage reception food (I Corinthians 11:20-22). We DISCERN the Lord's Body during participation in the Lord's supper (I Corinthians 11:29). This implies we recognise that the emblems, "the fruit of the vine" **and the "unleavened Bread" REPRESENT or SYMBOLISE the Lord's broken body and His blood that was shed respectively. They are not the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. This calls for holiness of life and solemnity on our part as we come to the Lord's table. We take the emblems to SHEW FORTH the Lord's death. We call to remembrance His love and passion on Calvary's Cross. The Lord's Supper is to be taken as often as practicable, in remembrance of our Lord till He comes (Matthew 26:17-21,26-30; Luke 22:7-13; I Corinthians 11:26). We look forward to the Rapture and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9). Adequate preparations should be made by the leadership of the church to secure the emblems and a location for the ordinance. More importantly, we must keep our total being worthy for it.**

In a Bible-believing church, grave consequences can befall those who eat it unworthily. Weakness, sickness or even death could ensue (I Corinthians 11:30). If you always feel disqualified, it is not certain that you will be qualified for the Rapture and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7,8). Adults, youths and children who have current testimony of salvation and holy living can partake of it.

10 Entire Sanctification

God's Word teaches;

That Entire Sanctification is a definite act of God's grace, subsequent to the New Birth, by which the believer's heart is purified and made holy. It cannot be attained progressively by works, struggle or suppression, but it is obtained by faith in the sanctifying blood of Jesus Christ. Holiness of life and purity of heart are central to Christian living - Luke 1:74,75; John 17:15-17; I Thessalonians 4:3,7,8; 5:22-24; Ephesians 5:25-27; Hebrews 2:11; 10:10,14; 13:11,12; Titus 2:11-14; I John 1:7; Hebrews 12:14; I Peter 1:14-16.

The doctrine of entire sanctification is central in the mind of the God-head. The doctrine is at the hub or nucleus of Christian teaching. What then is the meaning of the word, Sanctification? Sanctification is an English word which means: to make sacred or holy; to set apart for a holy or religious use; to make free from sin; to cleanse from moral corruption and pollution; the act of God's grace by which the affections of men are purified or alienated from sin and the world, and exalted to supreme love to God; to purify in order to prepare for divine service and for partaking of holy things; to free from the power of sin; being set free from the power of cancelled sin. It is a gracious work of the Holy Spirit - not of works, not of growth, not of death, not of purgatory - in those who are already in Christ. Sanctification is an operation of the Spirit of God. Those who have been regenerated and recreated in Christ, must of necessity be sanctified through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, and by His Word and His Spirit.

Sanctification is an instantaneous experience given to a believer to enable him cleave to God without the tendency to want to go astray or go away from the Lord. It is not a protracted or tedious process of growth. You do not grow INTO sanctification, but you can grow IN sanctification. We can never grow into what God must of necessity do for us. Again, sanctification is not brought about by death: to assume that is to say that death is no longer our last enemy to be destroyed (I Corinthians 15:26). Neither are we cleansed from the original stain (the nature we brought into the world) through Water Baptism. Entire sanctification is not of works, but it is the work of God, divinely wrought by the Holy Spirit.

'Holiness', 'Perfection' and 'Sanctification' are the definitive terms used interchangeably. Holiness means entire freedom from sin; wholeness, spiritual health, moral integrity and purity. Therefore, holiness means the absence of sin (Luke 1:74,75; Psalm 93:5; I Peter 1:16; Hebrews 12:14). 'Perfection' means that which is not lacking in that which it ought to have. The perfection which God requires and accomplishes in those who earnestly ask in faith is the purifying of our hearts to love every believer as Christ loves us, and to love our neighbours as ourselves. Nothing less than this is desirable and nothing more is required (Colossians 1:28). Entire sanctification is described as 'clean heart' or 'pure heart'. This descriptive term shows the experience in a way one can understand when it takes place in his heart (Psalm 24:3,4; Matthew 5:8). The Bible teaches that all of God's children can be like Jesus in separation from the world, in purity and in love. We must be inwardly pure and peaceful in order not to suffer defeat in our Christian life. A blameless life is a life in which God sees nothing to condemn. We may not be blameless to our contemporaries, but we can be blameless before God. God examines a sanctified heart and expects to always find all that it possesses to be in harmony with Himself. The heart of the sanctified is a throne on which God reigns without a rival; an empire wherein He exercises unchecked, undisputed dominion and authority.

How does the earnest seeker get sanctified? There must first be a definite separation and withdrawal from all sins and appearance of evil, immorality and all unclean things (I Thessalonians 5:22; 2 Corinthians 6:17; 2 Timothy 2:21). There must, second, be entire consecration. This is giving ourselves unto God in a vivid manner. First, we give ALL we are to God. Here, we no longer lay any claim to ourselves (Luke 9:60; Romans

12:1-2). Second, we give our body unto the glory of God, not for any selfish motive or purpose in view, but with the consideration and knowledge that we are bought by the precious blood of Jesus. Third, we give ourselves for service (John 13:12-17). We should not only stress our being priests and kings unto God but also as being servants. Here, Jesus shows us how to consecrate and dedicate ourselves for service. Washing the feet was the work of a slave. So, we must learn to do the meanest job in the midst of believers and not waiting for compliments. Fourth, we must die to self. **“Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit”** (John 12:24,25). To consecrate is to come before God with our past, present, future personality, possession, wisdom, talent, intellect, money, influence, position in the family and in the church and dedicate all to Him. When we separate and dedicate ourselves unto God, He is readily willing to do His part and give us the definite experience of Entire Sanctification. This is the operation of God, a definite act of God’s grace in believers’ hearts (Hebrews 2:11; 13:12,13).

By what means of grace does the believer get into this experience? The means of sanctification includes: (a) the word of God (John 15:3); (b) the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 13:12,13); (c) Faith in the Lord (Acts 26:18); (d) the Spirit of God, and (e) God Himself (I Thessalonians 2:23). We do not get sanctified by studying the Word alone. We need to pray in faith for the experience. We must believe in its possibility before we can ask in faith. Also, we must realise that it is the will of God that we are made holy (I Thessalonians 4:3-8; I John 5:14,15). Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord. Holiness here is not just the judicial kind of holiness, but the practical holiness of which believers are partakers because they have surrendered their entire life unto God through Christ. This holiness does something in our hearts and it makes us live right. We must desire it (Mark 11:24), and ask with a genuine burning desire.

What should be our response to this doctrine? The Bible teaches that all believers can be wholly sanctified (I Thessalonians 5:23). We should not be guilty of taking away from the Word. This teaching places a great and solemn responsibility upon all preachers of the Word to teach this doctrine; be a partaker of the experience (I Timothy 4:12; 2 Timothy 2:6); endeavour to understand and know it through diligent study (2 Timothy 2:15; Titus 1:9); faithfully and effectively teach all believers without fear or compromise, for in all things of the Spirit, we should not withhold or withdraw the truth from our congregation (2 Timothy 2:2). Let us encourage all believers to partake of the blessing. This gracious Christian experience could be kept all through life provided that the recipient keeps abiding in Christ, watching and praying (John 15:4; Mark 13:32-35). Thus, believer must not grieve the Holy Spirit, or relapse into bitterness and harshness of spirit (Ephesians 4:30,31). He must not allow or engage in unprofitable conversation (Ephesians 5:3,4), unkind criticisms, evil speaking and fault finding, self-indulgence, prejudice, impatience, indolence, negligence, uncontrolled temperament, self-dependence and self-management. He must avoid developing or showing interest in objects of temptation.

Why should any Christian doubt the possibility of complete deliverance from sin? Jesus should not be limited as a Saviour. Complete deliverance from sin is Christ’s purpose (Titus 2:11-15). The white lily grows up from a mire, but with no dust on it. Christians can grow up in this dirty world yet without spot on their lives (Romans 12:1,2). It is our privilege to be totally separated from this evil of the world. It is a promise from God that we should be purged and sanctified. **“Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it”** (I Thessalonians 5:24).

11 Holy Ghost Baptism

God's Word teaches;

That the Baptism in the Holy Ghost is the enduement of power from on High upon the sanctified believer. It is "the promise of the Father" and when one receives this "gift of the Holy Ghost", it is accompanied by the initial evidence of speaking a language unlearned previously, referred to as speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance - Matthew 3:11; Acts 1:8; Luke 3:16; 24:49; John 1:30-33; 7:37-39; 14:16,17,26; 15:26; 16:12-15; Acts 1:5-8; Mark 16:17; Acts 2:1-18; 10:44-46; Acts 19:1-6. We do not teach or instruct people how to speak in tongues: the Holy Spirit gives utterance. We also stress the necessity of purity before power. The Gifts of the Spirit are for believers today - I Corinthians 12:1-31; 14:1-40.

The baptism in the Holy Ghost is the enduement of power from on High upon the sanctified believer. It is the promise of the Father. When one receives this gift of the Holy Ghost, it is accompanied by the initial evidence of speaking a language unlearned previously, referred to as speaking in tongues as the Spirit gives utterance (Matthew 3:11; Acts 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:30-33; 7:37).

We do not teach or instruct people how to speak in tongues; the Holy Spirit gives utterance (Acts 2:4). Jesus Christ the great Teacher preached it and promised it (John 7:37-39; Luke 24:49; and Acts 1:4-8).

The Baptism in the Holy Ghost is not the new birth, salvation, conversion or regeneration (John 7:37-39; 14:17; 17:6-9,14-16; Luke 10:19-24; 24:49). It is not the sanctification experience (John 17:9; 17:21-23; Acts 2:1-4). Jesus prayed for the sanctification of His disciples and yet commanded them to wait for the enduement of power, the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. Moreover, sanctification is for purity whereas the Baptism with the Holy Spirit is for power.

It is also for illumination, feeling of joy, liberty and victory in prayer, self-denial or zeal (Luke 24:27,31-32,44,45; Acts 8:8,14-17).

The Holy Spirit is not a mere impersonal force. He is not a mere power that we can get hold of and use. He is not a mere influence that we feel. He is a person who seeks to get hold of us and use us. The Holy Spirit is a Divine Personality who we must honour, worship, fellowship with and listen to. He is called the Holy Ghost, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of the Living God, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Holiness, the Spirit of Life, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of your Father, the Comforter, the Eternal Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Luke 11:13; Hebrews 9:14; I Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 3:3; I Peter 1:11; 4:14; Romans 1:4; 8:2). The Holy Ghost is eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, and holy. He is the Inspirer of the Holy Scriptures, the General Overseer of the militant Church, the Great Teacher, Helper and Guide of all the saints, the character Builder of all members of the Body of Christ (Hebrews 9:14; Psalm 139:7-10; Acts 10:38; Matthew 12:28; I Corinthians 2:10,11; John 14:17-26; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Galatians 5:22,23). The Holy Ghost is the third Person in the Trinity (I Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:3-6; Matthew 28:19).

The Holy Spirit:

1. Searches all hearts (John 16:8-11; I Corinthians 2:10,11).
2. Convicts of sin (John 16:7-11).
3. Regenerates (Titus 3:5).
4. Bears witness with us (Romans 8:14-16).
5. Adopts into God's family (Romans 8:15).
6. Helps and gives victory in temptation (Romans 8:2,26-27).

7. Helps in prayer (Romans 8:26,27; Zechariah 12:10).
8. Fills believers with joy, peace and boldness (Acts 13:49-52).
9. Sanctifies (Romans 1:4; 5:5).
10. Quickens and heals our body (Romans 8:11).
11. Comforts, counsels and commands (Isaiah 11:1,2).
12. Intercedes for saints (Romans 8:26,27).
13. Illuminates and inspires (2 Peter 1:21).
14. Searches and reveals the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:9-12).
15. Teaches (John 14:26).
16. Guides into all truth (John 16:13).
17. Creates (Psalm 104:30).
18. Empowers (Acts 1:8).
19. Directs gospel work (Acts 8:26-29).
20. Confirms the gospel (Hebrews 2:3,4).

The mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit is promised to all flesh; and those who meet God's conditions can receive God's abundance (Isaiah 44:3; Ezekiel 36:25-27; Joel 2:28,29; John 7:37-39). Few (very few) of the Old Testament saints had the bulk of the Spirit upon them for some special tasks that the Lord gave them to do. The rest majority of the Israelites lived all their lives without the "special privilege" of having "the Spirit upon" them. Even those who had this privilege did not all enjoy His continuous abiding presence (Numbers 11:25; 24:2; Judges 3:10; 6:34; 14:6; 1 Samuel 10:9,10; 16:13; 2 Peter 1:21).

There were great expectations and a "diligent searching" by the Old Testament prophets. They looked forward to the glorious Gospel days in which we live. Even the angels dared to look into these things.

In as much as Christ's incarnation, birth, life, dominion, rejection, suffering, meekness, death and resurrection were all foretold, and the messianic prophecies were fulfilled in every detail, so also, will all prophecies concerning the outpouring of the Holy Spirit must be fulfilled.

Today, we can all receive the Spirit in baptismal measure. We can be baptized in the Holy Spirit if:

1. We thirst - have strong desire (Isaiah 44:3; John 7:37,39).
2. We receive "a new heart", "an heart of flesh", renewal of "the stony heart", "circumcision of heart" (Ezekiel 36:26,27).
3. We have "faith" to "receive" (Galatians 3:2,14; Mark 11:22,24).
4. We pray to receive (Luke 11:13).

12 Redemption, Healing and Health

God's Word teaches;

That Redemption from the curse of the law, Healing of sickness and disease as well as continued Health are provided for all people through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ - Exodus 15:26; Deuteronomy 7:15; Psalm 103:1-5; Proverbs 4:20-22; Isaiah 53:4,5; Matthew 8:16,17; I Peter 2:24; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 13:16; John 14:12-14; 10:10; Acts 10:38; James 5:14-16; 3 John 2 Galatians 3:13,14.

Redemption is a release or liberation from captivity or death by paying a price called a ransom. It simply connotes buying back unto freedom someone in servitude, slavery or captivity. The fall of man brought all human race under sin, Satan and condemnation. This was the result of man's disobedience to God, and the consequence of the broken law. Man lost his purity and favour with God in the fall. Man cannot, by himself, regain it. The whole creation was brought under the curse and all men (in Adam) became sinners and captives to sin, Satan and sickness (Romans 5:12). Consequently, man being under the sentence of death, could not pay his own death penalty and live again to enjoy freedom from sin and carry out the divine purpose for which he has been created. God then undertook the redemption of man by sending His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ to die in man's place. He, being capable, of redeeming man, met the demands of the law and became the legal substitute by paying the redemptive price for those who are condemned to death for breaking the law. This is absolute protection from eternal punishment through the blood of the perfect and spotless substitute (Exodus 12:13; John 3:16; Ephesians 1:7; Romans 3:24; Revelation 5:9; Romans 8:3; Isaiah 53:4-8; I Corinthians 6:20; 7:23; Matthew 26:28; I Peter 1:18-21). It is Christ who bore the curse of the law and suffered its condemnation of death in our stead. No sinner can be acquitted except he accepts Christ as his Redeemer (Acts. 4:12).

Man's redemption is not limited to removal of guilt; it covers all consequences of the broken law which are sickness, disease and satanic oppression. Healing of sickness and disease as well as continued health are provided for all men through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, there was a divine plan by which God heals all those who were in covenant relationship with Him. It is not everyone that can enjoy this unfailing healing and health plan made by God for all mankind based on the fact that not all men are in covenant relationship with Him. The promise to keep the Israelites from diseases by which the Egyptians were afflicted was made at the instance of the healing covenant Israel made with God. Diverse sickness, pestilences and plagues came upon them when they disobeyed God and broke His covenant (Deuteronomy 28:28-61; Psalm 107:17-20). But when they repented and prayed, fulfilling the covenant conditions, they were healed (Numbers 21:4-9; 2 Chronicles 7:13,14; Psalm 107:17-20). God is in the business of healing today where the conditions of the covenant are met.

Jesus not only bore our sins, He also bore our sickness and diseases. He became our sickness-Bearer in exactly the same way He became our sin-Bearer. Christ was scourged and striped for our healing; nailed to the cross for our sin (John 3:14; 12:22-23; Isaiah 53:4,5; Matthew 8:16,17; Psalm 103:2,4). The Holy Spirit concluded by saying, "**Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law**" (sickness - pestilence, fever, cancer, ulcer, boils, as well as nameless sicknesses found in people's life today and other infirmities recorded or not recorded in scriptures) (Deuteronomy 28:15-29,58-61; Galatians 3:13; Deuteronomy 7:12-15). Christ has been made manifest to destroy the works of the devil (I John 3:8; Acts 10:38; Hebrews 13:8).

Divine healing and health, like salvation has remained the right of every child of God. It is a vital part of complete salvation once we belong to the commonwealth of Israel and not strangers to the covenant of promise (Matthew 15:26-28; Ephesians 2:12-21; I Peter 2:9,10). Sickness in whatever form is of the devil. God calls

it captivity (Job 42:10), Jesus calls it bondage (Luke 13:16,12) and the Holy Spirit calls it oppression (Acts 10:38). The victory of Jesus is our victory. He did nothing for Himself. He conquered sin, Satan, disease and sickness on our behalf. He shares His victory with all who will repent and believe on His name. He bore our infirmities, sicknesses and diseases so that we could claim full release and deliverance. But disobedience to God's word, misuse of tongue and unbelief will make the covenant of no effect. For the people of God, no more can anyone enjoy the blessing of healing without a current relationship with God through Christ, obedience to the Word of God and fulfilling the terms and conditions for healing (Exodus 15:26; 23:25,26; Deuteronomy 7:12-15,6-9; Psalm 91; Isaiah 1:19; Mark 2:5,9,11; 3 John 2).

It then goes without saying that "curse causeless shall not come" Most often, infirmities come as a consequence of disobeying God (Genesis 20:1-18; I Chronicles 10:13), through Satan, the very source of sickness and affliction (Job 2:6,7; Matthew 4:23,24; John 10:10; 8:44; 5:14; Acts 10:38), backsliding (2 Chronicles 16:12-14; Matthew 12:43-45), misuse of the tongue (Numbers 21:4-6; 11:1-3; 12:1-10), sin, covetousness or merchandising God's gift (2 Kings 5:20-27); rebellion (Psalm 107:17- 20; Deuteronomy 32:39-41) or even breaking God's law of nature. The Scripture reveals that evil spirits, devils and demons also assist Satan in its destructive work on human bodies. They possess, oppress, afflict, torment, obsess people and cause dumbness and deafness (Matthew 9:32,33; Mark 9:25-27), blindness (Matthew 12:22), grievous vexation and torments (Matthew 15:22), lunacy (Matthew 4:24; Luke 9:38-42) and suicide (Matthew 17:15). Satan and his cohorts gain entrance into men when men sin, consult with familiar spirits, practise palm reading, magic, witchcraft, fortune telling, not guarding the mind or refusal to resist the devil. As long as you have any of the devil's property, he will stay around you. Renounce and destroy the works of the devil for total emancipation from his claws (1 Peter 1:1,13; 5:8,9; Acts 19:18,19).

The Bible sets forth the conditional precedence to enjoying the benefits and blessings of our relationship with God, which are our redemptive rights: genuine conversion (Psalm 103:2-5; Matthew 13:15; Mark 9:23; Matthew 21:21,22; Mark 11:22-24; John 14:12; James 1:6-8), obedience to God and His Word (Exodus 15:26; 23:25,26; Proverbs 4:20-22); abiding in Him (Psalm 91:1-7; John 15:1-7); making peace with fellow men (Mark 11:22-26; James 5:14-16; Genesis 20:14), serving God in holiness (Exodus 23:25,26; Colossians 2:6,7; John 5:14; I John 3:21-22), and appropriating the benefits of Calvary through prayer of faith (2 Peter 1:3,4; Hebrews 6:18; I Peter 2:24; James 1:16,17; Hebrews 13:8; Matthew 8:17). From the foregoing, God heals those who are under His healing covenant (Psalm 105:37; 2 Chronicles 30:18-20) by His Word (Psalm 107:20; Hebrews 4:12; Matthew 8:8), through His Mercy (Matthew 20:30-34), by His Power (Matthew 28:18; Colossians 1:16,17; Luke 5:17), by His Spirit (Acts 10:38; Isaiah 61:1,2; Luke 10:18,19; Romans 8:2,11; Matthew 12:28), in His Name (Acts 3:6; Luke 10:17,18; Mark 16:17,18; Proverbs 18:10; Philippians 2:9-11), by His Will (I John 5:14,15; John 5:30; 3 John 2). What a sure word of prophecy! No need therefore for private interpretation; according to your faith it shall be done unto you.

It is then left with every believer to fulfil the terms of the divine conditions in order to live in the reality of this marvellous provision. Healing and health is for us today. We can lay claim boldly to this redemptive grace: not with uncertainty, but with confidence of faith and prayer to get healed and remain healthy all the days of our lives. Now, we are redeemed, purchased, bought back again to be God's peculiar possession (Acts 20:28; I Corinthians 6:20; 7:23; Obadiah 17). We shall live to possess our possession.

13 Personal Evangelism

God's Word teaches;

That Personal Evangelism is a God-given and God-ordained ministry for every believer. Jesus commanded and God requires every believer to be a compassionate and fruitful soulwinner, bringing others to Christ - Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-49; John 17:18; Acts 1:8; 1- 4; Psalm 126:5,6; Proverbs 11:30; Daniel 12:3; Ezekiel 3:17-21.

Personal Evangelism is a God-given and God-ordained ministry for every believer. The Greek word “evangelion” (gospel) actually means Good News. It is good news from a loving God to a lost world that, through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, there is salvation (John 3:16,17). Personal evangelism is the person-to-person sharing of this good news of salvation with the aim of soul-winning - leading the sinner to repent and turn wholly to God through Jesus Christ, the Saviour (John 1:40-42; Acts 8:26-37). Jesus commanded and God requires every believer to be a compassionate and fruitful soul-winner (Matthew 28:19,20; Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8). Although mass evangelism is good and necessary, it will never take the place of personal evangelism. Illustrating the efficacy and superiority of personal evangelism, one godly man said, “If you had one hundred empty bottles before you, and threw a pail of water over them, some would get a little in them, but most would fall outside. If you wish to fill the bottles, the best way is to take each bottle separately and put a vessel full of water to each bottle’s mouth”. Another man of God said, “The world is never going to be brought to Christ whole-sale, but one by one. Men are not born collectively, they do not die collectively, they do not accept or reject Christ collectively.”

Personal evangelism is essential and mandatory because (a) Jesus commanded it (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19,20); (b) God is happy with its result (Luke 15:10); (c) Jesus did it (John 4:21-30; Matthew 4:19); (d) God the Father started it (Genesis 3:9); (e) Jesus prayed for the believers’ sanctification to make personal evangelism effective (John 17:17,18); (f) The Holy Spirit is given because of it (Acts 1:8); (g) Jesus Christ willed it (Matthew 4:19); (h) It is the heart desire of God (Ezekiel 33:11; 2 Peter 3:9); (i) Jesus’ earthly ministry illustrates it (Luke 19:10); (j) The early apostolic church practised it (Acts 8:30-37; Mark 16:20; Acts 8:4); (k) It is a mark of true wisdom (Proverbs 11:30); (l) Every genuine believer is equipped for it (John 1:37-45; 4:28,29); (m) It is the primary purpose for our salvation (John 15:16; 20:21); (n) There is great reward for those who carry it out (Daniel 12:3); (o) The harvest is plenteous but labourers are few (Matthew 9:36,37; John 4:35-38); (p) Life is short while eternity is endless (John 9:4; I Corinthians 7:29-31); (q) Souls are precious to God (Matthew 16:26; Mark 8:36,37; Psalm 49:6-9); (r) Hell is the end of all who die in sin (Mark 9:43- 48; Psalm 9:17; Revelation 20:10-15); (s) Powers of darkness and cults are growing (2 Timothy 3:13; I Timothy 4:1); (t) Neglect hinders prayers and progress (Proverbs 21:13; 24:11,12); (u) It can be done without any expense. No loudspeakers and microphones are needed. No permission from the government, church or school is needed for the use of their compound (Acts 8:4). Finally, (v) There are tremendous possibilities in personal evangelism when pursued vigorously and scripturally. It produces abundant results through the law of spiritual multiplication. For instance, if a church of 100 dedicated and witnessing members will share the gospel with the unsaved, each member with effective follow-up will, within a period of four months, disciple a new convert till he becomes a soul winner. If each convert were in turn to win one person to Christ, for example, spending four months helping him to grow in faith, and then each of them in turn were to win another soul, there would be in one year four hundred Christians. If they spend four months with the new converts and if each of the four hundred believers wins another, they would be eight hundreds. Continuing in that schedule, the membership of the church would be over three million in five years. Precisely, if there were only one Christian in the world and he worked a year, and won a friend to Christ, and if these two continued each year to win another, and if every man they led into the kingdom of God continued to win another, then, in thirty years, every person in the world would be won for Christ.

To be involved in personal evangelism, personal experience of conversion is indispensable (2 Timothy 2:6,7, 19-21; 2 Corinthians 5:17). Also, the soul-winner must live a holy life (2 Timothy 2:4; Isaiah 52:11). Secondly, the true soul-winner must have a strong, unshakable conviction (John 9:4; I Corinthians 9:16; Acts 26:22- 24; 21:8-14). He must, therefore, see himself as an ambassador of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19,20) and must thus devote his time, talents, strength and money to the furtherance of the Gospel. The world will never see Christ again until He comes back in judgment, except as it sees Him in us. There should therefore be a strong conviction about God, the Bible, salvation, Christ's death, resurrection and His second coming. Thirdly, the soul winner must accept that the responsibility of preaching the gospel is not optional but a debt (Romans 1:14; Proverbs 24:11,12; Ezekiel 33:6; I Corinthians 9:16). Furthermore, there is need for a deep, burning Christ-like compassion (Matthew 9:36; Romans 9:1-3; 10:1). This should be the basis for the sacrifices we make, effectual fervent prayers we offer, tears we shed and hardship that we endure for the souls of men to be won to the Lord.

Specifically, there must be quite a lot of secret praying because there is no substitute for expectant, secret waiting upon God for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, for wisdom, strength and power, and for courage, hope, faith and a glowing, burning and appropriate message from God (2 Timothy 1:7). This prayer must be importunate to open the hearts of men to God (Psalm 2:8). The soul-winner must be skilful in the use of the Word which is the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17; 2 Timothy 2:15). He must also have a definite message, and recognize first that the Gospel is a fact that must be told cheerfully; and an entrusted fact, that should be told faithfully. The soul-winner must preach the gospel with earnestness, love, simplicity, tact and wisdom (1 Corinthians 9:20-23; 2 Timothy 2:24-26). He must not give in to discouragement.

Opportunities for personal evangelism abound daily on the streets, hospitals, motor parks, bus stops, inside the bus or taxi, prisons, homes of neighbours, schools, markets, etc. The soul-winner does not wait for a perfect opportunity as every situation is an opportunity (Ecclesiastes 11:4,6; 2 Timothy 4:2). An effective way of conducting personal evangelism is through friendship. Friendship evangelism is the art of leading a soul to Christ by cultivating his friendship. Deed of kindness, love, service and friendliness can be the bait that will get a sinner interested in the gospel message. The soul-winner must do things that will demonstrate that he cares for the person's earthly welfare as well as his eternal soul. Friendship evangelism reflects genuine and true Christlike love in action. Jesus Christ our Lord did not count it ungodly to dine with sinners (Luke 19:5-7). Tracts, cassettes, good books, magazines and even letter writing could be employed for personal evangelism. When do we start personal evangelism? Now (John 4:35). This is because we cannot be guiltless before God if we neglect it (Ezekiel 3:18,19). Millions of souls are rushing towards a lost eternity. Believers must, therefore, throw aside all flimsy excuses as there is no trouble too great, no humiliation too deep, no suffering too severe, no labour too hard, no expense too much in saving souls. We must arise therefore, pray and do the work.

14 Marriage

God's Word teaches;

That Marriage is binding for life. Monogamy is the uniform teaching of the Bible. Polygamy is contrary to God's perfect will and institution. Also, under the New Testament dispensation, no one has a right to divorce and remarry while the first companion lives. When a person becomes converted, necessary restitution, on this line, must be done without delay if he has married wrongly. Genesis 2:24; Deuteronomy 7:1-4; Job 23:11-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Proverbs 31:10-31; Malachi 2:14,15; Romans 7:2,3; Ephesians 5:31-33; Matthew 5:31,32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; John 4:15-19; Genesis 20:3-7.

Marriage is a holy union, a living symbol, a precious relationship that needs tender self-sacrificing care. It is God's idea and not a derivative of any culture. It is a gift from God to man and it has three basic aspects: (i) The man leaves his parents, and in a public act, pledges himself to his wife; (ii) The man and woman are joined together by taking responsibility for each other's welfare and by loving the partner above all others; (iii) The two become one flesh in the intimacy and commitment to the wonderful union which is reserved for marriage. By so doing, marriage provides the needed fellowship, comfort, companionship and partnership. It is one of God's methods to keep men and women free from fornication and immorality. With very few exceptions, most men and women are to marry. These few exceptions are to receive God's guidance and are not to be the product of infantile decisions, misguided imitations, faithless consecration or frivolous religious compassion (Genesis 2:18-20, 22-24; Matthew 19:4,5; Ephesians 5:31; I Corinthians 7:1,2,25-29,32).

Marriage is part of God's plan to raise the Christian family. But the believer is not to go searching for a wife or husband, neither are they to resort to the abominable method of 'sampling' or 'picking and choosing'. And the Lord God, said, **"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him"** (Genesis 2:18). God seems to be saying, "I am not going to allow the man to choose for himself". **"And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman and brought her unto him"** (Genesis 2:22). God did not bring a girl, an immature female or a teenager, but He brought a woman - (intelligible, sensible and mature) unto the man. He brought a perfect fit - two of a kind! God still leads His children to His will in marriage today. He does this through (i) His Word (Psalm 119:105,130; 2 Timothy 3:16,17), (ii) the inner voice of the Holy Spirit, prompting, directing, influencing or checking (John 10:4,5,27; Romans 8:14; Proverbs 20:27; I Samuel 9:15-21; 16:12,13; Joel 2:28,29; Acts 9:10-15). However, any revelation that is received must be diligently compared with the Scripture. If any revelation, visions or dreams contradict the Scripture in anyway, such revelations, visions or dreams are to be rejected as false (Isaiah 8:19,20; Jeremiah 23:21-32; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; Revelation 22:18,19). Once the will of God is known, believers are to seek and obtain their parents' consent before going on with any further plans (Genesis 24:15-29; 34:3-12; Exodus 22:16; Deuteronomy 7:3; I Samuel 18:20,21; I Corinthians 7:36-38).

It is ungodly for any believer to elope with a woman or man no matter the divergent and unyielding stance of their parents (Genesis 31:20-51). People in such a situation must pray and trust in the Lord who gave the revelation of His will, to finish the work, for **"with God all things are possible"** (Mark 10:27; Psalm 37:4; Philippians 4:6; Proverbs 21:1). Thereafter, payment of bride price or dowry shall be executed in line with the Scripture. It is an ungodly practice to borrow money or go into debt to impress the woman's parents or invitees. It is also considered sinful for two people to live together without meeting the requisite obligations to their parents (Exodus 22:17; I Samuel 18:25-27; Hosea 3:2,3; 1 Corinthians 14:40; Romans 13:7,8). The parents' consent will lead, naturally, to a period of courtship to be determined by the church leadership but preferably not longer than nine months. This affords the intending couple the opportunity to understand each another and plan for the future together. It is a time to be spent together not in secrecy but in the home of a Christian family

where movement of people is not restricted. It is during courtship that the intending couple will discuss their expectations of each other (on finances, size of family anticipated, extended family, etc). Purity must be maintained before, during and after the courtship (I Thessalonians 4:3-7; 5:22). Visitations and exchange of gifts at this stage are not acceptable, before the wedding. The Christian wedding is preceded by 'filing in of notice' at the Marriage Registry. This is to enable the public inform the Magistrate should there be any objection to the proposed marriage. The church wedding will take place after the Pastor had received a certificate from the magistrate.

The church will not join a couple in marriage where (i) one of them had been previously married and is separated from his or her partner (Matthew 19:4-6; John 4:18); (ii) the lady has not obtained the consent of her parents; (iii) the lady is already pregnant (iv) the couple is in unequal yoke - one of them is not born again (Deuteronomy 7:3; 2 Corinthians 6:14).

Therefore, no believer will marry an unbeliever or a divorced person. Moreover, God's word forbids the believer marrying "**any that is a near of kin**", that is "**a relative**" (Leviticus 18:6). Marrying relatives was prohibited by God for physical, social, and moral reasons. Children born to near relatives may experience serious health problems. When improper sexual relations begin, family life is destroyed. "**For all these abominations have the men of the land done, which were before you, and the land is defiled ...**" (Leviticus 18:27).

From the parables and actual marriages in the Scripture, weddings were moments of rejoicing and feasting (Jeremiah 33:11; John 2:1-11; 3:29; Isaiah 62:5) and special garments were provided for the bridegroom, bride, and guests at the wedding (Matthew 22:12; Revelation 19:7,8). Yet, Christian practice must be guided by the uniform teaching of Christian living in the New Testament (I Corinthians 7:29- 31; 6:12; 8:9,13; Romans 14:15; I John 2:6; 3:2-4). The believers therefore must shun every form of worldliness and worldly imitations in dressing and in the manner of entertaining guests. Simplicity and modesty must characterise the wedding in order that God's name may be glorified.

The first step in creating a new union with one's spouse is the dissolving of the old one: a severance of relationship with one's parents (Genesis 2:23,24; Ephesians 5:30,31). He is to 'leave father and mother', which means departing, loosing oneself, finding freedom from them. Many who have violated this scriptural principle have discovered to their chargin a hurt to their marital joy. Marriage is "until death do us part", and God did not make any provisions for divorce or re-marriage.

In marriage, lack of spiritual, emotional, and intellectual intimacy usually precedes a break down of physical intimacy. When couples fail to expose their secret thoughts to one another, they shut off the line of communication to one another. The great secret of conjugal happiness is mutual love, kindness, tenderness and loveliness of character in the home. The wife should respect and obey the husband and the husband should love and care for the wife (Ephesians 5:22-31). "**Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord ...**" Submission is not the obliteration or nullification of the woman's personality. It is neither subjugation nor an imposed obedience. Submission is a voluntary subordination. It is obedience motivated by love (Philippians 2:5-8). "**Likewise, ye wives be in subjection to your own husbands ...**" (I Peter 3:1-6). Such a life speaks loudly and clearly, and is often the most effective way to influence a family member. Christian wives should develop inner beauty rather than being overly concerned about their appearance. When the wife lives the Christian faith quietly and consistently in the home, her family would see Christ in her.

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it ... So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself" (Ephesians 5:25,28). Christ is the model of love. The husband can never love his wife too much; yet, that love is inconsequential when compared to his love for the Lord. The husband's love makes him to be considerate, understanding and is able to bear with his wife.

The husband is also the head of the family. This headship has the idea of authority, an authority after the analogy of Christ's headship. In that sense, the husband is the spiritual head of the family and his wife goes along with his leadership. A wise and Christ-honouring husband will not take advantage of his role, and a wise and Christ-honouring wife will not try to undermine her husband's leadership.

“Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband ” (Ephesians 5:33).

15 The Rapture

God's Word teaches;

That the Rapture (commonly referred to as the first phase or stage of the SECOND COMING OF CHRIST) is the catching away from the earth, of all living saints and all who died in the Lord. The Rapture will take place before the Great Tribulation and can happen any time from now. "In a twinkling of an eye" without a moment's warning, "the trumpet shall sound" "and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" - John 14:1-3; Luke 21:34-36; I Corinthians 15:51-58; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:4-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:5-7; Philippians 3:11,20,21; I John 3:1-3.

The rapture is the greatest event of all ages that the Church is waiting for. It is the catching away of all true believers in Christ to meet the Lord in the air (I Thessalonians 4:16). Christ, at the end of His first advent, was in like manner taken up in the air to go and prepare a place for His own. The parting promise from God was that Jesus will return in like manner to receive His 'Bride' to be with Him forever (Acts 1:9-11; John 14:1-3).

The rapture is not the same as the Second Coming of Christ. At the Rapture, Christ will appear in the air. He will not be visible to the inhabitants of the earth. His mission then will be to resurrect all dead saints, who, along with the living believers, will put on immortality and shall be caught up to be with the Lord. This event will take place in the twinkling of an 'eye' before the great and terrible day of the Lord, when the wrath of God will be poured down from His cup of indignation without mixture - an event fitly called the Great Tribulation (I Corinthians 15:52). The Second Advent will not take place until after the great tribulation. The time of the Rapture is unknown, even by the angels (Matthew 24:36; 2 Thessalonians 2:1- 5). The Rapture will be heralded by the voice of the archangel and the blowing of trumpets signalling the end of the Church age (I Thessalonians 4:13-15).

The Rapture was a mystery, unknown to the Old Testament saints and prophets. God had underlined this great event in two different ways in the Scripture to assure us of its certainty. First, it was illustrated in Enoch and Elijah, the two living saints who did not taste death but were translated in a moment of time and caught up in the air (Genesis 5:24, 2 Kings 2:11,12).

Second, it was illustrated in Christ in the New Testament. He died, was buried and resurrected. While He talked with His disciples on Mount Olivet, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight (Acts 1:9-11).

The rapture which was a mystery to the Old Testament prophets marks the end of the Church Age, also referred to as the time of the Gentiles (Luke 21:24). This truth was veiled to the saints of old. However, known unto God are all His works from the foundation of the earth. In His mercy, He interrupted His programme for Israel with the interpolation of Church Age. Christ the Messiah came for His people but they rejected Him (John 1:11), and God turned to the Gentiles to take a people for Himself. The rapture will mark the end of this special period of grace. Does this mean that God has forsaken His people Israel forever? Far from it, God will resume His programme with Israel immediately after the rapture, thus ushering in the beginning of the Seventieth week in Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:24-27).

Any moment from now, the trumpet shall sound and He that shall come will come and will not tarry. It is very certain that Christ is coming back again. He assured the Church of the certainty of His coming (John 14:1-3).

Angels proclaimed it, apostles and saints throughout the ages preached it. All the signs of His coming are daily being fulfilled.

Christ, answering a pertinent question asked by His disciples on “...**What shall be the sign of thy coming...**” (Matthew 24:3), gave in details what would be happening on earth shortly before His coming (Matthew 24:5-12,30-39). He highlighted the following as what to expect:

- (i) Many false Christ's will arise to deceive many unsuspecting believers.
- (ii) There will be wars and rumours of war.
- (iii) There will be international wars.
- (iv) Famines (global economic recession)
- (v) Pestilences
- (vi) Earthquakes in divers places
- (vii) There will be persecution of Christ's followers and some cases of martyrdom.
- (viii) The emergence of many false prophets.
- (ix) Backsliding from the faith on the increase
- (x) More people given to pleasure and merry-making than those seeking the Lord.

The scripture also predicts the conditions, characterized by a system of denials, that will be prevalent within the visible Church, shortly before Christ's return. There will be a denial of God (2 Timothy 3:1-5), a denial of Christ (I John 2:18; 4:3), a denial of Christ's return (2 Peter 3:3,4), a denial of the faith of Christian living (Jude 18) and a denial of authority. All these signs are being fulfilled before our very eyes.

To qualify to partake in the rapture, one must be born again, live a transparent holy life, walk daily in the light, do service for God, watch daily, pray always with all prayer, and maintain these experiences at the time of the Rapture or at the time of death as the case may be (John 3:3; Hebrews 12:14; John 4:35-38; 9:1-4; I Thessalonians 4:16,17).

All the signs preceding the Second Advent of Christ are all fulfilled, a clear indication that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is very close and the time of the Rapture is much closer. Sinning Church members will not be able to go at the rapture, though saved before and baptised in water. Careless and compromising preachers will miss the rapture; it does not matter what Christian work they may have done in the past. All such people together with backsliders and sinners outside the Church will be left behind to face the Great Tribulation.

Knowing that these things shall be, that the rapture will occur unannounced, and it is very imminent, what manner of persons ought believers to be. Sinners are to make haste to repent and embrace Christ, as their Saviour. The Saints of God are to watch and pray lest that day comes upon them unprepared (Matthew 24:42-44).

16 The Resurrection of The Dead

God's Word teaches;

That the Resurrection of the dead is taught in the Bible as clearly as the immortality of the soul. Every individual who has ever lived will be resurrected, some to honour and glory and others to everlasting shame and contempt - Job 19:25-27; Psalm 71:20; Isaiah 26:19; Daniel 12:2; John 5:28,29; I Corinthians 15:12-57; I Thessalonians 4:13-16; Hebrews 6:1,2; Philippians 3:8-11; Revelation 20:4,6,12,13.

The resurrection of the dead is a cardinal and an important doctrine of the Bible. As a fact, all who die in this world will undergo physical resurrection before the Great White Throne Judgement. This doctrine shows that there will be a resurrection of the body, joined with the soul to meet the LORD either in peace and joy, or meet Him (as a Judge) in condemnation, eternal punishment and torment of hell fire.

Jesus, the Prophet come from God, declared in John 5:25, **“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.”** The fact of the resurrection of the just and unjust rings through the teaching of Jesus Christ (John 6:40; 11:25; Matthew 16:21; 22:23-32). Job spoke of his eyes and flesh seeing God after worms have destroyed his body (Job 19:25-27). Isaiah spoke of the earth casting out the dead (Isaiah 26:14,19). Daniel spoke of the awakening of many that sleep in the dust, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Daniel 12:2). In like manner spoke David (Psalms 16:10; 17:15), Old Testament saints (Hebrews 11:35), New Testament saints (Matthew 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-18; Luke 24:1-49; John 20: 19-21) including Paul (Acts 17:18,32), Peter (I Peter 1:3; 3:21), even Herod the wicked King and the generality of the people of his day believed in the resurrection of the dead (Mark 6:14-16).

The form to be associated with the resurrected body of the just is exemplified by the glorified body that Jesus, the first fruit, had after His resurrection (Luke 24:36- 43; John 20:11-20,24-31; I John 3:2). All resurrected bodies will be immortal (Daniel 12:2; Mark 9:42-48). The resurrected bodies of saints will possess different degrees of glory. **“There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead ”** (I Corinthians 15:39-54).

In the intervening period between death (when the body and soul are separated) and the resurrection, one may ask: Where is the soul? The soul of a saint of God goes immediately to meet God in heaven. The repentant malefactor on the cross received forgiveness and assurance of Jesus: **“Today shall thou be with me in paradise ”** (Luke 23:39-43). Righteous Lazarus died and was **“carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom ”** where he was comforted (Luke 16:19-31). Stephen at death said, **“I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God ”** ready to receive him (Acts 7:54-60). Paul was **“willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord ”** (2 Corinthians 5:1-8). Many other references of the Scripture confirm that the soul of the saint rejoices in God’s presence at death (Philippians 1:21-23; Ecclesiastes 12:1,7). On the other hand, when a sinner dies, his soul goes immediately to hell. In hell fire, he is conscious; he can see, feel and hear (Luke 16:19-31).

The timing for the resurrection to life of the just and resurrection to judgement of the unjust is well spelt out in the scriptures in accordance with the ordained programme of God.

The resurrection of the saints of God also variously described in scriptures as resurrection of life (John 5:28,29), resurrection of the just (Luke 14:13,14), a better resurrection (Hebrews 11:35) and the first resurrection (Revelation 20:4-6), has four phases:

- (i) The resurrection of Christ, the first fruit (I Corinthians 15:3,4,12,20,23).
- (ii) The resurrection of the Church-age saints at the rapture (I Thessalonians 4:13-16).
- (iii) The resurrection of the tribulation period saints (Revelation 20:3-5).
- (iv) The resurrection of Old Testament saints at the second advent of Christ to the earth (Daniel 12:2; Isaiah 26:19).

All the saints of God that ever died would resurrect in the first resurrection. Not a soul will be left behind. What joy! What triumph!! **“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years”** (Revelation 20:6).

The second resurrection is still part of God’s programme but deals with the unsaved dead. There is a difference in time of one thousand years between the first and second resurrection (Revelation 20:5-15). The second resurrection is also described as the resurrection to damnation (John 5:29). There will be everlasting punishment and torment in the lake of fire for all who partake in the second resurrection who have missed the first resurrection and whose names are not found in the Book of Life (Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:11-15).

As in the early church when Hymenaeus and Philetus erred concerning the truth by teaching that the resurrection was past already, thereby making a shipwreck of their faith and that of all those who followed their false doctrine, there are many false teachers today who **“know not the scriptures nor the power of God”** and overthrow the faith of many (2 Timothy 2:17,18; Matthew 22:23-32). Today many false teachings on the resurrection of the dead abound having the same devastating effects on all who believe them. Among such doctrines are (a) Annihilation and (b) Purgatory.

The doubt, unbelief and scoffing of sinners will not prevent the complete resurrection programme of God for both the saved and the unsaved, the same way it did not alter the resurrection from the dead of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ (Acts 23:8; 2 Timothy 2:15-18; I Corinthians 15:12-23; Romans 3:3,4). The resurrection of Christ and the future resurrection of the saints form the foundation of our Christian faith (I Corinthians 15:16-20). **“For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised; and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. BUT NOW IS CHRIST RISEN FROM THE DEAD!”**

To partake in the first resurrection, the resurrection of the saved, there must of necessity first be a spiritual resurrection in the present life, whereby the spirit is quickened from death in trespasses and sins, and the whole being renewed in the glorious likeness of God to a life of righteousness and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord (Ephesians 2:1,2,4-6; 1Thessalonians 4:14,16; 2 Corinthians 5:17- 19; Hebrews 12:14).

17 The Great Tribulation

God's Word teaches;

That the Great Tribulation will occur after the Rapture and will be a time of terrible suffering on earth. It is also referred to as the time of "Jacob's trouble"- Matthew 24:21,22,29; Revelation 9:16; Mark 13:19; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; Revelation 13. During this time, the Antichrist will take possession of this world for a reign of terror. He will not be a system or organization but a person - a supernatural, diabolical being, in the form of a man who will blaspheme and proclaim himself to be God (Daniel 8:23-25; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Revelation 13:1-10). The Marriage Supper of the Lamb will take place above while the Tribulation continues on earth - Revelation 19:1-10.

The Great Tribulation is described as the “... **time of Jacob's trouble**” (Jeremiah 30:7) “... great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matthew 24:21). “... **the day of the Lord**” (Joel 1:15). “... **a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness**”, (Joel 2: 2). “... **a day of wasteness and desolation**” (Zephaniah 1:14,15). “... **a time of trouble**” (Daniel 12:1). The purpose of the great tribulation is to make Israel suffer so that they can be ready to cry to the Messiah (the Lord Jesus Christ whom they, at present, reject) to come back to them. It is also to judge the unbelieving men and women of all ages (Zechariah 12:10,11; 13:1-9; 14:12-13).

The Bible shows that the great tribulation will take off after the rapture of the church (I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 4:1) and will last for seven years. It will end at the second Advent of Jesus Christ when He alights on Mount Olives (Zechariah 14:4; Matthew 25:31; Revelation 19:11,12; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Jude 14,15; Acts 1:11) and settles on earth (Jerusalem) for a thousand-year reign called the Millennial Reign (Revelation 20:4,5). This means that it is post-rapture and pre-millennium or, the 70th of Daniel's 70 weeks (i.e after the 69th week) Daniel 9:26,27; Revelation 19:11-19,21; Matthew 24:15-31; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-8). It is post-rapture because God will not like His children to suffer the great tribulation, its judgements and destructions. He saved Noah (a preacher of righteousness) and his family before destroying the world with flood (Genesis 6:8-10; Genesis 7:1-13,16-24; 8:15-22). He rescued Lot (who was vexed with the filthy conversation of Sodom) and his family before destroying it with fire (Genesis 19:10-29). So God will take away His children from the earth before the great tribulation begins. The great tribulation reaches its peak of destructions, judgements, terrors, frightening wars and desolation from the middle of the seven-year duration and ends with Christ's second advent. This is when the anti-Christ breaks his seven-year peace covenant with Israel and attacks Jerusalem (Revelation 19:15-19,21; Matthew 24:15-22; Daniel 12:1; Jeremiah 30:6-9).

The great tribulation is described as being full of woes, judgements, famines, bloody wars, explosions, plagues (incurable epidemics which become pandemic), terror, anguish and earthquakes. It will be a time men will be calling unto the mountain to fall upon them; burning rocks falling from heaven upon the earth and scorching it, seas will be polluted, cattle and vegetations will be destroyed and millions will be dying from catastrophes, “**as if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him ... leaned his hand on the wall, and serpent bit him**”. Beasts and men will be in trouble even mighty men will weep. “**Neither their gold and silver (riches) will be able to deliver them**”. Whole cities and nations will be under great distress, perplexity, as the seas and waves roaring, hypertension and confusion as the powers of the heavens will be shaken by God (Amos 5:18,19; Isaiah 2:19; 24:1-3,6,19; Mark 13:24; Joel 1:15; Luke 21:25,26; Matthew 24:11-26; Revelation 19:1-3,11-19,21). The great tribulation opens with the rapture of the church (I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 14:1) then the rise of the Anti-Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:7,8). He wins nations, some by war while others concede authority to him (Daniel 7:8,24-25; Revelation 17:8-14). The False Prophet popularizes him, making men to worship even his image. No one buys or sells without the mark or number (666) of the beast. While these are going on, saints receive rewards in heaven (Revelation 2:17,25-28; 3:12). There will be great

apostasy, more of false religions and increase in the power of the devil who will be driven down to the earth (2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; Revelation 12:10-12; 13:2,12-18). God's planned judgements will fall on men in a divine sequence, producing supernatural phenomena and demonic creatures unknown to man. These will come as Christ opens seven seals of a scroll on which they occur, then the blowing of seven trumpets each, a harbinger of more woes. 144,000 Jews will be sealed and raptured as well as countless tribulation saints from all over the world (Revelation 7:1-17). Saints in tribulation will be martyred (Revelation 6:9-11; 14:13; 20:4-6). A mighty Angel appears with rainbow on his head, a little book opened and swears that "there should be time no longer", (Revelation 10:1-11). After this, the high point of catastrophies called "the great tribulation" begins for the remaining 3 1/2 years (Revelation 11:1-19; Daniel 12:1,5-7; Jeremiah 30:6,7). Jerusalem falls to the Anti-Christ and Israel is defeated (Matthew 24:15-22; Daniel 11:40-45). Israel runs for refuge in old Edom (Revelation 12:6,13-17; Isaiah 16:1-5). There will be more woes on earth through the pouring out on it of the content of seven vials (Revelation 15:1-6; 16:21; 18:1-24). God's two witnesses appear, are killed and later resurrect (Revelation 11:7-12). The marriage supper of the Lamb takes place (Revelation 19:1-10) and saints prepare to return to the earth with Christ (Jude 14,15; Revelation 19:11).

The scope will cover Israel, the middle east and the whole earth. The powers at work will be (a) the Anti-Christ called the Beast, the King of the north, the Syrian, the Assyrian, the king of Babylon, the Extortioner, the man of sin, the little horn, the Prince that shall come, a king of fierce countenance and understanding dark saying, the spoiler, the son of perdition and that wicked one empowered personally by Satan (2 Thessalonian 2:1-10; Daniel 7:8,24; 8:9,23; 9:26,27,36-45; Revelation 13:1-18; 14:9-11; Isaiah 10:31; 30:31; Micah 5:3-15; Isaiah 14:4;16:4; Daniel 7:11). (b) The false Prophet (Revelation 13:1-19; 14:9-11; 15:2-4; 16:2-12; 19:20; Daniel 9:27; 11:35, 45; 12:7; Matthew 24:15). (c) God's powerful judgements (Joel 1:15; 2:11; Amos 5:18; Revelation 4-19:1-21). (d) The devil (Revelation 12:7-17; 20:1-2; 2 Thessalonian 2:9).

While terrors are unleashed on the earth, saints will be (a) receiving rewards: crowns, mansions, new names, white stones, etc, at the judgement seat of Christ (Bema) (I Corinthians 3:11-15; Luke 14:14; I Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10-12; Matthew 16:27; John 14:1,2; 1Thessalonians 2:19; James 1:12; 2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 2:17,25-28; 3:12,21; 22:12-16). The believers' time of judgement and reward only means the evaluation of believers' works for which they may receive rewards or loss of reward. All raptured believers will be eternally saved. (b) Rejoicing and feasting at the marriage supper in heaven (Revelation 19:6-9) (c) Worshipping God with the angels (Revelation 7:9-17; 14:1-5; 4:5,7) and (d) preparing for the second Advent with Christ upon white horses (Jude 14,15; Revelation 19:11-14; Matthew 25:31).

The great tribulation ends when Jerusalem is ravished by the Anti-Christ with two thirds of it captured at the end of the seventh year, and the children of Israel will repent in great mourning and tears, calling for the Messiah, Jesus Christ to come back to the earth and establish the millennial reign all over humanity (Zechariah 14:4-8; Micah 1:3,4; Zechariah 14:1-3; 13:1; 12:4-14; Zephaniah 3:8; Joel 3:13-16). All Israel will be saved (Romans 11:25-27; Hebrews 8:8-12; 10:17; Zechariah 12:10; 13:1; Isaiah 66:7,8). Jesus then descends, destroys the anti-Christ, the false prophet and casts them into the lake of fire together with his armies at the battle of Armageddon (valley of Megido), then an angel, binds the devil and casts him into the bottomless pit for 1000 years (Revelation 19:20; Ezekiel 38:3,9; Revelation 20:1-3; Zechariah 14; Revelation 1-20; Revelation 19:11-21; Isaiah 34; Jude 14,15). Jesus Christ then builds a millennial temple at Jerusalem from where He rules the whole world.

18 The Second Coming of Christ

God's Word teaches;

That the Second Coming of Christ will be just as literal and visible as His going away, and He is coming to execute judgement upon the ungodly. He will also, then, set up His Kingdom and reign on this present earth for a thousand years - Zechariah 14:3,4; Matthew 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 13:24-37; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2:8; Jude 14,15.

The Scriptures abound with evidence that speaks of the certainty of Christ's Second Coming. Our Lord Jesus spoke of His return several times, once leading the disciples to enquire about the signs that would herald that certain event. A study of the scriptures indicates that certain prophecies concerning Christ, and some future programme of God are not yet fulfilled and would only be, after the second advent of Christ. However, all the signs preceding the second advent are being fulfilled daily. Going through the Olivet discourse of Matthew 24 and 25, the following signs of His coming are clear. Jesus Himself said, there would be deceptions (Matthew 24:4-5,11,24), false christs (Matthew 24:5,23-26), wars and rumours of wars (Matthew 24:6-7), Famines (Matthew 24:7), pestilences, earthquakes, anti-semitism (Matthew 24:9; Mark 13:9,13), offences (Matthew 24:10), betrayals, hatred, false prophets (Matthew 24:11), lawlessness and martyrdom. He said the impact of the second coming will be as universal as when **“the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth unto the west ...”** It would make all **“the tribes of the earth to mourn”**. They would be deep in spiritual lethargy and indifference as was the case in the time of Noah's flood (Matthew 24:27,30,37).

The Holy Spirit, through the apostles, confirmed that Christ shall appear **“the second time”** (Hebrews 9:28) and would then reward His faithful servants with crowns of glory, praise and honour and His adversaries with fiery indignation (I Peter 5:4; 1:7; Hebrews 10:27). James the apostle also encouraged believers: **“Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth near”**. The angel of God confirmed that, **“this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven”** (Acts 1:11).

The prophecy in Isaiah 9:6 that the government (of the whole world) would be on His (Christ's) shoulders is yet to be fulfilled. Also, some prophecies in Isaiah 61 concerning our Lord Jesus Christ were only partially fulfilled at His first coming. Christ Himself confirmed in Luke 4:21 that **“this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears”**. The rest of the prophecies in that chapter would be fulfilled after His second advent.

The exactitude with which the old time prophecies concerning the first coming of Christ were fulfilled points to the infallibility of the Scriptures and to the certainty of those prophecies concerning His second advent. Prophecies on His virgin birth, details of His earthly life, His death, burial and resurrection were all literally fulfilled to the letter, and so would those relating to His second coming.

Apart from the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning Christ, other divine purposes which the second advent would fulfil include: (i) the comfort of the church (John 14:1- 3; 16:20-22); (ii) the restoration of Israel to her sovereignty as prophesied in the scripture (Isaiah 32:18; 33:20-24); (iii) the judgement of the earth (Revelation 20:11-15; John 5:22); (iv) The renovation of the earth (Isaiah 67:17; 66:22; Revelation 21:1); (v) The restoration of all things as God wants it (Romans 8:20-23; Jeremiah 12:4,11).

The greatest event that will precede the Second Coming of Christ is the Rapture - the catching up of the saints to meet the Lord in the air and to be with him forever. The Rapture lies in the valley between the mountains of Christ's first and second coming. It is a part of the mystery of the church which in the Old Testament age

“was not made known unto the sons of men” as it was revealed in the New Testament to “His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit”.

The Rapture should, however, not be confused with the Second Coming. The two events are distinct and separated by seven years. Specifically, the second coming refers to Christ’s coming to the earth to live as He did in the first coming, to be seen by every eye. In the rapture, Christ would not come to the earth but stop in the air where the saints will meet him. It is not every eye that will see Christ at the rapture. When Christ meets the saints in the air, He will take them to heaven where they would remain, out of the period of the Great Tribulation (Revelation 19:18,19). It is during this seven-year period that the marriage supper of the Lamb and the judgement of saints for reward would take place in heaven (1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10). In other words, the rapture is the time Christ comes for the saints, to take them to heaven. In the second coming, however, He will come to the earth to live and fulfil a definite part of God’s time-table for the earth and man. Christ would come with the saints raptured seven years earlier. Whereas the rapture can take place any moment without warning; the second coming cannot happen until after both the rapture and the Great Tribulation.

In His Second Coming, Christ will reign on the earth for one thousand years with the saints. Christened the Millennial Reign, Christ’s rule would be characterized by unprecedented peace, prosperity and blessings on the earth (Isaiah 11:1-9). Satan, the author of heartache, strife and contention would be bound for the duration of Christ’s Millennial Reign (Revelation 20:2,3).

Satan and his cohorts will mobilise forces to fight Christ and to frustrate His coming again to establish the Millennial Reign, just in the same way he used Herod in his attempt to kill Christ at His first coming. He was defeated and again he will be defeated. The battle against Christ and His host is called the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 19:11-21; 20:1-4). There will be a great and terrible slaughter of the armies of the anti-christ gathered from the nations of the earth through the efforts of the evil spirits sent out over the earth by Satan, the anti-christ and the false prophet (Revelation 17:13,14). This Satan’s last attempt to wrongfully take the Kingdom from Christ will fail.

The world and the church are called to prepare for this great event. The world is admonished to repent and come to Christ before the day of the Lord (John 3:1- 8). The Church as a bride is called to be ready, holy, spotless, watchful, prayerful and busy preaching His word until He comes (Hebrews 12:14; 1 John 3:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:1,2; Ephesians 5:25-27). **“Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him”** (Revelation 1:7).

19 Christ's Millennial Reign

God's Word teaches;

That Christ's Millennial Reign is the 1,000 years literal reign of Jesus on earth, which will be ushered in by the coming of Jesus back to earth with ten thousands of His saints. At this time He will judge the nations that dwell upon the face of the earth - Jude 14,15; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10. During this time, the devil will be bound - Revelation 20:2,3. It will be a reign of peace and blessing - Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25; Hosea 2:18; Zechariah 14:9-20; Isaiah 2:2-4.

The word millennium, is a compound derivative from Latin which simply translates into a thousand years. Thus, Christ's millennial reign is a thousand years of the full manifestation of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is sequel to the Great Tribulation period which is a period of intense suffering for everyone on earth.

According to God's revealed time-table, the Church will suddenly be taken away by Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) in a mysterious event known as "the Rapture". Then, a seven-year period of great suffering for sinners left behind will follow (Matthew 24:21,22). At the end of the seven-year period, Jesus will come again with the church to establish His government (Jude 14). The government of this world, at that time, will resist His coming. But the Lord will overcome at the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 19:15-21). Satan will be bound and imprisoned for 1000 years (Revelation 20:1-3). The kingdom of this world will, then, become the kingdom of our God and His Christ (Revelation 11:15).

Christ's millennial reign will be a time when the purposes of God will be fully realised on earth, as theocracy (government of the state under the firm control and direction of God) will be established. Christ, as the divine representative of God will at this time, speak and act for God. He will be given a universal and glorious dominion with absolute power to govern (Isaiah 9:6; Psalm 45:4; Isaiah 11:4; Psalm 72:4). It will be the responsibility of Christ at this age to announce God's will and law (Isaiah 2:3,4; 33:21,22; 42:4; Acts 3:22).

Christ's millennial reign will be a manifestation of the promise God gave David, that his throne shall have no end. Christ, as David's "son", will thus establish a glorious house and throne, over an equally glorious kingdom (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 72; Isaiah 11:10). Divine mercy, goodness and truth will be displayed through Christ even as the glory associated with His deity, omniscience, omnipotence and righteousness will be fully made manifest. The Gentile world system (humanity without Christ) as it is at present, organised under the direct influence of Satan, will thus become an out-moded set-up.

In its stead comes Christ's millennial reign, void of sin and all forms of unrighteousness. Satan, having been defeated and bound, will lack the power to induce people to sin (Revelation 20:1-6; Matthew 19:28; Ephesians 5:25-27).

What are the components of the millennium? (1) The millennium shall witness an unprecedented era of national and individual peace. There will be a complete cessation of the scourge of wars, as the kingdoms of the world will be fused together under the reign of Christ. The ensuing peace will herald an era of economic boom and prosperity. The beauty of this age is that hitherto antagonistic and irreconcilable foes will henceforth co-habit as "sheep and lambs". (2) There will be joy unspeakable (Isaiah 9:3,4; Jeremiah 30:18,19). (3) There will be holiness (Ezekiel 43:7-12; Isaiah 1:26,27). (4) Glory (Isaiah 24:23,60:1-9). (5) Comfort (Isaiah 12:1-2; Jeremiah 33:23-25). (6) Justice (Isaiah 9:7; 11:5; 42:1-4). (7) Full knowledge (Isaiah 11:1-2,9; 41:19-20; 54:13; Habakkuk 2:14).

Additionally, the following benefits will also accrue to the inhabitants of the age (a) The original curse placed upon mankind at creation will be removed, resulting in abundant productivity of the earth (Isaiah 11:6-9; 35:9; 65:25). (b) Sickness will become a thing of the past (Isaiah 33:24; Jeremiah 30:17; Ezekiel 34:16). (c) Healing will be naturally available to the deformed (Isaiah 29:17-19).

Against the background of the above, there shall be (a) preservation of life (Isaiah 41:8-14; 62:8,9; Jeremiah 32:27; Ezekiel 34:27; Joel 3:16,17; Amos 9:15; Zechariah 14:10,11) and (b) complete freedom from all forms of oppression that at present ravage mankind (Isaiah 14:3-6; 42:6,7; 49:8,9; Zechariah 9:11,12).

Who are those expected to partake in Christ's millennial reign? (i) The Glorious Church (Ephesians 5:25-27). This will exclude the apostate church that is married to the world (Revelation 17:1-7). (ii) The poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3). These are those who recognise and admit their state of spiritual poverty (life on earth without assurance of salvation) and are willing to turn away from sin and surrender to Christ, (iii) The watchful, prayerful (Hebrews 9:28; Matthew 25:34).

20 The Great White Throne Judgement

God's Word teaches;

That the Great White Throne Judgement is when God finally judges all (the living and the dead, small and great) who have ever lived on the face of the earth, according to their works. This is after the Millennium. At this time, the final Judgement known as the Great White Throne Judgement will be held. All those, from all ages, who have not yet been judged (believers' judgement for sin, borne and accomplished by Christ on the Cross - John 5:24; 3:17-19 will stand before God at this time. The devil and his angels are judged at this time also and sent to the lake of fire forever - Daniel 12:2,3; Matthew 10:15; 11:21-24,12:41,42; John 5:28,29; Romans 2:15,16; 14:12; 2 Peter 2:9; Jude 6; I Corinthians 6:1-4; Acts 10:42; Revelation 20:11-15.

In this teaching on the events of the last days or eschatology, the Lord is graciously unveiling the curtain of eternity to reveal to humanity His programme for this present evil world. The doctrine of "The Great White Throne Judgment" opens our eyes to see a time to come when all wicked/ungodly people (the living and the dead, small and great who have neglected God's salvation) will face the final judgement of the Living God (Romans 14:12). We caution that the teaching must not be approached with doubtful disputations or viewed as fable or fiction but a fact. These are true sayings of God written for our learning and admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come (Romans 15:4; I Corinthians 10:11; Revelation 19:9).

The Bible (Gods revelation to man) clearly presents the order of events preceding the Great White Throne Judgement and constantly enjoins "**He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches**" (Revelation 2:7). At the close of the millennium, the devil will be released from "**the bottomless pit**" (Revelation 20:3) and he will deceive thousands of people and will gather them to fight against the King (Jesus Christ) and His Saints. This will be the battle of Gog and Magog; but at the end of the battle, when the rebellious have been killed, and destroyed by the fire of His indignation which comes down from heaven, the devil will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7-10). After this, the Great White Throne Judgement will be set. God will sit on a throne so white, magnificent and terrible at sight that the whole face of the earth and heaven (the atmospheric heaven) will tremble and flee from Him. All those who died unrepentant from the time of Adam till the time of the Great White Throne Judgement will be resurrected (Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15). This is called the second resurrection. And they will all stand before God to account for their deeds. This final judgement of sinners (the living and the dead, small and great) is known as the Great White Throne Judgement (Psalm 9:17; Daniel 7:9-10; Matthew 11:20-24; 10:15; John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:11-15). The Bible is replete with pointers to this great and notable day of the Lord (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 11:21-24; 12:41,42; Romans 2:15,16; 2 Peter 2:9; Jude 14,15).

The world is corrupt and polluted. Man is rebellious and disobedient against God. For a long time it has repented the Lord that He has made man on the earth, for every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart has been evil continually (Genesis 6:5-6). Will man continue in his wilful disobedience and rebellion against God? No, for "**...He hath appointed A DAY, in which He will judge the world in righteousness ...**" (Acts 17:30,31). No true believer whose name is written in the Book of Life will face the Great White Throne Judgement since their judgement as sinners was accomplished by Christ on the cross (John 3:17-19,30; Romans 8:1; John 5:20,24). Besides, "**...God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ**" (I Thessalonians 5:9). "**But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death**" (Revelation 21:8). That great congregation will consist of: (i) All categories of sinners (dead and alive) from Adam to date. They will be judged for neglecting the salvation of God (Hebrews 2:3). (ii) All backsliders in all dispensations who denied the faith of Him that once bought them (Exodus 32:33). (iii) All who deny the deity of Jesus Christ (John

3:18,36). These are the skeptics, the atheists, the idol worshippers and all religious hypocrites (Matthew 23:27).

At the Great White Throne Judgment, Death, the age-long enemy of God's creation and Satan's principal messenger of destruction and instrument of cruelty will be stripped of his power, and together with hell, will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14; 1 Corinthians 15:26). The old heaven and earth which had been polluted with sin, defiled by Satan, demons and sinners, shall be burnt up (2 Peter 3:7,10-12).

In righteousness He will judge: (a) All unrighteous deeds of men (1 John 5:17; Romans 11:28-32). Every unrighteous act, feeling or imagination that was not cleansed by the blood of the Lamb will be condemned at the Great White Throne Judgment. (b) The secret deeds of men (Matthew 10:26; Romans 2:16; Hebrews 4:13; 2 Chronicle 16:9). Every secret bribery, immorality, pornography, drunkenness, abortion, etc, will be revealed. **"...Books (books of records) were opened...and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works"** Revelation 20:10. There is a record in heaven for everything done under the sun **"...whether it be good or bad"** (2 Corinthians 5:10b). (c) The words of men (Matthew 12:36,37; 5:22; Ephesians 4:29,31; 5:4). **"Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment"**. Every gossip, backbiting and slander against our neighbours, fellow believers or church leaders will be judged. All foolish unedifying words, corrupt, graceless words, defamatory and abusive words against others will be accounted for at the Great White Throne Judgment. **"For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned"** (Matthew 12:37). God will judge every unrepentant sinner or backslider according to His divine will and righteousness (Proverbs 11:21). God's judgement will be fair, without partiality or respect of persons (Romans 2:2-12; Job 34:18-22). He will judge the small and the great, the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate, the highly respected and the most despised. **"For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh rewards [bribe]"** (Deuteronomy 10:17). The righteous Judge of the universe will receive no bribe to pervert judgement on the great day of His wrath. But **"... in righteousness he doth judge and make war"** (Revelation 19:11). Without partiality **"WHOSOEVER was NOT found WRITTEN in the BOOK OF LIFE was cast into the lake of fire"** (Revelation 20:15).

21 The New Heaven and The New Earth

God's Word teaches;

That the New Heaven and the New Earth "wherein dwelleth righteousness" will be made by God and the redeemed shall dwell therein with God forever. This present earth which has been polluted by sin will pass away after the Great White Throne Judgement - Psalm 102:25,26; Isaiah 51:6; 65:17; Matthew 5:18; 24:35; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1. No unclean thing will be there. There, we shall know each other, our knowledge having been perfected. There will be no more curse upon anything. There will be no more night; the glory of the Lord will be the light thereof - Isaiah 66:22; 2 Peter 3:12,13; 1 Corinthians 13:12; 1 John 3:2,3; Revelation 21:1-7; 22:1-5.

The present age in which we live is referred to in scriptures as the "last days" (Hebrews 1:1,2). This age is very significant in the plan of God as it ushers us into another important series of events often called in theology as "eschatology". Also called the church age, our present age is marked by evil, the dominion of Satan, darkness, ungodliness, lust, murder, lying and all manner of sin (Ephesians 6:12; Galatians 1:4). The church is not left out. There is, and there will be a denial of God, Christ, faith, sound doctrine and Christian living (1 Timothy 4:1-4; 2 Timothy 4:3,4; 3:1-8). The land is under a curse (Genesis 3:17). The devil and all his fallen angels walk to and fro the whole earth. The atmospheric heavens are polluted by the activities of Satan. The believers today groan under the harsh and hard conditions of the earth. They look forward to a change - a new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness and holiness. God has the ultimate plan to judge sinners who remain obstinate to the call of God to repentance. **"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire"** Revelation 20:15. With the final judgement of sinners, God's divine plan is to replace this polluted evil earth and atmospheric heavens with a new earth and a new heaven that will match His glory, holiness and righteousness (Revelation 21:1-7). **"For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come in to mind"** (Isaiah 65:17). This gives a good picture of what shall become of the present earth and heavens. All what we may call beautiful edifices and empires today will melt away in fervent heat because **"... the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men"** (2 Peter 3:7,10-14). The glories of men and all the so-called "wonders" of the world shall not stand this fervent heat. Herein is wisdom: believers should lay up their treasures in heaven, not on earth **"where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal"** (Matthew 6:19).

This new creation is entirely free from any taint of sin and therefore the consequences and effect of sin are absent. Here, there is neither death, sorrow, pain, tears, nor separation from God (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:4). As God created the present heavens and earth, so will He create the new heavens and a new earth - NEW in quality and in TIME. The great, holy and eternal heaven will have new Jerusalem as its capital. This is the capital of the eternal state called the "Bride" because of its virgin beauty, unstained with sin. Here, Christ and all the saints, from all ages will reside forevermore. Indeed, all things will be new. **"Behold, I make all things new"**. This is the eternal destiny of the saints from all ages. This is the place Jesus spoke about, **"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also"** (John 14:3). It is certain that all believers with current experience of salvation shall appear with Him in glory and be like Him (Revelation 21:3; Colossians 3:4).

The Holy City, New Jerusalem, is a material city not a mystical one. Its beauty is beyond human description. About 15,000 miles in length and a breadth and height of about 15,000 miles, the streets are made of pure gold, as clear as glass. With walls of jasper and its twelve foundations garnished with all manner of precious stones, it has twelve gates of twelve pearls. The entire city wall is pure gold, as clear as glass. This is a city

without any temple. The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. **“And the city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof”** (Revelation 21:23). The redeemed of all the earth shall bring their glory and honour into the city. This is a city whose gates are never shut (Revelation 21:16-26). The pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeds out of the throne of God and the Lamb. The tree of life by the sides of this river bears twelve manner of fruits monthly. The fruits and leaves are for the healing of the nations. **“And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever”** (Revelation 22:5). Words are insufficient to describe this new creation. But what will it take to partake in this inheritance?

In order to partake in this new inheritance, sinners must repent and believers must overcome. **“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son”** (Revelation 21:7). We must overcome the world (1 John 5:4,5; 2:15-17) and Satan (Revelation 12:11). False prophets, sin and evil must not have dominion over us. We must flee from all appearances of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22; Romans 12:17-21). Whether there be persecutions or temptations, we must overcome to be part of this great inheritance (Revelation 2:10,26-28). The overcomer is the one that prevails and triumphs over all the works of the devil.

The sinner must be thirsty for righteousness and salvation because it will be costly to miss this glorious experience in the new heavens and the new earth. Christ promises to... **“give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of water of life freely”** (Revelation 21:6). Sinners must repent today. Backsliders must return to the Saviour immediately!

The life of the redeemed in this eternal city will be glorious. It will be a life of fellowship (1 Corinthians 13:12), rest (Revelation 14:13), full knowledge (1 Corinthians 13:12), holiness (Revelation 21:27), joy (Revelation 21:4), service (Revelation 22:3), abundance (Revelation 21:6), glory (2 Corinthians 4:17) and worship (Revelation 19:1; 7:9-12).

“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8). There is punishment for the unrepentant and coward who would rather chose to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. They will suffer torment eternally in the lake of fire. We have only one life to live (Hebrews 9:27), therefore the believer must remain faithful and steadfast in the Lord, the sinner must repent and be saved and the backslider must come back home and be restored. Negligence of this “so great salvation” will be unfortunate. We should not miss the glories of the New Heaven and the New Earth. **“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches”** (Revelation 3:11-13).

22 Hell

God's Word teaches;

That Hell fire is a place of everlasting punishment where sinners (all who do not have their names in the book of life) will suffer torments for ever and ever. It was prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41) but God has decreed that the wicked and those who forget Him and reject Christ will also be cast there because of their sin and neglect of His salvation - Psalm 9:17; Matthew 25:46; Luke 12:4,5; 16:19-31; Matthew 5:22,30; Mark 9:43-47; Revelation 14:10,11; 20:10,12,15.

The fact and reality of Hell is an important and recurring theme in the Scriptures. It is vividly captured as a place of agonizing torment and everlasting punishment in unquenchable fire for the unconverted (Matthew 25:41; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:23,28). Owing to its frightful credentials, there are those who merely explain away hell as a biblical truth. Many have even drawn up the broken cisterns of erroneous assertion to rationalise their gross inadequacies. The Bible, however, unambiguously provides ample illuminations of hell, as the indisputable abode of sinners (Psalm 9:17; Proverbs 7:24-27; Proverbs 9:13-18; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:22-28; Revelation 20:13-15; 21:8).

Hell is a fearsome 'restplace' for transgressors. And the Lord Jesus Christ spent considerable time lending weight to this reality. He told the city of Capernaum for instance, that it would be turned into hell because of its iniquities (Matthew 11:23,24).

He warned repeatedly on the danger of hell and the need for His listeners to steer clear of it (Matthew 5:22,29,30; 10:28; 18:8,9; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 12:5). He offered vivid explanations of hell as a place of everlasting punishment (Matthew 25:41,46; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:22-28; Revelation 14:10,11). He revealed that sinners who die unsaved would have their lot in hell (Matthew 7:15-19; Matthew 13:40-42,50; 23:33; 25:41-46; Luke 16:23; Revelation 19:20; Revelation 20:14-15; 21:8).

The Apostles also followed the same thematic explanations of hell as offered by the Lord (Romans 2:5-9; 2 Thessalonians 1:8,9; Hebrews 10:26,27; James 3:5,6; 2 Peter 2:4,9; 3:7; Jude 7, 23; Matthew 3:7-10). The church today cannot afford to assume a less specific position on the teaching of hell, without subverting the sacredness and completeness of scripture.

The word 'Hell' is found about fifty-four times in the King James Version of the Bible. Its translation in Hebrew, Sheol, occur thirty-one times, while the Greek interpretations "Gehena", "hades" and the latin interpretation "Tartarus" occur twelve, ten times and once respectively. Its regular usage in scriptures, apart from the allusions drawn to it by the Lord and other Bible characters, lend sufficient validity to its reality.

When a sinner dies, his soul immediately proceeds to hell where, with full consciousness, he tastes the excruciating pain that hell offers. The story of poor Lazarus and the rich man, best exemplifies the eternal punishment awaiting the sinner (Luke 16:23,24).

Hell is also a place where the memory of the damned comes alive. The rich man in Luke 16:23,24 remembered his riotous living while on earth as well as his five brothers yet unsaved. Apart from the acute discomfort of hell, the regret of an error of judgement while on earth on the part of the unsaved, presents an everlasting torment of its own.

The teaching of the doctrine of hell must scrupulously avoid erroneous and unscriptural views of false teachers. The concept of purgatory, representing a so-called intermediate state between death and appearance before God has no biblical foundation. Neither is the notion of the annihilation of the wicked correct. The future punishment of the wicked is eternal while the sinner at death automatically receives an express translation into hell where **“their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched”** (Mark 9:44- 48; Deuteronomy 32:22; Job 26:6; Isaiah 5:14; Amos 9:2; 2 Peter 2:4; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). The needless controversy over the reality of hell is not strange as the scriptures clearly allude to this. **“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned ”** (I Corinthians 2:14). Since God is holy, sin must be punished in the person of the sinner or in the person of the sinner’s substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ.

No man believes in Hell because he simply wants to. He believes in Hell because he is compelled to. It is true that eternal punishment is not a pleasant subject for discussion, yet, it is a fearful reality, an awful and tragic fate.