

Blueprint Series—Foundation Principles

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FOUNDATION STONES

The scriptural basic for this course is:

Hebrews 6:1-3 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit.

To have a foundation implies that something will be built upon it and that is exactly what God is doing. He is in the process of building a dwelling place for Himself.

I Corinthians 3:9 For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.

I Corinthians 3:10-16 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

Ephesians 2:20-22 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

I Peter 2:4-8 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he

that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

Revelation 3:12 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.

Our foundation must be built upon the Rock if it is to stand the storms of life. We all face the same storms but only lives founded upon the Rock will stand when the storm has passed.

Matthew 7:24-27 Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.

Blueprints

When one determines to build a building, the first thing needed is a set of building instructions which tell the builder all of the details needed to construct the building. These architectural instructions are called *blueprints*. All of the specifications, that is, instructions, are contained in the blueprints. When someone begins to work on the building, he consults the blueprints to make sure that he is doing the correct work with the appropriate materials to accomplish the desired results.

Whenever God desires for something to be built, He provides the blueprints to those whom He has called to do the building work. When God told Noah to build an ark, He gave him the instructions on size, material, etc. as explained in Genesis Chapter 6. When God told Moses to build the Tabernacle and the furniture for it, He gave him detailed instructions for the pattern he was to follow. Read the details in Exodus Chapters 25 through 27.

It was extremely important that Moses follow the instructions exactly because the earthly Tabernacle that he was building was fashioned after the pattern of the heavenly Tabernacle.

Hebrews 8:5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount.

Hebrews 9:23 It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

The furniture and structure of the Tabernacle also reflect spiritual truth concerning Jesus and His work. If Moses had not followed the plan, the earthly patterns would not have reflected the spiritual truth of the heavenlies.

If God had a plan, a pattern, a set of instructions, a blueprint for the Tabernacle (the dwelling place for God with His people), then he surely has a blueprint for the Temple that He is building under the New covenant.

The building materials have changed from stones of rock to living stones of people. It is these living stones which God is using to build His Temple, a place where He can dwell and people can come and worship and talk with Him, and spiritual sacrifices can be made.

Foundation Components

One of the most important aspects of a building is its foundation. Without a proper foundation the building will shift or collapse under stress or even under the weight of its own structure. The taller or larger the building the deeper and stronger the foundation must be.

The foundation of God's New Covenant Temple consists of three parts with Jesus being the primary or most important.

Ephesians 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

It requires all three of these foundation components to provide a complete foundation for the individual, the Church, and the Kingdom. These are also the foundation for all doctrine.

God calls others into His building work (making it even more important that everyone follows His plan and not one of their own).

I Corinthians 3:10-11 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

To lay a foundation requires a *footing* to be done first. In large buildings these are huge metal or

concrete pylons that go deep into the earth. In smaller buildings these are trenches filled with concrete to create a stable sub-foundation to tie the foundation together with the ground.

Before we get to the six foundation stones listed in the first three verses of Hebrews Chapter 6, we need to build a footing upon which these doctrines can stand. The footing is made up of things which the Hebrew people understood but which understanding we have either lost or corrupted through pagan philosophy.

The Nature of Man

Psychology has attempted to define the nature of man in many different ways, none of which are based on the Word of God.

Our God is a trinity, that is, three in one. When He made man, He made him in His image; therefore, man is also a trinity, that is, three in one.

Genesis 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

The body was formed or fashioned from dirt and is primarily the part of man which is in contact and interaction with this world and through which we receive all of our sensory input. God then breathed into man the breath of life. In the original “life” is plural, that is, “lives”. When God breathed life it was both spiritual life and natural life. The spiritual life in man is the spirit (the breath of God) and it is the spirit which is God conscious and it is through the spirit that we interact with God. When the breath of God came into contact with the body, man became a living soul. Just like two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen combine to form a third substance called water, the spirit combined with body to produce soul. It is our soul that makes us unique, which makes us self-conscious. It is what makes me different from you and you different from the next person. It is the soul that is valuable to God for the scripture tells us that Jesus came to save souls.

Genesis 2:17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

God then gave the man a warning--if he was disobedient and ate fruit from the tree, which God said he couldn't eat, then the man would die. We all know that Adam was disobedient and ate the fruit from the forbidden tree and as a consequence had to leave the Garden. Yet, he did not die physically for a long period of time. So, what died? The spirit within man--his God consciousness.

God knew that there would be a day when He would restore man to fellowship with Him and to do that man would need a new spirit.

Ezekiel 36:26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you

an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Jesus referred to this promise as being “born again”.

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

When we are “born again” we receive a new spirit, not a new soul. If we got a new soul, we wouldn't be us. Instead God expects us to have our souls renewed. We call the process of receiving a new spirit *regeneration* and the process of renewing our soul *sanctification*.

Just like Adam, our spirit puts us into union, communion, and fellowship with God.

The Nature of God

Our society has also lost perspective on the nature of God. We have become confused with the vain speculations of men and mythology. The scriptures give us a clear picture of the nature of God.

Exodus 34:14 For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:

Psalms 116:5 Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.

Psalms 99:9 Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God is holy.

Leviticus 19:2 Speak unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them, Ye shall be holy: for I the LORD your God am holy.

These scriptures give us a look at the character of God from the Old Testament and we find that first God is jealous and we are not to worship anyone or anything but Him. Then we find that He is gracious, righteous, merciful, and holy.

Under the New Testament, the character of God doesn't change but we get a further revelation and understanding of Him.

John 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth

I John 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is

- love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him
- I John 1:5 This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.
- I Corinthians 8:6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him

We realize from these that God is Spirit, Love, Life and, foremost, Father. Because He is Father, we can trust that His dealings with us are as the dealings of a Father toward His children.

REPENTANCE FROM DEAD WORKS

The first foundation stone is Repentance From Dead Works. Let's break this down into two pieces: repentance and dead works. Once we understand the pieces, we will understand what it means when we put them together.

Repentance

First, let's define repentance. The Greek word used in the scriptures is "*metanoein*" and means "*to change one's mind*". It is a decision; not an emotion. In military terms, repentance would be an "about face".

John the baptist, as the forerunner of Jesus, came with a message of repentance and performing a baptism of repentance.

Mark 1:4 John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

As John's ministry came to a close and Jesus began His ministry, the first message of Jesus was to repent and believe the gospel.

Mark 1:14 Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

In the Scriptures, repentance always precedes true faith. Faith alone is an empty profession. Many profess faith but have never practiced true repentance. Today's Church message of "only believe" was not the message of Christ. His was "repent and believe".

This pattern is followed throughout the New Testament: Luke 24:46-47--repentance and then remission of sins; Acts 2:38--repentance, then baptism and remission of sins; Acts 20:21--Paul

preached repentance and then faith. If we want to achieve New Testament results with our conversions then we need to follow this same pattern--repent and then believe.

Repentance is a command of God.

Acts 17:30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

The reason that God has commanded men to repent is because He has appointed a day of judgment when the world will be judged by His righteous standards.

Acts 17:31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Jesus gave us only one option when it comes to repentance:

Luke 13:1-5 There were present at that season some that told him of the Galilaeans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Repentance is the first great dividing line for people. If one doesn't repent, he will perish. It is as simple as that--no "ifs", "ands", or "buts" about it.

We tend to think of repentance as "sorrow" or "being sorry"; but, emotion is not repentance. The Scriptures make it plain that there are two types of sorrow: one that is godly and leads to repentance and another that is worldly sorrow and leads to death.

2 Corinthians 7:8-10 For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

We have both an Old Testament and a New Testament example of sorrow that doesn't produce true repentance. The Old Testament example is Esau and the story is told in Genesis chapters 25 through 27. This is interpreted for us in the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 12:16-17 Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when

he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

The New Testament example is Judas, who betrayed Jesus.

Matthew 27:3-5 Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

The King James version of the Bible says that Judas “repented himself” but, the Greek word is “*metamelein*” and means “remorse or anguish”. This was sorrow but not repentance.

Why could these two people not repent? We like to think that we can repent of anything at anytime. However, our hearts can be hardened to the point that God will not allow us to repent. Repentance begins in God as these Scriptures indicate:

Acts 11:18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

2 Timothy 2:25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

God has to grant us repentance. That's why, as we saw earlier, that godly sorrow will lead to repentance. Esau and Judas both passed the point at which God was willing to grant repentance. That should be a warning for us.

Requirements for Repentance

What are the requirements for repentance? Both John the Baptist and the Apostle Paul said that people should show appropriate fruit or work of repentance.

Matthew 3:7-8 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:

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

The Scriptures give us a detailed process of this:

2 Corinthians 7:11 For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what

indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter

There are 7 things wrought in us by godly sorrow which leads us to repentance:

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|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| carefulness | literally “haste, diligence” |
| clearing of yourselves | clean through forgiveness |
| indignation | over offenses allowed |
| fear | anticipating judgment or punishment |
| vehement desire | for correction |
| zeal | for reformation or punishment |
| revenge | justice/moral judgment, vindication |

Dead Works

We all understand what work is--our job, what we do, etc. A “dead work” is work which doesn't have life in it. If work arises out of ourselves, that is, our flesh and not out of the Spirit of God, then it has no life in it and is, therefore, dead.

John 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

God has already created work for us to do. He has crafted us as a worker to do the work that He ordained that we should do. If we substitute our work for His work, then the work that we do is dead work.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

A dead work can have the appearance of a very good work. It is easy to see our need for repentance from sin but not so easy to see our need to repent of dead works when they appear to be good and beneficial. Many of our traditions fall into this category.

Matthew 15:6 And honor not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition

Or we use humanitarian work to justify ourselves to God in an attempt to earn His favor. Works of the law, no matter how good and beneficial they might be to others can never justify us to God. They are dead works from which we need to repent. God will not allow us to boast of our good works. They are of no use to Him.

Galatians 5:4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Ephesians 2:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast

We must have our conscience purged or cleansed from dead works in order to serve the living God.

Hebrews 9:14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

FAITH TOWARD GOD

As God grants us repentance we turn from the world toward God. These first two foundation stones are tied together by these prepositions: “from” and “toward”. It is “repentance from” and “faith toward”.

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Faith is the beginning point with God. Without it, we are unable to please Him. As a matter of fact, without faith we have no motivation to please Him because we don't see any value in it. We need to believe that there is value, a reward, in seeking God.

Definition of Faith

Sometimes, we seem to have a rather vague definition of faith, a kind of nebulous something that some people have and others don't. Usually, we confuse faith and hope, which are two different things. Many people will say that they have faith when really all that they have is hope.

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Faith has spiritual substance, which is strong enough that we hold on to it as evidence of things that we can't see with our physical eyes. It is based on the eternal, invisible truths and realities revealed by God's Word and not on our physical senses.

Paul shows the contrast between the objects of faith and the objects of sense perception when he says, “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). Our senses deal with things that

are material, temporary, and changeable; whereas, faith deals with the revealed truths of God which are invisible, eternal, and unchangeable. Our faith is not based on what we see and experience but instead on God's Word. Thereafter, that which we see or experience is the outcome of that which we have already believed.

FAITH

Established in the present
 Substance, confidence, something
 real & definite in us that we possess
 here and now
 Anchored in the heart
 Function of the Spirit

HOPE

Directed toward the future
 Expectancy of things to be

 Anchored in the mind
 Function of the soul

Romans 10:10 For with the heart man believeth unto *[literally "into"]* righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

When associated with heart, believe becomes a verb of motion. The Greek word translated "unto" in this verse is "*eis*" and is regularly translated as "into". Heart faith produces a definite change. The translation here is important: "unto righteousness" is more a mental agreement with an abstract theory, whereas, "into righteousness" is to believe in a way that produces a transformation of habits, character, and life.

John 14:1 Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in *[literally "into"]* God, believe also in *[literally "into"]* me.

The verb phrase "to believe" is associated with a process of change or motion. It is not enough to believe "in" Christ with a mental acceptance of the facts of His life or the truths of His teaching, but, we must believe "into" Christ with a heartfelt faith.

Faith is always present tense and because of present faith we have a serene hope, a sure confidence concerning the future. Hope based on this kind of faith will stand the test of death and eternity.

Faith is both a gift and a fruit. As a gift, we can receive it instantly from the Spirit of God. However, as a fruit, it must be grown, which takes time.

Romans 12:3 For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

Faith begins in God. He gives a measure to us. We then are responsible for growing faith from this seed which God has given. Some, however, allow the seed of faith to be lost, stolen, or otherwise become non-productive.

2 Thessalonians 3:2 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.

Since we receive this seed faith from God, we have to make sure that it is planted in good soil and that it has an opportunity to sprout, grow and mature into full-grown fruit. This is a process that takes time. We don't have “instant” fruit in the Kingdom of God.

Colossians 2:6-8 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: (7) Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. (8) Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

This verse also points out the things which can spoil your faith--cause it to rot on the vine: philosophy (world view), vain deceit (pride of life), traditions of men, and rudiments of the world (worldly elements and principles).

The scriptures give us the methodology to increase our faith.

Romans 10:17 so then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Jude 1:20 But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,

Faith and the Law

It is faith which justifies us and gives us access to the grace of God not the keeping of the law.

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: (2) By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Galatians 3:10-12 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. (11) But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. (12) And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.

While not by the law, besides faith we are justified by grace (Rom. 3:24), by the blood of Jesus (Rom. 5:9), by the resurrection of Jesus (Rom. 4:25), and by works (James 2:24).

The law is a schoolmaster (that is, teacher) to bring us to the place of faith in Christ.

Galatians 3:22-26 But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. (23) But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. (24) Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. (25) But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. (26) For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

The law had taught the Jews the elements of obedience to God, but for the Gentiles, it was not necessary that the law be observed for justification. It was decided by the Council of Jerusalem that it was necessary for the Gentiles to only observe four key elements.

Acts 15:19-20 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: (20) But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

If you will notice, each of these deals with us keeping ourselves pure.

Faith and Confession

Faith requires verbalization. We speak what we believe.

Romans 10:8-10 But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; (9) That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (10) For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

We cannot keep our faith secret if we want it to be active.

Matthew 10:32 Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.

1 John 4:15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.

When we have active faith it naturally produces an outflow of works based on that faith.

James 2:14-18 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? (15) If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, (16) And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? (17) Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. (18) Yea, a man may say,

Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show thee my faith by my works.

The works of faith mature and complete faith.

James 2:22-26 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? (23) And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. (24) Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. (25) Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? (26) For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

Without works, faith itself will die. It is faith expressed in works which keeps faith alive in us.

Faith is rooted in our belief in Jesus as the Son of God and should find full expression in our daily lives. God is not only our God but also our Father and Jesus is our Elder Brother. If we truly believe this then our daily walk will also express our faith in this fact. Faith will cause us to enter into His Rest.

THE DOCTRINE OF BAPTISMS

In our foundation text listed above, the Greek word for “*baptisms*” is plural, implying that there is more than one baptism. However, the scripture specifically says that there is one baptism.

Ephesians 4:4-6 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; (5) One Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

There are seven “ones” in these verses:

- one body
- one Spirit
- one hope
- one Lord
- one faith
- one baptism

one God and Father.

Since Scripture doesn't contradict itself, there is obviously something that we need to understand about baptism that is not clear when we see a singular baptism in this verse and a plural baptism in the foundation verse.

Definition of Baptism

The verb phrase “to baptize” is transliterated into English from the Greek. When something is transliterated the original word is used with the English version of the letters which make up the word. The Greek word is “baptizo” which becomes our word “baptize”. When a word is transliterated, it is not defined, just put into English.

Why was this word transliterated? In the early years of the 17th century, King James of Britain, authorized an English translation of the Bible (this is the Authorized King James version which we have today). While King James held political power as an absolute monarch yet, in matters of religion, he was answerable to the Bishops of the established Church of England. King James made it known to the translators that he did not want anything introduced into the Bible translation that would cause unnecessary offense to the Bishops or which would be too obviously contrary to the practices of the established Church. Therefore, two words were transliterated without definition: bishop and baptize. Baptize came directly from the Greek to English; bishop came from the Greek to Latin to English without real translation. Had the Greek word for bishop been translated correctly everywhere by its meaning of “overseer”, the result could have been considered a challenge to the established hierarchical order of government in the Church of England

The root of “baptizo” is “bapto”. To give a Greek verb a special, causative meaning, you insert “iz”. This creates a compound verb which always has the sense of causing something to be or to happen. The precise nature of that which is caused to be or to happen is determined by the meaning of the simple root verb out of which the causative form was built.

The root of “bapto” is used three times in the Greek text and is always translated by the English verb “to dip”:

Luke 16:24--”...dip the tip of the finger in water...”

John 13:26--”...a piece of bread when I have dipped it.”

Rev. 19:13--”...a robe dipped in blood.”

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible defines “bapto” as “to cover wholly with fluid,” hence “to dip”.

A compound version of “bapto” is made by adding the Greek preposition “en” or “em” which

means “in”. “Embapto” is used three times in the Greek text:

Matthew 26:23--”...He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish...”

Mark 14:20--”...It is one of the twelve, that dippeth with me in the dish.”

John 13:26--”... I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it... when he had dipped the sop...”

Therefore, there is only one meaning for “baptizo”: to cause something to be dipped into a fluid and then taken out again.

In secular Greek, the word is used for the action of dipping a cloth into dye in order to dye the cloth.

TYPES OF BAPTISM

There are a number of baptisms with different meanings in the New Testament.

1. The Baptism of John

Mark 1:4 “...baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”

This form of baptism was a transitional baptism between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. It was not intended to be utilized after baptism in the Name of Jesus was available.

2. The Baptism of Suffering

Luke 12:50 ”I have a baptism to be baptized with...”

Mark 10:38 “Can you ... be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?”

It doesn't appear that the baptism of suffering is a universal baptism that all Christians would receive but is only applicable to those that the Lord has called to it.

3. Christian Baptism (baptism into the Name of Jesus)

Matthew 28:19 “...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

Act 2:38 “be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ...”

Act 19:5 “they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

Throughout the Greek text, only two prepositions are ever used with the verb phrase “to baptize”----*in* and *into*.

4. Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Acts 1:5 “...you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”

Jesus told His disciples to wait until they received power, until they were baptized in the Holy Spirit before being witnesses.

5. Baptism into the Body

1 Corinthians 12:13 “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body,…”

It is the Holy Spirit who immerses us into the body; who places us according to the will of the Lord.

Out of these five baptisms, we have one which is transitional and not intended to be utilized today, one which is not considered to be universal, and three which are for everyone--christian baptism, baptism in the Holy Spirit , and baptism into the Body. So, there are three baptisms which are applicable to us , yet the Scriptures tell us that there is only one baptism. What does that mean?

I believe that we have revealed in this another of the mysteries of the Word. We believe in One God who is manifested in three persons--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He created man in His image, so man is also three in one. The one man is made up of three components--body, soul, and spirit. The One Baptism is the same way--three in one--one baptism with three parts--Christian (water) baptism, baptism in the Holy spirit, and baptism into the Body.

JOHN'S BAPTISM

Acts 19:1-6 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, (2) He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. (3) And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. (4) Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. (5) When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (6) And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

These scriptures show the distinction in nature and significance between John's Baptism and Christian Baptism. John's baptism could not be accepted as equivalent nor could it be substituted for Christian baptism.

John's baptism indicates an outward act of being baptized as a visible confirmation that those being baptized had already passed through the experiences of repentance and forgiveness.

Mark 1:3-5 The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. (4) John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. (5) And there

went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

We are not baptized merely because we are sinners who have confessed and repented of our sins; that would be no different than John's baptism. We have passed into something fuller. Romans 5:1 tells us that we are “justified by faith”. God has imputed to us the righteousness of Christ on the basis of our faith. We are baptized as an outward act of obedience to complete the inward righteousness which we have received in our hearts by faith.

Then, why was Jesus baptized by John?

Matthew 3:13-17 Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. (14) But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? (15) And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. (16) And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: (17) And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Jesus was not baptized as outward evidence that He had repented of His sins because He had no sins for which He needed to repent. He was baptized to fulfill (that is, complete) righteousness. Jesus deliberately and consciously established a standard of behavior, thereby, setting an example and pattern of the baptism in which He desired Christians to follow Him.

CONDITIONS FOR CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

It is not by chance that the Doctrine of Baptisms is third in our foundation study list. First comes repentance, then faith (belief) and then baptism. Baptism must be built on repenting and believing.

The Philippian jailer gives us the pattern:

Acts 16:30-33 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? (31) And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. (32) And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. (33) And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.

The Word gives us four conditions for Christian baptism:

1. Repentance

Acts 2:37-38 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? (38) Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

2. Belief

Mark 16:15-16 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. (16) He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

3. A good conscious

1 Peter 3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

4. Become a disciple

Matthew 28:19-20 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (20) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

“Teach” in this verse is actually “disciple” in the original text.

In other words, the person

must have heard enough of the gospel to understand the nature of his act

must have repented of his sins

must confess his faith that Jesus Christ is the Son of God

must be able to answer God with a good conscious on the grounds that he has fulfilled all of God's requirements for salvation, and

must commit himself to a life of discipleship.

SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

Romans 6:1-7 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? (2) God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? (3) Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? (4) Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead

by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (5) For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: (6) Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. (7) For he that is dead is freed from sin.

These verses present two mutually exclusive facts:

1. If we have availed ourselves of God's grace, we are dead to sin.
2. If we are not dead to sin, then we have not availed ourselves of God's grace.

The purpose of baptism is a declaration of death, burial, and resurrection in order that we might not live to sin but instead live to righteousness.

Romans 6:11-14 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. (12) Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. (13) Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. (14) For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Romans 8:10 And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

1 Peter 2:24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

The average Christian today:

has some kind of belief that their past sins can be forgiven
 goes to Church to confess and obtain forgiveness for sins committed
 has no thought or expectation of experiencing any inward transformation of own nature
 leaves Church unchanged and continues committing the same kind of sins which was confessed.

To be dead to sin and alive to God and righteousness requires two things of us:

1. "Knowing this"--Rom. 6:6
2. "Reckon yourselves"--Rom. 6:11

If God's people do not know this truth, they can't believe it; if they can't believe it, they can't experience it. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Hosea 4:6

There are three successive stages to the ordinance of baptism:

1. We died with Jesus on the Cross.
2. We are buried with Him.
3. We are raised with Him in His resurrection.

This produces an inner transformation within the believer: 1) death to sin, 2) new life to righteousness in God.

Colossians 2:12-13 Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. (13) And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

We have an example in the Old Testament when the children of Israel followed Moses through the Red Sea. The New Testament calls this a baptism.

1 Corinthians 10:1-2 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; (2) And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

We learn 5 lessons from this example that are applicable to us in our baptism.

1. Baptism is a memorial.
2. Baptism involves a confession
3. Baptism declares solemn determination
4. Baptism announces separation
5. Baptism means new identity.

In Acts Peter gives us the first three steps in our walk with God:

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

- 1) Repent;
- 2) Be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins,
- 3) Receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Too many Christians stop after water baptism and don't move on to receive the Holy Ghost.

BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

As shown in Acts 2:38, receiving the Holy Spirit comes after believing and being baptized. This is what happened to the disciples on the day of Pentecost. This was important enough that Jesus told his followers to wait until they received the Holy Spirit before doing anything.

Acts 1:4-5 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. (5) For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

Jesus said wait for the promise of the Father and equated this with being baptized with the Holy Spirit. What, exactly, is the promise of the Father?

Jesus speaks of this in John.

John 14:16-17 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; (17) Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

John 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Jesus says the Father will send another Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Ghost to abide with the disciples. The Holy Spirit is not for the world because they can't receive Him because the world doesn't see Him or know Him. He is for the disciples and He dwells with them (in Jesus) but would be in them.

The purpose of the Comforter is two-fold:

John 16:7-14 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. (8) And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: (9) Of sin, because they believe not on me; (10) Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; (11) Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. (12) I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. (13) Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. (14) He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and

shall show it unto you.

The Comforter will

- 1) reprove the world of sin, of righteousness, and judgment
- 2) guide believers into all truth and glorify Jesus.

Jesus adds a third purpose of the Spirit for the believer when He tells the disciples to wait to be baptized in the Holy Spirit: power.

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

To do the work that we need to do requires the power of the Holy Spirit. Effective witnessing to the Truth can only be done through the power of the Holy Ghost. If it was necessary for the disciples to receive the Holy Spirit before going forth, how much more do we need to receive the Holy Spirit before we can go forth and witness of Jesus and do the works that He has called us to do in His name?

Examples of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

When the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, there were certain manifestations of the event. Let's see if there is a consistent occurrence each time the Baptism in the Holy Spirit occurs.

1. The Day of Pentecost (Acts Chapter 2):

- 1) a rushing mighty wind
- 2) tongues of fire over the heads
- 3) speaking with tongues

2. Samaria (Acts Chapter 8):

- 1) sign not named but was visible because Simon offered money to Peter and John for the ability to lay hands on people so that they would receive the Holy Spirit.

3. The House of Cornelius (Acts Chapter 10):

- 1) speaking with tongues
- 2) magnifying God

4. Certain disciples at Ephesus (Acts Chapter 19):

- 1) speaking with tongues

2) prophesy

The only commonality of these examples is "speaking with tongues". The only example which doesn't name "tongues" is Samaria. However, Simon saw something different than what he had seen before. With Phillip, he had seen miracles, healing, deliverance, and great joy. Since he saw something happen different than he had seen before, it seems logical to assume (based on the other incidences given) that he saw them speak with tongues.

We can conclude that "speaking with tongues" is a consistent evidence of having been baptized with the Holy Spirit.

BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY

The third part of the one baptism is when we are baptized into one body.

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

This aspect of baptism is not often (if ever) discussed because its significance is not recognized. But as we begin to understand the meaning of baptism as immersion, this aspect takes on greater significance. The three-in-one baptism is progressive: 1) water baptism, 2) Holy Spirit baptism, and 3) body baptism.

We can see the progressive nature of the one baptism as we look at the one who ministers the baptism and at the element in which one is baptized (that is, immersed). This will be easier if we place these three aspects of baptism into a table format where we can see each part as it relates to the whole.

Baptism begins with water. A servant of the Lord baptizes one by "dipping" them in water. The person is buried with Christ and raised in newness of Life. Then, the Lord takes the person and "immerses" them into the Holy Spirit where they receive power. Then, the Holy Spirit takes the person and "immerses" them into the Body where they find their place and function.

By One Baptism, we are identified with Christ, filled with power, and functioning in our place in His Body.

It is important that we complete the progressive baptism.

| ONE WHO MINISTERS | ELEMENT | RESULTS |
|---------------------|-------------|------------------------------------|
| Servant of the Lord | Water | Immersed in the water, raised new |
| Jesus | Holy Spirit | Immersed in the Holy Spirit |
| Holy Spirit | People | Immersed in the people of the Body |

Laying on of Hands

The laying on of hands signifies one of three things:

1. transmitting blessing or authority,
2. public acknowledgment of blessing or authority already received by the one receiving laying on of hands, or,
3. publicly commit the one on whom hands are laid to God for some special task or ministry.

Old Testament Usage

In the Old Testament it was an accepted practice to lay on hands for blessing or special anointing at the direction of the Lord.

Genesis 48:14 And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn.

NOTE: It was accepted practice that the right hand was for the greater blessing which normally went to the firstborn.

Numbers 27:18-20 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; (19) And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. (20) And thou shalt put some of thine honor upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient.

Two things accomplished by Moses laying on of hands:

1. transmitted to Joshua a measure of spiritual wisdom and honor which he had received from God, and
2. public acknowledgment before the congregation of God's appointment of Joshua as leader to succeed Moses.

These two things were essential for Joshua to do the job that God had prepared him to do.

We can see the results or outcome of Moses laying hands on Joshua in Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy 34:9 And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.

Another example is the way that Elisha acknowledged God's appointment of Joash as God's deliverer. Joash received divine wisdom and authority needed to equip him as deliverer.

2 Kings 13:15-17 And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows. (16) And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand upon it: and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands. (17) And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the LORD's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them.

This appointment by Elisha parallels Joshua's appointment by Moses:

1. each acknowledged a leader whom God had appointed for a special purpose, and
2. each received wisdom and authority needed to carry out his God appointed task.

Note: both of these were primarily military commanders.

New Testament Usage

In the New Testament there are 5 purposes for the laying on of hands:

1. Ministry of healing
2. To impart the Holy Spirit
3. Impartation of spiritual gifts
4. To commission ministers, and
5. To commission Elders and Deacons

We will look at each of these in detail.

Laying on of hands for healing

There are 5 supernatural signs appointed by Jesus that would accompany the preaching of the Gospel and those that have faith in His authority.

Mark 16:17-18 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; (18) They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they

shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

The last of these is the laying on of hands for the sick to recover. This shows that this “sign” is for the unconverted or the newly converted believer.

The Lord has made provision for the healing of the believer also.

James 5:14-15 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: (15) And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

There are several lessons for us in this scripture:

1. Every believer is associated with a church;
2. Elders are recognized by the congregation as ministers of the Lord;
3. We are in open disobedience if we don't call for the elders when we are sick; and
4. The leaders are ready to minister in faith.

The anointing with oil may or may not be accompanied by the laying on of hands; but the anointing oil is for the believer only. We don't find it used with the unconverted.

When the Elders pray over the sick (with faith) and anoint him with oil, it does 3 things:

1. the sick shall be saved (healed);
2. the Lord shall raise him up; and
3. sins committed shall be forgiven.

Laying on of hand to impart the Holy Spirit

There are 5 cases of receiving the Holy Spirit given in the scriptures:

1. Acts 2: 1-4 Day of Pentecost
2. Acts 8: 14-20 Samaritan new converts
3. Acts 9: 17 Saul (Paul)
4. Acts 10: 44-46 Cornelius' house
5. Acts 19: 1-6 Disciples at Ephesus

The Holy Spirit was ministered with the laying on of hands in 3 of these 5 instances. That is more than 50% of the time. The two occasions when the Holy Spirit came without the laying on of hands was the day of Pentecost and the house of Cornelius. Both of these occurrences we

special and unique by their nature. While we might have some unique or special occasions when the Holy Spirit just falls, we should expect a similar ratio today as those revealed by the scriptures when we pray for people to receive the Holy Spirit. The expected or normal procedure would be by the laying on of hands to impart the Holy Spirit to the believer.

Laying on of hands to impart spiritual gifts

The laying on of hands is frequently used to impart spiritual gifts to others. The clearest example of this is with Timothy.

1 Timothy 4:14 Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.

2 Timothy 1:6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.

Timothy received a gift that was given prophetically and confirmed and imparted by the laying on of hands of the presbytery (elders) and by Paul. The reason for the gift was so that Timothy could wage war with the enemy.

1 Timothy 1:18 This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare;

Paul also wanted to see the Roman believers because he wanted to impart a spiritual gift to them that was for the purpose of establishing them.

Romans 1:11-12 For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; (12) That is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me.

In each of the examples, spiritual gifts were only imparted by the leadership not by the individual believers.

Laying on of hands to commission ministers

The clearest example of this occurs in Antioch when Paul and Barnabas were sent out.

Acts 13:1-4 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. (2) As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. (3) And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. (4) So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.

The Holy Spirit had called Paul and Barnabas for a special work and had, apparently, spoken to them individually prior to this meeting. The Holy Spirit now spoke publicly (probably through one of the prophets). The other leaders fasted, prayed, and laid hands on them to publicly confirm the Holy Spirit's call to the work. Then, Paul and Barnabas were sent forth to accomplish the work assigned by the Holy Spirit. After this sending forth, Paul and Barnabas are both called apostles.

After fulfilling the work that they were called to do they returned to Antioch and gave a report of all that the Lord had done.

Acts 14:26-27 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. (27) And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.

This reveals the results of the commissioning Paul and Barnabas:

1. the ***purpose*** for which the church leaders laid hands on them--commended them to the grace of God;
2. the ***outcome*** of the work--successfully completed without omissions or failures;
3. the ***impact*** of their ministry on the Gentiles--an open door of faith.

Laying on of hands to commission elders and deacons

The scriptures only give us two offices in the local church: elders and deacons.

The commissioning of elders could be placed under the previous purpose of the laying on of hands--commissioning ministers; however, I wanted to keep the church offices together.

While the scriptures don't specifically use the phrase "laying on of hands" in connection with elders, it is a logical assumption.

Acts 14:21-23 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, (22) Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. (23) And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.

As Paul and Barnabas made their trip, they left groups of believers (disciples) behind as they moved on to the next town. As they made their return journey, they visited the groups of disciples and ordained (appointed) elders in each of the towns where they had left the groups of

believers.

We can see several principles in these verses:

1. the transition from a group of disciples to a church was the appointment of elders;
2. elders weren't appointed until some time had passed with the group of believers;
3. elders were appointed by the apostles; and
4. when appointed as elders, there was prayer and fasting to commend them to the Lord (this was probably accompanied by the laying on of hands).

The appointment of elders was so important that when Paul couldn't do it in Crete, he left Titus to specifically set things in order and appoint elders in each city.

Titus 1:5 For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

It would appear to me that being without elders leaves a church out of order.

The only example we have in the scriptures of the selection of deacons is in Acts.

Acts 6:2-6 Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. (3) Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. (4) But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. (5) And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: (6) Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.

The deacons were specifically selected to resolve the issue of unequal distribution of help to the different groups of widows. They were selected by the group of believers and then confirmed and appointed by the laying on of hands of the elders.

Warning about laying on of hands

The scriptures give us a warning about hastily laying hands on people.

1 Timothy 5:22 Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.

There are 3 warnings in this verse and I believe the second two are a result of the first.

1. don't lay hands hastily on people;
2. don't be a partaker of other's sins; and
3. keep yourself pure.

Laying on of hands is not just a religious ceremony. It has real spiritual effect. For this to occur then there must be direct spiritual contact. Whenever there is contact between two spirits, there is always the possibility of spiritual harm. That is why we should not be hasty about laying on of hands.

How to Protect Against Harm

1. The ministry of laying on of hands should never be exercised lightly or carelessly but with humility and a spirit of prayer.
2. The guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit should be sought at every stage--with whom to pray, when to pray, and how to pray.
3. The one who lays on hands must know how to claim, on behalf of his own spirit, the continual purifying and protecting power of the blood of Christ.
4. The one who lays on hands must himself be so empowered of the Holy Spirit that he is able to overcome any kind of evil spiritual influence seeking to enter in or through the one on whom hands are laid.

Resurrection of the Dead

Resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment are bound together by the logic of the scriptures. Eternal judgment always follows resurrection of the dead. Resurrection always precedes eternal judgment. To properly address these we need to look first at two areas: time and eternity.

Time and Eternity

Eternity is not endless time, although that is the way that we tend to think of it. Eternity is the nature and mode of God's own being--the uncreated realm in which God Himself exists.

Isaiah 57:15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

- Exodus 3:14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.
- Revelation 1:8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.
- Isaiah 40:28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.

Time was created by God as part of the creation of the Heavens and earth mentioned in the first verse of Genesis. We refer to it today as the space-time continuum. While we live our lives by the clock, there comes a point in our life that the clock stops ticking. At death we step out of time and into eternity. When our life ends, time stops for us.

There are two things awaiting us on the other side of time:

1. resurrection of the dead, and
2. eternal judgment.

Our faith hinges on the fact that there is a resurrection of the dead because Jesus was raised from the dead. This is a central or key point to Christianity.

- 1 Cor. 15:16-22 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: (17) And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. (18) Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. (19) If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. (20) But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. (21) For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. (22) For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

- Romans 14:9 For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

There is one class of exceptions to the resurrection of the dead and that is, naturally, those who never die.

- 1 Cor. 15:51-53 Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. (52) In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

True Christians which are alive when Christ returns will not die but will be changed. They will skip the death process. As we can see from these scriptures, the resurrection of the dead (which means resurrection of the body) occurs at the time of Christ's return and before the judgment

seat.

NOTE: There are two other people that possibly fit into the exception category: Enoch and Elijah. They were translated from Earth to Heaven without seeing death. (I personally believe that these return to Earth as the two witnesses in Revelation where, eventually, they will be killed. Enoch represents the righteous that were before the Flood and Elijah represents the righteous after the Flood.)

We can see a principle in this. Since resurrection precedes judgment in every case, man will not appear before God as disembodied souls but as a complete person--the complete human personality: spirit, soul, and body.

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Acts 17:30-31 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: (31) Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.

Romans 14:10-12 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. (11) For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. (12) So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

Man has both a material and an immaterial component. The body is material and the soul and spirit are immaterial and as a result the body decomposes while there is no decomposition with the immaterial aspect of our being.

Ecclesiastes 3:18-21 I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. (19) For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. (20) All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. (21) Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?

Ecclesiastes 12:7 Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

After Death--Before Resurrection

When a person dies, the body returns to the dust from which it came and the spirit and soul return to God who gave it. I believe that this means that all, the righteous and the unrighteous, appear before God after death. However, this is not for judgment which only occurs after resurrection. The purpose of this appearing is to hear the divine sentence appointing to each the state and place each must occupy from death until resurrection and final judgment. Others believe that when a person dies his soul goes automatically to the appropriate place to await judgment and doesn't appear before God at all until that time.

Two facts are made clear in the Bible:

1. After death, there is a separation between the righteous and the wicked;
2. After death, the condition of the righteous was different before Christ's death and resurrection than afterward.

We can glean some facts about this from God's judgment on the oppressing King of Babylon in Isaiah.

Isaiah 14:9-10 Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. (10) All they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we? art thou become like unto us?

First, this scripture does not suggest any knowledge of events currently occurring on the earth.

Second, we can determine 5 facts from this scripture:

1. there is a definite persistence of personality
2. there is recognition of one person by another
3. there is communication between one person and another
4. there is an awareness of conditions in Hell
5. there is some correspondence in some measure between a man's state in the world and his state in the next. Kings were still recognized as Kings.

Ezekiel chapter 32 verses 17-32 present a similar picture containing these same five points.

The New Testament is in agreement with the Old but reveals or adds some additional details for us. Let's look at the scriptures about the beggar, Lazarus, and the rich man.

Luke 16:19-26 There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: (20) And there was a certain beggar

named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, (21) And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. (22) And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; (23) And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. (24) And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. (25) But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. (26) And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.

We have clearly revealed here that the destiny after death of the righteous is different from the wicked. The rich man is in a place of torment and Lazarus is in a place of rest. Between these two areas is an impassable gulf.

Sheol, Hades, Hell

Our thinking, understanding and traditions about hell are out of line with what the Scriptures present. We have seen too many movies about hell or read too many writer's articles about hell that have been based on cultural concepts taken from pagan religions.

The Hebrew word that is translated as "hell" is *sheol* and means "the place of departed spirits". The Greek word for *sheol* is *hades* and the English word for *hades* is *hell*. As the word has moved through the languages it has picked up extra meanings that were not meant in the original.

Our modern concept of hell is a place in the center of the earth that is burning with fire where the Devil has his throne and rules this underworld. This is not correct. The Devil is not in hell right now. His false kingdom is in the heavenlies. This is where his throne is currently.

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (*literally, the heavenlies*).

The Devil hasn't even been cast out of the heavenlies and into the Earth yet. This doesn't occur until halfway through Revelation.

Revelation 12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

It is only at the beginning of the Thousand Year Reign of Christ that the Devil is bound in the

bottomless pit (which may or may not be hell).

Revelation 20:1-3 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. (2) And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. (3) And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

So, as you see, the Devil is not in hell and is certainly not ruling there.

Prior to the resurrection of Jesus, all departed souls went to sheol or hell. However, there were two compartments with an impassable gulf between them. One side was a place of torment for the wicked. The other side was called Paradise (literally, Garden of God) and Abraham's bosom and was a place of rest for the righteous. This changed for the righteous after the resurrection of Jesus.

The Work of Jesus in His Death and Resurrection

We all understand the work of Jesus on the Cross. He was the Lamb of God offered as a sacrifice for our sins. As the Lamb He became sin for us. He literally took on Himself our sin nature that we might be free and no longer slaves to sin. When Jesus said "It is finished", He was referring to His work as the Sin Offering, the Lamb of God.

John 19:30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

Under the Old Covenant, besides the blood offering that was sprinkled on the altar, there was another offering called the Scapegoat. Once each year it took both of these sacrifices to make atonement for Israel. We have similar provision through Jesus under the New covenant.

Leviticus 16:9-10 And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. (10) But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.

Leviticus 16:20-22 And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: (21) And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: (22) And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

Jesus was both our sin offering and our scapegoat. When He finished the work of the sin offering (it was always performed first), He began the work of the scapegoat which took place between His death on the cross and His resurrection. There has been little teaching done on the scapegoat. As a result some of the scriptures which point to this have been misinterpreted and misapplied to create erroneous teaching because of lack of understanding. It has created quite a controversy in the Church as a whole.

Let's look at what the bible says about the time between His death and resurrection.

Two facts are clear:

1. When Jesus died, His body was laid in a tomb but it did not decompose;
2. His spirit and soul went to "sheol".

How do we know that He went to sheol (hell)?

Ephesians 4:9-10 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? (10) He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

He descended into the lower parts of the earth before He ascended.

Psalms 16:10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

This is quoted by Peter in Acts 2:25-28 and Paul in Acts 13:35 as prophetic of Jesus. His soul would not be left in hell and his body would not see corruption.

Jesus told the repentant thief that He would see Him in paradise that day.

Luke 23:42-43 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. (43) And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise. (*literally "garden"*)

We have already seen that paradise was the compartment of the righteous in *sheol*. Since Jesus expired before the thief, we can assume that He was there waiting to greet the thief when he arrived.

1 Peter 3:18-20 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: (19) By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; (20) Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

Jesus also apparently went to another area of *sheol* and preached (literally, heralded, proclaimed, declared) to the disobedient ones from the days of Noah.

But it is David, the Psalmist, that gives us the prophetic picture of Jesus suffering as the scapegoat. As I understand the atonement process with both the sin offering and the scapegoat, it was necessary for Jesus to suffer in this way to make a complete or full atonement for us.

Psalms 88:4-18 I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength: (5) Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand. (6) Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. (7) Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah. (8) Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; thou hast made me an abomination unto them: I am shut up, and I cannot come forth. (9) Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: LORD, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto thee. (10) Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee? Selah. (11) Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? or thy faithfulness in destruction? (12) Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? (13) But unto thee have I cried, O LORD; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee. (14) LORD, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me? (15) I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. (16) Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off. (17) They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together. (18) Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.

Jesus as the scapegoat was taken into this spiritual wilderness (the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps) and there suffered complete and total separation from God. We can't imagine the suffering that went with this. But then as the scriptures say He was "quickened by the Spirit", that is, He was made alive by the Spirit. His soul was not left in hell but was re-united with His body and He was resurrected.

In the process of resurrection, Jesus brought with Him the righteous which were in paradise awaiting the time when they could be in the presence of God. Some of these received their resurrected bodies just as Jesus did.

Matthew 27:52-53 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, (53) And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

While this is largely ignored by bible teachers, it is important because Jesus rose on the day of the First Fruits Offering, the Wave Offering. The first fruits were presented to the Lord so that the entire harvest would be holy.

Changes for the New Testament Righteous

When Jesus rose the paradise compartment of *sheol* was emptied and the souls of the Old Testament righteous are now with Jesus in heaven. Because we are now made acceptable to God by the blood of Jesus, we, too, are with Jesus when we die.

2 Corinthians 5:6-8 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (7) (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) (8) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

Philippians 1:22-24 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not. (23) For I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: (24) Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

Paul makes it clear that, for him and therefore all who belong to Christ, when a person's soul is absent from the body then it will be present with the Lord.

From this we know that when we die, our souls do not go to sheol, but, instead, go into the presence of Jesus in heaven.

Resurrection Body

When we are resurrected our spirits and souls are re-united with our bodies. It is the same body we had when we died only changed. God keeps track of all of our elemental components so that they can be assembled again at the right time.

The Psalmist records the original process that occurred before birth. A record was kept so that in the resurrection the process could be duplicated in a moment.

Psalms 139:13-16 For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. (14) I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. (15) My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. (16) Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

When Jesus appeared to His disciples, He had the same body that was crucified as evidenced by the wounds on the hands and feet. They at first thought that He was a spirit but He quickly set them straight on that.

1 Cor. 15:35-44 But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body

do they come? (36) Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: (37) And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: (38) But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. (39) All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. (40) There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. (41) 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. (42) So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: (43) It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: (44) It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

When our natural body is sown into the ground like seed, it is raised as a spiritual body.

Abilities that we can expect of our resurrected bodies (our example is Jesus):

1. appear and disappear at will
2. enter closed rooms
3. pass between heaven and earth.

The Order of Resurrection

1 Cor. 15:22-24 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. (23) But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. (24) Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

Regardless of any particular belief that you might hold about the timing of various events such as the Rapture, the order will always be the same and it is a three step process.

Christ the first fruits: As we have already seen, many old testament saints rose from their graves and walked the streets of Jerusalem before ascending to heaven with Jesus. Christ was planted as a seed and rose in newness of Life. When you plant a seed, you don't just get one seed back but instead you get many. Jesus and the old testament saints were the wave offering of the first fruits to God.

Leviticus 23:10-11 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof,

then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest:
(11) And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

John 12:24

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.

They that are Christ's at His coming: All true Christians will be resurrected in their new immortal bodies and those still alive when He comes will receive their new bodies also. This is the next event to occur in the resurrection process.

1 Cor. 15:51-54

Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. (52) In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (54) So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

Then comes the end: This occurs when the Kingdom is delivered to the Father. The timeline for this is after the 1000 year reign of Christ on the earth.

Revelation 20:5-6

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. (6) 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.

After everything is completed at the end of the 1000 years, then the rest of the dead are raised for the Great White Throne judgment.

Five Main Purposes of Christ's Second Coming

(1) Christ will come for the Church. He will come as the Bridegroom to receive to Himself all true believers as His Bride.

John 14:3

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.

(2) Christ will come for the national salvation of Israel. The remnant of Israel that survives the fires of the great tribulation will acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah

Romans 11:26-27

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: (27) For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins.

(3) Christ will come for the overthrow of Anti-Christ and of Satan

2 Thessalonians 2:8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

(4) Christ will come for the judgment of the gentile nations.

Matthew 25:31-32 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: (32) And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

(5) Christ will come for the establishment of His millennial kingdom upon the earth

Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

There is much argument among believers about the details of these phases of the Lord's return and the fulfillment of His purposes. Will all of these be a single event? Or, will there be definite time intervals between some of them?

1 Thes. 4:13-17 (13) But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. (14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. (15) For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. (16) For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: (17) 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.

There are 3 sounds associated with the Lord's return:

1. the shout of the Lord--only the Lord has the power to call the dead out of their graves;
2. the voice of the Archangel--possibly Gabriel (herald);
3. the trumpet of God--all through the bible, the trumpet call signaled the gathering together of God's people.

Jesus said that He would also come as a thief.

Revelation 16:15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

Like a thief:

1. sudden, unexpected, without warning
2. culminates in a single ruthless action of snatching away earth's most valuable treasure snatched--the true Christians.

Difference from a thief: Jesus only takes His own.

Eternal Judgment

There are two aspects of Eternal Judgment:

1. General revelation of God as judge of all, and
2. The main principles which administrate God's judgment.

Hebrews 12:22-24 But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, (23) To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, (24) And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

Three main parts to these scriptures:

- A) Description of God's dwelling place
 1. Mount Zion
 2. city of the living God
 3. the heavenly Jerusalem
- B) Listing of those who dwell there with God
 1. innumerable company of Angels
 - a) Angels who kept there first estate
 2. general assembly and Church of the first-born

- a) new testament saints
- 3. spirits of just men made perfect
 - a) saints of previous ages
- C) Presentation of God Himself
 - 1. God, the Judge of all
 - 2. Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant
 - 3. the Blood of sprinkling

These scriptures reveal GOD THE JUDGE

which leads us to JESUS THE MEDIATOR

which leads us to THE BLOOD--the means and price of reconciliation.

The blood of Abel contrasted with the blood of Jesus:

| Abel | Jesus |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 1. blood shed without his consent | 1. blood freely given |
| 2. sprinkled on the earth | 2. sprinkled on the mercy seat in heaven |
| 3. cries out for vengeance | 3. pleads mercy and forgiveness |

The revelation of God as judge of all is tempered by the revelation of God's mercy and grace manifested in the mediatorial office and the shed blood of Christ. This is in harmony with the total revelation of scripture on this theme.

God, the Father, as Judge

Throughout the entire Bible it is plainly stated that, by sovereign, eternal right, the office of "Judge" belongs to God Himself.

Genesis 18:25 That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

Psalms 58:11 So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

Psalms 94:2 Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud.

Isaiah 33:22 For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.

However, even though God is judge, His nature is to be long-suffering.

Isaiah 28:21 For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act.

There are two Hebrew words translated by the same English word “strange”. The meaning that they have in common is “alien”. The administration of wrath and judgment is *alien* to God's own nature.

This concept is also born out in the New Testament.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

John 3:17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

The reluctance of God to administer judgment finds expression also in the way in which God's judgment will ultimately be carried out.

1 Peter 1:17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

Jesus, the Son, as Judge

God, the Father is Judge; however, He has delegated judgment to the Son.

John 5:22-23 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: (23) That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent him.

John 5:26-27 For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; (27) And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.

Two reasons the office of Judge is transferred from the Father to the Son:

1. because with the office of Judge goes the honor due the judge--men will be obliged to show the same honor toward God, the Son, as they would God, the Father.
2. because Christ is also the Son of man as well as the Son of God; i.e., he partakes of the human as well as the divine nature, and, therefore, in His judgments He is able to

make allowance from His own experience, for all the infirmities and temptations of human flesh.

However, the Son is also unwilling to administer judgment.

The Word as Judge

The Son of God has transferred the final authority of judgment from Himself to the Word of God.

John 12:47-48 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. (48) He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

The final authority of all judgment is vested in the Word of God. This is the impartial, unchanging standard of judgment to which all men must one day answer.

Psalms 119:160 Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth forever.

God's principles and standards of judgments are contained in His Word and like the Word endure forever.

Principles of Divine Judgment

Romans 2:1-12 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. (2) But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. (3) And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? (4) Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? (5) But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; (6) Who will render to every man according to his deeds: (7) To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life: (8) But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, (9) Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; (10) But glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: (11) For there is no respect of persons with God.

(12) For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law:

There are 3 principles of divine judgment in these scriptures.

“according to truth” -- has to do with those who judge others by one standard and themselves by another standard. John 17:17 says “Thy word is truth.” The revealed standard of God's word applies to the judge and the judged.

“according to deeds” -- repeated many times in the scriptures: 1 Peter 1:17, “according to every man's work”; Rev. 20:12, “according to their works”. Records are kept of each man's life, not just deeds but also thoughts and intents of the heart.

“as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law” -- each person is judged according to the measure of moral light and understanding available to him.

Romans 1:20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Example: Matthew 11:20-24--Jesus is comparing Tyre and Sidon and the light they had received with the cities of His day and the light they received. Judgment would be easier on Tyre and Sidon than on the current cities.

We should take note of this because we live in a time and a country when more moral knowledge is more easily available than ever before in history. We are held accountable for the light which we have received and that which is available to us. To neglect or to not receive the light which is available does not relieve us from the responsibility and the accountability that goes with the Word. Just as the cities of Jesus time did not receive the light and understanding available to them and as a consequence will receive a stricter judgment than even Sodom and Gomorrah, America will, I believe, be held even more accountable than the cities of Jesus time.

God's Judgments in History

God administers judgment to the human race in two stages:

God's judgment in time--that is, that part of God's judgment that is carried out on the scene of human history.

God's judgment in eternity--that is, that part of God's judgment that is carried out in eternity, after time and history have ceased.

Scriptures of Historical Judgments:

Exodus 20:4-6 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any

thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: (5) Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; (6) And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Jeremiah 32:18 Thou showest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name,

In certain cases the sins of one generation can cause the judgment of God to come upon succeeding generations even to the third or fourth and, conversely, the righteousness of one generation can cause the blessing of God to come upon many thousands of their descendants.

Scriptures on Eternal Judgment

Ezekiel 18:1-4 The word of the LORD came unto me again, saying, (2) What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge? (3) As I live, saith the Lord GOD, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel. (4) Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.

God though the prophets rebuked Israel for their sinful and backslidden condition. The people tried to blame the previous generation for their present conditions, thereby excusing themselves.

God doesn't allow this. When one stands before Him, he can't blame his parents for his problems with morality. Although it may have been true that the national decline was due to their ancestors, God still holds each accountable for his moral condition. Each one will be judged, in eternity, solely for his own character and conduct. Each one of us has a will with the ability to choose what is right or wrong and God has provided His Word to be to us the standard by which we can exercise our will to make the correct choice. God leaves us without excuse; when judgment day comes, our deeds will speak for us.

Ezekiel 18:20 The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

This is not judgment of a nation or a family; this is the judgment of each individual soul--the judgment by which the destiny of each soul is settled for eternity.

Ezekiel 18:24 But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the

wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.

“... in them shall he die.” indicates that God is speaking of the condition in which each individual soul passes out of time into eternity. the condition of the soul at that moment determines the destiny of that soul for eternity. The soul that dies in sin can never thereafter be admitted into the presence of God. Jesus made this clear when He was speaking with the Pharisees.

John 8:21 Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.

Ecclesiastes 11:3 If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.

The tree falling corresponds to a man dying. The position in which the tree falls determines the position in which it will thereafter lie.

The previous three scripture passages all deal with eternal judgment of God upon each individual soul. The destiny of each soul is settled by the condition in which it dies.

From these we can draw two conclusions:

in history---the behavior on one generation has an important effect, for good or evil, upon the course of the succeeding generations.

in eternity---each soul will answer to God solely for his own character and conduct.

Examples of God's Judgments in History

Sodom and Gomorrah:

2 Peter 2:6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly;

This clearly displays god's attitude towards the sins of which these cities were guilty. His judgment was given to provide us an example, that is, a pattern, of the conditions which will bring His judgment.

What were the basic moral and social conditions which produced the decline of Sodom?

Ezekiel 16:49 Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy.

Four basic causes of Sodom's decline:

1. pride
2. fullness of bread
3. abundance of idleness
4. lack of concern for the poor and needy

Out of these four basic causes there grew up that particular form of sexual perversion which has, ever since, been called by the name of “sodomy”. In our current population centers, the same moral and social causes are producing the same forms of sexual perversion.

Ananias and Sapphira:

Acts 5:1-10

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, (2) And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. (3) But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? (4) While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. (5) And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. (6) And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. (7) And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. (8) And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. (9) Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. (10) Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband.

These were what we would call “religious hypocrites”. They sold a possession and brought part of the price to the apostles as an offering to the work of God; however, they pretended that the money that they brought was the full price of the possession that they sold. They did this to gain the praise and favor of the apostles and their fellow Christians.

However, by the supernatural revelation of the Holy Spirit, Peter discerned their hypocrisy, and charged first Ananias and later Sapphira, with lying and seeking to deceive the Holy Spirit and each fell down dead at Peter's feet.

The Seats of Judgment

The New Testament reveals 3 main, successive scenes upon which eternal judgment will be carried out. Each of these is marked by the type of seat that the Judge sits upon to execute judgment:

1. the judgment seat of Christ
2. the throne of Christ's glory
3. the great white throne.

Different groups of people are judged at each seat of judgment.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

The language and context make it clear that this scripture is addressed to Christians. It may seem surprising that Christians are going to be judged at all. Popular thought seems to say that the Judgment Day is for the unbelievers. However, look at the scriptures.

1 Peter 4:17-18 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? (18) And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

Judgment must begin at “the house of God”, “at us” which is obviously Christians. The first judgment will be that of the true Christians.

Romans 14:10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Romans 14:12 So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Paul's use of “brother” and “every one of us” shows that he is speaking of Christians. Each will give an account of himself.

2 Corinthians 5:10 tells us that the Christian is judged for “the things done in his body”; that is, the acts and the behavior of each Christian during his life here on earth. These acts will fall into one of two categories--“good” or “bad”. There is no third category of neutral. Every act of a Christian has definite value of some kind--either positive or negative, good or bad. Every act that is not performed in faith and obedience, for the glory of God, is unacceptable to God, and therefore, “bad”. It is upon this simple basis that each Christian must expect to be judged.

It is clear that the judgment of Christians is not a judgment of condemnation.

John 3:18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

John 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Therefore, the believer does not face judgment where the outcome will be final condemnation. The believer will not be judged for sins. Sins were blotted out when the person received Jesus as Savior and confessed him as Lord.

Isaiah 43:25 I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.

Isaiah 44:22 I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 2:1-2 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: (2) And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Christians are not judged for condemnation but for reward. Not in respect of righteousness but in respect of service to God. The Christian's righteousness is not his own but Christ's.

1 Corinthians 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

2 Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Christian judgment is for reward:

1 Cor. 3:11-15 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (12) Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; (13) Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. (14) If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. (15) If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

This is not a judgment of every man's soul but of every man's work. Quality is of more importance to God than quantity.

Three points to consider:

Motive--are we pleasing ourselves for our own satisfaction and glory or are we sincerely seeking to glorify Jesus and do His will?

Obedience--are we serving according to the principles and methods revealed in the Word of God or are we fashioning our own forms of worship and service?

Power--are we serving in the inadequacy of our own carnal will and strength or have we been renewed and empowered by the Holy Spirit?

Principles of Christian Judgment

We have principles for which we are held accountable given by Jesus in two of the parables.

Matthew 25:14-30 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. (15) And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. (16) Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. (17) And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. (18) But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. (19) After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. (20) And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. (21) His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. (22) He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. (23) His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. (24) Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strewed: (25) And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. (26) His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strewed: (27) Thou

oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. (28) Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. (29) For unto everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. (30) And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

A talent was a considerable sum of money, possibly as much as 15 years of wages. Each was given an amount according to his ability. He was not given less nor more than his ability would allow him to care for appropriately. Each was judged by the percentage of increase not by the net gain. Each that was equally faithful received the same reward. The unfaithful was judged and cast out of the Lord's presence.

We can see from this that reward is based on faithfulness. Each received the maximum his ability could handle and each was equally faithful to produce the maximum increase (100%); therefore, each received the same reward.

Now, let's look at the other parable:

Luke 19:11-27 And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. (12) He said therefore, A certain noble man went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. (13) And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. (14) But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. (15) And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. (16) Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. (17) And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. (18) And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. (19) And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. (20) And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: (21) For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou laidst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. (22) And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: (23) Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? (24)

And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (25) (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) (26) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. (27) But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

A “pound” or “mina” is about 3 months wages. Apparently, these all had equal ability since they each received the same amount. However, they were not equally faithful. The first produced twice as much compared with the second and as a result received twice the reward plus the commendation of his Lord.

We can conclude from these parables that faithfulness in this present age in service to the Lord will result in our continued service to Him in government and administration of His Kingdom in the next age.

We can also conclude that to do nothing with what the Lord has given us is classified as “wicked”. The sins of omission are just as serious as the sins of commission.

The difference between the “unprofitable” servants end in these parables and the one who suffered loss mentioned by Paul in 1 Cor. 3:11-15 is that even the one who built out of wood, hay and stubble was attempting to serve God and do something even though it was mis-guided and therefore, he was not cast out of the Lord's presence.

The Throne of His Glory Judgment Seat

The second Judgment Seat is the throne of His glory.

Matthew 25:31-33 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: (32) And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: (33) And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

It is the nations which are gathered before Christ and they are separated as sheep and goats. The sheep enter the Kingdom (here this would be the 1000 year reign of Christ) and the goats go into everlasting punishment (the Lake of Fire).

Before we proceed further with this, let's look at how God divides the human race into three groups of people: the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church of God.

1 Corinthians 10:32 Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:

God deals with these groups separately during His judgments. The Jews are a special nation. The Gentiles are the rest of the nations. The Church is not considered a Jewish nation nor a

Gentile nation but a new nation of those in Christ. This new nation is under the government of the King. The Church is dealt with at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The Gentiles (the nations) are dealt with at His Throne of Glory. When are the Jews dealt with?

It is clear that the Judgment of His Throne of Glory is for the Gentile nations only. There will be no Jews nor Christians in this particular judgment. The Christians have already undergone judgment at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The Jews, by this time, as a nation have undergone their own special judgment. Those who have passed through this special judgment have acknowledged Jesus as their Savior and Messiah. This will complete God's historical work for the nation Israel that has been progressing now about four thousand years. The completion of the judgment of Israel and the judgment of the Gentile nations is the transition between historical and eternal judgment.

The Jews, Israel, is a special nation and a special people to God. There are many prophetic scriptures which reveal God's dealings with Israel. From these we can derive two fundamental principles about blessing and punishment:

Blessing--God normally bless the Gentiles through the Jews, but He blesses the Jews directly.

Punishment--God normally punishes the Jews through the Gentiles, but He punishes the Gentiles directly.

These two principles are operative in the Old Testament and the New and will continue to be operative through the close of this age.

In the closing stages of the great tribulation God will judge and punish Israel for the last time as a nation through the instrumentality of the Gentiles. God, Himself, intervenes directly when this final judgment of Israel is complete and executes judgment on the Gentiles. Jeremiah describes this final judgment on Israel after they have returned as a nation to their own land.

Jeremiah 30:3-9 For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it. (4) And these are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah. (5) For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. (6) Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? (7) Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. (8) For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: (9) But they shall serve the LORD their

God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.

Notice the order of events as foretold by Jeremiah:

God will bring Israel back to their own land.

There will be for Israel a time of national peril and distress more terrible than any that they have previously passed through.

The Lord, Himself, will eventually intervene against the foreigners--the gentile enemies of Israel--and will save Israel from them.

The national Kingdom of Israel will be again restored upon the throne of David, under the supreme government of the Lord, Himself. This period of the restored Kingdom will be the millennium.

This end-time gathering against Israel by the Gentile nations and the Lord's intervention is further described by Zechariah.

Zechariah 12:3 And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.

Zechariah 14:2-4 For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. (3) Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. (4) And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

As a result of the Lord returning to the Mount of Olives, to the exact point from which He ascended into Heaven, all rebellious elements will finally be purged out of Israel and those who survive this final purging will then be ready to be reconciled in repentance and humility to their God.

Ezekiel describes this final purging and how the Lord deals with it.

Ezekiel 20:37-38 And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: (38) And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

The phrase “to pass under the rod” describes the process of a Shepherd inspecting the sheep before admittance into the fold. All rebels will be purged by this process and the remaining sheep will enter into a new covenant relationship with the Lord--through the new covenant in Jesus Christ.

How the Lord deals with the Gentile nations who are enemies of Israel is described in Zechariah.

Zechariah 12:9-10 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. (10) And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

As you can see, those who survive reconcile to Jesus when they realize their error.

Paul says it very clearly.

Romans 11:26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:

After Israel has passed through the fires of the great tribulation and been reconciled to God, there will be no further need to judge them. All that would remain would be the judgment of the Gentile nations which survived this process.

So, after the Lord sets up His Kingdom and the Throne of His Glory, all that remains is the judgment of the Gentile nations which survived the tribulation.

Judgment of the Gentile Nations

Jesus gives us a picture of this judgment.

Matthew 25:31-33 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: (32) And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: (33) And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

This separation is between those whom God accepts and those whom God rejects. Those accepted by God will enter the Kingdom for the 1000 year reign of Christ. Those rejected don't go to sheol, hades, or hell but go directly into the Lake of Fire as final judgment.

The basis for acceptance or rejection here is how the gentile nation treated the brothers of Jesus, the Jewish people.

This is also described by Joel.

Joel 3:1-2 For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, (2) I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land.

“Plead with them” means to “enter into judgment with them” and it is “for (or on account of) my people”.

First, God brings them back to their land. Second, God gathers the nations against Israel. Third, He will enter into judgment against the Gentiles. This is in accordance with Matthew 25. When the sheep have been separated from the goats, the judgment of the Gentile nations will be complete.

By this time, all who have been considered worthy to enter Christ's earthly Kingdom will have been purged by the refining judgments of God--Israel through the fires of the tribulation, the Gentiles by the direct intervention and judgment of Christ at the close of the tribulation.

After the purging of both the Jews and the Gentiles, there will be a thousand years of peace and prosperity with Christ as King ruling over the earth.

After the thousand years, Satan will again stir the nations against Israel in rebellion against Christ and His Kingdom, but this rebellion will be brought to an end by the direct intervention of God.

Satan will then be cast into the Lake of Fire to join the Antichrist and False Prophet who are already there.

By now, all of the rebellious among those living on the earth have been purged out. All that remains is the judgment of the dead from previous ages. All the dead who have not previously been resurrected will be called forth for judgment. The stage is set for God's third and final judgment seat.

The Great White Throne Judgment Seat

Revelation 20:11-15 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. (12) And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. (13) And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. (14) And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

(15) And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

This is the final judgment. The Jews have already been judged. The believers in the atoning work of Christ have undergone their own judgment at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Therefore, this judgment is for all of those who don't fit into the previous categories. The criteria is whether or not the person's name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. It stand to reason that most of those in this judgment are rebellious sinners, and unbelievers and will be cast into the lake of everlasting fire. However, there is reason to believe that there are at least two categories of people who will have their names written in the Book of Life and will escape condemnation enter into eternal life.

The first group is mentioned by Jesus:

Luke 11:31-32 The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. (32) The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here.

In each of these examples it is clear that the men of this generation (who rejected the mercy offered them through Jesus) will rise up (be resurrected) for the judgment of condemnation. Together with them, however, two groups will be resurrected who will receive mercy at the judgment: the queen of the South and the men of Nineveh.

Unlike the saints of the old testament, these two groups were not granted a revelation of Christ's atoning sacrifice--fore-shadowed in type and prophecy--in which they could trust for salvation. Consequently, they will not be included in the resurrection of those who are Christ's at His coming. They did, however, respond in faith to the limited measure of light that came to them. At the close of the millennium, therefore, they will be delivered from condemnation and enter into the resurrection of life.

Will there be others in this category? Only God knows. It is futile and foolish for us to try to quantify others in the resurrection. That is the exclusive domain of God.

The second category of people who will be delivered from condemnation at the final resurrection will be the righteous who have died in faith during Christ's millennial reign on earth.

Isaiah 65:20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die a hundred years old; but the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed.

The picture given here is that although human life will be greatly extended, both the righteous and the sinner will still be subject to death. When the final enemy, death, is put under the feet of Jesus, He will turn the Kingdom over to the Father (1 Cor. 15:25-28). This, apparently, doesn't

occur until the end of the Millennium.

Will there be others besides these in the Lamb's Book of Life? That is locked within the omniscience of God. We should adopt the attitude of Abraham.

Genesis 18:25 That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?