

Front cover

Handbook 1

The Shepherds' Handbook

and

The Holy Spirit

**A Guide for Elders, Bible Teachers & Students of
God's Word**

Edited by Albert Fairweather



“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” Acts 20:28

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Handbook Studies by Albert Fairweather

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Please contact the editor if translating.

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What We Believe

We believe in:

- [1] The Bible as the inspired Word of God, our sole authority for doctrine and practice.
- [2] The Trinity of the Godhead.
- [3] The Deity and sinless humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- [4] The personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit.
- [5] The creation and fall of man.
- [6] The sacrificial death of our Lord Jesus Christ for the sin of the whole world and His bodily resurrection and ascension.
- [7] The personal and pre-millennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- [8] The resurrection of the body.
- [9] The judgment of the living and the dead by the Lord Jesus Christ.
- [10] The eternal blessedness of the righteous and the eternal punishment of the wicked.
- [11] The reality and personality of Satan, who was created by God, but fell through pride.
- [12] The necessity of the new birth for salvation.
- [13] The maintenance of good works and godly living by all professing Christians.
- [14] The eternal security of the believer.
- [15] The baptism by immersion of all believers.
- [16] That Apostles and Prophets belonged to the foundation period of the Church and they and their special gifts of miracles, healings and tongues are no longer with us today since we have the completed Scriptures. However, we believe that if God so wills, He still heals in answer to prayer.
- [17] A plurality of Elders as the spiritual guides of the local church, supported by Deacons, with no outside controlling body.
- [18] The observance of the Lord's Supper every Sunday, with meetings also for prayer and teaching.
- [19] We believe in the autonomy of each local church.
- [20] In the local church, men and women have differing roles and functions. Men are to fill leadership roles and lead in all public ministry and prayer.

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All quotations are from the New King James Version of the Holy Bible.

Some Reasons for this Handbook

This handbook has been prepared as a guide for Elders, Bible Teachers and Students of God's word as they seek to lead and teach local churches in the pattern set forth in the Word of God. It will also be a help to new Christians and can be used in group Bible Schools and Classes as well as in churches.

In these studies, we may not always follow the practices and doctrines of the various denominations developed over the centuries, but we will be looking at **what the Apostles taught**, and what **the early churches practised** during the first century of the church era, as recorded in the Bible.

Do not be surprised by what is taught, but be like the Bereans who searched the scriptures daily and so made sure that it accorded with the Bible (Acts 17:10-12). Please carefully read all Bible references.

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

Chapter 1

Jesus said, 'I am the good Shepherd'

He is also called the 'Chief Shepherd and the 'Great Shepherd' who has a care for our souls. We need to make sure He is our Shepherd.

The Importance of the Word of God

Elders and Bible Teachers and all believers need an understanding that God's Word is to be faithfully **taught** and **obeyed**.

The following Bible references teach that all **Scripture**:

- **Is inspired by God** (2 Timothy 3:16-17),
- **It did not come by the will of man** (2 Peter 1:19-21).
- **Is everlasting and will never pass away** (Matthew 24:35).
- **Is powerful, discerning and searching** (Hebrews 4:12-13).
- **Is more necessary than bread** (Matthew 4:4).
- **It cleanses and is life changing** (Psalm 119:9; 1 Peter 2:1-3).
- **It sanctifies positionally and personally** (Acts 20:32; Colossians 3:16).

All believers should have a great reverence for the Bible, as it is God's Word to guide in all areas of our life and faith. It teaches the way to heaven and how to please the Lord. King Saul lost his kingdom and his life because he rejected God's directions and failed to obey the Word of the Lord.

Samuel said to King Saul: *"Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king"* (1 Samuel 15:22-23).

The Word of God equips all of God's people for their special ministry and should be carefully studied (2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Please note the apostle Paul's parting words to the Ephesian elders: *"And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified"* (Acts 20:32).

The Lord Jesus said: *"I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep"* (John 10:11). 'Good' means 'genuine and true'! He is faithful to His word and can be totally relied upon! He gave *'His life for the sheep'*. All who believer in Him find forgiveness, rest and peace of heart for life's journey.

In Psalm 23, King David said: *"The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want... He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul"*. David enjoyed the companionship of his Lord, meditating and communing with Him, finding in Him peace and rest of heart. He knew this: *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me.* Saints through many centuries have found comfort in this Psalm.

Jesus taught many parables

A 'parable' illustrates a spiritual truth taken from events familiar to the hearers. In Luke Chapter 15 we have four such parables of **lost things**, and listening to Him were tax collectors, all sorts of sinners and very religious Pharisees!

His message on a lost sheep. Sheep are foolish and tend to wander away. The shepherd left his 99 sheep, and searched and found the lost one, laid it on his shoulders and brought it home. Calling his neighbours he said, *"Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!"* Then Jesus added: *"I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance"* (Luke 15:1-7). At times we have acted foolishly and brought many problems upon ourselves and our families. But the Lord Jesus is the 'good Shepherd' who seeks for the foolishly lost.

His message on a lost coin. A woman had 10 silver coins, and lost one. A coin is a dead thing with no ability to find itself. The woman lit a lamp, swept the floor searching for it. Finding it, she called her neighbours together and said: *"Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost"*. To this the Lord added, *"Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents"* (Luke 15:8-10). The Bible says *"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins"* (Ephesians 2:1). By nature, we are lost and

spiritually dead, but on believing we receive a new life in Christ, our ‘good Shepherd’.

His message on the lost younger son. A father had two sons, and the younger demanded his share of the inheritance **before** his father died! He left home and in a far country spent it all on riotous living. To survive he found work feeding pigs, an unclean animal to Jews. *“But when he **came to himself**, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, **I have sinned** against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. **Make me like one of your hired servants.**” (Luke 15:11:24). This illustrates true repentance.*

His father was watching for him, and saw him coming ‘a great way off’. He ran to meet him, kissed him, clothed him and made a feast, saying, *‘for this my son **was dead** and is **alive** again; he was **lost** and is **found**.’ And they began to be merry’.* The Lord Jesus revealed the Father’s love even for those who have messed up their lives with drugs, alcohol and prostitutes. He can **make** something new and lovely of our lives.

His message on the elder son. The older brother was not happy when he heard the music and dancing. He said to his father, *‘Lo, these many years I have been serving you; **I never transgressed** your **commandment** at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.’* This is a perfect illustration of the proud and very religious Pharisees, but the Lord Jesus tried to win even these who would later crucify Him! *“Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother **was dead** and is **alive again**, and was **lost** and is **found**” (Luke 11:25-32). God loves even the religiously lost.*

Some of us have sinned more than others, but it is not just the **depth** of our sins, but the **fact** of our sin. The Bible says *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).* Jesus said, *“for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that **which was lost**” (Luke 19:10).* He truly is the ‘good Shepherd’.

On the Cross, our Lord paid the penalty for every sin ever committed, past, present, and yes, future! And out of His great heart of love He offers all who repent and come to Him complete forgiveness and the gift of eternal life.

Chapter 2

What is the Church?

The Church is first mentioned by our Lord in Matthew 16:13 to 20.

The word for ‘**Church**’ is the Greek word ‘**Ekklesia**’ and means ‘**a called-out company, gathering or assembly.**’ Certain Greeks were elected to form the ‘**Ekklesia**’ (an elect Council) to manage their city affairs, and so Jesus would call out of all nations ‘*a people for His name*’, His elect people, from both Jew and Gentile, to form **His Ekklesia or Church** (Acts 15:14). There is the **Church Universal**, made up of all believers, and the **local church** where believers gather to worship the Lord Jesus Christ.

I use a capital ‘C’ for this Universal Church. The word **Universal** is not found in the Bible, but I use it to describe how all believers **from Pentecost to the present time**, are in the Church, regardless of their denomination. **The local church in this Study will have a small ‘c’ for church.** This will help us to distinguish between the two. The **context** in our Bibles tells us if it is a local gathering of the church or the Universal Church, often called ‘*the church of God*’.

The Church is not found in the Old Testament, for Paul wrote that God gave him a **special revelation**: *“that by **revelation** He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), **which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men**, as it has now been **revealed by the Spirit** to His holy apostles and prophets” (Ephesians 3:3-5).*

The Holy Spirit and the Church

The Lord Jesus told His disciples that after He returned to heaven, He would pray to the Father to send the Holy Spirit to dwell ‘**in**’ His disciples. Before this He was ‘**with**’ the disciples (Read John 7:37-39; 14:15-18).

In answer to His prayer, the Father sent the Holy Spirit **on the day of Pentecost, 50 days after Jesus arose from the grave** (Acts Ch. 2). This is when the Church was formed, and since that time all who believe are baptized by the Holy Spirit into this **one body, the Church** (Read 1 Corinthians 12:13). The Church is called a body, a building and a holy temple where believers are being built together for a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:19-22).

We call this Church, for it is composed of believers, both Jew and Gentile, from all around the world. Many are now in heaven, and when our Lord returns as He has promised to do (John 14:1-3), He will then take His people who are still on earth, the Church, home to heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Pentecost means ‘Fiftieth’, and this Jewish Old Testament festival was held 50 days after Christ arose from among the dead. This fulfilled this Feast given to

Moses. All these Feasts of the Lord were fulfilled, or will be fulfilled by our Lord Jesus Christ. Read carefully Leviticus Chapter 23.

Jesus and His Church

Matthew 16:13-16. The Lord Jesus asked His disciples the most important question ever asked: *“Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”* The disciples had various answers, but Peter had the right answer: *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God”*. Our heavenly Father revealed this to Peter, as He does to all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour from sin (Matthew 11:25-30).

Matthew 16:17-18. Then the Lord Jesus said *“and you are Peter* (Greek 'Petros', meaning 'a small stone'), *and on this rock,* (Greek 'Petra', 'a huge foundation rock', Christ Himself), *I will build My Church”*. Notice the different meanings for the word 'rock'. Peter, a small rock, and Jesus, the great foundation rock.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the 'Rock of Ages' on which to build our house of life (1 Peter 2:6-8). Jesus said; *“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock”* (Matthew 7:21-29). The storms of life cannot move the Christian from this foundation.

Matthew 16:19. Keys open doors, and Peter was given keys to open the door of salvation firstly to the Jews (Acts Chapter 2), then to the Samaritans (Acts Chapter 8) and then to the Gentiles (Acts Chapter 10).

Matthew 4:19. Peter had been called to follow our Lord, for He said to him, *“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men”*(Matthew 4:18). If we respond to His call, He also has a plan for us, as He did for Peter, and He will also make our lives useful to God, if we use the gifts and abilities He has given us.

There are three divisions of humanity. The Bible says, *“Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks* (Gentiles) *or to the church of God”* (1 Corinthians 10:32). The Church is formed from both Jew and Gentile. If you are not a Jew, then you are a Gentile, one of the nations. The Church is built on Christ, not on Peter who denied his Lord three times and was later rebuked by Paul (Galatians Ch. 2).

Peter does not hold the keys to heaven – Christ holds these!

The Church and Israel

The Church is not under the Law of Moses, for the Law was given only to Israel. The Church is His **new creation** and under **grace** (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:8-10), *“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ”* (Read John 1:15-18).

The Church is first mentioned by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 16:13-19, and was **still in the future** when He said, *“I will build My Church”*. He did not say *“I have been building My Church”*.

The true Church began at **Pentecost**, 50 days after Christ rose from the dead (Acts Chapter 2), and will be raptured, 'caught up' to heaven to meet Jesus in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Israel will return to their land in unbelief, as is happening today after 2000 years of dispersion among the nations.

After the Church is raptured, the 'great tribulation', the time of *‘Jacob’s trouble’* will begin (Jeremiah 30:7). Jacob is Israel. When Israel is brought to her knees, she will turn to the Lord, and be restored spiritually, as is taught in Zechariah Chapters 12 to 14 and Romans Chapters 9 to 11. The book of Isaiah Chapter 11 tells of Israel’s great future.

Today the Lord is taking from both Jews and Gentiles a people for His name to form His Church.

The nation of **Israel** was promised the land of Canaan as an **earthly inheritance** conditional on their obedience to the Law of Moses. The **Church** has a **heavenly inheritance**, based on faith in Christ alone.

In contrast to Israel, the Universal Church is God’s new creation that was formed at Pentecost fifty days after Christ arose (Acts Chapter 2) and is given a spiritual inheritance in Christ in heavenly places by grace and subject to faith alone (Ephesians 2:1-10; 1 Peter 1:3-5).

The Church is the virgin bride and wife to be of Christ and also the **body** of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:6-8; Ephesians 1:22-23).

Israel is the adulterous wife of the Lord, put aside because of her unfaithfulness, yet she will be restored in Christ’s coming Kingdom: *“Surely, as a wife treacherously departs from her husband, So have you dealt treacherously with Me, O house of Israel,” says the LORD*” (Jeremiah 3:20).

“For your Maker is your husband, The LORD of hosts is His name; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth. “For the LORD has called you Like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, Like a youthful wife when you were refused,” Says your God. For a mere moment I have forsaken you, But with great mercies I will gather you. “With a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; But with everlasting kindness I will have mercy on you,” Says the LORD, your Redeemer.” “For this is like the waters of Noah to Me; For as I have sworn That the waters of Noah would no longer cover the earth, So have I sworn That I would not be angry with you, nor rebuke you” (Isaiah 54:5-9).

For the final scenes describing the saving and restoration of Israel as a people and nation, read Zechariah Chapters 12 to 14 and Romans Chapters 9 to 11.

Chapter 3

The Local Church

The second mention of the church is found in Matthew 18:1-20

Teaching and shepherding the flock in local churches is a work especially dear to the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ who through the apostle Paul charged **the elders** at Ephesus: *“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood”* For this important teaching, read Acts 20:17-36.

Shepherding the flock also has its own special reward, for the apostle Peter said to Elders: *“when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away”* (Read 1 Peter 5:1-5).

The local church is unique: Each local church should be **autonomous**, and answerable to God alone. In Revelation Chapter 1 the Lord Jesus is seen walking among the golden lampstands which represented the seven churches He addressed in Revelation Chs. 2 and 3.

Our Lord did not place one church over another; each was responsible to Him alone. Each local church should aim to be self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating.

The local church is not the building, but the believers who meet in the building. All believers are members of the true Church, the body of Christ.

Note these points about the local church

In Matthew Chapter 18 verses 1 to 20 we find the teaching the Lord Jesus gave the disciples preparing them for the time when local churches would be formed. He first mentioned a local church in Mathew 18:17. Remember, the Church was still future as He taught the disciples! The book of Acts teaches that when people were saved, they were **gathered together** in local churches (Acts 2:42; 14:23). All believers should seek to meet with a Bible believing church. Jesus taught His disciples to gather **in His name** (Matthew 18:20).

1. Matthew 18:1-4. The members should all be the **converted**. We must come to Christ as little children, humbling ourselves, confessing our sins and trusting in the Lord Jesus as our Saviour from all sin. Coming as children, God begins a new work in us, and promises to complete it (Philippians 1:6). We have much to learn, and also much of our worldly ways to unlearn.

2. Matthew 18:5, 15-18. The church should receive into its fellowship **all** those whom the Lord has received. But we must **reject some** who **cause divisions** and put away those who live **immoral lives** and will not repent. It is the local church which must do this. (Read Romans 16:17-18; Titus 3:10-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5).

3. Matthew 18:6-14. We should not stumble or despise or cause to sin those who are His children. We must live lives pleasing to the Lord before believers and before the world, watching our **words and our ways**, not leading astray any who are observing our lives. For we read *“that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,”* (Philippians 1:10). In this we also have the example of the Lord Jesus: *“And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him”* (John 8:29).

4. Matthew 18:15-18. The local church should be a place where sin is **not tolerated** and where Bible teaching is followed to deal with it; for the local church has authority to **discipline** and should so do. If our brother sins, the first step is to go to him **alone** and try to win him from his sin. We should not spread abroad his sin. Next, if he will not listen, take two or more to confront him in a loving, caring way. In all this we must remember we also are prone to sin and must seek to **restore** the brother (Galatians 6:1). If he refuses to repent, then it must be taken to the church for all the members to decide. If we do this in a godly caring way, this will be bound and applied and endorsed by the Lord in heaven.

5. Matthew 18:19. The local church should be a place on earth where all learn to **'agree'**, and this word means to ‘sound together’ in ‘harmony’ like many musical instruments, for when all ‘agree’ and walk in love and unity, then God can bless and prayer will be answered (Read Psalm 133).

6. Matthew 18:20. This is the simplest form of a local church: Our Lord said: *“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them”*. We do not gather to any human leader, a denominational structure or any cult; we gather to our Lord Jesus Christ, for He is Lord of all.

Reception Policy

While churches should receive the Lord’s people in a loving and caring way (Romans 14:1; 15:7), they must not be open to receive any false teaching or problems some people may bring. It is the responsibility of the elders and Bible teachers to teach in the local church, and the elders should meet with newcomers who have a differing belief to show them the true teaching (Titus 1:5-9).

The Bible teaches:

- a. To take note of and avoid those who cause divisions and offences contrary to the true doctrine (Romans 16:17-18).
- b. To put away from your fellowship those who are immoral, drunkards etc. (1 Corinthians 5:9-13).
- c. To stand fast against legalistic observances. We are under grace, not the law of Moses (Galatians 5:1-5).

d. To reject a divisive man after the second admonition, that is anyone who is self-opinionated and will not be taught or corrected. He is a trouble maker causing divisions (Titus 3:10-11).

The Word of God teaches that the local church has the responsibility to maintain good order and uphold the doctrines that the apostles taught, and to refuse fellowship to those who promote error or live immoral lives.

We are called into liberty, the liberty to do what is **biblically right**. However, this is not the **license** to do what **we please** contrary to God's Word. A driver's licence gives us the liberty to drive a car, but not the license to drive on the wrong side of the road and endanger our own and the lives of other people! It is not 'Christian liberty' to be disobedient to the Word of God.

“Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle” (2 Thessalonians 2:15).

Chapter 4

The Functioning of Local Churches

The book of Acts gives **examples** of what these first Christians and churches did – **their actions!** This book has been called ‘The Acts of the Holy Spirit’.

The Epistles of Paul, James, Peter and John give local churches teaching on what they should believe and how to live holy lives. After the Holy Spirit was sent by the Father and the Church was formed (Acts 2:1-4) there were about 120 disciples in Jerusalem! Peter preached and 3000 more were added (Acts 2:40-41).

These are the meetings of local churches

These first believers “...continued steadfastly in the apostles' *doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers*” Note these four things the first Christians in Jerusalem “*continued steadfastly*” in **doing** (Acts 2:42).

They met together:

1. For teaching the apostles' 'doctrine' (doctrine is teaching). The apostles simply taught what the Lord had taught them (Acts 1:1-3) and what He later revealed to them through revelations. This is now found written in the New Testament and it is there for us to teach and obey (Acts 16:4-5).

2. For 'Fellowship'. This word means ‘**things shared in common**’. We **enjoy together** the things of the Lord that we share in common through faith in Jesus Christ our Lord. We also encourage and support one another along the journey of life. We have been called into this fellowship and are maintained in it by God Himself (1 Corinthians 1:9; 10:14-16; 1 John Chapter 1). We need a loving and caring ‘fellowship’ among the Lord's people.

3. For 'The breaking of bread'. On the night when our Lord was betrayed, He told the disciples to do this in remembrance of Himself by partaking of **the bread and cup** (Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34). The **bread** reminds us that His body was broken for us on the cross. The **cup reminds us** that He shed His blood for the forgiveness of sins. We have redemption through His blood (Ephesians 1:7).

This was done on the “*first day of the week*”, the resurrection day, our Sunday, when the local churches met (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2). God began His creation on the first day and ‘finished’ it on the sixth day. When the Lord died, He said ‘*It is finished*’ (John 19:30). He was in the tomb under the curse of a broken Law on the Sabbath (Saturday), but rose on the first day (Sunday). **Christians are His new creation** (2 Corinthians 5:17) and we should meet on the first day of the week to partake of the Lord's supper.

4. 'And prayers'. The church began at a prayer meeting (Acts 1:14; 2:1) and continued in prayer (Acts 4:23-31; 12:12). A suitable time should be set aside for the church to meet when the members can be prayed for and also for any other needs.

From **1 Timothy 2:23-31** we learn that this is an apostolic “*first of all*” for local churches and therefore it is very important. **The various aspects of prayer are:**

Supplications – why we pray – occasioned by a need felt.

Prayers – to whom we pray – to God in reverence and faith.

Intercessions – praying for others – we have freedom of access, confidence, holy intimacy of approach to our heavenly Father and can make all our requests known to Him.

Thanksgivings – reasons to pray - results from prayers answered and needs met.

For all men – for whom to pray, kings and commoners - without partiality.

These are the meetings of a local church, times to enjoy fellowship together.

Meetings of the church and roles of men and women

The breaking of bread or Lord's Supper: When the Lord instituted the Supper, He asked His disciples to “*do this in remembrance of Me*”. He used the ‘*bread*’ and the ‘*fruit of the vine*’ of the people among whom He lived (Mark 14:22-23).

The wine: It was probably fermented grape juice diluted with water as many believe the custom of the Jews was at the time. Many poor and isolated tribal peoples have no access to this and so a suitable alternative has to be found. Many believers will not drink alcoholic wine, and grape juice is not available. A black tea sweetened with sugar when cooled could be used.

The bread: It is not possible to make bread like our Lord used; the poor believers then would have used barley, and the richer wheat for flour. The Greek word used for the ‘*bread*’ used at the ‘Lords Supper’ is ‘*artos*’, and means “*bread of any*”

kind” (W. E. Vine, Expository Dictionary). This word refers to **bread in general**, made from grains of various kinds, as used by peoples all around the world.

Africans make their bread from maize flour, while Asians use rice. **God looks on the heart as we remember Him.** There is no magic in these emblems: **“Only bread and only wine, yet to faith the solemn sign, of the heavenly and divine.”**

Worship: Before breaking bread, take time to magnify the name of the Lord in **worship** for the greatness of His being, and by singing suitable hymns, reading and meditating on Bible passages that tell us about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Any of the **brothers** may join in this worship, and not just the elders. The **entire congregation** is involved in the worship of God in singing and saying 'Amen'! Men in the church are free to lead through praise, thanksgiving, prayer, meditation or an exhortation from God's Word befitting to the occasion as led by the Holy Spirit. Being led by the Spirit does not preclude individual preparation. Participation should be orderly, timely, reverent, honouring to God and edifying to the body.

The brothers should lead in the above meetings of the church; the sisters should not take a public part. Principles relating to this are found in 1 Corinthians Chapters 11 to 14 and in 1 Timothy Chapter 2.

Teaching on Headship

Over the centuries many believers followed the teaching that in meetings of the local church, men should have heads uncovered and women should be covered. This is based 1 Corinthians 11:1-22, and sets forth:

The headship of the Father and Christ over men and women; The original order of the creation of first men, then women; That the angels are spectators to local churches displaying order and headship, and it was the '*custom*', or the '*customary usage*' or the '*practice*' of all the churches in Paul's day.

Note especially Paul's words: *“Therefore I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church”* (1 Corinthians 4:17).

The context is a church meeting: *“Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk”* (1 Corinthians 11:20-21)

Corinth was a seaport, a multi-cultural melting pot. What Paul taught here he taught in all the churches, and it had nothing to do with **Corinthian culture**, but everything to do with **God's given order**. It was even contrary to Jewish practice, where to this day men cover and women uncover their heads in synagogue services.

In the home and local churches, men and women have differing 'roles'. However, women are not inferior to men, for all are *“one in Christ Jesus”* (Galatians 3:28). Women also have special gifts and ministries, especially teaching other women and children and in their witness outside church meetings (Titus 2:1-5; Philippians 4:3).

Deborah prophesied sitting under a palm tree, but not in the Tabernacle (Judges 4:4-5) and Philip's four daughters prophesied, but not in church meetings (Acts 21:8-9). The Bible does not contradict itself.

While the husband is the head of the wife and she is to submit to him, he should love her as Christ also loved the church (Ephesians 5:22-33). He should seek to build her up in the faith and see that she reaches her full potential as a wife and mother, encouraging her to use and to develop her special gifts because she is also part of His body, the Church.

The Christian home should be a place of Christian love and harmony, an example to those around who do not believe. In some cultures, husbands beat their wives, but this should never happen in a Christian home. Priscilla assisted her husband Aquila in teaching Apollos, and used their home for the meetings of a new church (Acts 18:1-26, 1 Corinthians 16:19).

The windows of the church can be open to the winds of cultural changes and a wisdom coming from a world view. Elders should resist changes that contradict biblical teaching.

**Laws are now made in many lands to legalise what God has prohibited.
God will judge those who practice such things.**

Chapter 5

The Leadership of Local Churches

You will notice that in this study we use the word 'Elder', 'Overseer', 'Deacon' and 'Teachers' as these are the words the Bible uses for the leaders, shepherds and servants of the churches. We do not use 'Bishop', 'Priest' 'Father', 'Reverend' or 'Pastor', as these are titles that set men over churches.

In these studies, we will be looking at **what the Apostles taught, as recorded in our Bibles**, and what **the early churches practised** during the first century of the church era, and not at the practices and doctrines of the various denominations developed over the centuries.

I have proven in church planting in Australia and East Africa that we can return to what was practised by the early church and it really works. God's ways are better than those devised by man.

First, Apostles

Note the way we can recognise true apostles from false. The word **Apostle** means ‘a sent one’. They were:

1. **Chosen and appointed** by the Lord – Mark 3:13-19.
2. **Named** ‘apostles’ by the Lord – Luke 6:12-16.
3. **Sent** by the Lord to bear **witness** to the Lord – John 15:26-27.
4. **Present with Him** from the **baptism of John to His ascension** - Acts 1:21-26.
5. They had ‘**seen**’ the Lord – 1 Corinthians 9:1.
6. They were granted the ability to do **signs and wonders** to authenticate their apostleship – Acts 5:12.

All the Apostles **had known and ‘seen’ the Lord**, except Paul, who ‘**saw**’ the Lord at his conversion, ‘*as by one born out of due time*’ (1 Corinthians 15:8; Acts Ch. 9).

No one today has ‘**seen the Lord**’ and can claim to be an ‘apostle’. The Bible says; “*For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ*” (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

The Apostles laid the foundations of the Church by **how they lived** (Acts 20:17-30); and by **what they taught** (1 Corinthians Chapter 3). What they taught is called the **apostles’ doctrine (or teaching)**: “*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers*” (Acts 2:42); “*And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem*” (Acts 16:4). This is now recorded in our Bibles, the inspired word of God.

Laying Foundations

The **apostles and prophets** belonged to the **foundation period of the Church**. They were **taught by the Lord**, and after His ascension they **received revelations** from the Lord to complete the teaching (1 Corinthians 3:9-23; Ephesians 2:19-21).

They and their special gifts of miracles, healings and tongues are no longer with us, since we have the completed Scriptures.

Please note 1 Corinthians 13: 8-13: That which is ‘**perfect**’ (Greek neuter gender) had come – the ‘**perfect**’ and ‘**complete**’ word of God. ‘**Perfect**’ is not a ‘**person**’, it is some ‘**thing**’. The Scriptures are the only ‘**perfect**’ ‘**thing**’ in the world today (‘**perfect**’ means ‘**complete**’). The ‘**perfect**’ completed Scriptures is the **near view**; the **far view** will be when His ‘**perfect**’ kingdom is established on earth.

These gifts are not necessary today for the normal functioning of the local church. They were **temporary** in nature, used by God primarily for purposes of **confirmation** and **authentication** of the apostle’s message. They were strictly

limited in use in 1 Corinthians Chapter 14. However, we do believe that miracles and healings do happen at times today in answer to prayer and as it pleases the Lord.

The apostles appointed elders in all the churches to carry on their work. Timothy and Titus were also instructed to see that elders were appointed in churches. Believers were to recognise and esteem their elders highly in love (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13). They were also to **submit** to them (1 Peter 5:5).

The apostles passed their baton to ‘elders’. We are instructed to appoint elders in the churches, but not apostles – Acts 14:23.

Second, Prophets

Prophecy came through gifted prophets. Prophecy is the declaration of what cannot be known by natural means. It contained warnings about future events and revelation of doctrine. Its purpose was to edify (build up), exhort (stir up) and comfort (to bind up) the believers (1 Corinthians 14:1-3).

The prophets gave inspired messages from God in the churches because the believers did not have Bibles. Scrolls of the Old Testament books were rare, costly and bulky and few existed. The first books of the New Testament were not written for some years after Christ’s resurrection and ascension.

The book of Revelation written by John about AD 96 completed the canon of Scripture. Nothing is to be added to the completed revelation in our Bibles (Revelation 22:18-19; Jude 3). **The Bible as we know it came much later.**

Today elders and teachers have taken the place of the apostles and prophets, and they are to edify, exhort and comfort as they gather from and unfold the treasures in the completed Scriptures.

Third, Shepherds who are the Elders

The word translated as ‘pastor’ in many Bibles should be ‘shepherd’, translated from the Greek word ‘poimainō’. The elders are the shepherds, and each church as it grows should have a number of elders who are also teachers. “*Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety*” (Proverbs 11:14).

Paul called the **elders** of the church at Ephesus to meet with him at Miletus (not the Pastor, Minister or Bishop, Acts 20:17; Philippians. 1:1). To these **elders** Paul said, “*Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood*” (Acts 20:28). The qualifications and service of Elders:

The word ‘elder’ describes one who is **spiritually mature**, and the ‘**work**’ of elders is to ‘**oversee**’ and to ‘**shepherd**’ the flock. **These are ‘doing’ and ‘caring’ words and not names to be taken as badges of authority.** The Greek word for

‘shepherd’ has been translated as ‘pastor’ while the word ‘overseer’ has been translated ‘bishop’ in some old versions of the Bible.

These words are now used as **titles for church leaders**, but this has **no authority** to do so from the word of God. *“And He (Jesus) sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “If anyone “desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all” (Mark 9:35).*

The Dignity and Duty of Elders

The word ‘elder’ indicates the **dignity** of the office.

The words ‘overseer’ and ‘shepherd’ indicate the **duties** of the office.

The **duties** of elders are to ‘oversee’ and ‘shepherd’ the flock.

To ‘oversee’ is the far view, for it means to ‘**stand in a prominent place**’ and ‘oversee’ the flock’, watching out for good pasture, water, and any danger from wild animals. **Elders** are to protect the flock from danger.

To ‘shepherd’ (verb) is the near view and it means to ‘*feed the flock from God’s Word with other acts of special care*’. Peter uses similar words in 1 Peter 5:1-5 to Paul in Acts 20:28. Psalm 23 reveals the ‘good Shepherd’ caring for His sheep.

The word ‘pastor’ is taken from Ephesians 4:11 and should be translated ‘shepherd’. The word ‘Pastor’ has been given a meaning beyond what the Bible teaches and often places a man **above** his fellow believers. The elders are ‘shepherds’ ‘**among the flock**’ and lead by **example**. Peter wrote:

“The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:1-3).

These words were never meant to be used as titles or badges of distinction. The Lord Jesus warned against this in Matthew 23:1-12: *“But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

Elders lead by example and not by force. In this way they gain the respect of the flock who are to esteem them highly in love for their works sake and submit to them (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:7, 17).

An elder is one who is spiritually mature, his gift and work is to teach, oversee and shepherd the flock.

The importance of a functioning oversight

The **ideal number** of elders caring for a local church is **three or more**. The Bible calls this the ‘oversight’ (1 Timothy 3:1-2). Elders should meet regularly and wait on the Lord for direction in all matters concerning the flock. One elder is not to rule over his fellow elders, but all are to meet in humility, thinking of others as better than themselves. The local church is a theocracy with the Lord as the head.

1. To have a biblical leadership, there must be spiritual people who know their Bible, and who are exercised to develop and use their gifts.
2. A dependance on any one man in leadership can limit the development of gifts, limit church planting and exhaust available funds in meeting a Pastor’s support.
3. A number of elders leads to sharing the load of caring for the flock entrusted to them. This also balances out personalities with their strengths and weaknesses. As elders wait prayerfully on the Lord, His will can be arrived at.

“For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25)

Financial support for Elders

For the most part elders are **self-supporting**, except for those who ‘*labour in the word and doctrine*’ – that is, those elders who give all their time to caring for and teaching the flock. These were ‘*counted worthy of double honour*’ and were to be supported by gifts from the churches and believers (1 Timothy 5:17-18).

Deacons

The **deacons** (meaning 'servants') support the elders in the work of the local church. The qualifications for elders and deacons are found in 1 Timothy Chapter 3 and Titus Chapter 1. They must have a good testimony in the community and in the church, be of good behaviour, having only one wife. The wives of elders and deacons are to be godly women of discretion.

Deacons support the elders in the various activities of the church.

Fourth, Teachers

Today, gifted teachers gather and glean from the Word of God. A gifted teacher waits on God as he meditates on the word of God. The Spirit of God can impress on his heart what scriptures to read and what to teach the flock.

Teachers have replaced the prophets. Elders are also to be able to teach: *“An overseer (elder) then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behaviour, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous” (1 Timothy 3:2-3)*

Transparency and Accountability

The Bible gives strong warning about money: *“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”* (1 Tim 6:10).

Money can be a temptation: Some may covet and misuse or even steal church funds. All offerings should be counted **by two or more elders or deacons**, and safely banked with **good accounting records kept and signed**. The elders and deacons also meet to decide what aspect of the Lord’s work should be supported.

Great care should be taken with the offerings of the Lord’s people because it has been given to the Lord.

Paul wrote this about gifts given by churches to be delivered to the poor believers in Jerusalem: *“avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us; providing honourable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men. And we have sent with them our brother whom we have often proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, because of the great confidence which we have in you”* (2 Cor. 8:20-22).

Elders and teachers should instruct church members about honesty in all aspects of their lives.

Chapter 6

Evangelism and Church Planting

Just before the Lord Jesus Christ went back to heaven, He commanded His disciples saying: *“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them** to observe **all things** that I have commanded you; and lo, I am **with you** always, even to the end of the age.”* Amen (Matthew 28:18-20). This is called the **‘Great Commission’**.

Making Disciples

The book of Acts records that Peter, John, Stephen, Philip, Barnabas, Paul and many others preached the Gospel, telling others about the Lord. Many were converted and new churches planted. This should be the pattern for us to follow today.

Making disciples means teaching the new believers not just some of the things, but **'all things'** found in God's Word. A disciple is a **‘disciplined one’** who learns to follow the Lord and follows Him to learn.

A disciple has **conviction** about the true teaching of God’s Word and will not depart from it. A disciple has **commitment** to the Lord and His ways as revealed in God’s word, and also has commitment to the local church and its activities.

Disciples must live sanctified lives

If the Lord is to use us, we must live sanctified lives. The word **‘sanctified’** means **‘set apart for God’s use’**. Set apart from sin and serving self. Disciples should:

1. Make it a daily practice of **reading** and **meditating** on the word of God. This means taking time to think about each verse and applying it to our lives.
2. Remember your **position** in Christ. *“For you **died**, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory”* (Colossians 3:3-4). When Christ died, you died in Him, then rose in Him.

This was important to Paul: *“I have been **crucified with Christ**; it is no longer I who live, but **Christ lives in me**; and the life which I now live in the flesh **I live by faith in the Son of God**, who loved me and gave Himself for me”* (Galatians 2:20). He taught this to the churches: *“For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin”* (Romans 6:5-6).

Walking in the light - Teaching this to the disciples

1. **What is your condition before Christ?** When you sin, read 1 John Chapter 1. *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9). The blood of Jesus Christ God’s Son **cleanses us** (keeps on cleansing us) from all sin. Once you confess any sin, get up from your knees and go on to serve God for He has forgiven and forgotten.
2. **All Christians at times sin.** We are not perfect. Do not let **an accusing conscience** trouble you, for you are forgiven. The devil wants to keep you down with your face in the mud with his foot on your neck! Ask the Lord for grace to walk humbly before Him and to overcome each temptation.
3. **Learn to walk by faith, not by feelings.** Walking in the light means there is no known sin between you and the Lord. *“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin”* (1 John 1:6-7).

If you stand under a light, you cast no shadows. If we all walk **in Christ’s light**, which is **walking in love and righteousness**, we have fellowship with Him and with each other. If we walk away from His light, we cast shadows, we sin and lose our joy and make problems for those around us and in our church.

4. Learn to witness: We need to learn how to witness to non-Christians and tell them about the Lord Jesus, and how He saves them from sins. **Learn to tell how you became a Christian, for this is your testimony!** *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear”* (1 Peter 3:15).

We need to so know the ‘word’ of God, so that we are *“holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict”* (Titus 1:9).

All Christians have a responsibility to live lives that commend the Gospel, and to look for opportunities to tell others about the salvation that is in our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is what the believers at Thessalonica did: *“For from you the word of the Lord sounded forth.”* They *“turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven”* (See 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10).

Teaching Baptism and all things

The Lord Jesus commanded that the disciples were to be **baptised**. The word means to 'dip' or 'immerse' and much water is needed for this because in baptism we identify with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, and thus a new life (Romans Ch. 6). Much water is needed to baptise, it means to **totally immerse** (John 3:23). Sprinkling water on babies or older folk is not found in the Bible.

As we read the book of Acts, we will see that **all believers** were baptised on their confession of faith: *“Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, “See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized? Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”* (Acts 8:36-37).

We are to baptise in the **one name** of the **Father, Son and Holy Spirit**. This teaches us the truth of the **trinity**. Three **Persons**, but one **God**. We read *‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth’* (Genesis 1:1). The trinity is latent in the word **‘God’** from the Hebrew **‘elohim’**. This word is a **plural** word, again referring to this same truth. We see this again in these words: *“Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness”* (Genesis 1:26). Jesus said, *“He who has seen me has seen the Father”*. We also see the **trinity** at the baptism of our Lord, for the **Spirit** descended on **Jesus, the Son**, in the form of a dove, and the **Father’s** voice was heard from heaven (Matthew 3:13-17).

We are to teach disciples what the apostles taught the new converts, *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42). Jesus said *“teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you”* (Matthew 28:20). We are to teach disciples:

a. To follow in the apostles’ teaching. **b.** To be in fellowship with other believers.

c. To keep the Lord’s Supper. **d.** To gather for prayer.

Church Planting

The Lord planned the church (Matthew Chapters 16 & 18). He wants His people to meet together each Lord’s Day (Sunday, the first day of the week) to carry out this teaching. When we lead people to Christ, we need to gather them together in the Lord’s name (Matthew 18:20), and instruct them in all the teachings contained in the Bible.

Remember, Jesus has said, *“...and lo, I am **with you** always, even to the end of the age.”* He will always be with you, and as you look to Him in prayer, He will open the way ahead for the path you are to follow.

May the Lord help you and bless you as you walk in the light of His word.

Chapter 7

The House of God

This is solemn teaching for local churches. They are part of His body, the universal Church. Both are seen here blended.

In the writings of the apostle Paul, we are taught how the Lord values His people, and the local churches where they meet. *“Do you not know that you are **the temple of God** and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are”* (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). The local church and our bodies are temples!

We must watch our conduct in His house: *“I write so that **you** may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”* (1 Timothy 3:14-16).

The Lord Jesus is present when His people meet: *“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them”* (Matthew 18:20). A local church is *“the Church of the Living God”*, with Jesus presiding in the midst of His people, where all members should be reverent and worshipful.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the owner of this house. *“but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are”* (Hebrews 3:1-6).

Christ is the foundation of His body, the Church: It *“is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”* (1 Timothy 3:14-16). Its ‘pillar’ (support) and ‘ground’ (foundation) rests on Christ, for He said *“I will build My church”* (Matthew 16:13-19). *“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 3:11).

“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory” (1 Timothy 3:16).

The mystery of God’s working is seen: **a.** In His virgin birth, for He was ‘manifested in the flesh’. **b.** In His perfect life, for He was ‘Justified in the Spirit’ in the Father’s eyes, the perfect, sinless Man who died on the cross for the sins of the whole world. **c.** He was ‘Seen by angels’, for they ministered to Him (Matthew 4:11). **d.** When this wonderful news was preached it was, ‘Believed on in the world’. **e.** When the disciples watched as He was ‘Received up in glory’

The ‘Mystery of Godliness’ is Christ made visible in flesh. His Spirit within us can enable us to live in godliness and seen in lives changed.

Entrance to and worship in His House

There is only one way in: Jesus said: *“I am the door”* (John 10:7-9). All must come through Jesus to be part of His household.

It is the household of ‘faith’: *“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith”* (Galatians 6:10) We enter His household by faith to be saved and receive the gift of eternal life (John Ch. 10). It is a spiritual house filled with a spiritual people:

- a.** They are a holy priesthood because sanctified (set apart) by the indwelling Holy Spirit and the precious cleansing blood of Christ (1 Peter 2:1-5).
- b.** They are a royal priesthood because they are adopted into the family of the King of kings (1 Peter 2:9). They are the children of God by the new birth (John 1:11-13), and sons of God by adoption (Romans 8:15-16).

Believers have a wonderful standing in Christ: *“Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”* (1 Peter 2:4-5).

All who believe form the body of Christ: *“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God”* (Ephesians 2:19).

The holiness of His house must be guarded

- a.** It is a holy temple, God’s dwelling place: *“in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord”* (Ephesians. 2:21).
- b.** Holiness should mark God’s children: *“but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy”* (1 Peter 1:14-16).

“Your testimonies are very sure; Holiness adorns Your house, O LORD, forever”
Psalm 93:5

The call for separation from unclean vessels’: *“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honour and some for dishonour. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work”* (2 Timothy 2:19-21). It is a ‘great house’ with both clean and unclean vessels. We must separate from believers who practice unclean things.

God’s call to His people: *“Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty”* (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). We must not defile them by adultery, fornication or other unclean practices. We must be clean vessels to carry the Gospel out to the world (Isaiah 52:11).

We who believe carry a message and responsibilities with eternal consequences and eternal rewards.

The Purpose for His House

It is a house of prayer - *And He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"* (Mat. 21:13). It is sad when the local church fails to meet for prayer, the Lord’s Supper and teaching.

The first Christians were faithful: *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42).

The inspired Scriptures state: *“not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching”* (Hebrews 10:25).

Prayer is an apostolic ‘first’ in importance: Things to pray for: *“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence”* (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

What the Father Seeks from His household. *“The true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him”* (John 4:23).

This is the first duty of true believers, both individually and collectively, to worship ‘in spirit and in truth’, and to walk in holiness with our Lord.

A Great High Priest over the House of God

“And having a High Priest over *the house of God*, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having *our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water*” (Hebrews 10:21-22).

We rejoice because of what Christ did for us on Calvary: “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, *since He always lives to make intercession for them*” (Hebrews 7:25). **Our great High Priest is seated in heaven and intercedes for us, to meet our every need.**

The Completed ‘House of God’: One day soon, ‘The House of God’ as a local church will be no more: but the Church His body will be complete, and presented to Christ as His perfect bride (Ephesians 5:25-27).

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” (Revelation 19:7).

Chapter 8

The Coming of the Lord

The coming of our Lord for His people is one of the most wonderful events promised in the word of God. It will happen in a moment, and it will usher us into the glories of His presence. This is what we should be living for and anticipating at any moment. It should fill us with zeal to serve Him faithfully.

We are to be: “looking for the *blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works*” (Titus 2:13-14).

We are to live for heaven: “For our *citizenship is in heaven*, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will *transform* our lowly body that it may be conformed to *His glorious body*, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Philippians 3:20-21).

We shall then be like Him: “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, *we shall be like Him*, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2)

He is coming for His people

This was taught by our Lord Jesus: “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. “And if I go and

prepare a place for you, *I will come again and receive you to My self; that where I am, there you may be also*” (John 14:1-3).

The apostle Paul also taught this: “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by *the word of the Lord*, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means **precede** those who are asleep. For the Lord **Himself** will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the **dead** in Christ will rise first. Then **we** who are alive and remain shall be **caught up** together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Also read 1 Corinthians Ch. 15. “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed **in a moment**, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

From this we learn: When Christians die, their bodies go to dust, but their soul and spirit are immediately with the Lord enjoying His presence (2 Corinthians 5:8). When the Lord returns, the dead in Christ will rise first, the living believers will be ‘**caught up**’ (raptured) together with them to meet Him **in the air**.

When we see Him we shall be changed and shall be like Him and with Him forever.

He will judge His people

After the ‘**rapture**’ we go to the ‘**judgement seat of Christ**’ for ‘**reviewing**’ and ‘**rewarding**’. For we all must stand before our Lord, **not for our sins**, but for the **reviewing** of the deeds done in the body; that is for our service, motives and our attitudes, whether **good or bad**.

Then He will **reward** His people, for there are **crowns** to be won if we have faithfully followed Him.

The Bible says: “For we must all appear before the **judgment seat of Christ**, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (Read 2 Corinthians 5:6-11).

This is not the judgement of our sins, for Christ paid that debt at Calvary. Jesus said: “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall **not come into judgment**, but has passed from death into life” (John 5:24).

His people will then be prepared for the **rejoicing** at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-10). In view of this, the apostle Paul disciplined his body, lest he became ‘**disqualified**’. This means the loss of his **present testimony** and of **future reward** (Corinthians 9:24-27).

His coming with His people

The Lord will then return to earth **with** His people, to **judge** the world in righteousness and to bring in His kingdom on earth (Revelation 19:11-21, Chapter 20). At that time **His feet will touch down on the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem**. For the repentance of Israel and the earthshaking events of that Day, read Zechariah Chapters 12 to 14.

This terrible 'Day of the Lord' is referred to in many scriptures (Read Joel 2:31-32), "*because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead*" (Acts 17:31).

When He comes for His people, we meet Him in the air.

When He comes with His people, His feet stands on the Mount of Olives at Jerusalem.

Reviewing these events

The Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples about His coming **for them in the air** (John 14:1-3). Each time we partake of the Lord's Supper, "*you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes*" (1 Corinthians 11:26). The Church should be waiting for the Lord Jesus to return at any moment (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10) after which the great tribulation runs for seven years, called the time of Jacob's or Israel's trouble. (See Jeremiah Ch.30; Daniel 9:24-27; Matthew Ch. 24; Rev. 7:13-14). Believers will be in heaven at the judgement seat of Christ.

Then the Lord returns **with His saints to earth** in great power and glory and establishes His 1000 year (Millennium) reign. The resurrection and judgment of the wicked follows, and then the eternal state (Read Revelation Chapters 19 to 22).

Our Lord Jesus also taught His disciples to use the gifts He had given them, and to "*Do business till I come*" (Luke 19:13). A number of His parables taught the disciples to be ready for His appearing at any moment.

Let us be busy serving the Lord, meeting with His people and waiting for His coming.

A Study on The Person and Work of The Holy Spirit

A Study by Albert Fairweather

Questions answered about:

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Prophecy, Speaking in Tongues & Healings



"If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever"

John 14:15-16

The Person and Work of The Holy Spirit

There is much confusion today over the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. Questions arise over “**Who is the Holy Spirit**”, “**Baptism of the Holy Spirit**”, “**Prophecy**”, “**Speaking in Tongues**” and “**Healing**”.

The Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples about the coming and the ministry of the Holy Spirit: *"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever; the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells **with you** and will be **in you**. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you"* (John 14:16-18).

He also said that the Holy Spirit would: *"teach you all things"* (John 14:26); *"He will testify of Me"* (John 15:26); He would *"convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment"*; *"tell you things to come"* and *"glorify Me"* (John 16:7-15). From this we learn:

1. In answer to the prayer of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit would be sent by the Father. He is called the ‘Helper’ or ‘Comforter’.
2. ‘He’ is a Person, not an influence, for He is *"The Spirit of truth"*. The world cannot know, see or receive Him.
3. The disciples would know Him, for He was ‘**with**’ them as Jesus spoke, and later would be ‘**in**’ them and ‘*abide with them forever*’.
4. He would have a ministry to the world, convicting of sin, righteousness and judgment.
5. He would have a ministry to believers, teaching and glorifying Christ.

The Father, Son and the Holy Spirit

While the word ‘**Trinity**’ does not appear in the Bible, the teaching does. Notice what the Lord Jesus Christ said: *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in **the name** of the **Father** and of the **Son** and of the **Holy Spirit**, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen* (Matthew 28:18-20). Baptizing is to be done in the **one name**, but the **three Persons** of the Godhead are named in this unity.

The ‘**Trinity**’ is also seen at our **Lord's** baptism –the **Spirit of God** descended like a dove and alighted upon the **Son**, and the **Father's** voice was heard from heaven (Matthew 3:13-17).

The ‘**Trinity**’ is seen in Hebrews 9:14, all acting together to bring redemption to us: *"how much more shall the blood of **Christ**, who through the **eternal Spirit** offered Himself without spot to **God**, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living **God**?"*

The Bible clearly teaches the deity of both the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and that the Father sent both into this world! *"And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Saviour of the world"* (1 John 4:14). *"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever" "who proceeds from the Father"* (John 14:16; 15:26).

The Holy Spirit is God and Lord

Peter also understood the deity of the Holy Spirit: *"Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the **Holy Spirit** ... You have not lied to men but to **God**"* (Acts 5:1-4). He is called: *"the eternal Spirit"* (Hebrews 9:14); *"the Spirit of life"* (Romans 8:2) and *"the Spirit of truth"* (John 14:15-17) and much more. These are all attributes of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

He has personality, for He can be lied to, grieved and quenched.

The Bible clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit is one with the Father and the Son. *"Now **the Lord is the Spirit**; and where **the Spirit of the Lord** is, there is liberty"* (2 Corinthians 3:17).

Jesus Christ is both God and Lord

From earliest time Christians understood that the **Lord Jesus is ‘God manifest in flesh’** (1 Timothy 3:16): *"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name **Immanuel**," which is translated, "**God with us**"* (Matthew 1:23; Isaiah 7:14).

He is called *"The Lord Jesus Christ"* over 80 times in the New Testament. The word ‘Lord’ tells us that He is God: *"And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My **Lord** and my **God**!"* (John 20:28).

Over 700 years before Christ's birth, Isaiah wrote: *"For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, **Mighty God**, **Everlasting Father**, **Prince of Peace**"* (Isaiah 9:6).

From this we see that there are three Persons in the Godhead, but they are one in essence.

The Sending of the Holy Spirit

It is important to notice that the Holy Spirit was not sent until the Lord Jesus was glorified: *"But this He (Jesus) spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified"* (John 7:39). After He died and was buried, He rose again the third day and was 40 days teaching the disciples, and then He ascended out of their sight and was glorified in heaven (read Acts Chapter 1). Then He prayed the Father, and the Holy Spirit was sent from heaven at the feast of Pentecost, 50 days after His resurrection (Acts chapter 2). The Church (a new thing) was formed, for the Lord Jesus said *"on this rock I will build My Church"* (Matthew 16:18). **Note:** It was still future when He spoke these words.

John the Baptist foretold the sending of the Holy Spirit. *"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire"* (Matthew 3:11).

The Lord Jesus reminded the disciples of this promise (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5) which was fulfilled at Pentecost: *"And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them"* (Acts 2:1-3).

This was the birthday of the Church, **a once-only event, never to be repeated.** There is only **one baptism**, *"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all"* (Ephesians 4:4-6).

In answer to Christ's prayer, the Father sent the Holy Spirit who baptized the disciples into one body, the Church!

Baptism of the Spirit

It is wrong to teach "The baptism of the Holy Spirit" or to say that believers are baptised **in** or **into** the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the **'baptizer'** who at Pentecost **'baptised'** the disciples **into one body**, *"For by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body; whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit"* (1 Corinthians 12:13).

In the Greek, *"were we all baptised"* is **in the past and is completed** - a never to be repeated event! The Church is this **'body'** made up of all believers from Pentecost when it was formed, to the day when the Lord Jesus takes His people home to heaven (John 14:1-3).

At conversion, every believer comes into the good of this, and becomes part of the body of Christ, and a member of His Church. This is something the Holy Spirit does for us, quite apart from any 'experience'.

The Lord Jesus told Peter that He would give him *"the keys to the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 16:18-19). Keys are used to open doors, and Peter was used to open the doors to the kingdom of heaven, first to the Jews (Acts 2:14-47); then to the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17); then to the Gentiles (Acts 10:1-48).

In all this we see how the Lord was extending the kingdom of heaven into new areas, just like a city that has the water supply connected to each new suburb as it grows. Lastly, Paul (also an apostle) was used to extend the kingdom to the disciples of John the Baptist (Acts 19:1-7). These men had not even heard about the Holy Spirit and knew very little about the Lord Jesus. They only knew John's baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

In God's order it was to the Jews first, where the body, the Church began. Then there was an extension to the Samaritans where **religious** barriers were overcome. Then to the Gentiles where **racial** barriers were overcome. And lastly all **dispensational** barriers were overcome when the disciples of John the Baptist were brought from the dispensation of law into the Church of the New Covenant.

Now in this the Church age, the age of grace, all who believe are baptized by one Spirit into one body. What a wonderful unity this is, overcoming all religious, racial and dispensational barriers! There is truly only *"one body"* (Ephesians 4:5).

The Filling of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the **'Helper'** or **'Comforter'**, meaning **'one who draws alongside to help'**. He would be sent to help the disciples in all situations of their life. While the Lord Jesus was with the disciples, He was their Helper and Comforter! He would not leave them orphans; He would come to them in the Person of the Holy Spirit who would take His place on earth (John 14:15-18).

It is wrong to speak of a second blessing, some extra 'supernatural' thing happening after conversion. People are here confusing the **baptism by the Spirit** into the one body, with **the filling of the Holy Spirit**. There is only "one baptism". The Bible says, *"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all"* (Ephesians 4:4-6).

There are many fillings of the Holy Spirit. After the Holy Spirit was sent and the one body, the Church, was formed, the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17).

To pray for or expect another 'Baptism of the Spirit' is nowhere mentioned in the Bible, **but the filling of the Holy Spirit is often mentioned.** The Bible tells us

about this filling: *"And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit"* (Ephesians 5:18). In the Greek language it is **a command to be continuously filled**.

A man drunk with wine is under the influence of the spirit of alcohol, and so he acts foolishly. In contrast, a person filled with the Holy Spirit will act differently, showing the influence and fruit of the Holy Spirit in his or her life. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law"* (Galatians 5:22-23).

We are commanded to *"be filled with the Spirit"* (Eph. 5:18), to *"Walk in the Spirit"* (Gal. 5:16), to be *"led by the Spirit"* (Gal. 5:18), and to show the *"fruit of the Spirit"* in our lives.

Walking in the Spirit

The Bible also says: *"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit"* (Gal 5:25). Every believer **lives in the sphere** of the Spirit by virtue of the new birth and by being baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ.

Now we are told to **walk** in the Spirit, for we can **grieve** and **quench** the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. *"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption"* (Ephesians 4:30). *"Do not quench the Spirit"* (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

When we are disobedient, making wrong choices, living a self-centred or sinful life, we **grieve** or hurt the Holy Spirit and **quench** the fire that He lights in our hearts to serve and live for Him. We will not have the peace and joy that a true follower of Jesus should have. He is the '**Holy Spirit**', and He works to produce **holiness** in our lives. If we continue sinning, He will be unable to use us, as He wants clean vessels in His service.

We should never seek a **baptism of the Spirit**, but we should seek to be **filled with the Spirit**. The baptism by the Holy Spirit is **God's work in us at conversion**; the filling is **our yielding to God's will in our lives**, a day-by-day necessity.

Yielding to the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit wants to **occupy** every room in our heart. Often there are rooms where He is not welcome! These rooms may be occupied with wrong and sinful thoughts, an unforgiving spirit, or with worldly ambitions and sinful deeds. We cannot know full joy and peace until we yield all to Him. *"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's"* (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Paul wrote these words to carnal or fleshly Christians (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). This church was allowing and some were even doing sinful things. They were not filled with the Spirit. Whenever we find ourselves doing things that grieve Him, we need to confess and forsake those things: *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). Then He will again use us for His glory.

Now is the time to enjoy this filling by yielding all to Him. He has a special work for each to do, and there is joy and peace in living for the Lord and being used by Him as He extends His kingdom among people today.

The Holy Spirit's Work 'for' and 'in' Us

Water baptism sets forth our wonderful relationship with Christ and our position as hidden in Him: *"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"* (Romans 6:1-14).

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we are identified with Christ, so that Paul could say: *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me"* (Galatians 2:20).

Paul also wrote, *"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory"* (Colossians 3:1-4).

This is what God sees of every believer: When Christ died, we died in Him; when He was buried, we were buried with Him, and when He arose, we arose in Him. See the important role of the Holy Spirit in this:

1. We were convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit and brought to repentance and faith (John 16:8-11).
2. We were born again *"of water and the Spirit"* and made God's children (John 1:11-13; 3:5).
3. We were placed as God's sons by *"the Spirit of adoption"* (Romans 8:12-17).
4. We were *"by one Spirit ...baptised into one body"*, the Church (1 Corinthians 12:13).
5. We were *"sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise"*, a sign of security and ownership (Ephesians 1:13-14).
6. We are *"sanctified by the Holy Spirit"*, this means 'set apart' for God's purposes (Romans 15:16).

This is the **sphere of the Spirit** in which we dwell in God's sight! We are eternally identified with Christ in the eyes of the Father through the work of Christ on the cross, and through the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. God has done many wonderful things for us and we cannot fully understand them all now. In eternity to come we will forever praise and worship Him for who He is and what He has done.

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament and His Gifts

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit was **'with'** God's people and came **'upon'** chosen ones to empower them to serve God in a special way (Judges 14:6; 15:14; 1 Samuel 10:6-10). He came on David, but He left King Saul (Judges 16:20; 1 Samuel 16:13-14).

David became a great king, a prophet and the sweet psalmist of Israel because the Holy Spirit was upon him. After his great sin with Bathsheba, he realised he was also in danger of the Spirit leaving him. His repentance is recorded in Psalm 51:11. He asked God, *"do not take your Holy Spirit from me"*.

David had lost the joy of his salvation (Psalm 51:12) and was in danger of losing the empowering to be a wise and good king, to be a prophet and write inspired Psalms. These were all **gifts** from the Holy Spirit.

Today, the Holy Spirit will never leave a true child of God, *"For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable (cannot change)"* (Romans 11:29). We also have the wonderful promise of the Lord Jesus Christ: *"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever"* (John 14:16).

Every Christian has received a gift, given by the ascended Lord (Ephesians 4:7-16) and by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:1-31). We need to ask the Lord to show us what our gift is, and then use it for His glory.

The Age of Apostles and Prophets ends

Paul knew that soon the apostles and prophets would die, and so God revealed to him this truth: *"Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away"* (1 Corinthians 13:8-10).

The word **'perfect'** means to be **'complete'**, and in the Greek it is not a **'person'**, but a **'thing'**! The Bible is the only **'complete'** and **'perfect'** thing on earth. Nothing is to be added or taken away from its pages (Revelation 22:18-19). In it is *"the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints"* (Jude 3).

'Knowledge' was the ability by some men to remember and teach the doctrines taught by the apostles and prophets. This knowledge was only in part and is now found in our Bibles.

The apostles and prophets belonged to the foundation period of the Church and nowhere are we told to appoint more apostles or prophets (Ephesians 2:19-20; 1 Corinthians 3:10-11). They and their special gifts of miracles, healings and tongues are no longer with us since we have the complete Bible.

These gifts are not necessary today for the normal functioning of the local church. They were temporary in nature, used by God to make people believe the apostle's message. They were outlined in 1 Corinthians Chapter 12; would pass away in 1 Corinthians Chapter 13 and strictly limited in use in 1 Corinthians Chapter 14. Paul had to correct many abuses and limit the use of these gifts by carnal believers in the church at Corinth.

Notice the divinely given **order** for these gifts: *"And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way"* (1 Corinthians 12:28-31).

Apostles and prophets were first in order, tongues were last, and not all had these gifts.

Are Tongues for Today?

To teach that if someone does not speak in tongues means they do not have the Holy Spirit is a serious error.

Peter and the disciples spoke in 'tongues' or 'known languages' on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-12). The people present came from different lands with different languages; **each heard in their own language** the wonderful works of God. Paul spoke in tongues more than all, but never in the church meetings (1 Corinthians 14:18-19). God gave him this gift so that he could preach the Gospel to all people he met in many lands.

Today's 'tongues' are not used for this purpose and are not the same as those of the early Church. Tongues have ceased along with prophecy and knowledge. Knowledge was the ability to remember and teach the apostles doctrine without having a Bible (1 Corinthians 13:8). Today all missionaries, even those who claim to speak in tongues, have to learn the language of the people they are evangelising! Otherwise, they must have someone to interpret.

Tongues had ceased by the end of the age of the apostles (AD 96) and of those who outlived them. John Chrysostom (AD 345 – AD 407) wrote in his *'Homilies'* of *"the cessation of happenings which were common in those days (of the apostles) but unknown in our own"*. He said, *"they have long since ceased"* (Homily 4). The present Charismatic movement dates from early 1900, when an attempt was made to revive these gifts.

Many teach that to receive the gift of tongues, one must begin praising God as fast as possible, relax, let the mind go blank, then start to speak in a babble. Then the Holy Spirit will come upon you and you will receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit! Some roll on the floor, scream and do other strange things. Nowhere does the Bible teach such things, and we need to be aware that Satan is a deceiver. Women also take part in these meetings, even though the Bible says *"let your women keep silent in the churches"* (see 1 Corinthians 14:31-34). From ancient times women have been prominent in pagan rites where they speak in strange utterances. If God's word is faithfully taught, these things disappear.

The Bible teaches that *'self-control'* is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:23): *"And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints"* (1 Corinthians 14:32-33). Those who preach should be careful not to be carried away by speaking faster, shouting and stirring up the people into a frenzy. The demon possessed prophets of Baal acted like this, but Elijah acted calmly and with a simple prayer (1 Kings 18:20-40). God's *"still small voice"* was not heard in the strong wind, the earthquake or the fire (1 Kings 19:11-12).

God is heard when we quietly and prayerfully wait on Him, and souls are saved when we preach the Word of God calmly, with reverence and sincerity.

What About Healings?

Both Peter and Paul healed people, but not on every occasion: *"Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick"* (2 Timothy 4:20). To Timothy he wrote: *"No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities"* (1 Timothy 5:23). Why did he not heal them? Paul had the *"gifts of healings"*, but even over these supernatural gifts God was sovereign. He cannot be dictated to or manipulated. He does everything after His own sovereign will.

Today we do not have apostles, prophets, or gifts of tongues, prophesy and healings. However, we do know and believe that miracles and healing happen at times today **in answer to prayer and as it pleases the Lord.**

If anyone had the *"gifts of healings"* today, hospitals could be emptied and dead people raised. This is the challenge to those who claim these gifts. When the Lord

Jesus was on earth, He perfectly and completely healed all who came to Him, raised three people from the dead, and caused great joy among multitudes. At times the apostles did this also, but not on every occasion.

In Conclusion

In teaching about these gifts, Paul said this: *"But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way"* (1 Corinthians 12:31). He taught that we should *"pursue love"* and *"especially that you may prophesy"*, for *"he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men"* (1 Corinthians 14:1-3).

Love is the main thing, for love unites, but arguments over these special gifts given to the apostles and the early disciples have divided many churches. Today the teacher has taken the place of the prophet, and his teaching should be for:

1. **'Edification'**, that is 'building up' believers in their most holy faith.
2. **'Exhortation'**, that is 'stirring up' believers to be obedient and to live disciplined lives.
3. **'Comfort'**, that is 'binding up' wounded souls and broken hearts and ministering comfort.

Let us be very careful not to be led astray by sensational claims about supernatural sign gifts, but rather let us give ourselves to *"the more excellent way"* of loving, caring for and nurturing one another in the Christian walk.

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