

WORD OF THE TRUTH

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FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD

The statement that "faith without works is dead" is probably familiar to every professing Christian. Like many other passages of Scripture, it has become a familiar proverb, quoted on many occasions with a thousand-and-one applications. Many who quote it do not know that it came from the Bible, and among those who do know that it came from the Scripture, very few could tell the circumstances in relationship to which these words were spoken.

These words set forth a perpetual truth that is not subject to any dispensational change or limitations. The truth they contain applied to the first man Adam, for if he had faith without works, then his faith was dead. These words apply to you and to me, for our faith is dead also if it be without works.

Inasmuch as Ephesians 2:8 declares that men are saved "through faith" and "not of works" many have erroneously tried to isolate faith from works and works from faith by sealing each one off into an air-tight compartment. They feel that faith and works are repugnant to each other, and that the man that is exercising faith should not be working, and that the man that is working cannot be exercising true faith. Those who reason thus need to face the truth set forth in I Thessalonians 1:3 where Paul speaks of their "work of faith." In this statement work and faith are linked together and they create no discord.

There are times when "works" get out of place and are projected into situations where they have no place. In certain dealings with God all thoughts of "works" must be banished from the mind. But great care must be exercised lest we condemn those works, which are the natural outflow of faith and without which faith is dead.

In **James 2:26**, the passage in which this statement is found, the two important words are "faith" and "works." Failure to comprehend the exact idea the Spirit of God intended to convey by the use of these terms has created many misunderstandings of the truth declared here. Men have read into these

words their own ideas; then, as a result have felt that the testimony of James is in conflict with that of Paul. The majority of uninstructed Christians think that faith has to do only with the salvation of sinners; therefore, they read the idea of salvation from sin into every passage where the word *faith* occurs. They fail to realize that faith is the principle by which righteous men live. In the Christian life every week should mark an advance in faith, an increase of faith.

Definition of Faith

Any true understanding of the declaration that "faith without works is dead" is impossible unless we first learn from Scripture the meaning of the words "faith" and "works."

If a list were made, one would be surprised to find how many acts of men are called "faith" by their fellow men. Confidence, hope, trust, optimism, and wishful thinking are all dignified by this name. Among religious men also many things are called "faith" which would never pass for faith once this word is accurately and honestly defined. Both the world and religious men in the world are hostile to precise definitions. They speak much about faith, but they do not want to stop their flow of oratory for a moment to tell us what faith is.

In the Bible there are many acts of men, which God commends, but there is only one basic act or attitude of men that God recognizes as faith. By this I do not mean that there is only one act which man can perform in order to exercise faith. I mean that while a man in his lifetime may perform a million acts of faith, every one of these acts must contain certain basic, fundamental, elements if they are to be recognized as faith in the sight of God.

If an act or attitude of man is to be classed as faith in the sight of God it must contain the element of a proper or fitting response to light, truth, or revelation. There can be no faith before God unless there is light, truth, or revelation, and even when these are present, there must be a proper response. This, at first, may seem to be obscure, but I will endeavor to fully explain.

On numerous occasions during His earthly ministry our Lord declared that the acts of certain people were faith. He said this of the Centurion in Matthew 8:10; of those who brought the palsied man in Matthew 9:2; of the Syrophenician woman in Matthew 15:28; and of the woman with an issue of blood in Mark 5:34. In all these cases we find the element of exact truth and a fitting response to this truth. Take for example the case of the Syrophenician woman. The Lord classed her as one among the "dogs." She accepted this as truth, took a dog's place, and claimed a dog's portion—the crumbs that fall from the master's table.

The actions of many men, which they like to think, are acts of faith are not the results of faith at all, but merely the product of their own desires. For example, those suffering from a physical affliction desire above all else to be rid of it and to be well or whole again. They will believe almost anything that gives promise of relief, and they are willing to try anything. They travel great distances to shrines, or seek out those who profess to have gifts of healing in the hope that they will stumble upon something or someone that will rid them of their affliction. However, their acts are wholly the result of their desires and not the result of faith. They vainly think that God has promised us miraculous deliverance from every physical affliction, but they are acting upon an imaginary promise that cannot be found in the Word of God.

True faith has been possible for every man since Adam. In John 1:9 we read of "the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Our understanding of this light and its operation is somewhat obscured by the brightness of our own light in the written Word of God; nevertheless, we know that any proper response to this light is faith. Inasmuch as this light was from the beginning, and, since it enlightened every man that came into the world, we know that faith has been possible for every man since Adam.

There are numerous records in the Bible of men who responded and acted upon truth that was not a part of the written Word. For example, the men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, and while repentance and faith are two different things, the repentance of the men of Nineveh was an act of faith since it was the proper or fitting response upon their part to the truth of God proclaimed by Jonah.

Our faith cannot be a response to that light which enlightens every man since we have the written Word of God. God has spoken, and we have the written transcript of what He has said. Our faith is to take God at His Word and respond accordingly. Our faith must be the product of the Word we have heard. We have been given much. From us much is expected.

Definition of Works

To the average person the word *works* means going to church, giving when the offering is taken, saying prayers, taking part in church activities, visiting sick people, taking food to the poor, etc. Thus when they read that "faith without works is dead," this means to them that faith is not enough; there must also be church going, giving, church activities, etc. This is foreign to the truth being set forth in James 2, since the illustration there of a man who had both faith and works is Abraham. Abraham never went to church, put money in an offering basket, or sang bass in a choir. Nevertheless, he is the outstanding example of faith mingled with works.

To help our understanding we will define a *work* as an *act*, and further define an *act* as that which one has done or is doing; that is, a deed performed or in the process of being performed. An act must be the result of the determination of the will, and it can be either negative or positive. If I am wronged and do nothing about it, my act is negative. Thus I have performed an act of forbearance, yet I have done nothing.

A man can act or work by doing nothing. When the Lord said, "Tell the vision to no man" (Matt. 17:9), the disciples served him by the mere act of keeping quiet. This was their proper response to His word. Again, when He said, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile," they did a work by resting. To rest was the only proper response to His invitation.

Man in his restlessness and self-will constantly determines that he is going to do something for God. All kinds of deeds are performed in the belief that this is what God wants him to do. He never bothers to ask, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and then seek for an honest answer to his question in the Word of God. He plunges into a whirl of activities in the vain belief that he is doing the works that should accompany faith. Works of the flesh can never take the place of works of faith. James never had in mind the kind of works that are performed by many in the hope that they are doing something for God. He spoke of works of faith; that is, those deeds or acts, which are the logical response to the Word of God.

The illustration James uses to make plain his teaching is the works of Abraham. "**Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?**" **James 2:21**. This work of Abraham is one that could not possibly be classed as a "good work" unless it were the result of his taking 'God at His word and responding accordingly. Apart from this it would have been plain murder, the act of filicide, a most repugnant crime.

On every hand today we find those who claim to be believers, but they are not working at their profession. If we should ask them when they last believed God, they would be embarrassed by the question. Believing God is not a regular experience in their lives. They seek for nothing to believe and desire no light beyond that which they have. They are retired believers, and have not worked at their profession since the day they put their faith in Christ. When matters of truth are pressed upon

them, they refuse to give them consideration. "I'm saved, and that's all I care about," is their oft repeated declaration. They claim to have faith, but it is a faith that is dormant. It lacks the activity and vigor that demonstrates it is a living faith.

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. James 2:26.

The End

MORE ABOUT THE CHURCH

(From Vol. XI, No. 3)

The article that appeared in the last issue of THE WORD OF TRUTH under title of *What Is A Church* was written solely for the purpose of exercising the minds of those who read these pages. I had no intention of giving the answer in that article, as it was written solely for the purpose of turning the minds of my readers toward this very important question. I have what I believe to be exceedingly important truth to set forth upon this subject, but I know from experience when new truth falls upon unprepared hearts and minds that there is no response. Those who have no questions or problems as to the Biblical witness concerning the church will have no interest in the truth that claims to answer the questions and solve the problems which face every man who has made a fact study of this subject.

Those who have never made a penetrating study of the Word of God have no problems, difficulties, or questions. But anyone who reads the Bible with the purpose in mind of finding the ideas set forth there, will face seemingly unanswerable questions before he has read very many chapters. The presence of these apparently unanswerable questions, insoluble problems, and insurmountable difficulties cause many to end their reading and abandon all hope of ever understanding the Scriptures. But the courageous student will seek first to understand the problem, then seek for the solution. It is a waste of time to seek solutions to problems, which we do not fully understand. Each problem solved, each question answered, each difficulty cleared up marks an advance in truth and the acquisition of additional truth. The article on *What Is A Church* was written in order to get this problem before you. I wanted this question to become your question, the problem to become your problem, so that you would desire the answer and the solution even as I desired them.

I rejoiced to see the interest, which the introductory article created. The question, "What is A church?" is now on the minds of many. Some have put the question to their ministers. Others have brought it up for discussion before Bible classes. The reports that have come to me show that many do not understand the problem. The stock answer is that A church is "a company of believers meeting in one place, observing the ordinances, etc." All one needs to do is to put this definition of A church into the announcement of Christ wherein He said, "Upon this rock I will build My church," and he will see at once how inadequate this definition is. Furthermore, if he puts this definition into "the church in the wilderness" it will break down altogether.

Many have resolved all problems and questions by accepting the idea that "two or three gathered in the name of Christ" is **A church**, and that **THE church** is the aggregate of all believers since the day of Pentecost. To this I would say that if **A church** is two or three believers meeting in the name of Christ, then **A church** is in reality just a name given to a meeting, and if **THE church** is the

aggregate of all believers since the day of Pentecost, then **THE church** is just an old thing called by a new name. There were many believers between the time of Adam and the day of Pentecost, and if the word *church* is just an exclusive name applied to believers since Pentecost, what does this make us to be that believers previous to Pentecost were not.

Abraham was a believer two thousand years before Pentecost, yet, according to this theory, Abraham was not a member of "**THE church**," but inasmuch as we have believed since Pentecost we are members of "**THE church**." Poor Abraham! He had the misfortune of being born two thousand years too soon.

I challenge anyone who holds this theory to show where a believer today possesses a single blessing or privilege by being in "the church" that Abraham did not possess. If being in "the church" is only an empty title, which I have, but which Abraham did not have, then I am not interested in it.

There are three types of study that can be made concerning the church. It can be an emotional study, a philosophical study, or a fact study.

Among emotional studies are those made by men who in advance have committed themselves to the idea that their denomination is "the church that Jesus built." These men study the Scriptures for the sole purpose of finding their organizations in the Bible. Such men cannot be honest in their studies. An inner conviction that arises out of a false assumption will cause them to distort, wrest, or deny the facts that are plainly declared in the Word. This explains why so many denominationalists can find their denomination in the Bible. Such men would hardly dare to seek a Scriptural answer to the question, What is A church? They begin by assuming that all denominations are churches, but that their denomination is the church that Christ built.

Philosophical studies are those made by men who seek to discover some logical, workable, credible philosophy concerning the church. Many and erudite are the philosophies that men have formulated concerning the church, and after their formulation, Scripture has been called to the witness stand to give testimony in support of them. Even the Roman Catholic quotes Scripture in support of his philosophy concerning the church. In almost any work on Systematic Theology one can find examples of philosophic studies concerning the church. Most of these philosophies seek to fit some indefinite thing called "the church" into divine revelation, or to explain divine revelation in harmony with "the church" as it exists today. These philosophies usually begin with the assumption that Christ came to earth to found a church, and that the organizations called "the churches" today are what he founded. Most of these philosophies are careful that the authority of churches over man shall never be weakened, and that the churches shall be divine institutions in the eyes of the people.

An example of a philosophical theory of the church may be seen in the following quotation: "The Protestant doctrine of the Church is that the Church may exist without a visible form because it is both visible and invisible. The invisible church is composed of all who are really united to Christ. The visible Church consists of all who profess to be united to Christ."

This is an attractive philosophy since it fits in with the state of things as they exist today, but it will not stand the acid test of Biblical proof. In fact it would not stand up even under the test of logical analysis, since nothing can be visible and invisible at the same time; therefore, such statements are nothing more than a "now you see it, now you don't" philosophy.

It is my opinion that no philosophy of the church has ever been able to emancipate the truth from its fictitious historical entanglements. The reformers never had a clear understanding of the church. They simply modified the Roman Catholic system of ecclesiasticism. Other modifications have followed, but no matter how much you modify it, it is still the same: good, human organizations claiming to be holy, divine institutions.

A fact study of the church is one in which the student seeks through the help of the Holy Spirit of God to obtain and understand every fact of Scripture in connection with this subject, then to think, believe, and speak in harmony with the facts. Truth is that which, accords with the facts, and no man has the truth of Scripture concerning the church until he is in possession of all facts of Scripture concerning it.

It has been said that, "every man has a right to his opinion, but no man has a right to be wrong in his facts." Yet human nature is such that when men have made up their minds, they manufacture, twist, or interpret facts to prove their theories. Pride prevents them from examining the supposed facts lest they find them false and lose their support. They welcome no facts except those that can be used in some manner to corroborate their own ideas and conclusions. I believe that one of the most glaring examples of ignoring facts and suppressing facts is seen in the thinking of men concerning "the church."

Some of the facts vitally related to this subject have been almost universally ignored, and the chief facts have been suppressed due to the paralyzing influences of preconceived fixed theories. Some facts have been manufactured; some have been twisted; others have been misapplied. Statements made by God concerning other subjects (such as Israel or the kingdom) have been applied to something called "the church." Many obvious facts, too plain to be ignored, have been explained away, since these facts did not conform to philosophies already fixed. Chief among the facts that are continually ignored and suppressed are those in the Old Testament. These speak eloquent truth concerning what A church is. In fact, if we would learn from the Word of God what A church is, we are forced to go to the Old Testament. There is no definition of A church to be found in the New Testament.

Every fact in the Word of God has been the constant goal of my researches into this subject. The one question in my mind has been, What is the truth concerning the church? The teaching, which I will present comes out of the facts I have gathered. The facts were not gathered in support of a theory.

True Bible study is always progressive. If we enter into truth upon one subject, it will open up to us many related truths, and these in turn will reveal further truths. I have found this true in connection with my studies in ecclesia truth. I was led to a new consideration of the word *head*. Jesus Christ is called the Head of the church, which is His body. As there are other *heads* in Scripture, I sought to find an answer to the question, What is A Head? When this is known, we can understand the meaning of "the glorious phrase "the Head of the church."

My studies led me to reconsider the word *body*. I tried to learn what A body is, but found my approach was wrong. I did not fully understand the problem. The real problem was, What is body? not, What is A body? I will have exceedingly precious truth to present on this subject.

The next question that arose concerned the meaning of the word *member*. We are told, "We are members of His body." How can we understand this unless we know what A member is, and what *body* is?

Another question that arose was, What is rock? The Lord said, "Upon this rock I will build My church." Until we know from the Word of God what *rock* is, we can form no correct understanding of "this rock"

In view of this the reader can begin to see the scope of the studies that are to be presented. We must seek together the answers to the following questions:

A. What is A church?

- a. What was "the church in the wilderness?" Acts 7:38.

b. What is the church Christ declared He would build? Matt.16:18.

c. What is the church, which is His body? Eph. 1:22.

B. What is A head?

a. Why is God said to be the head of Christ? I Cor. 11:3.

b. Why is man said to be the head of the woman. I Cor. 11:3.

c. Why is Christ said to be the head of every man. I Cor.11:3.

d. Why is the husband the head of the wife? Eph. 5:23.

e. Why is Christ said to be the head of the church. Eph. 5:23.

C. What is "body"?

a. What did the Lord mean by "This is My body"? Matt.26:26.

b. How were the Corinthians "body of Christ."? I Cor.12:27.

D. What is A member?

a. What are "members in particular"? I Cor. 12:27.

b. What are "members of His body"? Eph. 5:30.

E. What is "rock"?

a. What is the meaning of "The rock was Christ"? I Cor. 10:4.

b. What was "the rock" of Matthew 16:18?

The above does not represent an outline of the studies that are to be presented, as it represents only the scope of the study. The material will be presented in eleven chapters as follows:

1. Introduction.
2. The Word "Church."
3. Principles of Interpretation.
4. Ecclesia Defined.
5. Ecclesia in the Pentateuch.
6. Other Occurrences of Ecclesia.
7. The Kingdom Ecclesia.
8. Pre-kingdom Training of the Ecclesia.
9. The Gentile Complement.
10. The Ecclesia, Which is His Body.
11. Summary and Conclusion.

My original plan was to publish this material in THE WORD OF TRUTH. However, after due consideration this did not seem to be a wise course. If half the pages of each issue were devoted to these subjects, it would take at least three years to get all this material before our readers. Furthermore, we need this material in compact form so as to make possible a wide distribution. This has caused us to decide to publish these studies in pamphlet form. The first to be issued will be *Ecclesia Truth*. The second will be *Head, Body, and Members*, and the third will be *This Rock*. However, this plan is only tentative as the first two may be combined in one pamphlet.

This is not an announcement of these pamphlets, and we are not now offering them for sale, so do not send orders for them. If the first should be ready before the next issue of our magazine goes to press we will send an announcement to every reader.

THE ORDER OF THINGS TO COME

(Continued from Volume XI, No. 3)

I do not believe that "all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation," but I do firmly believe that God's relationship to the world and the world's relationship to God has not changed in the past 1900 years. The last great change was made when the Apostle Paul as God's ambassador announced that, "the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles" (Acts 28:28). I know that even yet we do not fully realize the vast change that took place when that pronouncement was made. We are still afflicted with that eye trouble that came as the result of trying to interpret the Acts period so that it would harmonize with the present administration. In doing this we stultified the character of the Acts period and we falsified the character of the present dispensation. Some of these false conceptions may still linger in our subconscious minds, but as we seek to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, we are realizing more and more the vast changes that took place when God's Salvation was dispatched to the Gentiles. That act marked the beginning of a demonstration of grace, which has been absolute in its nature since that time. This demonstration of grace is accomplished by means of an administration of grace in which every work of God, every act of God, and all dealings of God with men have been gracious in their character.

This method of dealing, this demonstration of grace, this purpose of God to be gracious does not wax and wane; it does not ebb and flow; for it has been constant and absolute throughout the years that have elapsed since that day when Paul spoke the words recorded in Acts 28:28.

When to His own satisfaction God has completed this demonstration of the graciousness of His character, a great change will take place. No apostle will announce it, but the change will come. The Salvation of God will depart from the Gentiles and return to His people Israel. By this the truth declared in Acts 28:28 will go into reverse. The results of this change are almost incredible, but we have the Word of God to direct our thoughts concerning this. May we neither come short nor go beyond that which is spoken.

The Threefold Rejection

In Old Testament times God ever sought to be a Father to the people of Israel, but they rejected His gracious effort. He sought to impart His character to them but they refused. "We would be like other nations," was their constantly expressed desire. Truly we can say that the Old Testament declares Israel's rejection of God when He sought to be a Father to them. The prophecy of Isaiah gives abundant proof of this, and it also reveals the sentence of judicial blindness, deafness and hardness of heart that was pronounced upon them. See Isaiah 6:9-10.

In the four Gospels we have the record of Israel's rejection of God when He was manifested in the Son. And those same words, which were first spoken by Isaiah when Israel rejected the works and words of Jehovah were repeated here after Israel had rejected the mighty works and words of the

Son. See John 12:40. The people of Israel brought about the crucifixion of the Son of God, but upon the Cross He prayed for their forgiveness. This prayer was answered.

Those familiar with the book of Acts will know that in the Acts period Israel rejected the work and words of the Holy Spirit. This rejection can be traced out through four great centers of Jewish population: Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, and Rome. In Rome Paul took again the words that Isaiah first spoke and used them to set forth the blindness of Israel's eyes, the deafness of Israel's ears, and the hardness of Israel's heart. Thus Israel as a nation has rejected the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

That this threefold rejection is the truth will be plain to all who are familiar with the Word of God, but if these lines are drawn too tightly the truth will slip away from us. For example, Acts 7:51 will show that the Holy Spirit was also resisted and rejected in Old Testament times; nevertheless, the supreme rejection of the witness of the Spirit occurred in the Acts period.

The prophetic Scriptures reveal that the restoration and full blessing of Israel will come about in reverse order to that seen in the nations' rejection of the Father, Son and Spirit. When the Salvation of God returns to Israel, the first great work of God in their behalf will be a witness and work of the Holy Spirit. This will result in a great awakening in Israel, and it will bring them to receive the Christ whom they have so long rejected. This will prepare them for the actual appearing of the Son of God at His second coming. In the kingdom they will fully receive the character of God, and He will in reality be a Father unto them. Thus Israel will receive the Spirit, receive the Son, and receive the Father. Our present study concerns this work of the Spirit.

By My Spirit

The work of the Spirit of God in behalf of Israel will begin when the Salvation of God returns to them. The Jewish people will then be the special object of God's seeking work, and the purpose of this work will be to bring them to God. This work will not fail as its success is clearly declared in predictive prophecy, outstanding among these prophecies is the one found in Hosea.

Therefore, behold. I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth., and as the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shall call me no more Baali. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth. and they shall no more be remembered by their name. And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. Hosea 2:14.18.

This beautiful prophecy of Israel has never been fulfilled. There is nothing in their past history that answers to this. If it is ever fulfilled, it will have to be before the second coming of Christ. It is not a picture of Israel in the kingdom, as it reveals Israel facing the time of Jacob's trouble, yet facing it happily and courageously since they are God's people and He is their God.

Inasmuch as this prophecy speaks of the cessation of warfare in the earth, many feel that it must be fulfilled in the kingdom. This is not so. For just as the world has already seen a *Pax Romana*, a peace brought about by the strength of the Roman empire, and a *Pax Britannica*, a peace brought about by the strength of the British empire, it will yet see a still greater peace, a *Pax Christus*, one brought about by the power of Christ. This peace will be a "foretaste of glory divine" of the absolute peace of the kingdom eon.

It is held by many that apart from the presence of the Prince of peace there can be no such peace as Hosea describes. They go on to insist that since His presence can only be realized by means of His second coming, the cessation of warfare predicted by Hosea must come after His coming and in the kingdom. This idea, when analyzed, is merely a declaration that Christ cannot do certain things from the heavens, and thus His ability to work from the heavens is limited. There is no need for His personal presence in order for him to impose peace upon the world.

Others feel they find a major difficulty in the fact that this Christ-given peace which comes upon the earth will be disrupted by the wars that characterize the time of Israel's great tribulation. One sympathetic critic declares that, "any peace brought about by the power of Christ will never be disrupted." This difficulty is only imaginary since even the thousand-year peace that prevails in the kingdom is disrupted by the wars that occur in the little season that follows the kingdom. See Revelation 20:7-9.

The Hope of the Nations

The best possible thing that could happen to the nations of the world right now is for the Salvation of God to return to His people Israel. This would mark the beginning of a work of the Spirit among the Jewish people. This work of the Spirit would result in their restoration to God, their turning to Christ, their restoration to their land, and from them would flow rich blessings to the world. Paul declares that Israel's reception by God would be nothing less than "life from among the dead." Romans 11:15.

It is a positive fact that all over the world nations are dying. Major operations are being performed by statesmen everywhere in order to remedy the ills that afflict the nations of this world. Great nations, like strong men, die slowly. And it is tragic to say the least to see great nations in the death throes, with no wisdom on any hand to suggest what should be done. Our own nation is afflicted with cancers that are eating at its most vital parts. The ointments that are being constantly applied may alleviate, but they bring no cure. Many declare that the sole hope of this world is the return of the Lord Jesus. If this were the truth of God's Word, no fault could be found with it, but the Bible reveals that this world has hope in the restoration of Israel to God. This miracle can be brought about only by God. When it does come to pass, the prayer uttered by the Spirit in the Psalms will be answered:

God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us: Selah. That thy way may be known upon the earth. thy saving health among all nations. Psalm 67:1-2.

When we recognize this period of blessing for Israel and the world before the second coming of Christ it allows room in our thoughts for the following prophesied events.

1. It allows for the great blessing upon Israel set forth in Joel 2:23-27; which according to Joel 2:31 must take place before "the great and terrible day of the Lord come."

2. It allows for the appearance and ministry of Elijah as prophesied in Malachi 4:5-6, an event which must also take place "before the great and dreadful day of the Lord." This ministry of Elijah prepares the world for the coming of Christ, lest at His coming the earth be smitten with a curse. See Malachi 4:6.

It allows also for the literal fulfillment of the Lord's words concerning Elijah wherein He said: "Elias truly shall first come and restore all things." Matthew 17:11. If any should say that this was fulfilled in John the Baptist let him keep in mind that John emphatically said he was not Elijah (John 1:21), that Christ's words were spoken after John was beheaded, and that John the Baptist did not "restore all things."

3. It allows for the repentance and conversion of Israel and those times of refreshing which must come from the face of the Lord before he sends back Jesus Christ. Acts 3:19-20. These things must precede the second sending of Jesus Christ to the earth, and not one of these divine requirements have ever been altered or withdrawn.

4. It allows for "the restoration of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His prophets." This restoration must precede the second coming for the heavens will hold Him until it is an accomplished fact. See Acts 3:21.

5. It allows for the building again of the tabernacle of David (Greek, the Davidic scene) before the kingdom. Acts 15:16.

6. It allows for the rebuilding of the temple of God in Jerusalem. This temple must be in existence before the great tribulation. See Matthew 24:15 and II Thessalonians 2:4.

7. It allows for the orderly fulfillment of the signs and events set forth in Matthew 24:5-30. The importance of this should not be missed. The predicted restoration and blessing of Israel and the blessing of the nations through them will result in the cessation of wars, the end of famines, the banishment of plagues, and the cessation of earthquakes. All these things are adumbrations of the blessings that will be in the kingdom. Just imagine what a sensation it will cause when after centuries of peace, plenty, health and solidity in the earth the people begin to hear of battles, famines, plagues, and earthquakes. Such things as wars, famines, plagues and earthquakes cannot be signs now for they have always been the constantly recurring experiences of the human race. But if they should cease to be, over several centuries, then should suddenly and simultaneously reappear they would be signs of such tremendous force that none could ignore them.

These seven things are only a partial list of those prophesied events that find room for fulfillment when we recognize a period of blessing for Israel and the world that precedes the second coming of Christ.

We must not fail to recognize and firmly fix the truth in our minds that Israel's future salvation and blessing is entirely a work of the Spirit of God and it is not brought about by any human agency. It will not be brought about by preaching the gospel to or evangelizing Israel. Christians have almost universally failed to recognize and admit the ability of the Holy Spirit to bring men to a knowledge of *God* and into relationship with *God* wholly apart from any human agency. The fact that God now permits us to have a share in the task of bringing men to Him should not blind us to the fact that *God* can dispense with our part altogether and still be as powerful to save as ever. When God resumes His prophesied program with Israel, the awakening that will come to that nation will not be by might, power, men, messages, or meetings. It will be by the Spirit of *God*. Furthermore, it is not necessary for *God* to take Israel to Palestine before He brings them to Himself. He will save them wherever they are, then in due time restore them to their land.

The Time Element

Many have written desiring to have me express an opinion as to how much time will elapse between the time when the Salvation of God returns to Israel and the second coming of Christ. I know of no revelation in the Word that reveals this, but I do know that enough time will elapse for the orderly fulfillment of all prophecies that must be fulfilled before that great and notable day of the Lord comes. The Darby-Scotfield system allows just seven years for the fulfillment of those events that must happen before the return of the Lord in glory. This is one of the weakest points in that whole system. Sir Robert Anderson sensed this weakness and did not hesitate to suggest that the period that Darby said would be seven years in length could very well be a thousand years. I

personally feel that the period of Israel's blessing before the kingdom will not be short. What is wrong with allowing at least a generation for the conversion of Israel and another generation or more for their restoration to their land? Furthermore, it is my opinion that any temple built in less than fifty years time will be jerry-built. It could well be that centuries will elapse between that time when the Salvation of God returns to Israel and the establishment of the millennial kingdom. God is in no hurry. He always tarries long when He blesses a people. He moves swiftly when He deals in judgment.

(To Be Continued, Vol. XI, No. 5)

ACTS, Chapter Four

4:1-3. And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next *day*: for it was now eventide.

The healing of the lame man was an accomplished fact, and the proclamation of Peter was just about complete. News of the miracle and the message had reached the priests and Sadducees. They descended swiftly upon the scene and placed under arrest Peter, John and the beggar who had been healed. We can imagine the surprise of the beggar when he was arrested for having been healed and saw also those arrested who had healed him. Luke mentions in order "the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees." The priests were indignant because it was their right to teach. They did not perform this work as they delegated it to the scribes, and were satisfied to perform rituals. The captain of the police was there as the arresting office. The Sadducees were there because these men were proclaiming through Jesus the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees denied the resurrection. They would have acclaimed Peter and John as great men and defended them if they had preached their doctrine. But since they preach the opposite, they brand them as criminals. This is ever the way of religious men. Those who see it like they do are always "outstanding spiritual men." Those who see it differently are "dupes and tools of the devil".

Luke's account of their arrest is brief. He gives no details except to say that, "they threw their hands on them." And since it was late in the day they were placed in custody until the Sanhedrin could be assembled the next day.

4:4 Howbeit many of them, which heard the word believed; and the number of men was about five thousand.

Peter's success was phenomenal. He has been preaching to Jews who knew the Scriptures, and they heartily respond to his message. These are the sheep of Christ, who readily hear His voice, thus proving that they are sheep. Those who did not believe demonstrated that they were not sheep. See John 10:26-27. Remember, the gospel is not here producing sheep. It is marking out those who are truly sheep. The number of those who believe has increased from 3000 in 2:41 to the 5000 number stated here.

4:5-6. And it came to pass on the morrow that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, and Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

They remained in the prison throughout the night. There was no miraculous deliverance such as took place on other occasions. These three men are to put the Sanhedrin on trial the next day, and a miraculous deliverance would have thwarted this. A list of names is given. No higher honor could ever come to a man than to have his name recorded favorable in the Word of God, even if it appears to have been inserted casually. But what a disgrace to have your name in a list such as given here.

4:7. And when they had set them in the midst. they asked. By what power, or by what name have ye done this?

These three now stand in the exact place where Jesus had stood when He faced this court. However, this is a judicial investigation rather than a trial. They are not accused of any crime; they are asked to make a statement concerning themselves. The question they were asked is full of meaning. In connection with what power, or in connection with what name have you done this thing? They do not describe the miracle in any way so they will not bring into prominence the good deed the apostles have performed.

4:8-10. Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel. If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole.

In these words of Peter we see the first fulfillment of Matthew 10:19,20. Peter and John had not lain awake all night discussing and planning their defense. The Holy Spirit is the author of this defense, and we should not credit it to Peter's power or courage.

Peter does what the spokesman for the Sanhedrin failed to do. He names the "crime" for which they are being examined; the good deed done to the impotent man. He has nothing to hide, for he would have all Jerusalem to know the facts of this beggar's healing. He courts the utmost publicity; declaring it is by the name of Jesus the Nazarene, the same One whom these rulers crucified, the One God raised from the dead, even by Him this former cripple now stands before them whole.

4:11-12. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

In spite of their great sin of rejecting Christ, we must admit that the rulers of Israel were earnestly seeking to rebuild their nation. They looked forward to a time when they would be freed from the iron heel of Rome and be an autonomous nation once again. These men were the builders of Israel. They had given some consideration to the man Jesus but deemed Him to be unfit to be used anywhere in a building such as they proposed. He was the stone considered as nothing by the builders. They rejected and crucified Him. But this very stone they rejected became the head of the corner; that one supreme stone which governs every other corner, every line, and every angle. They could find deliverance and blessing in none other. There was only one name under heaven given among men wherein they could expect salvation. Strict interpretation demands that we understand Peter as speaking of national salvation. However, by application this passage applies to individual salvation as well.

4:13-14. Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled: and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And beholding the man, which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

The Greek here literally means that they saw Peter and John to be uneducated and ordinary men. They were neither unlearned nor ignorant. They did lack the affectation that marked the learned class of that day, but they had been to the school of Christ. The lame man who had been healed standing beside them gave eloquent proof of every word Peter had spoken. They can say nothing to contradict or deny a single word.

4:15-17. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle has been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them that they speak to no man in this name.

The Sadducees are caught in an embarrassing situation. They had hardly expected to find themselves on trial with all the evidence against them. They order the prisoners to step outside while they confer in private. They know not what to do with these men. Having arrested them, they feel to save their faces they must do something. They admit they cannot deny the miracle, since it was performed in public and is already well known to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Since they dare not deny the miracle, the only thing left to do is to stop its spread. They determine to muzzle James and John completely. They will forbid them by threats not to mention "this name" to any man. Note that they purposely say "this name" without mentioning "Jesus." Some Jews still maintain an aversion to pronouncing this name even today.

4:18. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

These are Luke's own words, and he uses the name "Jesus" in reporting the facts. The translation fails to show the summary nature and strictness of this order. It was a sweeping charge not to say a word or to teach in the name of Jesus. Thus the apostles were ordered to cease being apostles and the witnesses were to cease their witnessing. The Sanhedrin nullifies the very orders the Lord had given them.

4:19, 20. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

God had ordered them to do one thing, and the Sanhedrin ordered them to do the opposite. In view of this they gave their brief but perfect answer. "If it be right before God to obey you rather than God, you judge." The apostles have already decided and they are ready to abide by the consequences. "We can do nothing else but speak the things which we have seen and heard." A great principle is here established. When the government or any human authority commands what is contrary to the Word of God, we are bound to obey God alone.

4:21-22. So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done. For the man was above forty years old on whom this miracle of healing was shewed.

Thus the whole examination ended in failure. The Sanhedrin threatened them further, but unable to do more, they let them go. They would gladly have manufactured some charges, but were hindered in this because they feared a rebellion among the people, for these glorified God because of the miracle. Thus we see an insincere Sanhedrin and sincere apostles; they disappointed, the apostles joyful; the Sanhedrin in danger from the people, the apostles being praised by the people.

4:23. And being let go. they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

Having been released, they went at once to their own. This seems to indicate the other ten apostles. What the Sanhedrin said is emphasized, and no stress is laid upon how Peter and John replied. Men of the flesh would gleefully report how they won the argument and tell of the discomfiture of the Sanhedrin. The important thing here is that the Sanhedrin has ordered the cessation of all testimony. From now on if they give witness it must be done in open violation of the highest legal authority in their nation.

4:24-28. And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said. Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things. The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together. For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done

Beyond all doubt, the apostles at this point are facing a critical moment. To disobey a strict order of the supreme Jewish court was a very serious thing. They turn to God, lay the whole matter before him and ask for the boldness needed to resist the demands of the Sanhedrin. They are in one accord on the matter. As a unit they determine to disobey man and to obey God. The divine direction that leads them to disobey their rulers is found in the words of Psalm 2. In that Psalm their own rulers are associated with the Gentiles in their hostility toward Jesus. Their rulers at one time were under Jehovah's protection, but they are now under His wrath because of their rejection of the Son of God.

4:29,30. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word. By stretching forth thine hand to heal: and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

They ask God to look upon the threats of the Sanhedrin, to take these threats into account in whatever He does for them. They ask for boldness that they may speak the Word. They call themselves slaves to show that they have no will of their own in these matters. They ask for signs. This is wholly in the will of God, inasmuch as He had promised to confirm their witness with signs following.

4:31. And when they had prayed. the place was shaken where they were assembled together: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. and they spake the word of God with boldness.

In full harmony with the Pentecostal dispensation, the answer to their prayer was immediate and miraculous. A sign was given immediately. There is no reason to link up the shaking of the place of their assembly with an earthquake. Let it be a miraculous shaking of the house, and not a miraculous earthquake that shook it.

4:32. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things, which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

Among these believers, thousands of hearts were beating as one; thousands of souls were one in desire, in feeling, and in love. They continue to have all things in common. This began with the twelve in the years before the Cross, when they had one common purse. It is continued here, even though the original twelve have become a multitude. There was not one man among them who said of anything he possessed, "This is mine."

4:33. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all.

The apostles were the official witnesses when public testimony was given. Their witness concerned "the resurrection of the Lord Jesus," not just of some part of Him called the body. Festus had it right when he said "one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." Acts 25:19.

4:34, 35. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands and houses sold them, and brought the prices of things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.

This passage has been almost universally misunderstood due to failure to recognize the property laws that existed in Israel. These were so different from ours that we will always have difficulty in understanding them. Every Jew had a portion of the land, which could not be sold. Most of the land was community property, and each family was allotted a certain portion. The family could sell their rights to this, but could give no title to it. It came back to the original owners in the year of Jubilee. Additional land could be acquired, but only for the time that remained until the Jubilee. Some of these believers had acquired lands and houses in this manner. This is what they sold.

4:36-37. And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation.) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus. Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles feet.

This man is given an elaborate introduction here due to the important place he will fill in the future. Some pieces of property in Israel were not communal property and these could be purchased with a title that was unaffected by the Jubilee. As a Levite, Barnabas would have a certain allotment, but this could not be sold. This valuable piece was his personal property, but he sold it and brought the money to the apostles.

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AN IMPERATIVE NEED – DANIEL'S SEVENTY WEEKS

God has no greater joy than to hear that His children walk in the truth. God's Word is truth, but men cannot walk in truth which they do not know or which they do not fully understand. We have gained a measure of truth upon many subjects, but much more is vitally needed. To cite a specific example, at the present time we could use to good advantage truth on the subject of **Daniel's seventy weeks**. We have numerous books, pamphlets, and charts that deal with this subject, but after reading all of them, the conviction persists that truth is still needed.

Satisfactory explanations of this great prophecy are numerous. One could hardly desire a better explanation than the one found in Sir Robert Anderson's *The Coming Prince*, but satisfactory explanations of a passage are sometimes only a substitute for the fullness of truth. Numerous teachers believe they have exhausted this prophecy, that they know all that can be known about it. They feel there are no problems here. Attitudes such as this indicate that those who hold them will be of no help in the quest for truth.

The word translated "Messiah" in Daniel 9:25, 26 occurs thirty-eight times in the Old Testament and it is translated "Messiah" **only** here; It is found in Isaiah 45:1 where it is translated "anointed," and is given to one named Cyrus. The translation of Daniel 9:25, 26 is merely an interpretation and gives us what the translator thought the Hebrew meant.

Daniel 9:25 speaks of "the going forth of the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem." There has been much speculation as to whether this refers to the decree of Cyrus (II Chron. 36:22, 23; Ezra 1:1-3); that of Darius (Ezra 6:3-8); or that of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7). After careful examination of all Scripture bearing upon this subject, honesty forces me to say that I see no commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem in the acts of any of these men.

It appears that the current interpretations of the prophecy of seventy weeks has been founded upon a too hurried acceptance of the *King James Version* translation of these verses. A comparison with the *American Revised Version* will reveal great differences.

A new translation, a new approach, an accurate Scriptural definition of every term used is essential to any true understanding of this portion. Such terms as "finish the transgression," "make an end of sins," "bring in everlasting righteousness," etc., must be defined by Scripture. One becomes wearied as he reads the statements of men who tell us what these terms mean yet furnish no Scriptural proof whatsoever of their definitions. Most important of all: this prophecy must be completely encircled by related truth from other portions of Scripture. When this is done, the problem will cease to exist and the correct interpretation can be discovered.

HELP WANTED – ISRAEL’S RESTORATION COMMENTS?

In the past eighteen months I have set forth in several articles teaching upon the subject of the repentance, conversion, and restoration of Israel before the second coming of Christ. Material on this will be found in Volume 10, Number 3; Volume 10, Number 4, Volume 10, Number 5, Volume 11, Number 1, also the article in the current issue expounding Acts 3:19-21, and the study under the title of *The Order of Things to Come*. Those who have read these articles can now be of help. Do you see any problems or difficulties that stand in the way of your acceptance of this teaching? Is there any point in the teaching as presented that you feel will not stand the test of Scripture? What points do you feel need further clarification?

I would like very much to hear from my readers in regard to these things. To be of real value, your letters must be brief and should be written on one side of a single sheet of paper. I will not be able to answer neither will time permit me to enter into personal correspondence with any reader concerning this subject. However, I assure you that your letter will be carefully read and considered and that it will have a bearing upon future articles that will be published upon this subject.

THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

****A glance at the calendar as this is being written shows that it was just two years ago today that we arrived in California. The burdens that were incidental to getting established here are now only pleasant memories. To me, the past two years have been of great spiritual value, and the experiences have been good discipline. I have failed to do some of the things I had earnestly hoped to do, but

believe that I have failed gracefully. There are no regrets or lingering disappointments. I trust that I have demonstrated to my friends and fellow-workers the graces of Christian patience, faithfulness and devotion to the work of the Lord.

I would not dare to summarize what has been accomplished. Spiritual progress can neither be weighed counted or measured. In a personal ministry such as this, confidence is built over a long period of time. Honesty of purpose is not established by announcing it at the first meeting. Two years of faithful ministry of the Word here has brought to me the love and confidence of a number of friends who now wait with willing hearts and hands to help me perform the service to which the Lord has called me. Hardly a month passes that I cannot count an addition to this number. I prize these friends highly and trust that I will continue to merit their love and confidence. However, let none think that I have won these friends to myself. Do not think that my feet are always under their table or else their's under mine. I never find time for such social contacts, much to my regret. We are friends in the Truth.

My two years of sewing the seed we are beginning to see results. The "due time" for reaping is not here yet, but at least we can report that the seed is sprouting. A stirring of interest or a sudden awakening is being seen in many places, and we are doing all in our power to further arouse those who are showing interest. A detailed report of this is not now possible, but it will be made later when and if this present interest takes more definite shape. However, I can say that all of us in the work here are thrilled as we see the interest being manifested in San Diego, California.

****Purely personal. The Editor gave sixty-two messages during July and August. I partially lost my secretary the first week in September. Our daughter Jane is teaching school in Victorville, California, a hundred miles from Los Angeles. She still types manuscripts for me in her spare time.

****Bound Volumes Number 1, 2, 3 are all out of print and will not be reissued. If any reader has these Volumes and desires to dispose of them, we will buy them at a dollar each. *The Study of Human Destiny* is also out of print. This will be rewritten and reprinted as it has proved to be an important message. *Let us Now Go Even Unto Bethlehem* has been out of print for several years. We do not plan to reprint this.

It brings me real joy to announce that *The Englishman's Greek Concordance* has been reprinted in England. We have a supply on the way here. Send us your order. The price is \$10.00.

****We can still supply *The Companion Bible* at \$15.00.

****Elroy B. Robinson, who has studied and worked with us for the past two years is now located in Illinois. He has gone there as the result of many invitations from those who were hungry for a Bible teaching ministry. He is willing to teach every night in the week, and no class will be too small for his consideration. Friends of this ministry living south of Chicago who are interested should write him c/o Frank Cox, Jewett, Illinois. A further report of classes being conducted will be made later.

****Regular meetings of the *Los Angeles Bible Fellowship* are three in number and are at 11:00 A.M. and 7:30 P.M. on Sundays and 7:45 P.M. on Thursdays. All meetings are held at 245 South Lucas A venue.

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