Walking in Present Truth

God's Plan and the Restored Church

Teacher's Manual

Walking in Present Truth
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Introduction to Course

We are fortunate to live in a time when we can expect God to move in powerful ways to bring to greater fulfillment the awesome purpose that He began when He created mankind. While there have been many obstacles to the fulfillment of that purpose, including the fall of Adam and the failures of many of God's people, there will be a generation of people who fully enter into all that God intended from the very beginning.

They will not succeed because they are better or smarter than any other people, but they will succeed because of the grace of God and the provisions of Calvary. When Christ came He came to get man back on track. He came to restore mankind to God's original purpose.

Actually the entire Bible deals with the subject of restoration. In the first two chapters of the Bible God declared His purpose. In the last two chapters of the Bible we see the fulfillment of that declared purpose. Everything in between is the story of restoration and mission fulfillment.

The purpose of this course is to take a look at the purpose of God as it pertains especially to our generation. We are in a relay race to the finish line. Each generation has had its challenge to respond to the Spirit of God in order to effectively contribute to its leg of the race. We have a responsibility to God and to any future generations to do our part to see God's purpose come to pass. We have a responsibility to leave future generations better off than we were.

We fulfill that responsibility by walking the present truth. The main thesis for this course could be summarized as follows:

Thesis: ***God's plan is progressive. What God began in Adam, He continued through Abraham and Israel. He will end up completing His plan in and through the Church. Each generation must build on the past and be responsive to the present dealings of God in their generation. God is speaking to the Church today, it is our responsibility to hear His voice and be established in Present Truth.***

Lesson 1-2
What is Present Truth?

"For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know them and are established in present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you…moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease." II Peter 1:12-13, 15

I. There is such a thing as "present truth" (II Peter 1:12-13, 15).

When Peter wrote to this group of God's people he was reminding them of truths that he had brought to them in the past into which they have now become established. For these believers in the New Testament Church era, there was a lot of "present truth" for them to absorb. The word "present" that is used here by Peter to describe certain truth is from the same word that is used to refer to Christ's second coming (*parousia*). It refers to a truth that is "nearby" or "coming upon us." It is a truth that is being "uncovered" or "revealed" to us at the present moment in time.

Most of these believers that Peter addressed were of Jewish background who had made the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant. Think of the amazing changes in understanding that these people experienced in that transition generation. Under the Old Covenant they were involved in animal sacrifice, but under the New Covenant they were to bring spiritual sacrifices. Under the Old Covenant they had to observe certain feasts and holy days, but in the New Covenant Christ fulfilled all of those things and they no longer observed them in the same way.

Of course, these few changes are only the "tip of the iceberg" when it came to the way in which believers functioned under the New Covenant as opposed to the way they functioned under the Old Covenant.

These early Christians were devout Jews who were trying to do their very best to please God. They had the writings of the Old Testament that prescribed certain activities for them in the practice of their monotheism. In fact, some of those things were serious enough to have severe penalties attached to them if they were not practiced.

However, many of those ceremonial practices were actually prophetic types and shadows that pointed to some new expression that would come to them when Christ fulfilled the law and the prophets. They were certainly real enough to those who practiced them in the Old Testament, but when you look at God's eternal purpose from start to finish, these natural practices were not an end in themselves but they pointed to Jesus would come later and establish a spiritual order.

Because of the stage in God's plan in which these First Century believers found themselves there was a present truth for them. There was a revelation of God's purpose

that specifically related to the age in which they lived and the place in which they served in relation to God's purpose.

For these believers in Christ there was a present truth that they were called upon by Peter to enter into and become established in. It would be that which would serve subsequent generations to bring them closer to the ultimate realization of the eternal purpose of God.

A. Present Truth Defined

1. Present truth is a "now" word from God (I Pet. 1:10-12).

"Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the suffering of Christ and the glory that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things which angels desire to look into." I Peter 1:10-12

This verse seems to suggest that the Old Testament prophets spoke of things that they realized were not "now" words for them, but they would become "now" words for another generation.

a. It is not a "new" word.

God is not speaking "new" things outside of His revealed word of God, but He does bring illumination on the revelation that He has given to us at critical seasons of our life.

b. It is meant to be an area of focus (Eccl. 3:1).

As God brings forth His plan it is much like a general contactor who is building a house. There are various stages in the process. There is the excavation work, the foundation work, the framing, the roofing, the wiring, the plumbing, the siding, etc. Each phase is important in its own time.

c. It is a necessary experience common to all progress or growth.

- For these early believers.
- For the corporate body of Christ.
- For each local church.
- For every single believer in Christ.

In each case there is a present word or present truth that corresponds to the next step in a spiritual journey.

The question could be asked, "What is God saying to you now?" or "What is to be your spiritual focus today?" or "What is God's present tense or ***now word*** for you?"

2. Present truth is a word for "today" (Heb. 3:7, 13, 15; 4:7).

Read Hebrews 3:7-15

In the book of Hebrew, the writer addresses the situation with Old Testament Israel. In chapter 3 and 4 he repeatedly uses the word "today."

- "***Today*** if you will hear His voice" (3:7)
- "But exhort one another daily, while it is called ***today***" (3:13)
- "***Today*** if you will hear His voice" (3:15)
- "***Today*** if you will hear His voice" (4:7)

a. God has a word for us today. He speaks in the present tense.

b. God had a word for the seven churches of Asia (Rev. 1-3). The common admonition was "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Many translations say "What the Spirit is saying to the churches."

c. God leads His people line upon line. He has a today word for:

- Individuals (What is God saying to you?)
- Local Churches (What is God saying to your assembly?)
- The Church World-wide (What is God saying to His Body?)

3. Present truth is a word that is "proceeding" from the mouth of God (Mt. 4:4).

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

a. Responding to the now word of God is the thing that keeps believers and churches alive.

What causes a believer to get sick spiritually? What causes them to dry up and become unproductive? What causes local churches to do the same?

b. We lose our life, vitality, strength, vision and purpose when we cease to be responsive to the "now" word of God.

4. Present truth involves our "day of visitation" (Luke 19:41-44).

Jesus wept over Jerusalem because those that should have had ears to hear did not hear and respond.

*Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known, even you, especially in this **your day**, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know **the time of your visitation**."*

The religious rulers of all people should have been those most ready to hear. They had a word for their day, for their season, for their place in the overall plan of God, but, for the most part, they did not respond to that word.

a. When God is visiting the individual, a church, or the church with a "now" word, it is important to catch the wave because there is a special grace available at that time to walk through that door.

b. In the Old Testament, those who had come out of Egypt failed to respond to the "now" word to go into the land of promise when the grace was available (Num. 14).

c. Many of the Jews of Jesus day missed their day of visitation represented in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus was the "now" word for their generation.

d. Throughout history we find that many fresh moves of God have been persecuted by the very people who should have been the most ready to receive them.

B. God has a "now" word for every generation (Acts 13:36).

For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption…

II. God wants us to be established in "present truth."

A. What does the word "established" mean?

The word "established" means "to set fast, to confirm, to be solid or stable". The following scripture verses indicate that this is God's desire for us.

1. Psalm 40:2 – David declared that God "set my feet upon a rock and **establish** my steps."

2. Psalm 112:8 – The Psalmist declared that the one who fears the Lord his "heart is **established** and it shall not be moved."

3. Isaiah 2:2 – Isaiah prophesied that "the mountain of the Lord's house will be **established** in the top of the mountains."

4. Colossians 2:7 – Paul said that we are to be "rooted and build up in Him and **established** in the faith."

5. Hebrews 13:9 – The writer to the Hebrews affirmed "it is good that the heart be **established** by grace."

B. To be solid and stable, we must be established in truth.

This establishing, however, is not to be construed as stubbornness in relation to a previously held position. If we are to be solid and stable, we must be established in "truth"—God's truth not our own opinions of the truth. We are to have lives and churches that are established on truth.

God wants us to be established in "present truth".

1. The church is to be the pillar and ground of truth (I Tim. 3:15).
2. As Christians we are to walk in truth (II John 4).
3. We are to be those who rightly divide the truth (II Tim. 3:15).
4. We are to obey the truth (I Pet. 1:22).
5. We are to rejoice in the truth (I Cor. 13:6).
6. It is the truth that will set us free (John 8:32).

C. To be established in the present truth we must be **reminded of the past** and be **responsive to the present** dealings of God (See II Peter 1:12-15).

This involves two things:

1. It means that we must have an appreciation for our past and build on it.

   a. We are to build on the old landmarks not remove them (Pr. 22:28; 23:10).

      "Do not remove the ancient landmark which your fathers have set"
      Proverbs 22:28

   b. The past becomes a platform for the future.

   c. The ancient landmarks keep us from getting out of balance or drifting into heresy (II Tim. 2:14; Eph. 4:14; Heb. 2:1).

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. Hebrews 2:1

d. Peter wanted believers to be reminded of the past (II Pet. 1:12-13, 15).

*I will not be negligent **to remind** you always of these things, **though you know them**, and are established in the present truth.* Verse 12

*Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up **by reminding you**…* Verse 13

*Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have **a reminder of these things** after my decease.* Verse 15

2. It means that we must be responsive to the present dealing of God.

At the same time that we are building on the past, we must be open to what God is saying **today**. We must never close the door to further truth and further light. Each of the following verses indicates that we do not "have it all." God's revelation is progressive, and we are on a path that progressively unfolds before us.

a. The path of the just shines more and more (Pr. 4:18 KJV).
b. We are to be changed from glory to glory (II Cor. 3:18).
c. We are to grow up into Him in all things (Eph. 4:15).
d. We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:1-2).
e. We are to increase more and more (I Th. 4:10).
f. Our faith is to continue to grow (II Cor. 10:15).
g. We are to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Him (II Pet. 3:18).

From these verses it is clear that the walk with God is a progressive walk—on and on, deeper and deeper, more and more, right up until we meet the Lord whether through the grave or the Second Coming.

So what is God saying today? Does He have something that He is trying to communicate to His people? What is He saying to your in your own personal life? What is He trying to do in your local assembly? Do you have an "ear to hear" what the Spirit is saying?

Lesson 3-4
Times of Refreshing

"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." Acts 3:19-21

In the last lesson we saw that God's method of bringing forth His purpose in the earth is to move like a contractor building a house. God is in fact building a house—the House of the Lord. He is moving in each generation to lead that generation closer to His original purpose and goal. He does this by bringing a word to each generation to which they are challenged to respond. It is the "now" word, the "today" word, the "coming upon" word that will bring life and meaning to their existence.

As God brings present truth to each generation His Spirit goes before that word with special times and seasons of refreshing that are meant to prepare the spiritual soil in the hearts of His people for the seed of truth that is to be planted.

I. There are times or seasons of refreshing that God inspires that are consistent with God's overall plan for His people.

A. These times and seasons are times where God provides special grace to enter into His purposes.

B. These times and seasons are described in ten different ways in the Bible.

1. Times of Refreshing (Acts 3:19)

2. Times of Restoration (Acts 3:21)

3. Set Times (Ps. 102:13)

   You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, has come.

4. Fullness of Times (Gal. 4:4)

   But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law…

5. Times and Seasons (I Th. 5:1)

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you.

6. Day of Visitation (I Pet. 2:12)

   …having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.

7. Appointed time (Acts 17:26)

   And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings…

8. Time of Reformation (Heb. 9:10)

   …concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.

9. Time of Visitation (Lk. 19:44b)

   …because you did not know the time of your visitation.

10. Time of Latter Rain (Zech. 10:1)

In more recent history, these times and seasons are often referred to as "revivals" or "renewals." These revivals or renewal seasons are not intended to be an end in themselves, but they are meant to accomplish a specific purpose and make God's people more suited to His purpose.

C. These times and seasons are often associated prophetically with the pouring out of water. They are seen as:

1. Rain from heaven (Joel 2:23; Zech. 10:1)
2. Rivers of living water (Jn. 7:38)
3. Fountains of life (Ps. 36:5-9; Jer. 2:13; 17:13; Rev. 21:6)
4. Springs of joy (Ps. 87:7; Num. 21:17)
5. Showers of blessing (Ezek. 34:26; Mi. 5:7)

I will make them and the places all around My hill a blessing; and I will cause showers to come down in their season; there shall be showers of blessing.
Ezekiel 34:26

D. These times and seasons must be discerned (Mt. 16:3; Luke 12:56).

We must have spiritual eyes and ears to discern what God is doing. Unfortunately not everyone will perceive that God is doing anything. Jesus represented one of the greatest visitations of all time, but not everyone discerned the times.

"Then He also said to the multitudes, "When you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, 'There will be hot weather'; and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not ***discern this time****?"* Luke 12:56

"Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot ***discern the signs of the times****."* Matthew 16:3

E. These times and seasons demand a response (I Chr. 12:32).

The children of Issachar were commended in the Old Testament because they were able to discern the day in which they lived and along with that they knew how they were to respond.

"The children of Issachar who had ***understanding of the times****, to know what Israel ought to do…"* I Chronicles 12:32

F. These times and seasons have a special purpose in God's mind (Eccl. 3:1; 8:6).

Everything God does, He does with purpose in mind. God wants to accomplish something special in His special prophetic times and seasons.

II. These times or seasons of refreshing will usually include four principle ingredients (Acts 3:19-21).

It should be noted that these elements will be present or apply whether a believer is in God's special time of visitation in their personal life with the Lord, whether a local church is experiencing a special time of visitation in its journey with the Lord or whether the entire church worldwide is experiencing a fresh moving of the Holy Spirit.

Re-read: Acts 3:19-21

Each one of these elements lays the foundation for and paves the way for the next one.

A. Repentance

When we are confronted with new insight and illumination from the Lord, the first response must always be repentance. Repentance precedes revival (John the Baptist must precede Jesus).

Our repentance is for:

1. Drifting way from God's intended purpose.
2. Lack of responsiveness to the moving of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
3. Doing our own thing in our own way.
4. Neglecting the "now" or the revealed word of God.

B. Conversion

Repentance must to lead to conversion.

1. Conversion involves turning around or changing what we are presently doing or the direction we are presently going.

   We must be willing to change and do things differently than we did them before if we are going to enter into the "now" word of the Lord.

2. Conversion involves adopting a new lifestyle, methodology or emphasis.

C. Healing

As we respond to the Lord in genuine repentance and manifest a true willingness to change, God comes in and brings healing to us. This healing is manifest in:

1. Receiving the forgiveness of sins.
2. Being delivered from former bondages.
3. Experiencing new grace for change.
4. Enjoying new found freedom in Christ.

D. Refreshing

The repentance, conversion and healing were to position us for God's refreshing.

Peter's words make it clear that we position ourselves so that "times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). God desires to blow fresh air on His people as they respond to His moving.

The Amplified Bible says it this way, "That the times of refreshing, or recovering from the effects of the heat, of reviving with fresh air—may come from the presence of the Lord."

1. The word "refreshing" from the Greek means "a cooling off or refreshing, recovery of breath, refreshment of one's spirit, revive" (Thayer).

2. In God's method, this is our time to absorb and accommodate ourselves to the "now" word that God has spoken.

Your mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the great mountains; Your judgments are a great deep; O LORD, You preserve man and beast. How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings. They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures. For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light. Psalm 36:5-9

III. These times and seasons can only be fully experienced when we have the right heart attitude toward receiving.

A. There are attitudes that will promote refreshing for the believer or the church.

1. We will be blessed if we are "poor in spirit" (Mt. 5:3). When we are poor in spirit, it simply means that we acknowledge that we have a need. We are not self-satisfied. Believing that we have it all closes the door to further blessing.

2. We will be blessed if we hunger and thirst (Mt. 5:6). Hungering and thirsting is described in several ways.

   a. Panting after (Ps. 42:1; Ps. 38:10).

   As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. Psalm 42:1-2a

   b. Longing for (Ps. 63:1; 84:2; 107:9; 119:20)

   O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. Psalm 63:1

   My soul longs, yes, even faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Psalm 84:2

   c. Thirsting after (Ps. 42:2; 63:1; 143:6; Neh. 9:15-20; Is. 55:1)

   I spread out my hands to You; my soul longs for You like a thirsty land. Psalm 143:6

   d. Hungering for (Ps. 107:9; Luke 1:53).

   For He satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungry soul with goodness. Psalm 107:9

B. There are things that will hinder refreshing for the believer or the church.

1. Forsaking the Lord (Deut. 11:16-17; Jer. 2:13; Amos 4:7)

Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, lest the LORD's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.
Deuteronomy 11:16-17

For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns--broken cisterns that can hold no water. Jeremiah 2:13

2. Disobedience (Lev. 26:12-24; I Kgs. 17:1; Jer. 3:3; 14:4)

Therefore the showers have been withheld, and there has been no latter rain. You have had a harlot's forehead; you refuse to be ashamed. Jeremiah 3:3

3. Pride (Rev. 3:17)

You say, "I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!" And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

4. Unrepentant Sin (II Chr. 6:26-27; 7:13-14; Is. 5:6)

If the skies are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and then they pray toward this Temple and confess your name and turn from their sins because you have punished them, then hear from heaven and forgive the sins of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them to do what is right, and send rain on your land that you have given to your people as their special possession. II Chronicles 6:26-27

At times I might shut up the heavens so that no rain falls, or I might command locusts to devour your crops, or I might send plagues among you. Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and heal their land. II Chronicles 7:13-14

IV. These times or seasons of refreshing will prepare the way for the restoration of the Church and the Second Coming of Christ.

Peter says that these times and seasons must come before Christ returns a second time (Acts 3:21).

A. From a prophetic standpoint there are two special or primary "times of refreshing" which are referred to as the early or "former rain" and the "latter rain" (Jam. 5:7).

1. The former or early rain

Prophetically this refers to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Early Church at Pentecost (Acts 2).

2. The latter rain

Prophetically this refers to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit or the season of refreshing at the end of the Church Age immediately preceding the Second Coming of Christ.

Even though these terms have been abused and misused in recent history and they have a certain stigma attached to them, they are biblical terms and concepts. So rather than avoid them we really need to redefine them.

B. The natural concept that serves as a basis for our understanding of this is the natural cycle of rains in Israel around which all of their agricultural and feast times were built (Deut. 11:10-17).

For the land you are about to enter and occupy is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you planted your seed and dug out irrigation ditches with your foot as in a vegetable garden. 11 It is a land of hills and valleys with plenty of rain--12 a land that the LORD your God cares for. He watches over it day after day throughout the year! 13 "If you carefully obey all the commands I am giving you today, and if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and soul, and if you worship him, 14 then he will send the rains in their proper seasons so you can harvest crops of grain, grapes for wine, and olives for oil. 15 He will give you lush pastureland for your cattle to graze in, and you yourselves will have plenty to eat. 16 "But do not let your heart turn away from the LORD to worship other gods. 17 If you do, the LORD's anger will burn against you. He will shut up the sky and hold back the rain, and your harvests will fail. Then you will quickly die in that good land the LORD is now giving you."

1. The early rain came in around the time of planting and was instrumental in softening the ground and germinating the seed for the coming harvest.

2. The latter rain came in toward the days of harvest and was instrumental in ripening the grain just prior to actual harvesting.

3. In between these two major rains there was a long dry spell. There may have been periodic sprinkles of rain but nothing of major consequence.

C. The Old Testament prophets used these agricultural cycles to apply to the moving of God's Spirit among His people.

Several prophets (including Joel, Hosea, Zechariah) used this terminology that was later picked up in the New Testament. Each of these prophets expanded the prophetic implications of the EARLY and LATTER rain.

1. Joel in his prophecy connects the concept of "latter rain" with restoration and an outpouring of the Holy Spirit prior to the Second Coming of Christ (Joel 2:21-27 especially vs. 23).

   It should be noted that even though the early church used Joel's prophecy and applied it to what happened on the Day of Pentecost (i.e. the early rain), the more specific words of Joel's prophecy make it clear that he was actually speaking of an outpouring that was to occur just prior to the return of the Lord (i.e. the latter rain, See Acts 2:17-21).

   "And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." Acts 2:17-21

2. Hosea indicated that Christ would come like the former and the latter rain (Hosea 6:1-3 especially vs. 3).

   "Come, and let us return to the LORD; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight. Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and former rain to the earth."
   Hosea 6:1-3

3. Zechariah indicated that we need to be discerning about the times and so that we can know when it is time to ask for the latter rain. At that time we need to seek the Lord for the fulfillment of His word (Zech. 10:1).

D. James, the brother of the Lord, picked up on the theme and again applied the agricultural concept to the spiritual purpose of God (Jam. 5:7).

Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.

James indicated that God as the heavenly husbandman or farmer is waiting for the earth to bring forth spiritually what He has been waiting for through the ages. He further indicated that it will happen in response to the coming of the early and the latter rains.

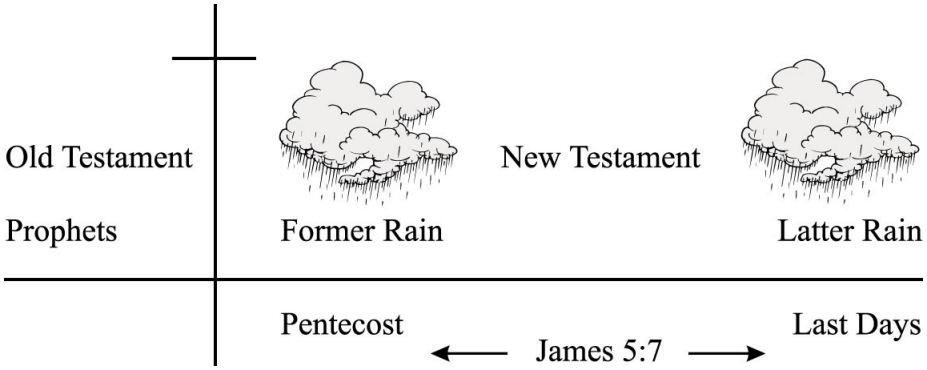
E. The spiritual or prophetic fulfillment of the EARLY and LATTER rain speaks of two primary seasons of refreshing in God's timetable.

1. The former rain speaks of the outpouring of rain (the Holy Spirit) on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21).

   This rainfall of the Holy Spirit accomplished exactly what the early rain accomplished in the natural agricultural cycle in Palestine. It softened the ground to receive the seed sown by the sower (the Son of Man). It was instrumental in the germination of that seed and the initial sprouting of that seed.

2. The latter rain refers to an outpouring that God will bring to ripen the grain to prepare for the harvest, which is at the end of the age (Mt. 13:39; Rev. 14:15).

   See the following Diagram:



3. The latter rains were always considered the most precious and they were of double intensity (Jer. 5:23-25).

   But this people has a defiant and rebellious heart; they have revolted and departed. They do not say in their heart, "Let us now fear the LORD our God, Who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest."

   The exciting thing here is that as wonderful as the experience was associated with the early rain in the history of the church, the experience of the end time church

will be even greater. The season of the harvest will be a time of great rejoicing as God brings His purposes to completion.

V. We are instructed to ask for the rain (Zech. 10:1).

God is going to be faithful to bring the rain of refreshing in its season. As believers in our day, we can believe three things. We can believe that God is going to give us rain in due season. We can believe that we are going to experience our appointed time. We can believe that as we fear the Lord and remain responsive to the present dealings of God we will not miss our day of visitation.

"Ask the LORD for rain
In the time of the latter rain.
The LORD will make flashing clouds;
He will give them showers of rain,
Grass in the field for everyone."

Zechariah 10:1

Lesson 5
Positioning Ourselves for Visitation

I. God has given many promises of revival, visitation, refreshing and harvest in the last days.

A. The last days will see a mighty outpouring of the Spirit (Joel 2:28).

B. The last days will be times of refreshing and renewing (Acts 3:19-21).

C. The last days will be times when God, the heavenly husbandman, receives the precious fruit of the earth (Jam. 5:7).

D. The last days will be characterized by the Church entering into its full purpose (Eph. 5:27).

E. The last days will be days of significant harvest (Mt. 13:39).

F. The last days will be the most exciting spiritual season since the first coming of Christ.

However, in the midst of this excitement, as in the midst of the 1st Century excitement, there will be those who miss their day of visitation. There will be those who are not a part of what is going on and will be oblivious to what is happening.

II. It is possible to miss one's day of visitation.

A. Jerusalem and many of its leaders missed their day.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem because they would not be gathered. There were, however, some exceptions to this (i.e. Anna, Simeon, Mary, Joseph, the Apostles, etc.).

B. Even among those who responded, not everyone caught the first wave.

1. The 120 on the day of Pentecost could have been 500.
2. Not all of those who had an opportunity positioned themselves to receive their day of visitation.

III. Experiencing personal revival involves being at the right place at the right time.

Ill. Little Johnny came in from recess all drenched with water on a bright and sunny day. The teacher asked, "How did you get so wet?" Johnny replied, "I was under the spout where the water comes out!"

The Bible speaks of those who were in the right place at the right time. They were people who had placed themselves under the spout where the glory comes out. They were people who got wet spiritually and did not miss their day of visitation. We want to learn what we can from these individuals.

A. Simeon (Luke 2:25-32)

And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. 27 So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, 28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: 29 "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; 30 for my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel."

Notice that his qualities included a prophetic touch concerning his time and season, a devout lifestyle, a posture of anxiously waiting for the Messiah and being Spirit-led.

B. Anna (Luke 2:36-38)

Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Notice that her qualities included continual prayer, fasting, and a posture of anxiously waiting.

C. 120 in the Upper Room (Acts 1:4-5, 12-14; 2:1-13)

When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5 And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. 6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together,

and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. 7 Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans? Acts 2:1-7

Notice that their qualities included unity, prayer and a devout lifestyle.

D. Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-31; 35-38)

Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert. 27 So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, 28 was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. 29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot." 30 So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?" 31 And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him…

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. 36 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?" 37 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." 38 So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.

Notice that his qualities included humility, open heartedness and being willing and obedient to the Word of God.

E. Cornelius (Acts 10:1-4; 44-48)

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always. About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!" And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God…." Acts 10:1-4

While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Acts 10:44-48a

Notice that his qualities included a devout lifestyle, fear of God, prayer and alms giving.

V. How to position yourself to receive an outpouring (getting under the spout).

As believers today we can follow the faith of those who have gone before us. If we possess the same qualities that they possessed, we can position ourselves under the spout.

Seven qualities in God's people

A. Humility

Regardless of his station in life, the Ethiopian was humble before the Word of God. The Bible says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God" (Mt. 5:3). The Ethiopian was humble, teachable, open and wanting more.

Many Pharisees missed out because the message came through Galileans or because it came through John (Luke 3:1-2), not through them and their rabbinical schools.

God is not obligated to come through the avenues that we expect or the way in which we expect. We must be open. We must be willing to adapt to God's ways rather than expecting God to adapt to our way. We must become as little children.

B. Prayer and Fasting (I Peter 4:7)

But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.

Anna, Simeon, Cornelius, the Apostles all had this in common. They didn't just sit by and say, "Whatever will be, will be."

Even though prophecies had been given about what was to take place, these pillars of faith were not going to take anything for granted. They would ask for what had been promised. They would "ask for rain in the time of the latter rain," as Zechariah declared (Zech. 10:1).

The end time church is to have the spirit and power of Elijah upon it. Elijah prayed for rain (Jam. 5:17-18).

C. Devout Life

Cornelius, Simeon and the Jews who received Christ on the Day of Pentecost, all were said to have had a devout or circumspect life.

This word devout means they were people who were very cautious about offending God in any area of their life. The word "circumspect" means that they paid careful attention to things in all sides. They did not let their spiritual guard down even though the Messiah's coming was delayed. These people were careful to observe the commandments of the Lord. They paid attention to details in their lives, not out of a sense of legalism, but because they sincerely wanted to please God and they did not want to miss out on anything that God had for them.

"It is not the Scriptures that I do not understand that bother me, it is the ones I do understand and am not practicing that really bother me." --Leonard Fox

D. Selfless Giving

Cornelius represents a man who did not store his religion in a bottle. He used the things God had blessed him with to minister to the needs of others. He was concerned about other people's needs, not just his own.

God wants us to be others orientated. He wants us to practice pure religion even when we have little or nothing to give. That is how He knows we will practice this when we receive His full blessing.

God can fill the Cornelius's of this world will abundant blessing, because He knows that they will not hoard it for themselves but will be open hearted and open handed to all in need.

E. Unity

Unity is a major principle that releases the anointing and power of God in the midst of His people (Psalm 133).

People of unity are people who are concerned about not only their relationship to God, but also their relationship to others. Clouded relationships can obstruct the pipeline of God in our lives.

Forgiveness and reconciliation are tools that God puts into our hands to help us to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

F. Watchfulness

Another word for "watchfulness" is "anxious anticipation." Another word for it is "faith." These people who got wet were people who had a spirit of faith and an anxious anticipation that God was going to move. They were looking forward to it and they didn't want to be left behind.

They had the posture of "Expect a Miracle!" They were talking it, walking it, eating it and sleeping it.

Simeon was "waiting for the consolation of Israel". Anna did not depart from the temple because she "looked for redemption in Israel". Her faith kept her alive (84 years young). The 120 stayed in the upper room in anticipation. Where were the other 380 who had been witnesses of the resurrection?

G. Willingness to Respond

The Ethiopian Eunuch had the attitude that we all must cultivate. When he was confronted with truth, he didn't say, "Do I have to do this to be saved?" He said, "What hinders me from being baptized?" Or as one translation puts it, "Why can't I be baptized?"

Psalm 110:3 reads, *Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power* (KJV).

Your people will offer themselves freely on the day you lead your host upon the holy mountains. –RSV

Your people shall be volunteers in the day of your power. –NKJV

In that day of battle, your people will serve you willingly. –NLT

God wants a people who are willing and obedient. In Luke 8:18-21 we are given an insight into who Jesus considers His close friends when He says, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it."

VI. Conclusion

God wants to bless His people.

God is going to move in awesome ways. He is going to do His part, BUT are you going to get wet?

Charles Finney once said, "Revival is finding out which way God is moving and moving with Him."

I cannot make visitation happen, but I can position myself to receive it when it comes.

Lesson 6
God's Eternal Purpose

Thesis: To understand, evaluate and enter into present truth we must have certain basic understandings. We must understand the unity of God's eternal purpose, the unity of the Scriptures, the relationship of natural Israel to the Church, God's method of revelation and restoration and the historic cycle of decline, restoration and revival.

We start with the first aspect of the thesis. In order to understand, evaluate and enter into present truth we must have an understanding of **the unity of God's Eternal Purpose.** We need an overview before we can know how the parts fit. It is like looking at the picture before trying to build a jigsaw puzzle.

God has a purpose that has been behind every action throughout history. All of the work of the Father in creation, plus all of the work of the Son in redemption, plus all of the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification has been aimed at the fulfillment of this purpose. Every single thought and action taken by God in His dealings with mankind, His dealings with nations, His dealings with individuals and His dealings with churches has been totally consistent with that plan and purpose.

Because of this, all of our activity as believers and as churches must be measured against God's Eternal Purpose as well. Whether or not what we are doing has any kind of eternal significance is directly related to whether or not what we are doing is in harmony with what God is doing.

However, if we do not understand God's Eternal Purpose how can we know if what we are doing makes any sense? The Eternal Purpose of God represents to us "the will of God". It is that purpose and this "will" that ultimately endures forever.

I. We must realize that God only has one purpose.

God did not have one purpose for Adam and Eve, another purpose with Noah and his descendants, another purpose for Abraham, another purpose for Israel and another purpose for the church. God is not double-minded, uncertain, or unstable. On the contrary, God is very methodical, determined, and definite in everything that He does.

A. God's purpose has not always been understood by man (Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 3:1-13).

B. God's purpose has been revealed to us in the New Testament Age (Eph. 3:8-11; Col. 1:26).

C. God's purpose was declared in the very first chapters of the Bible (Gen. 1:26-28).

Then God said, " Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the

cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

The key to understanding God's purpose is understanding God's heart—the heart of a father. Since God has the heart of a father, it follows that He also has the desires of a father. Those desires are expressed in five key ways:

1. **A Desire for Reproduction of Self, Image and Likeness**

   "Let us make man in our image" (Gen. 1:26).

   There is a desire in the heart of every father to have offspring that reflect the image of the father or that bear the family resemblance. God, too, is interested in an offspring that would be a true reflection of Him. He is interested in reproducing His character and image in His creation.

2. **A Desire for Multiplicity of Seed or Fruitfulness**

   "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen. 1:28).

   One of the greatest promises to the fathers of the Bible is that of multiplicity of seed. Even though children in our day are looked at by many as a curse, God originally gave them to man as the highest of blessings. The great promise that Abraham treasured above all was his fatherhood of many nations. As a father, God shares in this desire. Having only one Son did not fully satisfy the heart of God. God has a desire for many sons and daughters.

3. **A Desire for Reproduction of Ministry or Partnership**

   "Let them have dominion" (Gen. 1:28).
   "And subdue it" (Gen. 2:28).

   In the heart of every father is the desire to mentor and develop ministry in his offspring so that they might share in the ministry or work of the father. This desire is reflected in the eastern custom of the training of sons in the vocation of the father. Jesus was trained under the hands of Joseph to follow him in his occupation. The Father God desires to bring His offspring into partnership with Him in His occupation, that of ruling the universe.

4. **A Desire for Communion, Relationship or Fellowship**

   "The sound of the Lord God walking in the cool of the day" (Gen. 3:8).

In the heart of every father is the desire for appreciation to be expressed from his children and for there to be a high level of communication between him and his children. There is a desire for the cultivation of a deep personal relationship where the offspring are not just sons but friends. God has this desire in relation to those whom He fathers. This is not to be a relationship based on coercion, but a relationship built on love and the expression of free will.

5. A Desire to Provide a Bride for His Son

"It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18).

In the Old Testament the father had the right to arrange the marriage of his son (Genesis 24). God as the Heavenly Father plans to arrange a divine marriage for His Son by providing a worthy bride for Him.

D. God only has one purpose that He is working toward and everything that He has done, is doing or will ever do is consistent with that one purpose (Eph. 1:3-14).

God's purpose can be summarized as follows:

God's Eternal Purpose is to have a many-membered man in the image of God with whom He might establish relationship and who would qualify for rulership and dominion and for the honor of being eternally linked with the only-begotten Son as one flesh.

II. We must realize that all of God's dealings with man have been a progressive unfolding of and an entering into this purpose.

A. When God dealt with Adam and Eve, He had this purpose in mind (Gen. 1:26-28).

B. When God dealt with the patriarchs, He had this purpose in mind (Gen. 12:1-3).

C. When God dealt with Israel, He had this purpose in mind (Ex. 19:6).

D. When God sent Jesus, He had this purpose in mind (John 3:16).

E. When God works with the Church, He has this same purpose in mind (Mt. 28:19-20; Eph. 4:11-16).

III. We must realize that God's vision is and has been that the whole earth and all mankind come into harmony with His declared purpose.

The whole Bible is a revelation of the unfolding drama of this one central purpose of God. The plan is initiated in the first chapters of Genesis and it is achieved in the closing pages of the book of Revelation.

A. God created man for His purpose and good pleasure (Rev. 4:11).

B. Man sinned against God jeopardizing His ability to fulfill that purpose.

C. God sent Jesus to bring man back to His intended purpose.

D. Through God's grace and the processes of redemption and sanctification man will one day enter into God's declared purpose.

All of the pre-incarnation history is seen as an expectant preparation for the coming of the Redeemer. From Genesis 3:15 on, the primary thrust of the recorded word is the preparation and realization of the "Seed of the Woman" who would make it possible for man to be restored to God's intended plan and go on to fulfill His intended purpose. From this point on we can see God's concern over all the aspects of His purpose in preparing a people to fulfill that purpose.

IV. We must realize that God has used different instruments, vehicles or channels to represent His authority and purpose in the earth.

A. In the Old Testament Age, God used:

1. The Patriarchs
2. The Nation of Israel
3. Gentile Kings

The Jewish people were used by God under the Mosaic Covenant as His instrument to preserve the Seed of the Woman until Christ came. God used many instruments in the Old Testament Age. He used the patriarchs prior to the founding of the nation of Israel, He used Israel and He even used the Gentile nations at times to preserve the Seed. God has always been concerned with the same final product. He has moved through stages in the realization of the purpose. Israel was a part of the process but not the end in itself.

B. In the New Testament Age, God used:

1. Christ
2. The Church

V. We must realize that God's purpose is being accomplished in and through the Church of the New Testament (Eph. 3:8-11).

While God has been working toward this one central purpose since the beginning of time, it is going to be through the Church that this ultimate purpose is going to be realized.

"To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things through Jesus Christ: to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be known by the church to the principalities and powers in heavenly places according to the eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." Ephesians 3:8-11

It is in ***the Church*** where all of God's intended purposes will come to realization. ***The Church*** is God's final instrument that He is using to bring about everything He intended.

A. He is going to use ***the Church*** and His operation through ***the Church*** to bring us to completion, maturity, perfection and to the lost image (Eph. 4:12-16; Col. 3:10, Rom. 8:28-30).

B. He is going to use ***the Church*** to meet His desire for a bride for His Son (II Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:32).

C. He is going to use ***the Church*** to deal finally with Satan (Matt. 16:18-19; Rom. 16:20).

D. He is going to use ***the Church*** to rule and reign with Him for eternity (Rev. 20:6).

E. He is going to use ***the Church*** to bring back mankind into the right relationship to God in fellowship and priestly function (I Pet. 2:5-9; I John 1:3).

F. He is going to use ***His Church*** to fulfill His desire for multiplicity of seed and sinless offspring (Rev. 12).

This is why it is so critical for us to analyze what we are doing in the local church. In our activities and programs we must function in total harmony with God's Eternal Purpose. If we are, we can expect God to bless them with His anointing. If we are doing our own thing, we cannot expect that same blessing.

As we make plans in the church we must continually ask, "Is this in harmony with the purpose of God?" "Are we doing what God is doing?" "Does this hinder or further the work of God in the earth today?"

Even the activities within our programs themselves can be measured against God's purpose. Our children's and youth ministries must be measured by the product that they

are attempting to create. Our programs are not to be merely for the purpose of providing "baby-sitting" or "social function"; they are designed to develop the character of our children, to inspire them to sharpen their skills and abilities so that they personally can become instruments of God to extend His Kingdom and His Purpose to their world. They are preparing a generation to be used of the Lord to crush the serpent's head.

When we build this way, we are flowing with God. We are co-laborers together with Him and we can expect His blessing on all that we do.

VI. We must realize that God's purpose will never be frustrated (Is. 14:24-27; 46:9-11; 55:8-11).

"The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying, 'Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: That I will break the Assyrian in my land, and on My mountains tread him under foot. Then his yoke shall be removed from off them, and his burden removed from their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed against the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations. For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who shall annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?'" Isaiah 14:24-27

VII. Conclusion

God's Purpose and Present Truth

What God is doing today in my life and your life, what He is doing in our local churches and what He is doing in the Body of Christ worldwide is consistent with what He has always been doing. What God is doing in the present is a progressive unfolding of what He has been doing in all previous ages. He is working all things after the counsel of His own will and purpose.

"Revival is finding out which way God is going and going with Him." Finney

"*The instrument God uses may change, but the purpose remains the same."*

Lesson 7
The Unity of the Scripture

Thesis: To understand, evaluate and enter into present truth we must have certain basic understandings. We must understand the unity of God's eternal purpose, the unity of the Scriptures, the relationship of natural Israel to the Church, God's method of revelation and restoration and the historic cycle of decline, restoration and revival.

In the last lesson we learned that God has only one purpose to which He has been working from the foundation of the world. Every action that God has taken over the last centuries has been totally consistent with that plan and purpose. Every bit of creative energy expended by the Father was directed toward that purpose. Every bit of redemptive energy expended by the Son was directed toward that purpose. And every bit of sanctifying energy expended by the Holy Spirit is directed toward that purpose.

It stands to reason then that the history of all mankind is a history and an unfolding of that one eternal purpose of God. God has not gone from one plan to another or one project to another. In fact, He works all things after the counsel of His own will (Eph. 1:11) or as the *Twentieth Century New Testament* translates, "who, in all that happens, is carrying out His own fixed purposes."

To understand, evaluate and enter into present truth…

I. We must realize that the Bible is one book with one message (I Cor. 10:6, 11).

A. The New Testament is an extension of the Old Testament.

People have at times employed various sayings that help illustrate the relationship of the old and the new. The following are some samples:

The New is in the Old contained
The Old is in the New explained

Or,

The New is in the Old concealed
The Old is in the New revealed

B. The New Testament cannot be understood without the Old Testament.

You can go to the Old Testament and discover the seeds for everything that is in the New Testament within the types and shadows or in the prophecies of the Old Testament that foretold what was to take place in the new.

C. The Old Testament cannot be understood without the New Testament (I Pet. 1:10-12).

Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering the things which now have been reported to you through those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven — things which angels desire to look into. I Peter 1:10-12

Sometimes multiple chapters of the Old Testament are unlocked by one simple key given in the New Testament.

In the same way, you can go to the New Testament and find out the interpretation or meaning of much of what was covered in the Old Testament. You cannot understand one without the other.

You cannot understand the eternal purpose of God without both testaments working together. You see the Bible is one book.

Even though the actual writing of the Bible spans many centuries and includes sixty-six books authored by over 35 human authors, it is one, miracle book that unfolds God's will and purpose for mankind.

II. We must realize that the Old Testament Scriptures serve as the foundation for the New Testament Church.

A. The Old Testament was the Bible of the Early Church.

B. The early Apostles promoted the scripture of the Old Testament.

1. They gave themselves to the word (Acts 6:4).

2. They acknowledged the authority of the word (Acts 15:15-18).

3. They stressed the value of the word in assisting the people of God in fulfilling destiny (II Tim. 3:15-17).

But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. II Timothy 3:14-17

C. The Old Testament scriptures were written for the New Testament Church.

1. They were written for our learning (Rom. 15:4).

   For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

2. They were written to be an example for the people of faith at the end of the age (I Cor. 10:6, 11).

   Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these ***things became our examples****, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.* ***Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.***

   I Corinthians 10:1-11

   Paul's comments make you wonder why publishers even produce copies of the New Testament without the Old Testament. Can you imagine someone writing a mystery novel and leaving out the last chapter? You are being carried along by this intricate plot and trying to second-guess the ending only to discover that the last chapter is missing. What a disappointment!

III. We must understand God's method of revelation—first the natural, then the spiritual (I Cor. 15:46; Rom. 1:20).

When Paul wrote to the believers at Corinth, he encouraged them regarding the Second Coming of Christ and the events that would occur at that time. He referred to the changes that we would experience in our natural bodies. He said that our natural bodies would give place to new and spiritual bodies.

He unfolded a principle that relates to God's method of revelation to mankind. We could summarize that principle in the phrase, "first the natural, then the spiritual" (See: I Cor. 15:45-47).

And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the

spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven.

As God has unfolded His purposes throughout history He seems to have followed the principle of the **natural preceding and foreshadowing the spiritual** (I Cor. 15:46). God has used the natural things of creation to teach us of spiritual things (Rom. 1:20). He has used visual means (things clearly seen) to help us understand spiritual realities (things not seen).

A. The Old Testament dealings of God reflect that which is seen or the natural expression of God's plan.

B. The New Testament reflects the spiritual or that to which the natural pointed.

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse… Romans 1:20

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. II Corinthians 4:16-18

The Old Testament priests *serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things…*Hebrews 8:5

Hebrews 9:1-28 speaks of the first covenant, the Old Testament tabernacle with its priesthood and its sacrifices as being symbolic (vs. 9), unable to cleanse the conscience (vs. 9), temporary (vs. 10) and copies of the true (vs. 23, 24). It speaks of the new covenant which came in Christ as being greater, more perfect (vs. 11) and able to purge the conscience (vs. 14).

Hebrews 10:1-23 speaks of the Old Testament law as a shadow of good things to come as opposed to the very image (vs. 1).

The writer to the Hebrews helps us to see that the sacrifices of the Old Testament teach us about Christ's once-for-all sacrifice. It teaches us that the Aaronic priesthood gave way to a better priesthood of which we can all partake. The natural gives way to the spiritual. The shadow points to the image. The figure introduces us to the true. The temporal opens the door of understanding to the eternal.

Note the following chart (See key verses: Rom. 1:20; I Cor. 15:40-54; II Cor. 4:18; 5:1; Heb. 8:5; 9:1-28; 10:1-23):

Old Covenant	New Covenant
Natural	Spiritual
Flesh	Spirit
Shadow	Image
Figures	True
Visible (Seen)	Invisible (Unseen)
Made with Hands	Not Made with Hands
Patterns	Heavenly Things
Observed by Sight	Observed by Faith
Temporal	Eternal

This chart illustrates the relationship of the Old to the New. They are not separate entities or separate purposes. The Old Covenant gives place to the New Covenant. The New Covenant is an extension and fulfillment of the Old Covenant.

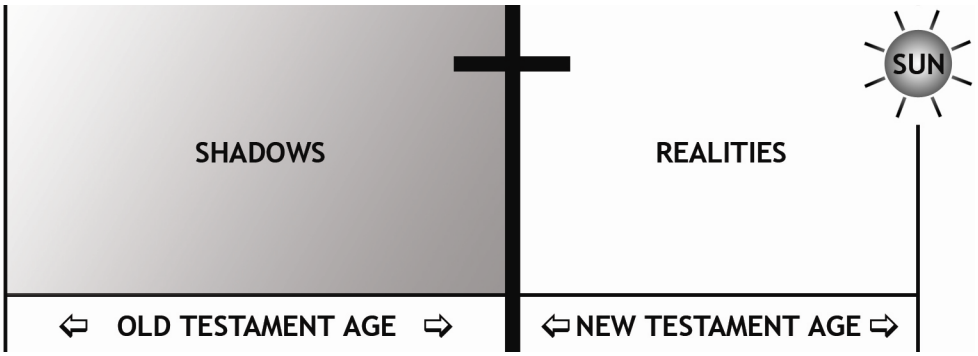
C. In the Old and New Testaments we are confronted with pairs of things—first the natural, then the spiritual.

You have the visible, natural and temporal things pointing to the invisible, spiritual and the eternal realities. Notice the following pairs of things in the Bible (natural and spiritual):

1. There is a natural birth and a spiritual birth (John 3:3-6; I Pet. 1:23).
2. There is a natural circumcision and a circumcision of the heart (Col 2:11-13; Phil. 3:3).
3. There is a natural Israel and a spiritual Israel (Gal. 6:16; Rom. 9:6).
4. There is a natural Jerusalem and a spiritual Jerusalem (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22).
5. There is a natural temple and a spiritual temple (Eph. 19-22; I Pet. 2:5).
6. There is a natural priesthood and a spiritual priesthood (Heb. 7:1-28; I Pet. 2:5).
7. There are natural sacrifices and spiritual sacrifices (Heb. 13:15; I Pet. 2:5).
8. There are natural enemies and spiritual enemies (II Cor. 10:4; Eph. 6:12).

IV. We must realize that the cross of Christ is the great divide between the natural and the spiritual.

It should be noted that the cross is the great dividing line between the natural and the spiritual, the shadow and the reality. When Jesus came He came as the transition point in history. This transition point has more significance than a mere change in the human calendar. This transition marks the entry into the age of fulfillment (See Chart).



A. Jesus came to fulfill the letter of the law and introduce the spiritual principle that operated behind the law.

   He came to fulfill the prophetic significance of the Passover Lamb by becoming the Passover Lamb to which all other previous lambs pointed.

B. Jesus introduced us to better things in the new covenant. They are better because they are not shadows of the real, but they are the very realities themselves!

   Once Jesus brought in the true or the realities, there was no more need for the shadow. In fact, to go back to the shadow after the true has been manifest is to regress and to devalue what God has provided in Christ.

   Notice the "Better Things" that the writer to the Hebrews highlights for us:

   1. Better Revelation (Heb. 1:1-4)
   2. Better Hope (Heb. 7:19)
   3. Better Priesthood (Heb. 7:20-28)
   4. Better Covenant (Heb. 8:6)
   5. Better Promises (Heb. 8:6)
   6. Better Tabernacle or Temple (Heb. 9:11)
   7. Better Blood (Heb. 9:11-14).
   8. Better Sacrifices (Heb. 9:23)
   9. Better Possessions (Heb.10:34)
   10. Better Country (Heb. 11:16)

   This is why we will never go back to animal sacrifice as an expression of our worship to the Lord. Every animal that was slain in the Old Testament as a sacrifice for sins only pointed to the One who would come to take away the sins of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ provided the better sacrifice that did not merely cover sin but it cleansed all sin. To go back to animal sacrifice after experiencing Christ would be to deny the power and efficacy of the eternal sacrifice of the Son of God. It would actually be an abomination to the Lord.

This same principle can be applied to all other aspects of the New Covenant. In the new covenant we have a better temple. It is not a temple made with hands like the Temple of Solomon, but it is a far superior temple composed of living stones (people) who have been fitly joined together for a habitation of God by the Spirit (Eph. 2:21-22).

Lesson 8
Israel and the Church

Thesis: To understand, evaluate and enter into present truth we must have certain basic understandings. We must understand the unity of God's eternal purpose, the unity of the Scriptures, the relationship of natural Israel to the Church, God's method of revelation and restoration and the historic cycle of decline, restoration and revival.

In the last lessons we discussed the unity of God's purpose and of the Scripture. We discovered that God does not have two plans but one plan. The Bible is one book that gives us one picture of God's dealings with His people. We saw that the Old Testament was that which laid the foundation for the New Testament. We saw that the Old Testament foretold that which would come to us through Christ.

We learned in the last lesson that the Old Testament is the story of the natural and temporal which would be fulfilled in Christ and give place to the spiritual and eternal. This includes such things as the priesthood, the sacrifices, the temple and our birth experience. It also relates to the subject of God's chosen people Israel.

To understand, evaluate and enter into present truth we must understand the relationship of Israel to the Church.

Since the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden, God has been working to bring restoration to His creation. The hope for such restoration was proclaimed in Genesis 3:15 when God declared that there would be a "Seed of the Woman" who would crush the seed of the serpent.

The whole of the Old Testament is about the conflict of these two seeds and God's plan to bring redemption to mankind. God used various chosen vessels through which He worked to preserve the potential for that seed and represent God's kingdom in the earth.

God began with the patriarchs of old. He used Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and others. He finally set His affection on the sons of Jacob, more commonly called the "children of Israel." He chose them as a nation to represent His purposes and His kingdom in the earth. His desire was always for the entire world (Gen. 12:1-3; Ex. 19:6), but He would use them to be dispensers of His grace to the rest of the world.

God has always worked through the hearts of man to reach man. It is part of His plan and is totally consistent with the end product that He desires.

All of these instruments of God were called out by God to be His unique and special treasure and to represent His purposes in the earth. In this sense, God has always had His "called out ones."

I. God has only ever had one true church.

A. This church consists of all those who by faith have believed the Word of God and have acted in faith by obeying the Word of God.

B. This church consists of all those who were "called out" by God and separated unto His purposes and glory.

C. This church is mystically united throughout all ages, cultures and nations (Mt. 8:11).

II. This church can be found in both the Old and the New Testament.

A. This church includes the heroes of faith of the Old Testament (Heb. 11:1-40, esp. 13-16, 40).

More specifically it includes individuals like Abel, Enoch, Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, Etc.

B. This church includes Israel, "the church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38, KJV).

1. They were the *Kahal Jehovah* or the "called out" and assembled ones of the Lord (Ps. 107:32; 149:1).
2. They were the objects of grace who were rescued by God (Deut. 6:6-10).
3. They were called out of natural bondage to Egypt (Ex. 3:9-10).
4. They experienced deliverance by virtue of application of the blood of the Passover lamb to the doorposts of their houses (Ex. 12).
5. They were to be distinct from the nations in order to be God's instrument in the earth (Num. 23:9; Ex. 11:7; Lev. 20:26).

C. This church includes the New Testament expression of the people of God know as the Church (Mt. 16:16-18).

1. They are the *ekklesia* or "called out ones" of the Lord.
2. They are objects of grace who were rescued by God (Eph. 2:8-10).
3. They are called out of bondage (Eph 2:1-3).
4. They experienced deliverance by virtue to the application of the blood of the Passover Lamb to the doorposts of their hearts (I Cor. 5:7).
5. They are to be distinct from the nations in order to be God's instrument in the earth (John 15:18-19; 17:14-17; I Cor. 4:13; II Cor. 6:14-18).

D. This church is God's chosen people, holy nation, priesthood and peculiar people (Ex. 19:1-6; I Pet. 2:4-9).

You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame. Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, the stone which the builders rejected, has become the chief cornerstone, and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. They stumbled, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people [KJV, a peculiar people], that you may proclaim the praise of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Who once were not a people, but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. I Peter 2:5-10

God applied unique descriptions of His unique people.

1. Peculiar People

Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice, and keep My covenant then you shall be a special [peculiar, KJV] treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.
Exodus 19:5-6

The word peculiar here refers to "a special, precious, private possession". It is something that is exclusively individual that is set apart because of its special value from all other things. In the Old Testament, God referred to Israel as a peculiar people (Deut. 14:2, 26:18; Ps. 135:4).

2. My People

God has only called two groups of people "My People." In Exodus when God saw the children of Israel in cruel bondage and their cry came up to Him He distinguished them as being His unique and private possession by calling them His people. In the New Testament this place of unique possession is ascribed to the Church (Heb. 8:10; I Pet. 2:9-10).

3. The Children of God

God has only called two groups of people the "Children of God." As a Father He has a family that He is in the process of bringing to maturity. This family is made up of children who are peculiar in that they have a different heritage than those around them. Heredity does make a difference. The children of Israel were different because they had a different father—not Abraham but God.

In the Old Testament dispensation it was possible to have Abraham as your natural father and not be considered a child of God (John 8:39, 44). It was also

possible not to have Abraham as your natural father and yet be considered a child of God (Mt. 1:5). The qualifications for being God's children in the Old Testament were not natural but they were spiritual (Heb. 11; Rom. 9:6-8; 11:20).

In the New Testament, the Church is referred to as the "children of God" (Rom. 8:16). The qualifications are the same in both testaments. We all become the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Natural heritage is not important, but spiritual heritage is very important. Because of our spiritual heritage we become the "called out," separated, unique, chosen children of God.

God's Title Applied	To OT Israel	To the NT Church
My People	Ex. 6:6-7; 3:7; 5:1	I Pet. 2:9-10
Children of God	Is. 63:8	Rom.8:16
Peculiar People	Ex. 19:5-6	I Pet. 2:9

It is critical in our understanding that although we have two groups of people, we do not have two plans or purposes. There is a consistency between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

III. The Church of the Old Testament and the Church of the New Testament share common names and titles.

A. The Scripture shows a unique relationship between the people of God in the Old Testament to the people of God in the New Testament.

Term Used	Old Testament	New Testament
A Chosen People	Deut. 10:15	I Pet. 2:9
A Holy Nation	Ex. 19:6	I Peter 2:9
People of God	Ps. 100:3	II Cor. 6:16
A Priesthood	Ex. 19:6	I Pet. 2:9
God's Treasure	Ex. 19:5	Mt. 13:44
Bride or Wife	Is. 54:6; 62:5	II Cor. 11:2-3
God's Vineyard	Is. 5:7	Mt. 20:1; Jn. 15:5
Israel	Is. 44:6	Gal. 6:16
God's Flock	Jer. 23:3	I Pt. 5:2
A House	Ezek. 18:31	I Tim. 3:15
A Light	Is. 60:1,3	Mt. 5:14
God's Witness	Is. 43:10	Acts 1:8
A Church	Acts 7:38	Gal. 1:13

B. Both the Church in the Old Testament and the Church in the New Testament are God's instruments for their day for extending His kingdom and purposes in the earth.

IV. True membership in God's true church has always been on the basis of faith and not works.

A. Children of Abraham had to have the faith and obedience of Abraham to be considered his spiritual children (John 8:30-47).

Read John 8:30-47

B. Circumcision of the heart has always been required to be a covenant child of God (Jer. 4:4; 6:10; Ezek. 33:31; 44:9; Is. 29:13; Ps. 78:30; Mt. 15:18). Even in the Old Testament the external act of circumcision was to be an outward symbol of an inward work.

Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches;
But let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD. "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that I will punish all who are circumcised with the uncircumcised — Egypt, Judah, Edom, the people of Ammon, Moab, and all who are in the farthest corners, who dwell in the wilderness. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart." Jeremiah 9:23-26

C. What is on the inside has always been more important than what is on the outside. As a result a Jew in God's mind is not someone with an outward sign, but it is someone whose heart is separated to the Lord (Rom. 2:25-29).

For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. 26 Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? 27 And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? 28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; 29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

The Jewish ceremony of circumcision is worth something only if you obey God's law. But if you don't obey God's law, you are no better off than an uncircumcised Gentile. 26 And if the Gentiles obey God's law, won't God give them all the rights and honors of being his own people? 27 In fact, uncircumcised Gentiles who keep God's law will be much better off than you Jews who are circumcised and know so much about God's law but don't obey it. 28 For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the Jewish ceremony of circumcision. 29 No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not a cutting of the body but a change of heart produced by

God's Spirit. Whoever has that kind of change seeks praise from God, not from people. –NLT

D. One's natural connection to Abraham does not make you God's child, but that distinction belongs to those who by faith have believed God's word and acted in obedience to it (Rom. 9:6-8).

But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, 7 nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." 8 That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.

Well then, has God failed to fulfill his promise to the Jews? No, for not everyone born into a Jewish family is truly a Jew! 7 Just the fact that they are descendants of Abraham doesn't make them truly Abraham's children. For the Scriptures say, "Isaac is the son through whom your descendants will be counted," though Abraham had other children, too. 8 This means that Abraham's physical descendants are not necessarily children of God. It is the children of the promise who are considered to be Abraham's children. –NLT

E. The true "Israel of God" or could we say the "true church" consists of those who walk by faith (Gal. 6:16).

And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.

May God's mercy and peace be upon all those who live by this principle. They are the new people of God. –NLT

V. Why is the understanding of the relationship of Israel and the Church so important?

Understanding this relationship of Israel to the church is important for four reasons.

A. If we do not understand this relationship, we will not see the church throughout the entire Bible.

God has had His church in every generation. It has consisted of all those who have been called out by God, who have responded in faith and have separated themselves unto the purposes of God.

His Church began with the heroes of faith in the patriarchal period including Adam and Eve, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Shem and Abraham. It continued with the seed of

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, and David. It further extended to the seed of David right up to the coming of Christ.

The Old Testament saints looked forward to and had faith in the Christ or the Messiah who was coming. The New Testament saints look back to and exercise faith concerning what Christ did for them at Calvary.

1. Both Old and New Testament saints make up the walls of the new spiritual temple that came together to form a spiritual habitation of God (Eph. 2:19-22).

   For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. Ephesians 2:14-22

2. Both Old and New Testament saints are merged together into a spiritual body and have become partakers of the same promise (Eph. 3:6).

2. Both Old and New Testament saints anxiously await the Second Coming where old and new will be raised together and for eternity to enjoy the blessings of salvation fulfilling Jesus words in Matthew 8:11…

   "Many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."

B. If we do not understand their relationship, we will not see or understand the Old Testament prophecies concerning the church (Heb. 12:22-23).

   If we are going to find the church in the Old Testament, it will be as we understand this—that prophecies concerning the establishing of Zion and rebuilding of the Tabernacle of David, etc. apply to the church and not a national system, a natural temple or animal sacrifice (Is. 2:1-4; 4:2-6; 62). The writer to the Hebrews understood that when you come to the Church you come to Mt. Zion, the City of the Living God, the New Jerusalem, the General Assembly and the Church of the Firstborn (Heb. 12:18, 22-24).

For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest…22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.

Jesus became the transition point in history when all that is natural gave place to the spiritual. To go back to the natural after experiencing the spiritual is to reject the truth.

C. If we do not understand their relationship, we will put all of our energies into building the natural and neglect the spiritual or the real.

So many Christians today do not understand that God is not into natural temples made with hands. As great as the Temple of Solomon was, even Solomon recognized when he dedicated the temple that God cannot be confined to a stone structure no matter how ornate it is (I Kgs. 8:27; Acts 7:48; 17:24).

"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built!" I Kings 8:27

God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Acts 17:24

The temple that God is building is a spiritual house. If you are a believer and you are walking in obedience to the Lord, you are a living stone in that house. Moses had a natural house or tabernacle, David had a tabernacle and Solomon had a temple, but all of them pointed to the spiritual temple that Jesus is building. It is Jesus' house (Heb. 3:1-6).

If we want to build what God is building, we must put our energies, our finances and our gifts, talents and abilities to good use. We must invest them in the local church and become that living stone that contributes to the success of the whole.

D. If we do not understand their relationship we will do the Jewish people a disservice that will keep them bound to the shadow.

Sometimes Christians have been accused of anti-Semitism. They have been accused of this for a variety of reasons. Unfortunately throughout history many "so-called" Christians have demonstrated a hatred for the Jewish people and have been responsible for persecution associated with them. In recent history when the Passion of the Christ movie came out there was concern about anti-Semitism because of its portrayal of the Jewish leaders' rejection of Christ.

True Christians have no room for prejudice of any kind against any people, most of all the Jewish people. Paul understood the historical debt that we have to the Jewish people who were responsible for preserving the law of God through a difficult history (Rom. 9:3-5).

For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.

The truth of the matter is that while some religious leaders rejected Christ, many accepted Him along with multitudes of Jewish people. The first Church in the New Testament and the foundation for all others was a Jewish church in the Jewish city of Jerusalem (Acts 2:5, 41-47). The twelve Apostle of the Lamb were Jewish and will have their names in the foundation stones of the eternal city. Jesus Himself was half Jewish (His mother being Jewish and His Father being God).

As we will see in the next chapter the believing Jews are the trunk on which the tree of faith rests. All others who accept Christ are added into that one tree of faith made up of both Jews and Gentiles.

But here is the sad fact. As long as Christians believe that the Jewish people who have not received Christ as their Messiah do not need Christ to be saved, they will not be positioned to share the truth of the Gospel with them. Israel like so many Muslim nations is in the 10-40 Window. The Jewish people need the Gospel as desperately as any other people.

The greatest act of anti-Semitism is to withhold the words of life from someone who is dying. Unfortunately there is not a Jewish heaven and a Gentile heaven. There is not one way for Christians (John 14:6) and other way for Jews. Christ is the only answer for all of the peoples of the world. When any man, woman or child receives Christ, they become part of the Church or the Body of Christ. There is but one Church!

Lesson 9
Romans 9-11

In the last lesson we looked at the relationship of Israel and the Church. We saw that both Israel and the Church were singled out by God as a special treasure to be His instruments in the earth to mediate His purposes to the rest of the earth. We saw that what was begun in Israel flowed through the cross and into the Church.

The Church of Jesus Christ is **not a replacement** for Israel. Israel was the foundation on which the Church was built. It was the believing Jews responding to the Gospel preached by Peter who formed the first New Testament Church in Jerusalem. The New Testament Church represents **a fulfillment** or **a continuation** of all that the Old Testament foretold.

The "called out ones" of the Lord have existed in every generation. They are a spiritual body of believers who have separated themselves unto God by virtue of the faith demonstrated by their obedience to His Word.

To understand, evaluate and enter into present truth we must understand the truths brought forth in Romans 9-11.

I. Paul's Revelation in Romans

Even though many of the early apostles and church leaders seemed to struggle with the relationship of their Jewish faith to this new expression under the New Covenant, Paul seems to have had a unique revelation. He shares some of those insights in an orderly way as he writes to the believers in Rome. Romans 9-11 is a summary of his revelation which acknowledges the unique heritage of the Jewish people and unfolds their present place in relation to the Church.

If we are going to be able to understand and enter into present truth, we must understand the truths brought forth to us in Romans 9-11. In order to fully understand what Paul is saying in these chapters, let us walk through them section by section.

A. Section 1: Romans 9:1-5

I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen. Romans 9:1-5

In this first section:

1. Paul affirms the fact that Israel was called by God as a nation to be His instrument in the earth to extend His purposes.

2. Paul affirms the fact that as "the church in the wilderness" all succeeding generations owe a debt of gratitude to Israel and the Jewish nation for the part that they have played in the overall plan of God.

   a. We should be thankful for the preservation of the seed line to the manifestation of Christ, the Messiah.

   b. We should be thankful to the Jewish nation through which we have received the knowledge of God's great covenants with mankind.

   c. We should be thankful to the Jewish people for the preservation of the Word of God that was handed down from generation to generation up to this present day.

   d. We should be thankful to the many early Jewish leaders who were willing to swim against the current of popular opinion and stand up for Jesus.

   e. We should be thankful for many of the Jewish people who gave their lives to see Christianity established in the New Testament era.

      If indeed, as some have said, that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church, then it must be remembered that it was Jewish blood that was shed to pave the way for what we are enjoying today.

      Some might focus on those that rejected Christ, the Messiah. In my thinking, it is better to focus on the many who received Him initially and later as time went on (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 6:7).

3. Paul yearned for all of his Jewish brethren to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ (See also Romans 10:1).

   In fact, he said that if it were possible he would take their place. He would be willing to be accursed if the Jewish people could be saved.

   In other words Paul never forgot his brethren according to the flesh. He never forgot the contribution that they had made to the eternal purpose of God. He never ceased to be filled with desire for them to be saved and to come to a full knowledge of God as revealed through Jesus Christ. He never ceased to pray for them that the natural sons or the natural branches from the tree of faith would regain their spiritual eyesight and come back into the tree of faith.

B. Section 2: Romans 9:6-8, 30-33

But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. Romans 9:6-9

What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness of faith; but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. Why? Because they did not seek it by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

Romans 9:30-33

In these verses:

1. Paul makes it clear that not all of the Jewish people responded in the same way to the coming of Christ. As with most of the things recorded in the Book of Acts, the response by various groups of people usually fell into three categories.

    a. There were those who responded positively immediately.

    b. There were those who were negative and rejected immediately.

    c. There was a large group of people who took a "watch and see" approach. Over time many in the third category became followers of Christ.

        Paul himself had been in the category of those who had rejected violently to the point of persecuting those of his own brethren that had become followers of Christ. While Paul was on his way to arrest believers in Christ, Christ arrested him and changed his course forever.

2. Paul makes it clear that whether you are talking about Old Testament Israel or the New Testament Church not everyone who identifies with the group is a true disciple.

    a. In Israel there were people who were of Israel by natural birth, but who were not true Israelites in the eyes of the Lord.

    b. The same can be said of membership in the Church. Not everyone who says that they are a Christian is a true Christian in the eyes of the Lord.

    It is not the physical identification with or natural lineage back to Abraham that makes you a true Israelite. It is the faith of Abraham that makes you a true Israelite. That is why Paul could say that "they are not all Israel [spiritually] that are of Israel [naturally]."

3. In Paul's thinking there were two Israel's.

   a. There is the Israel according to the flesh.

      These are those who are able to trace their natural parentage back to Abraham through their genealogy.

   b. There is the Israel according to the Spirit.

      These are and those who are referred to as the "children of promise" and are composed of those who have entered into relationship with the Isaac or only begotten son of the New Testament—Jesus.

      It is these children of promise, those who have entered in by faith that are the true seed of Abraham and the inheritors of the promises made to him.

C. Section 3: Romans 11:1-5

I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, "LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"? But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. Romans 11:1-5

In these verses:

1. Paul makes it clear that God has not cast away His people.

2. Paul reminds his readers that he is a Jew and he is partaker of the promises of the New Covenant.

   Paul himself is an example of a devout Jew who when faced with the claims of Christ eventually accepted them as present truth for his generation and entered in by faith.

   While it is true that Christ was a stumbling block to many of the Jewish people, to others He was a stepping stone to the future. There are many reasons why some in that generation of Jews may have stumbled over Christ, not the least of which was the manner in which He came.

3. Paul demonstrates that God's plan was based on the remnant of believing Israelites that would lay the foundation for the Christian Church.

D. Section 4: Romans 11:15-24

For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? For if the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root is holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? Romans 11:15-24

In this section Paul tries to help us understand what happened from a spiritual point of view by using the illustration of two trees. In a sense all of the history of mankind can be summarized with the illustration of these trees. All mankind finds themselves as a branch on one of these trees.

1. There is one tree of faith.

There is but one tree of faith that is composed of both believing Jews and believing Gentiles. That tree of faith is the true Church that God sees when He looks down from above.

2. There is also a tree of non-faith or could we say a tree of unbelief.

There is one wild olive tree that is composed of both unbelieving Jews and unbelieving Gentiles. Everyone in the wild olive tree is to be seen as a potential transplant into the tree of faith through evangelism.

When you apply this illustration to what took place with the Jewish people it looks like this. Prior to Christ's coming the faithful Israelites represented the tree of faith. It was a tree that was comprised of the devout Jews and those from other nations who had followed the prescribed plan for being adopted into this nation. Not every natural Israelite was represented as a branch in this tree, because it was and always will be a tree of faith.

When Christ came and made His claims as the Messiah, those Jewish people who were branches in the tree of faith and who accepted Christ as their Messiah stayed where they were. That is, they remained in the tree of faith with its root system going down to the great patriarchs of old (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob).

However, those Jewish people who were branches in the tree of faith who rejected Christ as their Messiah thereby rejecting the heavenly Father were taken out of the tree of faith. Once they were out of the tree of faith they automatically became part of the other tree, the tree of unbelief.

When it came to the Gentiles you have a similar thing occurring. While we know historically that many Gentiles had identified in faith with the children of Israel, for the most part, the Gentile people were part of the unbelieving world that is represented by the wild olive tree. Most Gentiles were branches in the wild olive tree or the tree of unbelief.

When Christ came and made His claims and the early apostles preached Christ in the Gentile areas those hearing the message had a choice to make. Those who chose to receive the message and respond in faith and obedience were cut out of the wild olive tree and grafted into the tree of faith right along side of other believers, both Jewish and Gentile. Those unbelieving Gentiles who rejected Christ stayed in the wild olive tree where they were.

II. In Christ there is equal opportunity for both Jew and Gentile.

As it can be seen, God is perfectly fair in the way in which He functions in relation to the tree of faith.

A. God treats both Jew and Gentile exactly the same.

1. At the present time there are both Jews and Gentiles in the tree of faith. They all have one thing in common—faith in the resurrected Christ.

2. At the present time there are both Jews and Gentiles in the wild olive tree or the tree of unbelief. Each branch in this tree has one thing in common—unbelief.

B. Both Jew and Gentile have the same opportunity.

1. Those who are in the tree of unbelief do not have to stay in that tree.

   Once any branch in the tree of unbelief calls on the name of the Lord and accepts Christ as their Lord and Savior, they are immediately taken out of the tree of unbelief and grafted into the tree of faith.

2. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true.

If any branch that is presently in the tree of faith chooses to throw off their faith and reject Christ, they will be cut off of the tree of faith and grafted into the tree of unbelief (Ezek. 18:21-32).

"But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live. Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the Lord GOD, "and not that he should turn from his ways and live?

"But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die.

"Yet you say,'The way of the Lord is not fair.' Hear now, O house of Israel, is it not My way which is fair, and your ways which are not fair? When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies in it, it is because of the iniquity which he has done that he dies. Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness which he committed, and does what is lawful and right, he preserves himself alive. Because he considers and turns away from all the transgressions which he committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not fair.' O house of Israel, is it not My ways which are fair, and your ways which are not fair?

"Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord GOD."Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies," says the Lord GOD. "Therefore turn and live!" Ezekiel 18:21-32

III. There is a major visitation awaiting the Jewish people in the future.

Paul seems to indicate in these passages that there will be a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Jewish nation prior to the return of the Lord. He talks of the rejoicing that will take place when the natural branches are grafted back into the tree of faith (Rom. 11:15, 23).

For if their being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?... 23 And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

IV. The New Testament Church is made up of Jews and Gentiles together.

When we apply these truths to our understanding of the Church we see that the true Church of Jesus Christ is a blending of believing Jews and believing Gentiles flowing together in faith. There is not a Jewish church and a Gentile church, but there is one church and one body. To maintain an ethnic distinction in our modern day expression of the church would be to come against the clear teaching of Paul in Ephesians.

In Ephesians chapter two, Paul makes it clear that both Jew and Gentile need reconciliation to God by the cross (vs. 16). He demonstrates that both Jew and Gentile believers are joined together to make up the New Testament Temple of God (vs. 19-22). Note the following summary:

A. Paul describes the former condition of the Gentiles.

- Gentiles in the Flesh
- Uncircumcision
- Without Christ
- Aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel
- Strangers from the Covenants of Promise
- Having No Hope
- Without God in the World
- Far Off
- Enmity from God and Man

B. Paul describes the present condition of the Gentiles.

But Now…

- In Christ Jesus
- Made Nigh by then Blood of Christ
- At Peace with God and Man
- Made One With the Jew
- Middle Wall of Partition Broken Down
- Enmity Abolished
- One New Man
- Both Reconciled to God in One Body
- Preaching of Peace to Those Which Were Far
- Both Have Access to the Father

C. Paul describes the new relationships that results:

- No More Strangers and Foreigners
- Fellow Citizens with the Saints
- Of the Household of God
- Jew and Gentile Joined Together

V. The New Testament describes this truth as a hidden mystery.

This coming together of the Jews and Gentiles was not something that was fully understood by the prophets of the Old Testament. It was not something that was understood by the Jews of Jesus' day. In fact, the apostle Paul indicated that he got the understanding by revelation from the Lord (Eph. 3:1-13).

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles--2 if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, 3 how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, 4 by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), 5 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: 6 that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, 7 of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

The hidden mystery is that:

A. Believing Jews and Gentiles are fellow-heirs of the same promises given to Abraham.

B. Both Jews and Gentiles come together into one body in Christ.

That body is the Church, the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Living God that will eventually become the Bride of Christ!

Lesson 10
The Early Church

Thesis: To understand, evaluate and enter into present truth we must have certain basic understandings. We must understand the unity of God's eternal purpose, the unity of the Scriptures, the relationship of natural Israel to the Church, God's method of revelation and restoration and the historic cycle of decline, restoration and revival.

The history of God's people is an interesting history indeed. Because God has chosen to implement His purposes through freewill beings, He faces a unique challenge. Somehow He must move upon the hearts of His people and guide them to the desired goal.

For this reason, if the history of God's people were charted on a graph, it would not ascend in a straight line. Instead there have been seasons of revival followed by decline and back to revival. The end result will be the realization of God's intended purpose, but the path has not always been a straight line.

In other words, God's people have had their "ups and downs" in their journey to become what they are to become.

Of course, God foresaw all of this before He ever created mankind. He knew what it would take for His purposes to be accomplished. He knew there would be a certain amount of suffering involved. However, when He saw the final result, He deemed the suffering worthwhile (Heb. 2:12).

To understand, evaluate and enter into present truth we must understand the historic cycle of decline and restoration or revival.

I. Throughout the Old Testament era, God's people were characterized by a pattern of decline followed by restoration or revival.

A. This is seen throughout the Old Testament.

If you were to open your Bible to any place in the Old Testament (particularly those sections dealing with history and prophecy), put your finger in its pages and begin to read, you would find that God's people were either backsliding or coming back to God.

The history of God's people has been characterized by cycles of decline and restoration. It appears that there can be no status quo in our walk with God. We are either reaching forward or we are falling back.

B. This is especially demonstrated in the Book of Judges.

There is no better illustration of this than the book of Judges. The book of Judges is characterized by seven periods of decline and revival. Each of these seven periods consisted of five parts as demonstrated by the following:

1. Israel sinned and wandered from the Lord.
2. Israel went into servitude or captivity to another nation or entity.
3. Israel cried out to the Lord from their bondage.
4. God raised up a deliverer (a judge) to save them.
5. Israel experienced a period of rest.

II. The New Testament age of the Church experienced a similar pattern.

I would love to tell you that this cycle of decline and restoration was only confined to the Old Testament. I would like to be able to report that once Christ came and the Holy Spirit was poured out man never again was prone to wander away from the purposes of God. Unfortunately that is not the case.

What we will find is that while the Early Church began in a great time of visitation it would face the same tendencies of decline that had been witnessed throughout history. We will find that in spite of the great start experienced by the church of the First Century, there would still be a need for God to bring restoration and fulfillment.

A. The Early Church began with great power.

1. The Early Church was birthed out of a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit that was accompanied by supernatural signs including the sound of a mighty rushing wind, tongues of fire and supernatural utterance (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4).

   a. They saw signs and wonders follow this experience (Mark 16:15-20; Acts 6:8).

      And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. Acts 6:8

   b. They witnessed to the Gospel with great power (Acts 4:33; I Cor. 2:4-5).

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

      And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.
      I Corinthians 2:4-5

c. They had powerful results (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 6:1).

Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. Acts 2:41

However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. Acts 4:4

2. The Early Church demonstrated power over nature.

Jesus had walked on the water. Jesus had calmed the storms. But Philip was transported supernaturally from one location to another (Acts 8:39). What a tremendous miracle that took place as Philip walked in obedience to the voice of the Holy Spirit. As Philip positioned himself to be God's instrument to preach the Gospel, the Holy Spirit worked with him with signs following.

3. The Early Church demonstrated power over evil spirits (Acts 8:7; 13:4-12; 16:16-20; 19:11-20).

And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city. Acts 8:6-8

When Philip went down to Samaria to preach the Gospel he entered a region that was dominated by occult practices. When he preached the Gospel, people who were demon possessed were delivered. In subsequent chapters in the Book of Acts, the apostles had other confrontations with the demonic and the results were always the same—the Word of God prevailed and people were immediately set free (See: Acts 13:4-12; 16:16-20; 19:11-20).

The apostles had the same results that Jesus had. Jesus had demonstrated a great power over satanic opposition in His ministry. When Jesus commissioned His followers He indicated that they would also cast out demons (Mark 16:17).

4. The Early Church demonstrated power over sickness and disease (Acts 9:33-34).

This was part of their commission. When Jesus sent out the twelve (Luke 9:2) and when He sent out the seventy (Luke 10:9), He sent them out to preach the Gospel and heal the sick. This same commission was given to the followers of Christ after the Resurrection. Jesus said that His followers would lay hands on the sick and the sick would recover (Mark 16:18).

Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. Luke 9:1-2

This is exactly what happened in the Book of Acts. After the day of Pentecost, the power to heal was evident in the lives of the early church leaders. Peter and John brought healing to a man who had been lame from birth (Acts 3:1-9). Ananias laid hands on Saul of Tarsus to receive his sight and Paul was immediately healed (Acts 9:17-18). Peter brought healing to Aeneas by commanding him to arise (Acts 9:32-35).

Jesus had told his followers that they would do greater signs than He had done because He would go to the Father and He would send the Holy Spirit to be with them and in them (John 14:12). This is demonstrated in the Book of Acts when the shadow of Peter fell on people and healed them (Acts 5:15) and handkerchiefs were taken from the body of Paul and applied to the sick and they were also healed (Acts 19:12).

5. The Early Church demonstrated power over death.

   This does not mean that the early church leaders prayed for every person who died, but at times they ministered this way at the leading of the Holy Spirit. Dorcas was raised from the dead by Peter who followed the example of Jesus (Acts 9:40). Paul and a company of believers prayed over Eutychus who had fallen to his death in a church gathering and he was brought back to life (Acts 20:7-12). What an amazing thing and what an amazing witness!

B. The Early Church began with authority over the kingdom of darkness (Mt. 28:18).

When Jesus commissioned His followers to carry on His ministry after Him, He put the necessary tools in their hands to be able to accomplish the task. Jesus gave them the authority or power that they needed to achieve the impossible. Jesus said to His disciples, *"All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth"* (Mt. 28:18).

When Christ commissioned His faltering and failing followers, He did it on the basis of the absolute authority available to carry out this super-human task. Mark gives a very practical definition of the phases and aspects of this power and resource which is in Christ.

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." Mark 16:15-18

Christ gave His disciples power relating to:

1. The SPIRITUAL KINGDOM, for *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved"* (Mark 16:16).

2. The ETERNAL KINGDOM, for *"He who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:16).

3. The SATANIC KINGDOM, for they shall *"cast out demons"* (Mark 16:17).

4. The UNIVERSAL KINGDOM, for *"they will speak with new tongues"* (Mark 16:17).

5. The ANIMAL KINGDOM, for *"they will take up serpents"* (Mark 16:18).

6. The MINERAL KINGDOM, for *"if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them"* (Mark 16:18).

7. The HUMAN KINGDOM, for *"they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover"* (Mark 16:18).

   Mark gives us a graphic portrayal of what the "all power" in Matthew's Gospel speaks. He demonstrates for us the power that was given to Christ, which He in turn gave to the Church to carry out His ministry in the earth.

C. The Early Church had other secrets to its success.

   In addition to the power of God demonstrated in the witness and testimony of the Early Church, the First Century believer's had other things that were secrets to their success.

   1. The Early Church had a hunger, a desire and a love for the truth.

      The Word of God was central to their lives.

      a. They continued steadfast in the word of God (Acts 2:42).

      b. They searched the word (Acts 17:11).

      c. They were willing to accept the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

         This included the things that were easy to hear (e.g. the goodness and mercy of God) and the things that were difficult to hear (e.g. the wrath and judgments of God).

   2. The Early Church had a vital Christian character and lifestyle.

a. They were willing to sell all that they had if necessary to see the kingdom of God go forth (Acts 4:34-37).

b. They were willing to share their material goods with those in need (Acts 2:44-45).

c. They were willing to suffer shame for the sake of the name of Christ and endure (even rejoice in) persecution (Acts 5:41).

d. They were willing to pray for their enemies (Acts 9:13-18).

e. They lived a life of holiness and separation (Acts 5:1-5). No hypocrites were in the camp.

   Just to exemplify the extent to which their lives reflected holiness and purity we have the story of Ananias and Sapphira. When you read their story in Acts 5 it is hard to believe. Here is a married couple who are part of the local church who have gotten caught up in a spirit of giving that is on the congregation. They make a commitment to give the proceeds from a sale of land to the church in the form of an offering. After the land sale goes through, instead of giving the full amount of the sale they hold some back.

   When Ananias brings the money to the church, he represents it as being the total sum of the sale price. While he is in the act of giving a significant offering to the local church, Peter confronts him with a word of knowledge, exposes the intent of his heart and the man is struck dead by God.

   How is that possible? Was this man's sin really so great? To make matters worse, Sapphira comes in later unaware of her husbands judgment, makes the same inference about their offering and she suffers the same fate. I often wonder if God was judging the church in the same manner today, how many would be able to stand?

   I know that many people try to tell us about how bad Ananias and Sapphira were to merit such judgment. However, if you only go on the details of the story as it is given to us in the Bible, by today's standards; their sin was not that great. It was more a sin of heart, motive and commitment. They sold something of value, they gave a significant offering to the church but they simply misrepresented the total sale price. Ananias and Sapphira were no worse than most church members are today!

   How often do people make commitments to the Lord and then do not follow through with their commitment? How often do people say they are going to give a certain amount and then stop short? I often think that if God was judging the saints with the same standard with which he judged Ananias and

Sapphira that people in our churches would be "dropping like flies." It would give a whole new meaning to being "slain in the Spirit."

In my thinking, this story does not tell us as much about Ananias and Sapphira as it does about the character and nature of the early church. There was such a level of righteousness and purity among the early Christians that the sin of Ananias and Sapphira stood out dramatically. Most pastors would gladly receive an Ananias and Sapphira into their congregation. They may even be given a place of honor for their generosity. However, in the Early Church they did not find such a place.

I wonder if this purity in the Early Church had anything to do with the power of the Early Church. Perhaps this is why the early Christians "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17:6). Or could we say turned the world "right side up!" It is hard to argue with the results of the Early Church (Acts 4:4; 17:6; 19:20).

III. The Early Church experienced seeds of decline in the first century.

What Happened?

So what happened? How did this picture change? How is it possible that a church that began with such power and influence could become so weak? As you look at the history of the church, it is clear that the church experienced a gradual decline and loss of truth. But how?

A. The Problem of Second Generation Christianity

The first factor that gave way to decline was the reality of "second generation Christianity." When you think about it, the Church is only ever one generation away from extinction. If those who have experienced a living and vibrant relationship with Christ fail to pass on that vibrancy to the next generation the church is going to lose its vitality, power and witness.

This principle is seen clearly in the Old Testament. When the generation that knows the Lord and His mighty acts passes on, the next generation will lose what the previous generation had unless it has a similar encounter of their own.

"When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel." Judges 2:10

God has no grandsons. Every generation must have a direct line to the Heavenly Father through the new birth experience. The history of the Church is like a relay

race. The most important part of the race is the handoff to the next runner, in this case, the next generation.

B. The Problem of the Passing of Time

The second factor that gave way to the decline of the church is the passing of time. A lot can happen over time. Just think about any local church with which you are familiar. Most churches began with a real move of God in the heart of a people. However, if that church is twenty five years old now, or if it is fifty years old now, does it have the same sense of visitation and revival?

A lot can happen over fifty years. They say that the lifespan of most modern churches is fifty years. So what if we are talking of a hundred years? What about two hundred years? What about a millennium? A lot can change! And that is exactly what happened.

C. Seeds of Decline in the Early Church

Even before the church reached its 100th birthday there were seeds of decline. There are evidences in the New Testament of problems that were already beginning to develop. Some of the early losses to the church include the following:

1. The loss of first love experience (Rev. 2:1-7).

Even in one of the best churches represented in the New Testament, there was a diminishing of the first love relationship. Even though this church had great doctrine, good programs and lots of activity, they had failed to cultivate relationship with the Father. Jesus predicted that this would be an issue in the church (Mt. 24:12).

And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

2. The loss of a love for the truth (II Tim. 4:3-4).

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

Paul talked about people who could be led astray because they did not receive the love of the truth (II Th. 2:10).

…and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

3. The loss of a servant spirit (III John 9).

John spoke of ministries that seemed to lose their servant's heart and long for power, prestige and authority in the church. Diotrophes loved to have the preeminence.

4. **The loss of separation from the world (II Tim. 4:10).**

   Paul indicated that the draw of the world system was still an issue for many. It is one thing to come out and be separate; it is another thing to live that way over the long term.

   …for Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world.

5. **The loss of responsiveness to authority (II Tim. 1:15).**

   Paul found that even in his short life that there were those that he had fathered in the faith who no longer responded to his counsel and felt that they had a better way.

   This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me…

D. Seeds of Decline in the Seven Churches of Asia (Rev. 1-3)

These seed are further highlighted at the close of the First Century in challenges given regarding the seven churches of Asia in the Book of Revelation. Jesus, the Great High Priest, is pictured in the first three chapters walking among the seven lamp stands that represent seven local churches. As the Great High Priest, it is His responsibility to minister before the lamp stands. His ministry is to pour in oil and to trim the wicks so that the lamps can burn more brightly.

In Jesus ministry of trimming the wicks or bringing adjustment to the churches, He highlights issues that needed work in each church. Some churches needed more work that others and one church had no charge against it.

Some of the problems that are noted include:

- Loss of First Love
- Compromise
- False Doctrine
- Moral Impurity
- Low Standards of Holiness
- Spiritual Deadness
- Lukewarmness
- Love of Ease

These seeds would eventually lead to more serious problems for the generations to follow. What began with great power would eventually end up powerless and a very poor reflection of the ministry of Christ in the world.

Lesson 11
The Loss of Truth—The Apostolic Church

Thesis: To understand, evaluate and enter into present truth we must have certain basic understandings. We must understand the unity of God's eternal purpose, the unity of the Scriptures, the relationship of natural Israel to the Church, God's method of revelation and restoration and the historic cycle of decline, restoration and revival.

In the last lesson we saw how the New Testament Church began. It began with a strong sense of purpose, a focus on fulfilling the commission given it by Christ and an intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit. In one generation that first church made an impact on the entire world.

The First Century Church functioned at a very high level as they moved from Jerusalem, to Samaria, to Judea and on to the rest of the civilized world. It is hard to imagine what could have happened when you compare it to the church of the high Middle Ages.

To understand, evaluate and enter into present truth we must understand the historical decline of the Church.

Before we look at each of the periods of Church history, it might be good to see an overview of history.

I. The history of the Church divides itself into seven periods.

A. These can be demonstrated from a historical perspective.

These seven periods which are bounded by significant events include the following:

1. **The Apostolic Church, 30-100 A.D.**

   This period extends from the ascension of Christ to the death of the last of the Twelve Apostles—the Apostle John.

2. **The Persecuted Church, 100-313 A.D.**

   This period extends from the death of John to Constantine and the Edict of Milan. The Edict of Milan granted formal acceptance to Christianity as a religion in the Empire.

3. **The Imperial Church, 313-476 A.D.**

   This period extends from the Edict of Milan to the fall of the Roman Empire.

4. **The Medieval Church, 476-1453 A.D.**

This period extends from the fall of the Roman Empire to the fall of Constantinople (the Eastern Empire).

5. **The Reformed Church, 1453-1648 A.D.**

   This period extends from the fall of Constantinople to the end of The Thirty Years War in Europe.

6. **The Fragmented Church, 1648-1948 A.D.**

   This period extends from the end of The Thirty Years War to a major outpouring of the Holy Spirit and Israel becoming a nation.

7. **The End-Time Church, 1948-?**

   This period extends to the Second Coming of Christ.

B. These can be seen from the prophetic perspective of Jesus (Matthew 13).

As one studies the seven parables of the kingdom as given by Jesus in Matthew 13, one is struck by the similarity of these seven parables with the events associated with the seven periods of Church history.

1. The Parable of the Sower

   This parable speaks of the Apostolic Church when the seed of the word of God was sown into the earth. This is the age of expansion in relation to the Church.

2. The Parable of the Wheat and Tares

   This parable speaks of the Persecuted Church period. Although the Church went through seasons of persecution during this period, it was also a period in which many of the early heresies concerning the nature of Christ arose. Those who preached these heresies were as tares among the wheat; they were "sons of the wicked one" (Mt. 13:38).

3. The Parable of the Mustard Seed

   This parable indicates that the kingdom of God expanded to such a level that even the birds of the air were able to lodge in its branches. This parable speaks of the Imperial Church period when Christianity became a state religion and many unregenerate people took refuge in its branches because of political expediency and, in some cases, because they had no options.

4. The Parable of the Leaven

This parable indicates that there was leaven introduced into the pure measures of meal that eventually caused the whole lump to be leavened. This parable speaks of the Medieval Church period where one has to search diligently to find a true expression of the Church. That which was called "the church" in that era was filled with corruption of all sorts.

5. The Parable of the Treasure in the Field

   This parable speaks of a new season of restoration where individuals discovered truth that had been hidden in the field of the Word. It speaks of the Reformed Church period where many of the reformers had to literally lay down their lives for truths or treasures from the Word of God that were being restored to the church.

6. The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price

   This parable speaks of the Fragmented Church period many precious pearls were discovered. These were pearls of truth that served as the catalyst for new groups and denominations to arise.

7. The Parable of the Dragnet

   This is the last parable and it speaks of the last period of church history. It deals with the great ingathering of fish and the days of harvest.

II. The Apostolic Church was a time of sowing the seed.

A. The seed is symbolic of the Word of God (Mark 4:14; Luke 8:11).

Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Luke 8:11

Notice how the Word of God went forth in the Book of Acts.

1. The word moved in power (Acts 10:44).

   While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

2. All in Asia heard the word (Acts 19:10, 26).

   And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. Acts 19:10

3. The word of God increased (Acts 6:7).

Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

4. The word of God grew and multiplied (Acts 12:24).

   But the word of God grew and multiplied.

5. The word of God grew mighty and prevailed (Acts 19:20).

   Thus the Word of the Lord…grew and spread and intensified, prevailing mightily. –Amplified

B. The seed is also symbolic of the children of the Kingdom (Mt. 13:38).

The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one.

The early apostles were sown into the world and extended the witness to the world. Part of the testimony of how well these early leaders actually did comes to us through the mouth of opponents of the Gospel (Acts 17:6; 19:26-27).

But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. Acts 17:5-6

Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands. So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship. Acts 19:26-27

The following is a summary of some of the traditions regarding the sphere of ministry of The Twelve (*Apostles, The Fathering Servant*, Bill Scheidler, pg. 39-41):

1. **Peter** ministered in Jerusalem as a pillar in that Church (Gal. 2:9) and then became very mobile in his ministry. He spent time in Lydda, Joppa, Antioch of Syria, Rome and Asia Minor. He is believed to have been martyred under the reign of Nero in Rome.

2. **John** also began as a pillar in the Jerusalem Church (Gal. 2:9) but later, after the destruction of Jerusalem, he moved to Ephesus. He became a key figure in the churches of Asia Minor and ministered a great deal in those regions until his exile in the isle of Patmos. The churches referred to in the first three chapters of the book of Revelation seems to be those over which he had a particular influence.

He is the only one of The Twelve to have died of natural causes. He is thought to have died around 100 A.D.

3. **James** the son of Zebedee and the brother of John was very close to Jesus and part of His inner circle (Mt. 5:37). He was the first of The Twelve to be martyred by Herod in about 42-44 A.D. (Acts 12:1-2).

4. **Andrew** the brother of Peter is mentioned very little in the New Testament. However, tradition holds that he evangelized Scythia (the region North of the Black Sea). It is also a part of early tradition that he was martyred by crucifixion.

5. **Philip** who was always listed fifth among The Twelve is believed to have ministered primarily in the region of Asia Minor. There are many conflicting traditions as to Philip's manner of death, but most insist that he was martyred for his faith.

6. **Thomas**, who is sometimes distinguished among The Twelve because of his apparent doubt concerning Christ's resurrection from the dead, evidently overcame his doubts in a rather spectacular way. Thomas is believed by some to have been one of the greatest missionaries of all time. It is possible that he actually traveled east to India and some believe as far as China spreading the Gospel and planting churches. In fact, the only church that exists today that claims to have been founded by one of The Twelve is in India and they believe that Thomas founded it!

7. **Bartholomew** is another one of The Twelve about which very little is known. Some believe that he worked with Philip.

8. **Matthew**, who was also called Levi, seems to have worked primarily among the Hebrews seeking to reach them with the Gospel. His greatest achievement in relation to that endeavor is his authorship of the first Gospel that bears his name and is often referred to as the Gospel to the Jews. Later it appears that his ministry expanded to Gentile peoples.

9. **James** the son of Alphaeus must also be included among those about whom little is known. In the New Testament he is only mentioned in the lists of The Twelve. The only reliable tradition is that he was believed to have been stoned to death by the Jews for preaching Christ.

10. **Simon**, often referred to as the Zealot, is also given little attention in the pages of the New Testament. However, he is believed to have evangelized Libya in North Africa.

11. **Thaddaeus**, who is also named Judas the son of James, became a very active missionary. It appears that he was originally sent to Edessa but because of persecution and threat of death he pushed into other regions of the world

establishing churches in Iran and Western Afghanistan. He is also partly responsible for the Gospel reaching China in that first century.

12. **Matthias** is the disciple, presumably one of The Seventy, who replaced Judas. Little is known of him. However, it is believed that he preached the Gospel primarily in Judea itself and died a martyr's death by stoning. Other traditions include Ethiopia as part of his sphere of influence.

By the end of this period, historians note there were several million Christians around the world (Col. 1:5-6, 23).

III. The Apostolic Church period experienced some early signs of decline.

We have already discussed some of the seeds of decline or reasons for the decline of the Church in the last lesson. In addition to what was discussed at that time it is worthy to note a few other factors that contributed to decline in this period.

A. The lack of New Testament Scriptures

Because there was no established canon for and availability of the New Testament Scriptures there was a vulnerability to false teachers who tended to travel from church to church peddling their philosophies. Many of the books (especially the later books) of the New Testament that we have today warned the local churches of these false teachers (e.g. II Timothy, II Peter, Jude, Etc.).

B. The Rise of Gnosticism

Gnosticism attempted to blend Christianity with other forms of religious knowledge from a variety of sources. It claimed to be the highest of religions because it included the best elements of all religions. Several books of the New Testament addressed issues dealing with this system of thinking.

C. Diminishing Apostolic Authority

With the death of the original Twelve Apostles and those who had seen Christ "in the flesh," there was a void of the kind of stabilizing authority that was present in the life of the Early Church.

Eusebius, one of the earliest systematic Church historians of the 4th Century quotes from an earlier witness by the name of Hegesippus:

"In describing the situation at that time Hegesippus goes on to say that until then the Church has remained a virgin, pure and uncorrupted, since those who were trying to corrupt the wholesome standard of the saving message, if such there were, lurked somewhere under cover of darkness. But when the sacred band of the apostles had in

various ways reached the end of their life, and the generation of those privileged to listen with their own ears to the divine wisdom had passed on, then godless error began to take shape, through the deceit of false teachers, who now that none of the apostles was left threw off the mask and attempted to counter the preaching of the truth by preaching the knowledge falsely so called."

--*The History of the Church,* Eusebius, page 143

Lesson 12
The Loss of Truth—The Persecuted Church

In the last lesson we looked at the first period of church history or the Apostolic Church where we already saw seeds of decline in the church. It is important to note that all of the changes in the character and the nature of the church took place gradually over a long period of time. It is also important to point out that as we look at the state of decline we are looking at an overview and, therefore, all observations are generalities. Throughout history there have always been exceptions to the general rule.

In a later lesson we will discuss bright spots in relation to all of the seasons of church history. However, our purpose at this point is to better understand how the powerful church of the Book of Acts could be transformed over time into the dark and powerless church of the high Middle Ages.

I. The second period of church history has been labeled the "Persecuted Church."

Persecution in this period of church history was seasonal. At times it was severe and at other times it was nonexistent (from a political point of view). The reason for this is that initially Rome had no official position on Christianity. To them it was merely a branch of Judaism for which they already had a policy. However, individual emperors often took a harsher stand against Christianity. Therefore the seasons of persecution were severe at times with periods of rest in between.

A. There were ten seasons of persecution identified in this period of church history (See: Revelation 2:10).

It is interesting and a point of note that the second letter in Revelation was to the church at Smyrna where Christ indicated that they would have persecution for ten days (Rev. 2:10).

Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

The primary seasons of persecution by the Romans included persecution under the following emperors:

* Note: Dates given represent periods of persecution and do not reflect their total years of reign.

1. Nero (64-70 A.D.)*

Nero was a weak-minded emperor with many personal vices. He saw the Christians as an easy scapegoat for some of his own problems. He was

responsible for the deaths of Peter and Paul. This persecution was not widespread throughout the empire.

2. Domitian (94-96 A.D.)*

   Domitian instituted a persecution against Christians that was short but extremely violent. Many thousands were slain in Rome and Italy especially. It was Domitian who banished John to the Patmos. His persecution ended when Domitian discovered that the surviving relatives of Jesus in Palestine were poor, common folk with absolutely no political ambition.

3. Trajan and Hadrian (98-138 A.D.)

   Trajan was actually one of the best emperors of Rome. As emperor, however, he felt that he should uphold the laws of the land and Christianity was an illegal religion because they refused to participate in emperor worship. He did not hunt down Christians, but when they were accused they were punished. Actually at one point he forbid Christians to be hunted.

   Eusebuis writes:

   "So great was the intensification of the persecution directed against us in many parts of the world at that time, that Plinius Secundus, one of the most distinguished governors, was alarmed by the number of martyrs and sent a report to the emperor about the numbers of those who were being put to death for the faith. In the same dispatch he informed him that he understood that they did nothing improper or illegal: all they did was to rise at dawn and hymn Christ as a god, to repudiate adultery, murder and similar disgraceful crimes, and in every way to conform to the law. Trajan's response was to issue a decree that members of the Christian community were not to be hunted, but if met with were to be punished. This meant that though to some extent the terrifyingly imminent threat of persecution was stifled, yet for those who wanted to injure us there were just as many pretexts left." --*The History of the Church,* Eusebius, page 143-144

   Under his reign Simeon the senior leader of the church in Jerusalem and Ignatius the senior leader of the church at Antioch were killed.

   Hadrian followed in the same policies as Trajan. He persecuted Christians in moderation. Telephorus the pastor of the church at Rome suffered martyrdom. However, in his reign, Christianity made marked progress in number, wealth, learning and social influence.

4. Marcus Aurelius (161-180 A.D.)

   Like Hadrian he regarded the maintenance of the state religion as a political necessity; but unlike Hadrian he encouraged the persecution of Christians. This

persecution was not of long duration and it was not general throughout the empire, but in Southern Gaul it was the most severe persecution since Nero. Many thousands were tortured, beheaded or thrown to wild beasts, among them was Justin Martyr.

5. Septimus Severus (193-211 A.D.)

   Septimus Severus was not unfriendly toward Christianity in the first part of his rule. In fact, he was known to have had some Christians in his household including a nurse who was entrusted with the rearing of his son. However, in 202 A.D. he issued a decree forbidding conversions to Judaism or Christianity. The persecutions that followed were not of a general nature. The regions of Egypt and Northern Africa were hit extremely hard.

6. Maximinus (235-238 A.D.)

   His bitter hatred of his predecessor, Alexander Severus, who had been favorable to Christianity, led him to persecute Christians, many of whom were in important positions in his own household. The edict that was issue by him against Christians was not extensively enforced, and yet two key leaders in Rome, Hippolytus and Pontianus, were thrust into the cruel slavery of the mines where they soon lost their lives.

7. Decius (249-251 A.D.)

   The Decian persecution was by far the worst trial that the Church as a whole had undergone up to that time. The cause for this persecution was similar to the previous one. Decius suspected the Christians of disloyalty to him because they had been favored by his predecessor. Whatever the motive, in 249 A.D. imperial edicts were issued that commanded all citizens of the empire to sacrifice to the Roman gods. Those who obeyed were given a certificate (*libelli*) as evidence that they had complied. Christians were not specifically singled out, but the Christians were the chief ones to suffer since they could not comply. To the Christians such sacrifice would have been considered apostasy.

   A Certificate of Sacrifice (*libelli*) found in Egypt read as follows:

   To the commissioners for sacrifices in the village of Alexander's Island, from Aurelius Diogenes, son of Satabus, of the village of Alexander's Island, aged 72; scar on right eyebrow,

   I have always sacrificed to the gods, and now in your presence, in accordance with the terms of the edict, I have done sacrifice and poured libations and tasted the sacrifices, and I request you to certify to the effect. Farewell

   Presented by me, Aurelius Diogenes.

I certify that I witnessed his sacrifice, Aurelius Syrus

--*Documents of the Christian Church*, Bettenson, page 13

Most Christians would rather face death than offer such a sacrifice. Some Christians, however, did comply with the sacrifice only to seek a place of repentance when the heat was off. This became a major issue for the churches when it came to receiving people back into the church when so many had died for their faith. Churches actually split over this issue.

8. Valerian (253-260 A.D.)

   During the first part of his reign, Valerian appeared to be friendly toward Christianity. At some point, perhaps influenced by his counselors, he changed his posture. Christians were blamed for many of the calamities that were being experienced in the nation (including the weather). Many church leaders were killed under his reign.

9. Aurelian (270-275 A.D.)

   Aurelian is not always listed among the major persecutors of Christians. However a careful study of books of martyrs reveals that many Christians were killed during his reign.

10. Diocletian (284-305 A.D.)

    By the time of Diocletian Christianity was becoming a formidable force in the empire. Even Diocletian's wife and daughter were studying Christianity. At some point he decided that he only had two choices. He either needed to attempt to wipe Christianity out or give in to them and seek their political support. He chose the former option and made one last attempt to rid the empire of Christian influence.

    He began slowly but in 303 A.D. he issued three edicts in rapid succession. Churches were ordered destroyed, sacred books were confiscated and clergy were imprisoned and forced to sacrifice by torture. In 304 he affirmed the requirement for all Christians to sacrifice to the gods. This was the last and the greatest of the persecutions and lasted about 10 years.

B. The result of the persecution of the church was primarily positive in relation to the spread of Christianity.

   1. Persecution only strengthened and purified the church (Ex. 1:12; Job 23:10; I Pet. 1:7).

But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew. And they were in dread of the children of Israel. Exodus 1:12

2. The attitude of the Christians who were martyred or tortured was a powerful evangelistic witness.

3. The charges leveled against Christianity spawned many apologists or defenders of the faith.

II. The Persecuted Church was seen by Jesus as a period of the sowing of tares among the wheat.

Even though the church of this period suffered seasons of persecution, it was also a time where the church was sorting out its doctrine. Some of the major teachings or heresies of this period include:

A. Marcionism

Marcionism promoted the idea of two gods, an evil god of the Old Testament and a good god of the New Testament. It also taught that Christ only seemed to have a body; He was really a spirit being. It rejected all of the Old Testament as an account of the evil god.

B. Monarchianism

Monarchianists denied the triune nature of God. Some of them held that Jesus was merely the best that the human race could produce and he was adopted by God. Others suggested that Jesus and the Holy Spirit were merely modes or manifestations of the Father.

C. Manichaeism

Manichaeism began in the middle of the Third Century with the teaching of a man named Mani. It was a blending of eastern mysticism with Christianity with its emphasis on the denial of pleasures and the attaining true knowledge as that which brings us to God. Jesus was just one of many messengers of light to lead us to God.

D. Novatianism

Novationism arose as a result of the issue of persecution especially under the persecution of Decius. While some leaders felt that those who had lapsed in their confession of faith should be let back into the church upon their repentance, Novatius, a strong church leader, felt that when these people denied Christ they committed the unpardonable sin and should not be admitted back into fellowship. He withdrew over this and started his own movement re-baptizing all who came to him.

E. Montanism

In a time when spiritual gifts were no longer active in the church a man by the name of Montanus started a movement around 156 A.D. that was characterized by prophetic utterance, speaking with tongues, gifts of the spirit, the priesthood of all believers and an end-time expectancy. This movement which was labeled Pneumatics has received mixed reviews throughout history. Montanus himself was excommunicated from the established church and yet, Tertullian, a significant church leader, became a Montanist after examining their beliefs.

III. The Persecuted Church experienced many elements of decline.

While most current church history book are not written from the perspective of restoration theology, clues to what happened can be seen in almost any study of church history. Often the clues are seen in the absence of material relative to a certain truth. When the literature of the day is silent concerning a certain truth or activity or when such an activity is deemed heretical and out of the mainstream, it is perceived as lost to the general experience of the church. This does not mean that there were not small groups who experienced many of these things; it merely means that these things were lost to the church in general.

In the Persecuted Church we observe the loss of:

A. The ministry of the prophet and prophecy about 130-140 A.D.

Early evidence suggests that prophecy was a vital part of the church but that it gradually tapered off perhaps because of abuse. In any event historical literature after about 140 A.D. does not mention prophecy except in groups like the Montanists who were viewed as heretical.

B. Spiritual impartation through the laying on of hands about 140 A.D.

The laying on of hands was restricted to the setting in of clergy by this time and it was not accompanied by prophecy. In this sense the form of this teaching continued but the power associated with it and the impartation aspect of it was lost to the church in general.

C. The baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking with other tongues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit about 150 A.D.

Much can be learned from writings condemning the Montanists with their prophecy, speaking with tongues and other expressions of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Because of the way in which they were treated by the church at large it is safe to assume that these practices were not common among the churches by this time.

D. Eldership form of church government about 160 A.D.

The church government in the New Testament was by spiritual leaders (elders) with a senior leader who were in tune with the Holy Spirit. This enabled Christ to be the head of the church. Without a strong emphasis on the personal work of the Holy Spirit it seemed more cumbersome and impractical to function this way. Without a strong unity of the Spirit, multiple leaders tend to pull against another. As a result, monarchial bishops became the norm. The bishops of the churches would eventually be strong political offices as well.

E. Local church autonomy about 180 A.D.

If man is not able to look to the Spirit for direction and guidance, he must look to other men. And so it was with the smaller and more recently established local churches. Many of these smaller churches became so dependent on larger churches that they lost their autonomy and came under the authority of bishops of a region. By this time many such churches were looking to Rome for direction, and thus, early seeds of Roman primacy were already developing by this early date.

F. The priesthood of all believers about 210 A.D.

As these monarchial bishops became more and more powerful a wide gap began to form between the clergy and the laity. As a result the bishop or priest became a central figure in the church and the actual ministry of the members of the Body of Christ diminished in importance. Because of these trends, the truth was soon altered to line up with experience and the ministers or clergy were the only ones designated "priests".

G. The focus on holiness and the sanctified life faded by 240 A.D.

By the middle of the third century much worldliness had crept into the church especially in seasons when persecution was not that strong. Without the power of the Spirit to lead a separate life, the standard of holiness and the sanctified life held up by the Early Church became an unrealistic life for many. Some recognized this problem and began the first monasteries at this time. This made provision for the double standard in Christian living. There was the "average Christian" and the ascetic who tried to lead the "deeper life."

There are several reasons why the monastic life caught on:

1. The low condition of the church.
2. The cessation of martyrdom (asceticism replaced martyrdom as the ultimate sacrifice).
3. An increased formalism in the established church. Many were longing for a more personal and freer expression in their pursuit of God.

4. The world was full of temptations that perverted the mind. This grew increasingly worse as the Roman Empire came to its end in 476 A.D.

H. The emphasis on faith alone and grace alone as a basis for our right standing with God by 300 A.D.

Because of the rigor of these ascetic groups, there developed an over emphasis on works as a sort of merit for eternal life. This merely laid the groundwork for what was to come later in the middle ages with doctrines relating to indulgences, purgatory and the veneration of saints.

Lesson 13
The Loss of Truth—The Imperial Church

I. The Age of the Imperial Church came with the rise of Constantine as the emperor of Rome.

While many historians debate whether or not Constantine had a genuine conversion to Christianity or simply adopted Christianity as a matter of political expediency, one thing we know for certain…things changed dramatically very quickly.

A. Constantine began by passing two edicts a couple of years apart.

1. The Edict of Toleration of 311 made it legal to be a Christian so long as they did not violate the laws of the land.

2. The Edict of Milan of 313 placed Christianity on equal footing with all other religions and ordered the restoration of all properties that had been seized by the state from the churches.

Now the church was free from persecution. But in winning its freedom from its enemies it had to pay a big price—coming into alignment with the emperor of Rome. This union would ultimately have very negative effects on the nature and spirit of the church.

B. Constantine gave further concessions to the church as time went on.

1. He gave tax exemption to the Christian clergy.
2. He gave the church the right to receive legacies (bequeathals).
3. He gave local churches the privileges of a corporation.
4. He forbade work on Sundays.
5. He gave gifts to members of the clergy.
6. He built expensive church buildings for strategic churches.
7. He eliminated certain practices of the state that Christians had opposed.
   a. Slavery was abolished.
   b. Gladiatorial games were abolished.
   c. The killing of unwanted children was prohibited.
   d. Crucifixion was abandoned as a form of execution.

C. At the same time, Constantine made it more difficult to be a heathen.

1. Private heathen sacrifices were forbidden.

2. Eventually pagan worship in all forms would be outlawed.

   This posture forced many heathen into the church where they brought with them their own rights and ceremonies. They merely blended their pagan practices with Christianity.

D. Constantine's concessions were responsible for many changes in concepts relative to the church.

1. Christianity became the established, government-favored church.

2. The concept of the future reign of Christ on earth gave way to the idea of the reign of Christ in the here and now.

3. The method of people entering the church became more of an intellectual decision and a matter of expediency rather than the result of a spiritual and personal experience of Christ.

4. Church membership became equal to salvation.

5. It became politically expedient and even essential to become part of the Christian Church.

6. The church became more focused on internal doctrinal disputes rather than on converting the world to the faith. After all, nations could now be Christianized by military means.

7. The simplicity of spiritual worship gave way to elaborate, stately ceremonies.

8. As the church became rich, bishoprics became objects of contention rather than opportunities for humble service. At times money was exchanged for the right to hold the office of a bishop (This practice was called "simony" after Simon Magnus who tried to give money to buy the gifts of God).

9. Missionary interest and activity declined immediately. With a new freedom the church was able to go into the world, but unfortunately the world had entered into the church.

The church appeared to conquer the Roman Empire, but in reality, the Roman Empire had conquered the church.

II. Some very positive things happened in the Imperial Church Age.

A. The finalization of the New Testament canon.

Church leaders and Constantine were very interested in doctrinal unity in the church for the sake of political unity in the empire. It was felt by all church leaders that an accepted body of New Testament books would be in order to form the Christian basis of faith.

B. The establishment of basic doctrine as the result of some church councils.

Constantine was very interested in unity of doctrine and in the face of heresies in the church pushed for church councils that could help set some doctrinal basis for orthodoxy.

1. The Council of Nicea (325)

   a. The problem was Arianism that saw Christ as a created being and thus not equal with God.

   b. The answer was a statement that would later be incorporated into the Nicean Creed which states in relation to Christ…

      We believe in…one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was made flesh of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary, and became man, and was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and is seated on the right hand of the Father, and he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, of whose kingdom there is no end.

2. The Council of Contantinople (381)

   a. The problem was Macedonianism that did not see the Holy Spirit as fully God.

   b. The answer was the formal acceptance of the Nicean Creed which states in relation to the Holy Spirit…

      We believe in…the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceeded from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is to be worshipped and glorified, who spoke by the prophets…

3. The Council of Ephesus (431)

   The Council of Ephesus condemned two other heresies, that of Nestorianism that denied the fusion of the human and the divine nature in Christ and Pelagianism

that denied the existence of original sin. Pelagius felt that prior to the coming of Christ there were men who lived without sin.

4. The Council of Chalcedon (451)

   The Council of Chalcedon condemned Eutychianism which denied the two natures of Christ and proposed a third nature.

C. The work of Patrick of Ireland

There were many great church leaders that lived during this time of the Imperial Church. There were men like Eusebius, Athanasius, Chrysostom, Jerome and Patrick of Ireland. Perhaps the most influential was Augustine who is considered the Father of Medieval Catholicism.

One of the brightest spots from a missionary point of view was Patrick of Ireland.

1. He was born in Scotland and lived from 389-461 A.D.

2. He was sold as a slave and worked as a shepherd in Ireland.

3. While in slavery he had an encounter with the Lord. He described it this way, "The Lord opened to me the sense of my unbelief that I might remember my sins and that I might return with my whole heart to the Lord my God" (*The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Douglas, page 752).

4. After six year, he escaped to a monastery in France.

5. Against all advice he returned to Ireland in 432 after receiving a night vision from the Lord.

6. He spent the next 30 plus years evangelizing the nation of Ireland.

7. He had a profound influence on the history of Ireland breaking the power of heathenism through his open air preaching, his thousands of converts, his church planting and his teaching monasteries.

8. He was never tied into Rome as so much of the rest of the world was. In some ways it could be said that he was more Protestant than Catholic.

III. There were more seeds of decline in the Imperial Church Age.

With the national acceptance of the Church it became much easier for things to be diluted with mixture and compromise. Because Christianity was now as much political as it was

religious the Church became susceptible to many abuses. The chief cause of decline in this period was mixture in the Church.

A. Constantine became ruler of the great Roman Empire and chose Christianity as the best possible of religions in 313 A.D. At this time the state began to exercise control over the affairs of the established Church, and men of little or no religious experience became instrumental in shaping Church doctrine. Even the outcome of the Council of Nicea was the result of the efforts of Constantine.

B. Constantine's sons became even more concerned about unifying the empire with one religion. In 346 A.D. they passed an edict that closed the temples of other religions and forbid heathen sacrifices under the pain of death. Even though this edict was loosely enforced it paved the way for the state to persecute all those who were not part of the official church. As can well be expected, many heathen preferred to be called "Christian" rather than face the sword. At this time the experience of SALVATION with the doctrine of JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH and the new birth into the Kingdom of God was no longer a universal basis for church membership.

C. This movement culminated in 380 A.D. with Theodosius who made Rome, which had already been the capital of the empire, the final authority in Church matters as well.

D. Theodosius went even further in 392 A.D. when he outlawed heathen worship. It now came under penalty of death for any one to have any religious connection other than that of the established Roman church. Those considered heathen as well as those considered to be heretical in their doctrine were openly persecuted. What a turn of events! The Church that had begun by being persecuted by the world (as Jesus predicted) now became the persecutor of the heathen. This was no longer the Church that Christ had commissioned to preach the Gospel to every creature.

E. As a result of this new posturing of the empire by 400 A.D. even the rite of baptism (for by this time that is all baptism was) was considered unnecessary and unimportant. Many put it off until their deathbed, while others never experienced it at all. To a church that was itself comprised of mostly heathen, baptism had little significance. Membership in the church was based primarily upon the affirmation of creedal statements rather than an experience of Christ.

F. During this whole period there was a gradual change in the concept of the priesthood. Not only was it an exclusive term that was applied to the leaders of the church, but because tax exemption had been given to the clergy, in order to minimize the loss of revenue to the state by taxation, the priesthood or clergy were often recruited from the poorest and least educated classes of people.

"And he made a house of high places, and made priests of the lowest people, which were not of the sons of Levi." I Kings 12:31

G. By the end of the Imperial Church Age, mixture with the heathen who entered the church with their religious practices gave rise to doctrines and practices in the church that were totally foreign to New Testament Christianity. Some of these include:

1. The veneration of martyrs
2. The worship of Mary
3. The worship of angels
4. Reverence for relics
5. Pilgrimages
6. Celibacy of the priesthood

Lesson 14
The Loss of Truth—The Medieval Church

I. The decline of the Roman Empire and the rise of the papacy are the most significant events of the medieval period?

A. The Decline of the Roman Empire

1. The Roman Empire declined morally and politically over time.

   Gibbon in his classic work on *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire* gave some of the basic reasons for the fall of Rome. According to Gibbon, Rome's fall had nothing to do with the strength of another world power. It had everything to do with moral decline from within. Some of the contributing factors included the following:

   a. The undermining of the dignity and sanctity of the home.
   b. Higher and higher taxes with bigger and bigger government.
   c. Financial irresponsibility; spending of public money for free bread and circuses for the populace.
   d. A disregard for the poor and a lack of regard for human life.
   e. The mad craze for pleasure with sports becoming increasingly brutal and immoral.
   f. The over-dependency of Rome on foreign mercenaries to do the work of defending its boundaries.

2. The Roman Empire became vulnerable to the hoards of barbarians including the Huns, the Visigoths, the Vandals, the Franks, the Lombards, the Ostrogoths, the Burgundians and the Anglo-Saxons.

3. As the Roman Empire broke up, the primary unifying force was the Church.

B. The Rise of the Papacy

While many of the seeds of the papacy were to be found in the Imperial Church Age, all of the seeds came to maturity and ripened in the Medieval Church Age.

1. The word "pope" comes from the Latin word "Papa" which simply means "father."

   At first this term was applied to most of the senior leaders or bishops (as they had begun to be called) of the larger churches. By about 500 A.D. it was primarily used of the Bishop of Rome and came to mean "Universal Bishop."

2. The rise of the papacy was a gradual thing that was fostered by several things.

    a. The statement by Jesus to Peter in Matthew 16.

    b. The fact that Peter was seen to be the chief apostle.

    c. The fact that Peter died in Rome. The Catholic argument is that he was the bishop of Rome.

    d. The fact that Rome was already the head of the Empire.

    e. The fact that emperors like Constantine wanted influence in the world-wide church.

       In fact, Constantine viewed himself as the head of the church with the power to convene councils and oversee the development of creedal statements.

3. Some of the occurrences that strengthened the developing papacy include the following:

    a. Callistus, who served as the bishop of Rome from 218-223 A.D., was the first one to claim supremacy on the basis of Matthew 16. His claim at the time was not well received.

    b. At the Council of Sarica in 343 A.D. it was decided that if a bishop was deposed he could appeal his case to the bishop of Rome. No one could fill his place until the bishop of Rome had ruled on the matter.

    c. In 380 A.D. Theodosius and Gratian issued an edict that stated that all Christians should hold "the faith which the holy Apostle Peter gave to the Romans," which he defined more specifically as that which was taught by its existing bishop (A History of the Christian Church, Walker, page 117).

    d. Innocent I who was the bishop of Rome from 402-417 A.D. referred to himself as the "Ruler of the Church of God" and claimed the right to settle the more important matters of controversy in the whole church.

    e. In the context of the empire dissolving under the storms of barbarian hoards, Augustine wrote his epic work *The City of God* in which he envisioned a universal Christian empire. This book had great influence in molding public opinion toward the idea of a universal church under one head.

    f. Leo I who was the bishop of Rome from 440-461 A.D. is considered by many to be the first true Pope. He certainly had a great deal of power. With the Roman Empire breaking up coupled with weak Roman leadership, Leo I was the one strong man of the hour. He seized the opportunity and declared himself to be the "Primate of all Bishops" by divine appointment. In 455 his claim was strengthened when the emperor Valentinian III recognized him as such.

g. Simplicius (468-483) was pope when the Western Empire fell in 476 A.D. The breakup of the empire left the popes free from civil authority. The various new kingdoms if the Barbarians into which the west was now broken furnished the pope with an opportunity for advantageous alliances. Soon the pope became the most commanding figure in the western world.

h. In 502 Bishop Ennodius of Pavia promoted the idea that the Pope can be judged by God alone (Walker, page 124). This concept laid a strong foundation for the ultimate dominance of the papacy and the concept of the Holy Roman Empire.

4. The papacy was strengthened additionally by the development of certain doctrines and practices in the Roman Catholic Church.

   Pope Gregory I (590-604) perhaps did the most to solidify the supremacy of the papacy. He did this primarily by establishing a number of church doctrines that would in fact make people more dependent on the pope and other ecclesiastical leaders.

   a. He developed the doctrine of penance and purgatory. His argument went something like this. He taught that penance had three parts:

      i. The sinner must be truly sorry.

      ii. The sinner must have a change of heart.

      iii. The sinner must make satisfaction for his sin by the payment of a "spiritual fine."

         Fines could be paid by repeating "Hail Mary's" or the Lord's Prayer, by giving alms or by making a spiritual pilgrimage to the Holy City. Sins that were not fully atoned for would be reconciled by doing time in purgatory after one's death.

   b. He fully developed the concept of the "mass." The concept of the mass is that when a priest performed the sacrament of communion it was an actual reenactment of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

   c. He developed the doctrine of transubstantiation. This doctrine taught that the bread and the wine in communion actually change into the veritable body and blood of the Lord when the priest performed the mass. This led to the practice of only the priest drinking the wine for fear that the blood of Christ would be spilled if it was taken carelessly. As a result of this teaching, communion took on a mystical and ritualistic flavor.

d. He was the first pope to raise his own standing army and pay their expenses.

e. His is credited with the statement "To be landless is to be powerless." It was this principle that led to later forgeries that bequeathed certain lands to the papacy.

5. The papacy was strengthened additionally by famous forgeries that granted concessions to the bishop of Rome. While these documents were later proven to be forgeries, at the time, they were readily accepted as genuine.

   a. The Donation of Constantine

      This document purported to be an official decree from Constantine concerning the bishop of Rome, specifically Sylvester, in which Constantine ordered all of the clergy of the realm to be subject to whoever occupied the position of leadership in the church at Rome. In addition, this document transferred to the bishops of Rome "the city of Rome and all the provinces, districts, and cities of Italy or of the Western regions." This gave the Pope power over the Western half of the empire. This document was eventually discredited, but not until the 1400's (about 800 years later).

   b. The Pseudo-Isodorian Decretals

      This document arrived on the scene in the mid 800's and purported to be a collection of official decrees by popes and decisions of councils strengthening the claims of papal supremacy. It wasn't until the Reformation that this document was scrutinized and proven false.

6. The culmination of papal power came under Hildebrand who became Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085). He actually brought the Holy Roman Emperor to his knees in a conflict of authority by exercising his powers of excommunication. One of the principle documents that further strengthened the claims of the papacy was the *Dictatus*. This document stated that:

   a. The Roman Church was founded by God alone.
   b. The Roman Pope is the only one who can be called "universal."
   c. The Roman Pope is the only one who can depose bishops.
   d. The Roman Pope is permitted to depose emperors.
   e. The Roman Pope may not be judged by anyone but God alone.
   f. The Roman Pope may absolve subjects of the loyalty to wicked kings.

   --*A History of Christianity*, Latourette, pages 470-471

7. As the power of the papacy was weakening, more and more was done to reinforce the papacy.

a. Boniface made a declaration in 1300 in a document called the "*Unam Sanctum* that, "we declare, affirm, define and pronounce that it is altogether necessary for salvation that every creature be subject to the Roman pontiff" (Walker, pg. 262).

b. Popes claimed the power to release people from years in purgatory through the issuing of official indulgences. The abuse of this practice became a major catalyst for the Reformation under Martin Luther.

II. The nature and character of the formal church declined severely in the Medieval Church Age.

The Middle Ages are sometimes referred as "Dark Ages" because of the overall condition of the church during this period. It is not hard to see why it fell to the place that it did. It is not hard to see why the Crusades or the Inquisition could fill the pages of Church History. This was no longer the Church that Christ envisioned when He said, "I will build My church!"

By now it was a false religious system taking the name of Christ. During the Middle Ages the road away from God grew steeper and the compromise with the world grew greater. Due to so many non-converted members in the Church, forms were substituted for the freedom that was once enjoyed in the Spirit of the Living God. Because of the pagan infiltration into the Church more and more compromises were made so that everyone would feel more at home.

The following are just a few of the areas touched by this tremendous spirit of compromise:

A. The Church became very liturgical and formalistic. Dignity and impressiveness were brought into the services. All this was to impress the natural man instead of to please God.

B. The mass was conducted in Latin, a language which few people actually spoke creating a mystery around the whole experience of worship. Added to this was the fact that the Bible was inaccessible to the people. Often the only public copies were chained to the churches and were written in Latin.

C. Singing during the services was done by trained chanters and the congregation did not participate in any of the official acts of worship. The priest acted in behalf of the people.

D. The Church buildings became larger and more decorative. Church walls were covered with tapestries and paintings. Stained glass windows were considered aids to the worship experience. Impressive spires modeled after the heathen temples to the sun became characteristic ornamentation.

E. Heathen, who were accustomed to worshipping multiple gods or sacred places, quickly switched over to the worship of the "saints" or the first apostles, and particularly the worship of Mary. In some cases all they actually did was rename some of their earlier gods.

F. Material objects in worship came to hold a larger and larger place as aids to the uneducated masses. Relics, images of the saints, pictures and crucifixes became especially prominent.

G. Because the church offices were now political offices as well they attracted those who were only after the power. As a result (although there were occasional good leaders) those who held church offices including the papacy were often immoral, violent, murderous, extravagant and extremely corrupt.

Because the papacy was a position of such great power there was great contention over the office whenever it fell vacant. At one point in history there were three popes all claiming the divine right and each anathematizing the other.

III. There were some bright spots in the Medieval Church Age.

By the close of the Medieval Church Age the established church bore absolutely no resemblance to the church of the Apostolic Church Age. In fact, the formal church was responsible for the persecution of anyone who did not fully acknowledge papal authority and submit to the rulings of the church. For this reason, true believers would mostly be found outside of the accepted reach of the church.

In every age, God has always had a remnant of people who were true to Him. However, during the period of the high Middle Ages they must be searched for outside of the walls of the established church. In some cases they will only be found among those that the established church deemed heretic.

This search is complicated by the fact that when someone was deemed a heretic, they were usually killed, their writings were burned and their followers were exterminated. As a result all we know about them is to be drawn from what was written against them by others. In such cases these accounts can be seriously flawed and exaggerated when they are describing the beliefs of such heretics.

If we are permitted to "read between the lines" of history, it is clear that God has had true believers even in the darkest of times. In our next lesson we will look at "the faithful remnant" during this dark time of church history.

Lesson 15
The Faithful Remnant

In the last lesson we discussed the decline of the church in the High Middle Ages. When we reference such decline we are focusing on that institution that was called "the Church." The question is, "Was this the true Church from God's point of view?"

We know from a human point of view, the Roman Catholic Church was seen as "the Church." In modern times, the sins of this church have been often cited as a criticism against Christianity. But was this the true church from God's point of view. If this was not "the Church" from God's point of view then where was the "true" Church?

I. God has always had a remnant of people according to faith.

As with Israel of old, God never let the light of truth go out (I Sam. 3:3-4).

And before the lamp of God went out in the tabernacle of the LORD where the ark of God was, and while Samuel was lying down, that the LORD called Samuel. And he answered, "Here I am!"

Note: This verse is talking about a literal lamp at night, but it also demonstrates what was going on with the nation of Israel at the time when the natural and the spiritual eyes of the leader were dim and the established leadership had become quite corrupt (I Sam. 4:15).

Throughout all of Old Testament history, including all of the seasons of apostasy relative to the Children of Israel, God, in His infinite mercy, preserved a remnant of people who clung to the truth by faith. God never left Himself without a witness in the earth. There has always been a line of faith righteous men and women preserved throughout the history of man right up to the present day. This does not mean that these individuals had a full understanding of truth, but they were true believers.

The line of the faith righteous throughout history can be referred to as "the faithful remnant." Notice some key scriptures regarding this truth in the Bible.

And the remnant who have escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and those who escape from Mount Zion. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.
II Kings 19:30-31

Unless the LORD of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah. Isaiah 1:9

Yet behold, there shall be left in it a remnant who will be brought out, both sons and daughters; surely they will come out to you, and you will see their ways and their doings.

Then you will be comforted concerning the disaster that I have brought upon Jerusalem, all that I have brought upon it. Ezekiel 14:22

But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace. Romans 11:4-5

See also: Ezekiel 6:8; Joel 2:32; Amos 5:15; Micah 4:7; Zechariah 8:12; and Romans 9:27.

II. Where are the true people of God to be found in the high Middle Ages of church history?

In every age, God has always had a remnant of people who were true to Him. However, during the period of the high Middle Ages they must be searched for outside of the walls of the established church. In some cases they will only be found among those that the established church deemed "heretic."

This search is complicated by the fact that when someone was deemed a heretic, they were usually killed, their writings were burned and their followers were exterminated. As a result all we know about them is to be drawn from what was written against them by others. In such cases these accounts can be seriously flawed and exaggerated when they are describing the beliefs of such heretics.

If we are permitted to "read between the lines" of history, it is clear that God has had true believers even in the darkest of times. It is an exhaustive and tedious study, but it can be shown that God has indeed preserved a people for His Name all throughout history. There have always been isolated groups or pockets of believers who have actually experienced the Lord in a deep and personal way and lived accordingly.

This does not mean that these individuals understood everything that characterized New Testament Christianity. But it does mean that they were walking in the light that they had. They were walking in truth that was beyond that which was coming to them through the established church of the day.

The following are some of the probable traces of a remnant of believers who functioned outside of and under the condemnation of the established church.

A. The Paulicians

1. The Paulicians were a group owing its origin to a man by the name of Constantine (not the emperor).

    a. Constantine was an Armenian who was converted to Christianity in 660 A.D. when he received a copy of the New Testament from a man whom he hid from Mohammedan persecution.

b. Constantine was not connected to the institutional church so all that he learned came from this copy of the New Testament particularly the writings of Paul.

c. Constantine saw a huge disparity between the organized church and the Christianity described in the writings of Paul.

d. Constantine began to sense that his mission in life was to defend and restore the practices of primitive Christianity.

e. Constantine changed his name to "Silvanus," one of Paul's disciples, and began preaching those things that he had learned from the study of Paul. Soon he established other churches based on what he taught. Most of these churches were established in the Mohammedan occupied areas where they were tolerated to a greater degree than they would have been in areas controlled by organized Christianity.

f. Because of the large number of conversions to this faith, the Paulicians soon attracted the negative attention of the Roman Empire.

g. Constantine was stoned to death and his successor was burned to death under the order of the emperor.

h. A full persecution of the Paulicians was ordered by Empress Theodora where about 100,000 Paulicians in Grecian Armenia are said to have lost their lives.

i. Even though formal persecution of the Paulicians continued for centuries to follow, evidences of these underground groups continued well into the Twelfth Century.

2. Some of the beliefs of this group included the following:

a. The Paulicians believed in the triune nature of God.

b. The Paulicians believed in the dual nature of Christ.

c. The Paulicians believed in genuine conversion and believers' baptism by immersion.

d. They opposed many of the trappings of the formal church in deference to a simple Christianity as described in the New Testament. They opposed such things as:

- Infant baptism
- Priestly orders
- Priestly garb

- Church councils
- Image worship
- Reverence of relics
- Veneration of Mary

The above information is extracted from *A History of the Baptists,* by John Christians, pages 48-55.

B. Henry of LeMans

Henry is one of a number of individuals who was considered a heretic by the established church. He lived in the early to mid 1100's and is only known by what was written against him (The following information is taken from *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, by Walter Wakefield and Austin Evans, 1969).

The following statement was made in a tract written against him and is presumed to have been written about 1133-1135 A.D.

Thereupon, I addressed the fellow with these words: "I ask you who propose such wicked tenets, so hurtful to our faith: In obedience to whom do you preach? Who commissioned you to this function? What Scriptures do you accept?" And he replied, "To answer your question about obedience: I confess that I obey God rather than men. To answer your question about my mission: He sent me who said 'Go, teach ye all nations.' He who imposed the duty was the same as He who said, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Furthermore, I accept the Scriptures of the New Testament, by which I verify and corroborate the aforesaid statements. But in case you seek to draw arguments against me from Jerome, Augustine, and other doctors of the Church, I admit giving their words due regard but not as vital to salvation…"

--Heresies, page 116

Some of the teachings for which Henry was brought into question had to do with abuses of power within the church and the corruption of the clergy. Some of the specific things cited against him include the following (Heresies, page 116-117):

1. That the Body of Christ cannot be consecrated by unworthy ministers.
2. That priests of the present day do not have the power to bind and loose.
3. That there is no Gospel command to go to a priest for penance.
4. That the bishops and priests should not have such great wealth.
5. That expensive cathedrals should not be built.
6. That no good work done in the present can help or benefit someone who has died. Henry is quoted as saying, "No good work helps the dead, for as soon as men die they either are utterly damned or are saved." This statement by Henry is described in the tract against him as "openly heretical."

C. Peter of Bruys

Peter is another individual from the history of the Church who lived about the same time as Henry. Little is known of him except from those who renounced him as a heretic of the church.

Peter preached against the established church of his day particularly as it related to the abuses of the clergy including what he perceived as a worldly lifestyle.

In a tract that was written against him we can get a glimpse concerning some of the things that he taught that were considered heretical in his day. Peter would eventually be murdered by those who were outraged by his teachings (Heresies, pages 118-121).

1. Peter denied that infants can be saved by baptism and that only those who have personally accepted Christ should be baptized.
2. Peter also reacted to the construction of ornate temples and churches.
3. Peter felt that crucifixes should not be reverenced.
4. Peter despised all of the acts of prayers, charities and good works that were done in behalf of those who were dead.
5. Peter did not believe that the mass was indeed a repetition of Christ's death and that it should not be continually offered as such.

D. An Unnamed Heretic at Cologne

The following are some excerpts from a document that was written to a superior in the church asking for answers regarding a particular heretic in Cologne about 1144 A.D. (Heresies, pages 126-132).

"Here in the neighborhood of Cologne, there have recently been discovered certain heretics, of whom some have returned to the Church after performing the requisite penance. Two, however—a man who was called their bishop and his assistant—held their ground against us in an assembly of clergy and laymen, in the presence of the lord archbishop himself and some great nobles, defending their heresy with the words of Christ and the Apostle [Paul]."

Later it goes on to say that while they were being questioned, *"they were seized by the people, who were moved by rather too great zeal, and thrown into the fires and burned. What is more marvelous, they met and bore the agony of the fire not only with patience but even with joy. At this point, Holy Father, were I with you, I should like you to explain whence comes to those limbs of the devil constancy such as is scarcely found even in men most devoted to the faith of Christ."*

"This is the heresy of those people. They say that theirs alone is the Church, inasmuch as only they follow in the footsteps of Christ. They continue to be true imitators of the apostolic life, seeking not those things which are of the world,

possessing no house, or lands, or anything of their own, even as Christ had no property nor allowed His disciples the right of possession."

"They have openly confessed, also, that besides [baptism in] water, they baptize and have been baptized in fire and the Spirit, adducing that testimony of John the Baptist, who, while baptizing in water , said of Christ, 'He shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire.' …That such baptism should be performed by the imposition of hands."

"Holy Father, we solicit your watchful concern over these manifold evils, and urge that you direct the point of your shaft against the wild beasts."

E. The Waldenses

The Waldenses were a pre-reformation movement that existed as early as the 1200's in Europe. Those associated with this group were against the hierarchy of the Roman Church and opted for a more simple expression of Christianity including evangelism, holiness, and a belief in the supernatural. This included a belief in visions, prophecy and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They generally rejected the abuses of the Catholic Church as previously mentioned.

A similar group grew to prominence in Southern France called "the Albigenses." Both of these groups were at various times hunted down and persecuted by the Roman Church.

These are only a few samples of what can be discovered as one digs a little deeper into the history of the Church. But it is evidence enough to see that God has always had a remnant according to grace.

Lesson 16
Promises of Restoration

The Dark Ages left the Church spiritually deaf and blind. The Church had lost its touch with the Spirit of God. As a result, God's Spirit no longer led and directed this organization of man into all truth. The religious leaders of this religious system were spiritually blind, and even though they had eyes they could not see. This Church did not listen for the voice of the Spirit directing their paths, but their ears were stopped by human traditions. The pity of it is that all of this time the religious leaders and most of the people felt that they did see and did hear. They felt they were in the perfect way.

The people of the Middle Ages were held captive by the traditions of men. They were a people robbed and spoiled of their spiritual heritage in Christ. They were snared by doctrines of men that made false demands upon them. They were literally bound in chains of bondage to a false religious system. They had lost their deliverer (Christ) and their one hope, but because of their ignorance none said, "Restore!"

"Hear, you deaf; and look, you blind, that you may see. 19 Who is blind but My servant, or deaf as My messenger whom I send? Who is blind as he who is perfect, and blind as the LORD's servant? 20 Seeing many things, but you do not observe; opening the ears, but he does not hear." 21 The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will exalt the law and make it honorable. 22 But this is a people robbed and plundered; all of them are snared in holes, and they are hidden in prison houses; they are for prey, and no one delivers; for plunder, and no one says, "Restore!" Isaiah 42:18-22

But God is a God of faithfulness. God was not taken by surprise by man's failure. Since God foreknew what would happen (as demonstrated in the parables of the Kingdom), He also knew what He would do. God is a God of restoration and a God of second chances. God promised that He would restore the people of God.

The word of the Lord came through Isaiah that there would be one who would be a "Repairer of the Breach, the Restorer of Streets to Dwell In" (Is. 58:12). It is in this lesson that we would like to consider God's promise to restore His people and to bring back that which was lost or stolen.

"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." Acts 3:19-21

To understand, evaluate and enter into "present truth" we must understand God's desire, promise and plan to restore His church.

I. What is the definition of the term "restoration" or "restitution" as it applies to the history of the Church?

A. In the Old Testament the Hebrew word that is translated "restoration" is the word ***shalam*** which literally means "to restore back something that was stolen or owed." It means to put something back into proper order or placement.

The Hebrew words used throughout the Old Testament carry some of the following connotations:

- to be completed,
- to finish,
- to make prosper,
- to recompense, to rescue,
- to refresh,
- to set again,
- to retrieve,
- to cause to return or
- to renew

Restoration refers to the putting back into existence or use that which has been lost, misplaced, or stolen.

B. In the New Testament there are two words that deal with the concept of restoration.

1. The first word is ***apokastasis*** (restitution). This word is only used once in the New Testament in Acts 3:21. It literally means to set something back again into its original order or former condition. This word was used in the secular Greek world to indicate the return of a possession or a piece of land to the rightful owner.

   Peter indicated that prior to Christ's return there would be a restoration of all things of which the prophets had spoken.

   …whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

   He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. –NIV

2. The second word is ***apokathistao*** (to restore). This word is used eight times in its various forms in the New Testament. This word literally means to restore to health or soundness, to put back into a former state, to restore lost dominion or authority or to be set again into its proper order.

   This word in its various forms is found several times in the New Testament. It is most often used in connection with the miracles of Jesus who healed various physical conditions. In these cases the bodies of those healed were restored to their original state (Mt. 12:13; Mark 3:5; 8:25; Luke 6:10).

The last day ministry or spirit of Elijah is for the purpose of restoring all things (Mt. 17:11).

Jesus answered and said to them, "Indeed, Elijah is coming first and will restore all things."

C. The concept of restoration has application in many areas including God's work relative to the church.

1. Restoration in a general sense refers to the returning of anything to its former condition, function or placement. It carries with it the idea of a restitution of something that may have been taken away or stolen. Ultimately the whole Bible is a book of restoration involving God's bringing back of mankind to the purposes of God and helping man to recover that which was lost through sin.

2. Restoration as it applies to the Church includes God's promises to restore life, truth, years and purpose to the Church. Restoration in God's mind not only replaces that which was lost but it also brings us back on track with God's intended purpose for the Church.

   a. Restoration involves the recovery of the divine principles and truths that were known, believed, taught and experienced by the Early Church. This would involve the recovery of those elements that were lost to the Church by the compromises made in the many years of church history. This aspect of restoration involves a returning to the foundation that was laid by the early apostles and prophets (See: Ephesians 2:20; I Corinthians 3:10; I Timothy 4:6).

   b. Restoration involves a renewal of spiritual life that is the result of the application of the above principles (I Tim. 4:15-16). As the Church returns to the pattern that God has set for it, it cannot help but experience that "breath of life" that God breathed into it on the day of Pentecost. The Breath or Spirit of God brings with it that freshness and vitality that the Church of the former rain experienced.

   c. Restoration also involves a completion of God's plan of the ages. It involves the bringing into existence of those things which were foretold by the prophets (Acts 3:21; Rom. 16:26). Everything that God has said He will do, He will do.

II. What are God's laws or principles governing His concept of "restoration"?

As with everything else in the life of God's people it is God who defines how things are to function. When one reads the Old Testament it is clear that God had something to say about nearly every aspect of the life of His chosen people.

One area about which God gave serious attention had to do with laws concerning possessions which were lost or stolen. These laws are given to deal with the natural life of God's people, but, as with so many things that God said in the Old Testament, there is a spiritual principle that stands behind the natural law.

A. God gave laws regarding restoration or restitution.

Notice the following key texts in the Old Testament:

1. Exodus 22:1-9

If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep. 2 If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed; 3 but if it happens after sunrise, he is guilty of bloodshed. A thief must certainly make restitution, but if he has nothing, he must be sold to pay for his theft. 4 If the stolen animal is found alive in his possession-whether ox or donkey or sheep-he must pay back double. 5 If a man grazes his livestock in a field or vineyard and lets them stray and they graze in another man's field, he must make restitution from the best of his own field or vineyard. 6 If a fire breaks out and spreads into thornbushes so that it burns shocks of grain or standing grain or the whole field, the one who started the fire must make restitution. 7 If a man gives his neighbor silver or goods for safekeeping and they are stolen from the neighbor's house, the thief, if he is caught, must pay back double. 8 But if the thief is not found, the owner of the house must appear before the judges to determine whether he has laid his hands on the other man's property. 9 In all cases of illegal possession of an ox, a donkey, a sheep, a garment, or any other lost property about which somebody says, 'This is mine,' both parties are to bring their cases before the judges. The one whom the judges declare guilty must pay back double to his neighbor.

Note in these verses that restoration always involved a recovery of the original loss plus additional goods of the same kind. Sometimes restoration involved up to four to five times as much as the original loss. It should also be noted that the restoration given was to be of the highest quality.

2. Leviticus 6:1-5

If anyone sins and is unfaithful to the LORD by deceiving his neighbor about something entrusted to him or left in his care or stolen, or if he cheats him, 3 or if he finds lost property and lies about it, or if he swears falsely, or if he commits any such sin that people may do-- 4 when he thus sins and becomes guilty, he

must return what he has stolen or taken by extortion, or what was entrusted to him, or the lost property he found, 5 or whatever it was he swore falsely about. He must make restitution in full, add a fifth of the value to it and give it all to the owner on the day he presents his guilt offering.

Note in these verses the same principle is found. Restoration is not merely a recovery of that which was lost, but it included an additional sum that was to be added to the original loss.

3. Proverbs 6:30-31

Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his hunger when he is starving. Yet if he is caught, he must pay sevenfold, though it costs him all the wealth of his house.

B. These principles of restoration are illustrated through types and shadows.

1. Samson (Judges 13-16)

Samson had a great start in his ministry as a deliverer of God's people. Unfortunately through compromise with the enemy and a spirit of pride he lost his strength and became a laughing stock in the earth. However, as He submitted himself back to God, God restored his strength and gave him one last chance to fulfill his original ministry.

So the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life.
Judges 16:30

2. Job (Job 42:10-17)

Job was a man of considerable wealth and influence. Satan came against him in such a way that it caused the loss of everything that he had. But just as he had suffered great loss, God restored Job in the end. After Job's restoration he had double of all that which he had at the beginning.

And the LORD restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. 11 Then all his brothers, all his sisters, and all those who had been his acquaintances before, came to him and ate food with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversity that the LORD had brought upon him. Each one gave him a piece of silver and each a ring of gold. 12 Now the LORD blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys. 13 He also had seven sons and three daughters. 14 And he called the name of the first Jemimah, the name of the second Keziah, and the name of the third Keren-Happuch. 15 In all the land were found no women so beautiful as the daughters of Job; and their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers. 16 After this

Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children and grandchildren for four generations. 17 So Job died, old and full of days.

3. The Widow (II Kings 8:1-6)

   This woman had experience a miracle birth through the ministry of Elisha. However, during a time of famine she became dispossessed of her inheritance and land. At the end of the famine she presented herself before the king to plead her cause. In the end the king appointed an officer to restore all that was hers. In addition, she was given all of the proceeds from the land during that entire seven year period of loss.

   Then Elisha spoke to the woman whose son he had restored to life, saying, "Arise and go, you and your household, and stay wherever you can; for the LORD has called for a famine, and furthermore, it will come upon the land for seven years." 2 So the woman arose and did according to the saying of the man of God, and she went with her household and dwelt in the land of the Philistines seven years. 3 It came to pass, at the end of seven years, that the woman returned from the land of the Philistines; and she went to make an appeal to the king for her house and for her land. 4 Then the king talked with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, saying, "Tell me, please, all the great things Elisha has done." 5 Now it happened, as he was telling the king how he had restored the dead to life, that there was the woman whose son he had restored to life, appealing to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, "My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life." 6 And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed a certain officer for her, saying, "Restore all that was hers, and all the proceeds of the field from the day that she left the land until now."

C. These principles of restoration are reflected in the prophecy of Joel (Joel 2:18-35).

   Read Joel 2:18-35

   Joel likens the ravaging of God's people to swarms of insects upon a land. Each stage of the insect stripped the land of more and more vegetation until all life was destroyed. In that context God speaks though his prophet that restoration is coming to the people of God. All of the things that were destroyed by insects would be restored and God's people will thrive with life once again. It is interesting that all of this is put in the context of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days.

D. The basic rule governing God's concept of restoration is that restitution of that which was lost must be in greater measure and better quality than the original that was lost.

III. What are the areas of restoration that we can anticipate in God's work in and through His Church?

A. All that was lost from the Early Church.

1. This includes the doctrine of the early church.

2. This includes the lifestyle of the early church (Is. 58:12).

   Those from among you shall build the old waste places; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, the Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.

3. This includes the power and authority of the early church.

B. All that was spoken by the prophets (Acts 3:21).

1. This includes the establishment of the house of the Lord above the other kingdoms (Is. 2:2-3; Mic. 4:1).

   Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. 3 Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

2. This includes the restoration of the tabernacle of David and Davidic worship (Amos 9:11-13; Is. 16:5; 33:20; Acts 15:13-19; Jer. 31:12-13).

   "On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name," says the LORD who does this thing.

3. This includes a mighty, end-time outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28).

4. This includes a release of the prophetic voice in and through the church (Jer. 33:10-11).

   Thus says the LORD: "Again there shall be heard in this place--of which you say, 'It is desolate, without man and without beast'--in the cities of Judah, in the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man and without inhabitant and without beast, the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who will say: 'Praise the LORD of hosts, for the LORD is good, for His mercy endures forever'-- and of those who will bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause the captives of the land to return as at the first," says the LORD.

5. This includes the full functioning of true biblical ministries (Is. 1:26; 30:20-21).

   I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.
   Isaiah 1:26

   And though the Lord gives you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.
   Isaiah 30:20-21

6. This includes a restoration of the family and family life (Jer. 31:1; Mal. 4:5-6).

   "At the same time," says the LORD, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people." Jeremiah 31:1

   Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse. Malachi 4:5-6

7. This includes a manifestation of the glory of the Lord on His people that will become a great witness to the world (Hag. 2:6-9; Hab. 2:14).

   For thus says the LORD of hosts: "Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; 7 and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory," says the LORD of hosts. 8 "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine," says the LORD of hosts. 9 "The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former," says the LORD of hosts. "And in this place I will give peace," says the LORD of hosts.
   Haggai 2:6-9

   For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. Habakkuk 2:14

C. All that was lost to mankind in the garden.

1. This includes a restoration of the image of God (II Cor. 3:18).

   But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

2. This includes restoration to a deep and intimate communion with God.

3. This includes the ultimate fulfillment of God's intended purpose.

D. There are limitations to restoration. God is not restoring…

1. The Devil

Although there are those that teach that the ultimate expression of restoration is the restoration of the devil and his angels to the purpose of God, there is absolutely no biblical evidence for such a view. It is clear from the New Testament that the devil's judgment in the lake of fire is eternal.

2. Old Testament Systems

Those things that were fulfilled and abolished at the cross will not be restored. This includes the temple, the Aaronic priesthood and animal sacrifices. For these to be restored would be to go backward in the purposes of God not forward.

IV. What are some of the obvious signs by which we can recognize days of restoration?

All through the Scripture God has given us glimpses of what times of restoration will be like (Re-read Jeremiah 33:11).

A. The Voice of Joy and Gladness

The voice of joy and the voice of gladness will be heard in the House of the Lord (Jer. 33:11). In the period of the Dark Ages the Church was in a state of mourning. The music that comes to us from that age has a very mournful sound. But God is restoring His House. The present songs of Zion are songs characterized by joy, gladness, shouting and victory.

B. The Voice of the Bride

The voice of the Bride will again be heard (Jer. 33:11). The Church is Christ's bride and is to be God's mouthpiece to the world. For so many years the Church has let the world toss it to and fro and the voice of the Church has been silenced. But once again the Church is arising and proclaiming the Word of the Lord to the lost world. The law is going forth out to Zion.

C. The Voice of the Bridegroom

The voice of the Bridegroom will be heard among God' people (Jer. 33:11). In the Dark Ages, the Church lost that personal communion with the living Savior when it lost touch with an intimate relationship to the Holy Spirit. But Christ is coming a second time as the Head of the Church to speak to his people through the prophetic word.

D. The Voice of Praise

This involves two things:

1. The voice of them that shall say, "Praise the Lord" (Jer.33:11). Over the years the Church lost the spirit of praise. Worship was written down in the form of liturgies because the song of praise was gone from people's hearts. But God is raising up a generation that has a song of praise in their hearts, and it is finding expression on their lips (Psalm 102:13-22).

   You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for the time to favor her, yes, the set time, has come. 14 For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and show favor to her dust. 15 So the nations shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth Your glory. 16 For the LORD shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory. 17 He shall regard the prayer of the destitute, and shall not despise their prayer. 18 This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD. 19 For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven the LORD viewed the earth, 20 to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to release those appointed to death, 21 to declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem, 22 when the peoples are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

2. The return of ministries that will bring back the sacrifice of praise to the Church (Jer. 33:11). God is in the process of raising ministries that are leading the Church to a renewed understanding of spiritual worship as a New Testament sacrifice.

E. The Voice of Freedom and Deliverance

Restoration will be characterized by the continual recovery of lost truth. When we discover the truth, the truth sets us free (John 8:32, 36). Restoration will be a time of deliverance and release from spiritual bondage (Gal. 4:22-31; Jer. 33:7, 11; Ps. 126). The Church has been in bondage to traditions of men. A great release in the Spirit is coming to the Church today as it applies the New Testament principles of discipline and life.

When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion, we were like those who dream. 2 Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." 3 The LORD has done great things for us, and we are glad. 4 Bring back our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the South. 5 Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. 6 He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. Psalm 126

Lesson 17
The Reformed Church

In our last few lessons we have looked at the decline of the church through the pages of church history. In the last session we looked at God's promises of restoration or reformation. From this point on in the course we will be looking at the recovery of truth that was lost to the Church including what God is saying to the church of today.

The next three periods of church history deal with the recovery of spiritual treasures that were lost to mankind and pearls of truth that have always been hidden in God's Word. We will find that in the case of the recovery of truth that for many of those who were used of God to "bring back that which was lost" there was a high price to pay.

In this session we are looking at the period of church history which we are calling "The Reformed Church." It extends from 1453 to 1648—from the fall of the Eastern Empire to the end of the Thirty Years War in Europe. This period is sometimes referred to as the Age of the Reformation.

As we look at "The Reformed Church" we are also looking at the fifth parable of the kingdom in Matthew 13. This is the parable of the treasure in the field. It tells of treasure that was hidden in a field. When the treasure was discovered it brought great joy though it was going to come to its discoverer at the price of "all that he had" (Mt. 13:44).

I. What were some of the things that precipitated the reformation?

There were several things that contributed to the reformation. The chief of these would include:

A. The terrible abuses of the papacy

The papacy was utilizing its power over penance, indulgences, purgatory and excommunication to foster its own personal agenda for power and wealth.

B. The system of taxation by the papacy

Many of the nations of Europe were tired of sending tax money out of the country to the Roman pontiff. One of the main reasons that the Anglican Church separated itself from the Roman Catholic Church was over this issue of taxation. The king of England decided that they could use their own tax money better and that he could lead the Church of England as well as the Pope led the rest of the church.

C. The corruption of the priests

By this time many of the priests were living for themselves. The priesthood had become self-serving and the priestly office had become a position of authority and

power rather than that of humble service to God and His people. In addition, many priests were openly immoral, gluttonous and murderous. You did not have to be overly astute to realize that something was very wrong.

D. The spiritual oppression of the people

The great demands made by the church on the people and the overwhelming contrast between the wealth of the church and the poverty of the people caused many to question the system itself.

E. The discovery of the New World

With the discovery of the New World and a general spirit of exploration, it soon became apparent that there was much more to this world than what had been previously known. Many of the long held belief systems were challenged by these discoveries. This carried over to a reexamination of those things that had been taught by the church.

II. Who were some of the men who prepared the way for the reformation?

Martin Luther gets a lot of credit for the reformation, but he stood on the shoulders of many who had gone before him, individuals who gave their lives for many of the same principles that Luther later developed.

Perhaps the most important of these were the following three individuals.

A. John Wycliffe (1324-1384)

1. John Wycliffe was an early English reformer.

   He was a scholar and a student of the word of God. The more he studied the word, the more he was convinced that the Christianity espoused by the formal church did not match up with that which was represented on the Bible. He was appalled at the material possessions and the extravagance of the church in the face of such poverty among the people.

2. Some of the things that he came to believe include the following:

   a. He believed that the Pope was the antichrist.
   b. He opposed Rome's taxation of England.
   c. He rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation and purgatory.
   d. He rejected the system of indulgences.
   e. He preached against the immorality of the priests and suggested that they have no spiritual authority and are not to be feared.

3. Some of his most significant contributions include the following:

    a. He translated the Scriptures into English, the language of the people.

    b. He established an order of itinerant lay preachers (sometimes called "poor priests") to expound these scriptures to the people. These preachers were called "Lollards" and they continued underground until the reformation. After the death of Wycliffe these preachers were hunted down and burned.

4. John Wycliffe died in England in 1384 at the age of sixty.

    If Wycliffe would have lived anywhere but England at this time he would most likely have been killed before he was able to do his best work. However, because England was also vying for its independence from Rome, he was not persecuted in England. His message preached by the Lollards spread to Bohemia and definitely had an affect on the later reformation that would arise in Europe.

    It is worthy of note, however, that the Roman Church did make an official judgment against him in 1428 over forty years after his death. At that time his work was condemned, he was declared to be a heretic, his body was dug up and burned and his ashes were tossed into the Swift River.

B. John Huss (1373-1415)

1. John Huss was an early Bohemian reformer.

    Huss was born in poverty but at his mother's prodding he studied for the priesthood, became a Doctor of Theology and was ordained into the priesthood. While teaching in university, he became aware of the teaching of Wycliffe.

2. Huss agreed with most of the abuses condemned by Wycliffe especially those pertaining to indulgences.

3. Huss's teachings were condemned and he was excommunicated in 1410.

4. Huss had a great impact in Bohemia but was eventually burned as a heretic for his views.

    His death came in a rather disturbing manner. He had been summoned to the Council of Constance to debate his views with other theologians. He went because he was given "safe conduct" to the Council by church authorities. However, at this Council he was formally denounced as a heretic and burned the same day.

C. Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498)

1. Girolamo Savonarola was an early Italian reformer.

   He entered the monastery and became a Dominican monk. He spent a great deal of time preaching especially in Florence with a good deal of charisma. As he traveled, he was grieved by the sins of the culture of his day.

2. Savonarola became a preacher of righteousness with a central message of repentance.

   He is said to have preached with such power against sin that people who had listened to him went about the streets half-dazed, bewildered and speechless. Soon crowds of people assembled wherever he went to listen to his preaching which only emboldened him to preach harder. He had a prophetic anointing and gave many accurate prophecies. He also wrote books on the subjects of humility, prayer and love. These books also were widely circulated and had much influence.

3. Savonarola became very influential in cleaning up the city and the politics of Florence.

   He even hosted bonfires where people could burn their masks, worldly books, obscene pictures and other such things. The most notable bonfire was over 50 meters across the base and rose in height to approximately 20 meters. Children danced in the streets going from house to house to collect materials for the fire. The fire was lit and the people sang hymns and rang bells as everything went up in smoke. This was in 1497.

4. Savonarola was burned to death in 1498.

   Unfortunately you cannot preach about the evils of society without arousing the wrath of leaders who do not want this kind of change. He was threatened by the pope, cardinals and priests alike. He was excommunicated for his teaching and eventually ordered burned to death in the public square of the city of Florence by the pope Alexander VI, one of the most morally corrupt popes ever. His last words in the fire were, "The Lord has suffered so much for me."

If the conditions in their day had been as they were in Luther's day, any of these men might have been credited with the Reformation. The thing that all of these forerunners had in common is that they were all scholars who had access to the Word of God. It was their study of the Word that convinced them of the truth.

III. How was the world prepared for the Reformation?

The Reformation would be a turning point in all of history. It started as a religious movement but eventually it would affect every area of society.

A. The Reformation can be compared to the First Century.

1. They are both turning points in history.
2. They both changed the world from its core.
3. They both were clear interventions of God in history.
4. They were both wonderfully prepared in advance by God.

B. The world was prepared for the Reformation and waiting for the right spark.

Some of the things that prepared the world for reformation include:

1. The corruptions throughout the church and world.
2. A growing desire for a genuine subjective experience of faith (mysticism).
3. A revival of scholarship and a return to the classics (The Renaissance).
4. The invention of the printing press (Gutenberg Press).
5. The publication of the Greek New Testament (Erasmus).
6. A striving for national independence and personal freedom by European nations.
7. A general spirit of inquiry.

Luther said of the day in which he lived,

If you read all the annuls of the past, you will find no century like this since the birth of Christ…Such building and planting, such good living and dressing, such enterprise in commerce, such a stir in all the arts, has not been since the birth of Christ. And how numerous are the sharp and intelligent people who leave nothing hidden and unturned: even a child of twenty years knows more nowadays than was known formerly by twenty doctors of divinity.

IV. What is the significant contribution of Martin Luther to reformation and restoration?

Martin Luther would become the spark that God used to ignite the fires of reformation. Had Luther lived in another country or region, he might have ended up becoming a martyr like all of the other reformers.

A. Luther the man (1483-1546)

Luther was the product of the Roman Catholic Christianity of the Middle Ages. At age seven he went to school and continued his study through the university level. He was sturdy physically, quick of mind, diligent in his work and had an excellent record

in school. He decided to study for a career in law, but because of a troubled soul he eventually entered a monastery. The monastic life, however, did not bring him the inner peace that he sought.

B. Luther's problem

The problem of his personal salvation obsessed him. He could not find God through Catholicism. The only God he found was an angry judge. He tried everything that was put before him but all of the masses, the veneration of relics, the pilgrimages and even physical torture did not calm his troubled heart. How much was enough to ensure his personal salvation?

C. Luther the reformer

Luther's superiors felt that the only way for him to find peace was to bury him in work. He became a teacher of the Bible at Wittenberg University. As Luther gave himself to the Word he began to see Christ in a new light—as our sin bearer. As he continued to study, especially the Book of Romans, he began to question many of the church's teaching on works. More and more he began to see that the abuses in the Church had, in fact, kept people from Christ and substituted a dependency on a system of rituals.

In order to open up a debate on some of these issues, he rather innocently nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the door of the church. Little did he know that this would ignite a fire that would never be quenched.

D. Luther prosecuted

As Luther tried to bring issues up for discussion, he only dug a deeper hole for himself. His concerns were the same ones as those who had already been condemned and burned as heretics. Ultimately he was condemned at the Diet at Worms in 1521 and declared an outlaw to be shot on sight.

At this point, had he not been kidnapped by Frederick the Wise, the Elector of Saxony, he would have most surely been killed.

E. Luther's legacy

1. Luther's understanding of salvation by grace is our starting place for the restoration of the church. Luther's doctrine can be summarized in three Latin phrases that became the battle cry of the reformation.

    a. *Sola Scriptura*, By the Scriptures alone!

    b. *Sola Gratia*, By grace alone!

    c. *Sola Fide*, By faith alone!

2. Luther's work to change the face of the church released the common man to a more personal worship and relationship God.

    a. He emphasized the priesthood of all believers.

    b. He reduced the number of sacraments from seven to two (communion and water baptism).

    c. He allowed the people to partake fully of the communion.

    d. He introduced congregational singing to the worship service.

    e. He conducted all services in the language of the people.

    f. He got rid of the elaborate priestly vestments and much of the ceremony.

    g. He rejected the doctrines of transubstantiation, purgatory, indulgence, prayer to the saints, Mariolatry, veneration of relics, the papacy and canon law.

    h. He opened marriage to the priesthood.

3. Luther's translation of the Bible into German put the Bible into the hands of the people.

    a. Luther's Bible was the first book published on the Gutenberg Press.

    b. Luther's Bible was instrumental in uniting Germany under a common language and became the basis for the modern German language.

4. Luther's commentaries on the Bible helped to form the basis for an entirely new theology around "salvation by grace."

    It is of interest that it was while he was reading Luther's commentary on Romans that John Wesley, centuries later, would have his personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

V. What movements followed Luther during this period of history?

The door that was opened in the early 1500's would never be closed. It was not long before reformation spread all throughout Europe. The restoration of the Church had begun.

It is interesting to note that the doctrines of the church would now be restored in the reverse order in which they were lost and that it would take about the same amount of time.

Some of the highlights of this age include the following:

A. Zwingli and Calvin in Switzerland

Calvin is perhaps best known for his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* published in 1546. This was the most systematic presentation of reformation doctrine for years to come. He laid the foundation of modern Reformed Theology.

B. The Anabaptists or Baptists

The Anabaptists sprung out the Luther's movement and were led initially by men like Balthasar Hubmeier (1480-1528), Felix Manz (1498-1527), Conrad Grebel (1490-1525) and Geroge Blaurock (1492-1529).* These men along with others did not feel that Luther had gone far enough. They began to doubt the validity of infant baptism. They felt that baptism must be done by immersion and it should only be done in relation to those who were old enough to demonstrate a true faith in Jesus Christ.

The word "Anabaptist" literally means "re-baptizer." They received the name because of their practice of baptizing those who had been previously "baptized" or sprinkled at birth. Their doctrine spread very rapidly but was greatly resisted by the Roman Catholic Church and the followers of Luther. Sad to say many Anabaptists were tortured and killed.

*Note the birth and death dates of the men listed above. They were born years apart but all died within a 3 year period. They were all killed for their faith.

This began a cycle that would not be uncommon in other seasons of restoration in the Church. The present move of God is often persecuted by the previous move of God. In other words, those who should have been best postured to receive a "now word" from God were often the biggest rejecters of that move of God. Those who began their journey with a fresh revelation from God often closed themselves off to further light and their personal experience became the measurement of that which was considered truth.

C. John Knox in Scotland (1514-1572)

John Knox was greatly influenced by Luther's writings and tried to introduce much of his teaching in Scotland. He was a man of courage and conviction who preached against the sins of his day and the abuses within the church.

VI. What is the significance of the date "1648" and the end of the Thirty Years War?

The Thirty Years War in Europe is a line of separation in both natural and church history. Some of the most significant changes that occurred at the end of this war include the following:

A. It marked the end of the influence and power of the medieval papacy.

B. It marked the end of the significance of the Holy Roman Empire.

C. It gave official recognition to Calvinism which in effect gave more freedom to other religious groups.

D. It gave full freedom and independence to Holland and Switzerland.

E. It gave autonomy to the 300 German states particularly in the areas of freedom of religion.

Lesson 18
The Fragmented Church

Because of the Peace of Westphalia that concluded the Thirty Years War, there was a new openness to religious diversity particularly in Europe. This, of course, paved the way for other groups to arise.

In this 300 year period of church history we are going to see the rise of denominationalism. We have likened this period to the sixth parable of the kingdom. This parable is very similar to the fifth parable of the treasure in the field. In this parable, however, the focus is on pearls of great price. Many pearls of great price would be discovered by those seeking them during this period of time as God continued to bring restoration to His Church.

Some books on church history refer to this period of time as "The Modern Church." I have chosen to label it "The Fragmented Church" because of all of the various church groups that resulted in this period of history. In addition, I see another period of church history leading up to the return of the Lord.

Most of the denominations that were birthed during this period of time (and there are literally thousands of them), began because of a new understanding of a particular truth. This "truth" was either not appreciated by the group to which they belonged or they felt that they had to separate themselves to give full expression to the implications of this truth. In either case, the church became fragmented or splintered into many, many groups.

While we can in no way cover all that was happening in particular groups and denominations, we can focus on some of the most relevant groups or individuals to our study of the restored church.

I. What are the patterns that can be seen in this period of restoration?

There does seem to be a pattern relative to the way in which areas of truth were restored over this 300 year period. It seems to follow a similar trend to what happened in the Old Testament period.

A. The Old Testament cycle of revival and decline

In the Old Testament the people of God never seemed to move in a straight line. At any point that you begin reading in the Old Testament, the people of God were either in a state of revival or they were in a state of decline.

B. The restoration cycle of heating and cooling

In the period of church history that is characterized by restoration, there seems to be a similar ebb and flow.

1. There would be those who pressed into God because of a deep hunger for truth and something deeper in God.

2. At this point God seems to have worked through key individuals to bring forth spiritual illumination of a lost truth.

3. This was followed by a period of time when people were gathered to this truth and it was taught and established.

4. Ultimately those who experienced the truth cooled down in their spiritual passion relative to the recovery of the truth.

5. This caused others to once again hunger for something deeper and fresh from the Lord.

C. Those who began with a new understanding of truth often systematized that truth with doctrinal statements that in effect closed the door to further truth.

1. For the Lutherans, this became the Augsburg Confession.
2. For the Methodist, this became the Twenty-Five Articles.
3. For the Church of England, this became the Thirty-Nine Articles

D. Those who rejected subsequent moves of the Spirit eventually slid back, while those who received truth moved forward.

As you study the restoration of truth, there seems to be another pattern. When groups who began with a fresh move of the Holy Spirit rejected the next move of the Holy Spirit and stopped moving forward, they eventually lost the actual truth upon which their group was established.

Examples of this include the following:

1. There are many Lutherans who are not born-again.
2. There are many Baptists who are not being baptized.
3. There are many Methodists who are not walking in holiness.
4. There are many Pentecostals who do not speak with tongues.

These movements that began with a certain revelation are no longer known by the truth upon which they were founded. In fact, some of them do not even teach the truth as brought forth by their founders. One has to wonder, if those founders were alive today, would they want to be part of the church that bears their name?

II. What are some of the more significant movements and the truths that were restored to the church in this period of time?

It is impossible in the scope of this class to go into a detailed study of all that happened in this period of time. We will focus on the groups that seem to have been used to bring forth a major aspect of restored truth to the church.

A. George Fox and the Quaker Movement

In the mid to late 1600's in Europe, George Fox began a movement that was labeled "Quakers" because of the spiritual "trembling" that characterized some of their meetings. This movement believed in a restoration to simple Christianity including a rejection of formal liturgies and ceremony of the established church.

An important feature of this movement was an emphasis on the **priesthood of all believers** and the **ministry of the body of Christ**. In point of fact, they were so critical of the gap between clergy and laity that they did not acknowledge clerical leadership in their services. They would wait on the Lord and members of the assembly would lead out as they felt to do so.

While they may have gone overboard in rejecting formal leadership, their concept of the functioning of every member in the body was in sharp contrast to much of the religious experience of the day.

B. Pietism and the Moravians

In the late 1700's in Europe there was again a cry for a more experiential relationship to Lord and a return to holy living. This movement influenced many of the existing churches to bring them up to a higher level. However, for some that was not enough. Count Zinzendorf, for example, felt that there needed to be a stronger separation from the world. He, along with others, was responsible for the establishment of Christian colonies that literally withdrew from the society around them.

This group was identified as Moravians. In some ways their concepts of separation went to an extreme, but the primary characteristic of the group that became their most significant contribution to the restoration of the Church was a **missionary and evangelistic zeal** that was not to be found in the Christian world of their day.

The Moravians sent missionaries to many parts of the world and were instrumental in influencing many lives for generations to come, including a man by the name of John Wesley.

C. John Wesley and the Methodists

John Wesley had been influenced by Moravian missionaries with whom he traveled early in his ministry. In a sense he was put to shame by their holy lifestyles and their missionary fervor. After he experienced his own personal encounter with the Lord, he determined to bring this same spirit back to England.

John Wesley started a Bible study movement outside of the established church. The emphasis of these groups would be a study of the Bible, sanctification and holy living. These groups eventually evolved into a denomination known as Methodists. This name referred to the discipline of the groups and of their lives.

The Methodist's strong contribution to the restoration of the church was in the area of **holiness** and the doctrine of **sanctification**. They sincerely believed that as believers in Christ we were not to settle for anything less for ourselves than the perfection of Christ's character within us.

D. A.B. Simpson and the Christian Missionary Alliance

Albert Benjamin Simpson was used of the Lord in the late 1800's and early 1900's to lay some of the foundations for the later Pentecostal movements. He was ordained a Presbyterian but soon established an independent congregation so that he could be more true to some of the things that God had revealed to him.

He preached what he called the "Fourfold Gospel" (A phrase that was later adapted by Aimee McPherson for the Foursquare Church). His fourfold Gospel was defined as Jesus Christ—Savior, Sanctifier, Healer and Coming King. As can be seen from this he had a strong emphasis on holiness much like the early Methodists, but he added a significant new element of truth that was not commonly preached in his day. He had a revelation of Christ's desire to heal our physical bodies as well as our spiritual condition.

Eventually the churches that he established became know as Christian Missionary Alliance churches. They became known for great missionary zeal and sent thousands of missionaries around the world. The thing we remember A.B. Simpson for the most in this journey of restoration is his understanding and teaching on **divine healing**.

Later at the turn of the century when the baptism of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit were to come into focus, A.B. Simpson would be very supportive. He did not believe in dispensational theology that would relegate these spiritual gifts to the Early Church alone.

E. Azuza Street and the Pentecostals

The spiritual climate at the turn of the century was ripe for a major move of the Holy Spirit. While the origin of the Pentecostal movement is subject to some debate (Did it start in Wales, in Kansas, at Azuza Street?), there is no question that what took place at Azuza Street in 1906 gave worldwide attention to a powerful burst of Holy Spirit activity.

William Seymour, who seemed an unlikely candidate to be used in such a way, began preaching in Los Angeles in a converted stable on Azuza Street the day of the great San Francisco earthquake. Immediately manifestations of the Holy Spirit began to

occur while he preached. The most significant manifestation was speaking with other tongues. People came from all over the world be experience this "weird babble," as reported by the papers.

From their experience at Azuza Street, people went home and the experience followed them to their local churches. Other leaders that followed Seymour would do the work of bringing the truth of this experience into doctrinal clarity. In the years that followed many denominations would form around the truths that were brought forth at this time.

Some of the most important truths that were restored to the church through the Pentecostal movement include the **Baptism of the Holy Spirit** with the evidence of speaking with other tongues, **prophecy** and the **gifts of the Holy Spirit.** The area of the prophecy and the gifts would find greater expression and definition some time later, but dramatic things were starting to take place.

Lesson 19
The End-time Church

In our last class we talked about the Fragmented Church. By the time the Twentieth Century began there were literally thousands of denominations around the world each claiming to possess the truth. Many of these groups began with a revelation of divine truth and an openness to the voice of the Holy Spirit. As time passed, some of these groups cooled off in their expression of the very truth upon which they were founded and did not continue with the same openness to the Holy Spirit with which they began.

In this session we come to a discussion of (what I am calling) "The End-time Church." This church is represented by the seventh parable of the Kingdom given by Jesus. It is the parable of the dragnet (Mt. 13:47-50). This is the final period of church history that concludes with the return of the Lord and the final judgment.

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, 48 which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away. 49 So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, 50 and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

This parable is also tied to the second parable in that they both deal with the separation that will take place at the Second Coming of Christ (Mt. 13:24-30).

Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; 25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. 26 But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. 27 So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' 28 He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' 29 But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

This period of church history begins in 1948 and extends up to the Second Coming of Christ. In 1948 there was a moving of the Holy Spirit that is sometimes labeled "The Latter Rain Movement." While that title for this particular movement may be disputed, the Bible does speak of a season in God's prophetic calendar known as "the time of the latter rain." This is clearly a season of time immediately preceding the Second Coming of Christ.

I. What does the Bible tell us about "the latter rain"?

A. The end times will be characterized by a latter rain outpouring of the Holy Spirit that will precede and prepare for the end time harvest (Jam. 5:7-8).

Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

B. This end time outpouring was foretold by the prophet Joel and was partially fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost (Joel 2:23-32; Acts 2:17-21).

23 Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God; for He has given you the former rain faithfully, and He will cause the rain to come down for you--the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. 24 The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil. 25 "So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the crawling locust, the consuming locust, and the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you. 26 You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; and My people shall never be put to shame. 27 Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: I am the LORD your God and there is no other. My people shall never be put to shame.

28 "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. 29 And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. 30 And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: Blood and fire and pillars of smoke. 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. 32 And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls."
Joel 2:23-32

For more on the latter rain refer to Lesson 3-4, Times of Refreshing

C. Today we are in a unique position to be able to see that actual fulfillment of these prophecies.

II. What was the setting in 1948 that made it a season that was ripe for a move of the Holy Spirit?

A. The natural scene was ripe for a move of God.

1. World War II had just ended and the earth was devastated.

   a. Cities around the world were in ruin.

   b. Nations were depleted of resources.

2. The Atom Bomb had been recently dropped and the new Hydrogen Bomb (1000 times as powerful as the Atom Bomb) had just been invented which created a general atmosphere of fear.

3. The United Nations was formed to help avoid such wars in the future and help piece the world back together (The first official meeting was in London in January of 1946).

4. Israel became a nation under its own flag for the first time in nearly two thousand years.

   This gave many people a sense that end time prophecy was in the process of being fulfilled. In doing so it had the effect of giving many people a heightened awareness of the imminence of the Lord's return.

B. The spiritual scene was also ripe for a move of God.

1. Churches were weak prior to the war and spiritual dearth prevailed.

2. While the war brought many people back to church it was not long before things were back to the way they were before the war.

3. Many of the Pentecostal churches had cooled off and were primed for a new spiritual experience.

III. What happened in the 1948 outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

Whether or not one can say that what took place in 1948 was indeed "the latter rain" is something that can be debated (I am personally inclined to believe that it was not the latter rain outpouring). That a significant outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurred in 1948 cannot be debated.

A. The 1948 outpouring was foretold by Charles Price.

   Charles Price was a powerful Pentecostal leader and evangelist who died in 1947. Just before he died he spoke of an outpouring of the Spirit that would come.

1. He prophesied that a mighty move of the Spirit would begin in Canada.

2. He foretold that this move would result in mixture and lead to confusion.

3. He went on to say that out of the ashes of that visitation of the Spirit would come a mighty moving of the Spirit that would usher in the Second Coming of Christ.

The first two elements of this prophecy have definitely come to pass, we are most likely waiting for the third element to come to pass.

B. The 1948 outpouring began in a Bible school in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada.

1. Some gleanings from an eyewitness account.

The following account is given by George Warnock in the preface of his original book published in 1951, *The Feast of Tabernacles, the Hope of the Church* as he reports of an eyewitness account.

Three buildings on the airport at North Battleford, Saskatchewan composed Sharon Orphanage and Schools at its beginning in the Fall of 1947. About seventy students gathered to study the Word of God and fast and pray. After about three months the Revival suddenly began in our largest classroom where the entire student body was gathered for devotional exercises. One man told me that when he was five years old, God gave him a vision of that classroom. Everything in it was identical. He saw God moving in a way he could not understand.

I shall never forget the morning that God moved into our midst in this strange manner. Some students were under the power of God on the floor, others were kneeling in adoration and worship before the Lord. The anointing deepened until the awe of God was upon everyone. The Lord spoke to one of the brethren, "Go and lay hands upon a certain student and pray for him." While he was in doubt and contemplation one of the sisters who had been under the power of God went to the brother saying the same words, and naming the identical student he was to pray for. He went in obedience, and a revelation was given concerning the student's life and future ministry. After this a long prophecy was given with minute details concerning the great things God was about to do. The pattern for the Revival and many details concerning it were given. To this day I can remember the gist of the prophecy, and will try to repeat some things here as they were spoken.

"These are the last days, my people. The coming of the Lord draweth nigh, and I shall move in the midst of mine own. The gifts of the Spirit will be restored to my Church. If thou shalt obey me I shall immediately restore them…But oh, my people, I would have you to be reverent before me as never before. Take the shoes from off thy feed for the ground on which thou standest is holy. If thou dost not reverence the Lord in His House, the Lord shall require it at thy hands…Do not speak lightly of the things I am about to do, for the Lord shall not hold thee guiltless. Do not gossip about these things. Do not write letters to thy nearest friends, of the new way in which the Lord moveth, for they will not understand. Thou hast obeyed Me, and I shall restore my gifts to you. I shall indicate from

time to time those who are ready to receive the gifts of the Spirit. They shall be received by prophecy and the laying on of the hands of the presbytery."

Immediately following this prophecy a sister who was under the power of God gave by revelation the names of five students who were ready to receive. Hands were laid upon them by the presbytery. This procedure was very faltering and imperfect that first morning, but after two days of searching the Word of God to see if we were on scriptural grounds, great unity prevailed and the Lord came forth in greater power and glory day by day. Soon a visible manifestation of gifts was received when candidates were prayed over, and many as a result began to be healed.

Day after day the glory and power of God came among us. Great repentance, humbling, fasting and prayer prevailed.

So it was that God began this great work of Restoration. For that is what is happening. God is RESTORING! He is restoring all that was lost in the fall of the Church and in the fall of Adam!

2. Some of the unique features of the initial outpouring.

   a. The heavenly choir

      As people got together to wait on God and worship Him, they experienced a new sound of worship. People would simultaneously sing out in known and unknown tongues in perfect harmony. This would often continue for more than an hour in which time many would be healed, baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit and inspired to prophesy. Later on this would be referred to as "singing in the Spirit" (I Cor. 14:15).

   b. The laying on of hands with prophecy

      Prophecy immediately came up to a whole new level. This prophecy was very specific and very individual. It also occurred in conjunction with the laying on of hands.

   c. The concept of restoration

      While the concept of restoration as it applied to the church was not a totally new thought, it was definitely accentuated in this move of God. Those involved in this move were convinced that this was the time for God to restore things back to the way that they were at the first.

   d. Warnings about misuse and abuse of the gifts

There were several prophetic warnings that came through prophecy at the inception of this movement. Most of these warnings were not heeded in the long term and with some very negative results.

3. Some important things that were lacking in this move.

   An important emphasis that was lacking in this initial move was the importance of the local church as a context for the operation of the gifts and ministries.

   a. Many ministries functioned with no structure, order, covering or accountability.

   b. Many churches were split by outside ministries that had little or no respect for local church leaders.

   c. It was this missing element that caused the movement to end in confusion.

C. The 1948 outpouring ended in confusion.

   1. There was a misuse of authority.

      a. Apostles imposed their authority on pastors and local church leaders.

      b. Prophets freely gave out personal prophecies without accountability or spiritual covering.

      c. Laying on of hands and prophecy was used by some to control people's lives.

   2. There was an abuse of the gifts for personal gain.

      Many signs and wonders ministries arose with great healing campaigns. Most of them soon saw the money in it and used their gifts for personal gain. Because many of these individuals considered themselves above the local church and local pastors, they became susceptible to financial corruption and moral failure.

   3. There was a wave of false teaching regarding perfection.

      Some of those who were a part of this movement believed in what was referred to as "manifest sons of God." Some went so far as to promote the idea that they were in possession of their "redeemed body."

   These abuses gave "The Latter Rain Movement" a bad taste in the mouth of many Christian leaders of the time. Unfortunately, because of the abuses many rejected much of the understanding of truth that came through this move of the Spirit.

IV. What were some of the significant truths that came out of this move of the Holy Spirit?

There were many truths that came to light during this time. Some of these truths were actually made known through prophetic utterance. In some cases people were prophesying things that they did not understand or even believe. It was only after they studied their own prophecies in the light of the Word of God that they realized that God was indeed restoring truth to His people.

Some of the main truths that were highlighted in this move of the Spirit include the following (Note: We will be looking more closely as some of these area in our next lessons):

A. Prophecy and the Laying on of Hands

While the restoration of prophecy was a part of the Pentecostal revival of the early 1900's, this revival saw a significant upgrade in this gift. Not only was it now seen in relation to personal prophecy giving specific insight into individuals' lives, it was also used in conjunction with the laying on of hands of the presbytery.

*Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership [*KJV, presbytery*].* I Timothy 4:14

B. The Nine Gifts of the Spirit

While the concept of the gifts of the Spirit was also part of the earlier move of the Spirit, the earlier focus had been primarily on prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues and healing. Not only did all of these receive an upgrade in this new move of God, but a fuller emphasis on all nine of the gifts was seen. Such things as word of wisdom, word of knowledge, faith, miracles and discerning of spirits received much more definition.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. I Corinthians 12:7-10

C. The Five Ascension-Gift Ministries

The whole concept of the five ascension-gift ministries was highlighted in this move. Even though pastors, teachers and evangelists were common in the church by this time, they were not necessarily seen in the context of apostles and prophets as outlined in Ephesians 4. In this move of God, these five ministries were seen as a group with a similar mission from the Lord.

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ… Ephesians 4:11-12

D. Davidic Worship

While worship has been a vital part of every move of the Spirit, in this move of God there was a revelation that God was restoring Davidic worship to the church that was to be modeled after the worship that David established in the Tabernacle of David. This worship is summarized in the New Testament when it speaks of "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord… Ephesians 5:18-19

E. New Testament Priesthood and Spiritual Sacrifices

Another significant revelation in this move had to do with a new understanding of the believer's role as a priest unto God. The New Testament priesthood is a spiritual priesthood that is to offer spiritual sacrifices unto the Lord. A spiritual sacrifice of central importance to this move of God was "the sacrifice of praise" (Heb. 13:15).

Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

F. The Restoration of the Body of Christ—Unity

While the previous period of church history saw a fragmentation of the church into many splinter groups, a significant revelation in this move of God was that the church was to be one. There was a strong emphasis on the importance of the Body of Christ flowing together to establish or extend God's kingdom on the earth.

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. John 17:20-21

G. Church Government—Elders

In addition to the areas above, there seemed to be a new understanding of issues related to authority in the church. This certainly had some relationship to the new insight concerning the ministry of apostles and prophets, but it also brought a new focus to the local church government of elders. Many of the earlier movements had seen strong senior leadership with a church board of elected leaders.

For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you… Titus 1:5

V. What was the outcome this "latter rain" movement?

The "Latter Rain Movement" followed the path that had been foretold by Charles Price, which demonstrates that this was not the "latter rain" that the scriptures foretold.

A. The movement ended up in confusion because many did not take the initial warnings seriously.

As Kevin Conner states in his book *Restoration Theology*,

In hindsight, it could be said that there was never so much "seed-truth" and "seed word" given by the Spirit in any previous visitation as in this movement, but, never was there such a fast decline into extremes or error of a revival from God that took place in a few short years. *--Restoration Theology*, page 199

B. A pure stream survived the movement and the restored truths eventually prevailed.

C. We can anticipate another great visitation prior to the return of the Lord.

Lesson 20
Restored Truths, Part I

In the last lesson we looked at the movement that was referred to as "the latter rain movement." While that movement is most likely not the movement that the Bible predicts prior to the return of Christ, there were several significant truths that came to back in focus through this move. Even though there were some problems and abuses with that move of the Holy Spirit, the truths from the Word of God were pure.

In the next few lessons we want to take a closer look at some key truths that were restored in the late 40's and early 50's of the last century.

I. The Laying on of Hands and Prophecy

A key verse that was illuminated during the 1948 visitation was Hebrews 6:1-3:

Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits.

The author of Hebrews had just exhorted his readers in chapter five to leave childish things behind and become mature. They had been children long enough, and they needed to up (5:12). In chapter six, verses one through three, the writer of Hebrews describes the six fundamental doctrines upon which Christianity is built. The chief purpose of establishing this foundation is that we may "go on to perfection" (6:1). One of these six foundation doctrines is the doctrine of the laying on of hands (6:2).

We know that laying someone's hands on another person in and of itself means nothing. However, when we do it in faith according to the dictates of Scripture, it is a completely different matter.

God often uses a physical, material element as a channel through which to accomplish a spiritual work. In baptism, God commands the use of a natural element (water) to effect a spiritual cleansing (Acts 22:16). In healing, God encourages the use of oil with prayer as indicative of the work of the Holy Spirit accompanying a supernatural impartation of strength (Jam. 5:14).

In both of these cases, the water or the oil in and of themselves do nothing. But when they are used according to God's command and mixed with the faith of the believer they affect the desired results. When God chooses to use such an element, He usually chooses a natural agent that is consistent with the spiritual work that He wants to accomplish. Water is a natural cleansing agent; oil is a natural healing agent.

A. The spiritual significance of "hands" in the Bible?

"Hands" are used in the Bible in a symbolic way. They are always used to indicate power and strength. The right hand of the Lord is seen as a source of power (Ex. 15:6; Ps. 20:6; Is. 62:8). The hand of man is also seen as a source of power or strong aid (Ps. 76:5).

"Your right hand, O LORD, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O LORD, has dashed the enemy in pieces. Exodus 15:6

Now I know that the LORD saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven with the saving strength of His right hand. Psalm 20:6

B. The significance of the "laying on of hands"

Throughout the Bible we see God using the hands of man in special ways to accomplish various things. The anointed hands become the channel, the vehicle, the bridge by which something is transferred or transmitted from one person to another. There are three key concepts connected with the laying on of hands.

1. Identification

Through the laying on of hands one party identifies or associates him or herself with the other party. In the Old Testament, when the people laid hands on the sacrificial animal, they were identifying themselves with that animal in its death (Lev. 4:24). When the people laid hand on their leaders, they were identifying with them as God's choice for them (Num. 8:10).

2. Impartation

Through the laying on of hands one party imparts or transfers something to the other party. In the Old Testament, when the priest laid his hands on the scapegoat and confessed the sins of the nation over it, the sins of the nations were, in God's eyes, imparted to the animal (Lev. 16:21-22). On a more positive note, in the New Testament, Paul told Timothy that he had imparted to him certain spiritual gifts through the laying on of hands (I Tim. 4:14 with Rom. 1:11).

Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. I Timothy 4:14

3. Confirmation

Through the laying on of hands one party confirms or renders the other party more firm. In other words, a spiritual strengthening takes place. The priests in the Old Testament would bless the people by lifting up their hands toward them

(Lev. 9:22). In the New Testament believers were confirmed or rendered more firm by the laying on of the hands of the leadership (Acts 14:22).

C. The ways in which the laying on of hands functioned in the New Testament Church?

The laying on of hands was used in seven ways in the New Testament Church.

1. For Healing

The laying on of hands is often used in connection with healing. This is seen in the ministry of Jesus (Luke 4:40), in the ministry of the apostles (Acts 5:12), in the ministry of Paul (Acts 28:8) and in the ministry of all believers (Mark 16:18).

When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them. Luke 4:40

And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. Acts 5:12a

And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him.
Acts 28:8

And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." Mark 16:17-18

2. For Conferring the Holy Spirit

The laying on of hands is used when people were prayed for to receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17; 9:17; 19:6).

Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.
Acts 8:14-17

And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Acts 9:17

And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. Acts 19:6

3. For Imparting Spiritual Gifts

The laying on of hands is used in connection with the impartation of spiritual gifts to God's people (II Tim. 1:6, 14; I Tim. 4:14).

Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. I Timothy 4:14

Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. II Timothy 1:6

4. With Prophecy

The laying on of hands is used in association with prophecy over the person being ministered to (I Tim. 1:18; 4:14).

This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare…
I Timothy 1:18

5. For Blessing

The laying on of hands is used to impart a blessing. Jesus Himself demonstrated this when He put His hands on the little children (Mark 10:16).

And He took them up in His arms, laid His hands on them, and blessed them.
Mark 10:16

6. For Sending Out Ministries

The laying on of hands is used in the sending out of ministries from the local church in the sense of commissioning and identification with those being sent out (Acts 13:2-3).

Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away. Acts 13:1-3

7. For Ordaining or Appointing Ministries

The laying on of hands is used by leadership in connection with the confirmation, appointment or ordination of various ministries (Acts 6:6).

And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayer they laid hands on them. Acts 6:5-6

D. The prophetic presbytery or "prophetic assembly"

A prophetic assembly or presbytery is a time that is set aside to create a "safe" context for the prophetic ministry to operate in its prescribed realm of "equipping the saints" and "edifying the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12).

It appears that this is something that was practiced in the early church as well (Acts 11:28; 13:1-3).

In a prophetic assembly, three important concepts come together.

1. Prophecy

Prophecy is obviously an essential part of any prophetic assembly. Through the prophetic utterance God speaks immediately to those who are prophesied over in a specific manner and, secondarily, to all those present in a general manner. This dual function of prophecy is possible because of the nature of the prophetic word as expressed in divine principles which operate faithfully in accordance with the ways of God.

2. Laying on of Hands

While prophecy is certainly the most dramatic aspect of this ministry, the laying on of hands is not to be minimized. When we function according to God's prescribed order we can expect spiritual gifts, blessing and strength to be imparted.

3. Presbytery

The word "presbytery" is not a word that we use in our culture today. However, it is a biblical word and literally refers to a "group of elders." For this reason we prefer that the ministry at this level be done by those who are called to the "ministry of a prophet" working in tandem with the local elders and the leadership team of the local church. The prophetic aspect of this ministry is as much a blessing to the individual member of the church as it is to the leadership of the church by helping leaders with a better understanding of church members.

E. The various ways that prophecy functions in this context

Prophecy in the local church should normally be limited to expressions of edification, exhortation and comfort (I Cor. 14:3). However, the ministry of the prophet under the auspices of the leadership team of the local assembly can move beyond that limitation.

The various functions of prophecy in a prophetic assembly are as broad as the functions of the ministry of a prophet. There are five possible functions of prophecy in a prophetic assembly time. This does not mean that all of these functions will occur in every prophetic word, of course, but that every word will include at least one or a combination of these functions.

1. Edification (I Cor.14:3; Acts 5:32, 41)

   In this case, the prophetic word comes to build up and strengthen the believer in his or her spiritual life. Prophecies of this nature give the person insight into the building blocks that will help strengthen their life.

   But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.
   I Corinthians 14:3

2. Exhortation (I Cor. 14:3)

   In this case, the prophetic word comes to admonish, warn and to stir up. Some believers need to be urged along, stirred up and challenged in the area of faith for what God wants to do through their life.

3. Comfort (I Cor. 14:3)

   In this case, the prophetic word comes as a healing balm to a wounded spirit or to bring consolation to those who are in times of affliction, trial or persecution.

4. Confirmation of Direction (Acts 13:1-2; II Cor. 13:1)

   In this case, the prophetic word comes as an additional witness in the area of divine direction for one's life. While no one should act on a singular prophecy, when put together with other witnesses, prophecy can solidify direction.

   "By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established."
   II Corinthians 13:1

5. Correction (Amos 7-9, Mic. 3-6)

   In this case, the prophetic word comes to bring correction. A corrective word is a message of setting right, a chastening word or a call to repentance.

F. The responsibility of the recipient of prophecy?

Spiritual preparation before a prophetic assembly will help to ensure a proper response to the prophetic word when it comes. After receiving prophetic ministry each individual is responsible for maintaining a proper response to the word which he or she has received.

Proper responses to prophetic ministry include the following:

1. Faith (Jam. 1:6-7, II Chr. 20:20)

   Faith is essential in receiving anything from God. It is also part of God's way of operating to test the word that He brings to someone. Every word from God will be tested (Ps. 18:30). Therefore, it is essential to maintain faith.

2. Humility (Ps. 34:2; Jam. 4:10)

   The prophetic word must be received in a spirit of humility. Those receiving prophetic ministry must approach a presbytery in a humble spirit which says, "Dear God, not my will but Your will be done."

3. Meekness (Jam. 1:21)

   A spirit of meekness acknowledges the sovereign control of God over the life and future ministry of the individual. It does not seek to push a ministry in one's own power but allows God to develop it in His time.

4. Patience (Rom. 8:25; Jam. 1:3)

   One of the hardest things after a presbytery is to patiently wait for God to bring to pass that which He has spoken. The principle of delay is one of the tests of the prophetic word which we may expect.

5. Joy (1 Cor. 12:26; 1 Pet.1:8)

   Those receiving prophetic ministry should respond to the prophetic word with a spirit of rejoicing.

6. Submission (Heb. 13:17)

   Those receiving prophetic ministry should have a submissive spirit to the local church leadership who are now responsible to guide him in the revealed purposes of God their lives. Those receiving prophetic ministry must allow the elders to be a voice to them and they should actively seek their counsel.

II. The Nine Gifts of the Spirit

While the concept of the "gifts of the Spirit" was acknowledged in the Pentecostal Revival only a few of the gifts were seen in operation and then only in a very limited sense. The 1948 visitation gave strong impetus to these gifts.

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. I Corinthians 12:7-10

A. The Gifts of the Defined

These "Gifts" can be simply defined as follows:

1. These gifts are distinctly attributed to the Holy Spirit as the source (I Cor. 12:4, 7-11).

2. These gifts are a manifestation or a "shining forth" of the Spirit who dwells within the believer (I Cor. 12:7).

3. These gifts are supernatural in nature and are not simply an extension or a refinement of natural abilities or powers.

4. These gifts are distributed at the direction of the Holy Spirit to meet specific needs at specific times (I Cor. 12:11).

The gifts of the Spirit are supernatural endowments given to the believer at the direction of the Holy Spirit to meet particular needs at particular times.

B. The Gifts of the Spirit Enumerated

The gifts of the Spirit fall into three categories:

1. Gifts of Revelation—God communicating His mind through His Church

The gifts of revelation include:

a. Word of Wisdom

The gift of the word of wisdom is the God-given ability to perceive supernatural wisdom from God when it is needed (Mt. 22:15-22).

b. Word of Knowledge

The gift of the word of knowledge is the God-given ability to receive from God facts and information which would be humanly impossible to know (John 4:17-19).

c. Discerning of Spirits

The gift of the discerning of spirits is the God-given ability to recognize what spirit is behind different manifestations or activities. This gift also includes the God-given ability to challenge or deal with the spirits (Acts 16:16-18).

2. Gifts of Communication—God speaking through His Church

The gifts of communicate include:

a. Prophecy

The gift of prophecy is the God-given ability to speak forth a predictive or declarative message from God to mankind (Acts 11:28; 21:10-11).

b. Tongues

The gifts of tongues is the God-given ability to speak in a language which one does not naturally know (Acts 2:1-17).

c. Interpretation of Tongues

The gift of the interpretation of tongues is the God-given ability to bring forth in a known tongue a message that was given in an unknown tongue (Dan. 5:25-28).

3. Gifts of Demonstration—God doing or acting through His Church

The gifts of demonstration include:

a. Faith

The gift of faith is the God-given ability to believe God for the impossible (Acts 3:11, 13-16).

b. Healing

The gift of healing is the God-given ability to impart immediate healing to the physical body at a specific time (Acts 28:8-10).

c. Miracles

The gift of miracles is the God-given ability to perform the impossible (Acts 20:9-12; 13:8-12).

Note to student: A complete study of the gifts of the Holy Spirit can be found in the course *The Holy Spirit*.

Lesson 21
Restored Truths, Part II

III. The Five-fold Ministry

One of the notable insights that came in the 1948 visitation relates to the five ministries listed in Ephesians 4:11-12.

Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men"… And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ… Ephesians 4:8, 11-12

A. The five ministries defined

1. Apostles

   An apostle is one who is sent out with authority who faithfully represents the purposes of the sender. An apostle is a fathering ministry to believers, leaders and local churches.

2. Prophets

   A prophet is one who speaks as a mouthpiece for God who declares a message from God that can only be known by revelation and not by natural means.

3. Evangelists

   An evangelist is one who announces the good news of the Gospel to the lost and equips the church to evangelize.

4. Pastors

   A pastor is a shepherd or feeder who is committed to the care and the maturing of God's people.

5. Teachers

   A teacher is one skilled in the Word of God who is able to communicate the deep truths of the Word in a clear and concise way.

B. What the five ministries have in common

1. They are **word ministries**.

The word of God is the principle tool for all of these ministries. They all need training in the Word as a part of their ministry preparation.

a. Apostles (Acts 2:42; 6:4; 19:9-10). Apostles are to lay a doctrinal foundation so they must give themselves to the Word.

b. Prophets (Acts 15:32; Is. 8:19-20). Prophets are to prophesy according to the Word and their prophecies will be judged by the measuring rod of the Word.

c. Evangelists (Acts 8:4, 12, 14, 30-35). Evangelists are to preach the Gospel and spread the Word of God.

d. Pastors (Acts 15:13-18). Pastors are to feed the Word to their people.

e. Teachers (Acts 11:26; 13:1). Teachers teach the Word.

2. They are **equipping ministries** (Eph. 4:12).

   All of these ministries are given to the local church to equip the saints to become what God has called them to become.

3. They are **building ministries** (Eph. 4:12).

   All of these ministries work together to build the local church to make it strong.

4. They are **teaching ministries** (Eph 4:13).

   All of these ministries are to assist believers in coming to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God. Training leaders will be a major part of their work. As eldership level ministries they must be able to teach and to exhort and convince with sound doctrine (I Tim. 3: 2; Tit. 1:9).

5. They are **maturing ministries** (Eph. 4:13-14).

   All of these ministries work together to build character, to bring believers to Christian adulthood and to bring the church to full maturity.

6. They are all **patterned by Christ**.

   a. Apostle (Heb. 3:1)
   b. Prophet (John 4:19)
   c. Evangelist (Luke 4:18-19)
   d. Pastor (John 10:11)
   e. Teacher (John 3:2)

7. They are **all a measure of the gift of Christ, not the fullness** (Eph. 4:7).

No one can be compared to Christ and no one ministry has all that we need to grow to maturity. We need all five ministries functioning together to be truly discipled of the Lord.

Note: For a full treatment of the five-fold ministry refer to the course *Local Church*.

IV. Church Authority and Government

The 1948 visitation also brought with it a new understanding of issues related to authority in the church. This certainly had some relationship to the new insight concerning the ministry of apostles and prophets, but it also brought a new focus to the local church government of elders. Many of the earlier movements had seen strong senior leadership with a church board of elected leaders. Other groups were built on a democratic approach to government.

Some of the basic areas of understanding to come out of this season of time are as follows:

A. There is government in the house of God. There are those who have a ministry of ruling or governing (Heb. 13:7, 17, 24; Rom. 12:8; I Th. 5:12-13).

B. Those that govern in the house of God are called "elders" or "bishops" (Acts 20:17, 28; I Pet. 5:1-4; I Tim. 5:17; Tit. 1:5, 7; II Pet. 2:25).

Three words are used in connection to elders that help to define their role.

Term	Reference	Emphasis
Elder	The Person	Their Qualification as a Mature Leaders
Bishop	The Office	Overseeing or Watching over the Flock
Pastor	The Work	Feeding, Leading and Caring for the Flock

An elder is a mature leader (elder) who has been officially placed into office as an overseer (bishop) of the church to work with others feeding, leading and caring for the local church (pastor).

C. Those who serve as elders should be identified as one of the five leadership ministries of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor or teacher (Eph. 4:11-12).

All of the elders should be one of the five-fold ministries, but not all of the five-fold ministries in a large congregation will necessarily serve as elders at any given time.

D. God has given the deacons or appointed servants to the elders to assist them with their ministry to the local church (Acts 6:1-6).

Note: For a complete study of this area, see the course *Local Church.*

V. The Body of Christ and Unity

Another significant revelation to come forth from the 1948 visitation of the Spirit was that of the Body of Christ particularly as it relates to universal church. Historically the church had just come through 300 years that were characterized by a fragmentation of the Body of Christ into literally thousands of denominations.

As Kevin Conner states:

Great emphasis and teaching came forth about the unity of the Body of Christ. The "seed truth" sown was that the Bible shows that there is only one body and every true believer, regardless of denominational affiliation was in that one body.

–Restoration Theology, page 193

Kevin goes on to note other aspects of this revelation:

A. There was an emphasis on the prayer of Jesus in John 17—that the people of God might be one.

   Jesus prayed that the church might be one. If ever anyone prayed according to the will of God it was Jesus. If anyone's prayer will ever be answered it will be the prayer of the only begotten Son of God. He prayed that the people of God would be one even as He was one with the Father (John 17:11, 21).

B. There was a spirit of repentance for a divisive spirit that had kept believers and churches apart.

C. There was a fresh understanding that no one group has all of the truth and that we need each other.

D. There was an understanding that maintaining the unity of the Spirit is essential until we come to a unity of the faith (Eph. 4:3, 13).

E. There was an acknowledgment that unity does not require uniformity.

   The church is a complex organism that has a tremendous unity in the midst of diversity. Unity does not mean uniformity. Uniformity implies a loss of identity and individuality. In the unity that exists in the Church we maintain individuality, personality, unique expression and a variety of function, and yet we come into a corporate identification where we forfeit our rights to act independently of the rest of the members.

This relationship is seen in various New Testament pictures of the church;

- The church is **ONE** body with **MANY** members.
- The church is **ONE** temple with **MANY** stones.
- The church is **ONE** flock with **MANY** sheep.
- The church is **ONE** nation with **MANY** citizens.
- The church is **ONE** vine with **MANY** branches.
- The church is **ONE** family with **MANY** brothers and sisters.
- The church is **ONE** army with **MANY** soldiers.

This kind of unity exists nowhere else in the world, and is the source of tremendous power in the Church. It is this unity that will be a witness to the whole world of the truth of the Gospel (John 17:20-24). It is the unity of the people of God that will be their defense in the days of storm. It is this kind of unity that is foundational to all that God desires to do through His people.

Lesson 22
Restored Truths, Part III

VI. Priesthood, Sacrifices and the Tabernacle of David

The 1948 visitation paved the way for the current worship movement of the church by bringing some definition to New Testament priestly ministry, spiritual sacrifices, Davidic worship and the Tabernacle of David. The following is a synopsis of truth that came out of that movement.

A. All believers in Christ are called to be priests and have a responsibility to function as such (I Pet. 2:5).

1. In the Old Testament God called the nation of Israel to be His nation of priests (Ex. 19:5-6).

2. In the New Testament the believers in Christ are called to be God's nation of priests (I Pet. 2:9; Rev. 5:10; Is. 61:6).

   But you shall be named the priests of the LORD, they shall call you the servants of our God. Isaiah 61:6a

   But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light… I Peter 2:9

B. All believers as priests have a responsibility to offer gifts and sacrifices unto the Lord (Heb. 5:1; 8:3-6).

For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. Hebrews 5:1

In the Old Testament the sacrifices that God required were natural sacrifices that pointed to the spiritual realities that would come in Christ. In the New Testament the sacrifices that God requires are spiritual in nature.

1. New Testament priests offer five spiritual sacrifices in the sense realm.

a. The Sacrifice of Ourselves (Rom. 12:1)

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.

As New Testament priests we are to offer ourselves totally to God. We are to personally get on the spiritual altar of sacrifice and willingly present ourselves

completely to God. This is the foundation for all other sacrifices and the beginning of our worship. In essence we are doing figuratively what Solomon did literally at the dedication of the temple when he got on the scaffold himself and lifted his hands to God (II Chr. 6:13). For the believer this should be a daily experience.

b. The Sacrifice of Our Time (Eph. 5:15-16)

See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

As New Testament priests we are to offer our time to God. Our time represents our life. Just as Christ poured out His life for us, we are to expend our lives for Him.

c. The Sacrifice of Our Substance (Phil. 4:18)

At the moment I have all I need--more than I need! I am generously supplied with the gifts you sent me with Epaphroditus. They are a sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable to God and pleases him.

As New Testament priests we are to use our finances in a way that pleases the Lord and extends His kingdom.

d. The Sacrifice of Our Good Works (Heb. 13:16)

Don't forget to do good and to share what you have with those in need, for such sacrifices are very pleasing to God. –NLT

As New Testament priests we are to offer the sacrifice of "doing good." Jesus is our model who went about doing good (Acts 10:38). These good works are the fruit of faith in our lives. As believers we are to be zealous of good works (Tit. 2:14).

e. The Sacrifice of Our Fruit (Rom. 15:16)

For I am, by God's grace, a special messenger from Christ Jesus to you Gentiles. I bring you the Good News and offer you up as a fragrant sacrifice to God so that you might be pure and pleasing to him by the Holy Spirit.
–NLT

As New Testament priests we are to produce spiritual fruit. In other words, we are to bring others to Christ and present them to Him as a pleasing offering. Paul offered His fruit back to the Lord because he realized it was only because of the Lord that this fruit could be produced.

2. **New Testament priests offer three spiritual sacrifices in the soul realm.**

   a. **The Sacrifice of Thanksgiving (Ps. 107:22; 116:17).**

      Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men! Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing. Psalm 107:21-22

      The sacrifice of thanksgiving involves cultivating a personal expression of thanks to God even in times of difficulty understanding that God is always good and He is always faithful.

   b. **The Sacrifice of Joy (Psalm 27:6,** lit. joyous shouts**)**

      And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me; therefore I will offer sacrifices of joy [lit. joyous shouts] *in His tabernacle; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.*

      There is a difference between the joy of the Lord and a naturally happy and exuberant spirit. The joy expressed by Christians is an inner rejoicing based on faith not on circumstances (II Cor. 4:8-10). It is expressed in "joyous shouts" unto the Lord that can actually have the power to change our circumstances.

   c. **The Sacrifice of Praise (Heb. 13:15)**

      Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.

      A blessing is something that you receive when you come to the House of God, but the "sacrifice" of praise is something that you bring with you. It is something that we offer to the Lord, not on the basis of our feelings or our circumstances, but on the basis of our revelation of God's awesome greatness and our personal desire to honor Him.

   To fully express these three sacrifices of the soul realm involves the use of our voice. As the writer to the Hebrews suggests, these sacrifices involve the "fruit of our lips" (Heb. 13:15). Therefore, the believer is to offer audible thanksgiving, audible joy and audible praise to the Lord.

4. **New Testament priests offer one primary sacrifice in the spirit realm—the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart (Ps. 51:15-17).**

   O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Your praise. For You do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart-- these, O God, You will not despise.

God is never as interested in external sacrifices as He is in a heart that is rightly related to Him. If the heart relationship is right, none of the other sacrifices will be a problem. But if the heart relationship is wrong, all of the sacrifices will be mere forms. It is from this heart condition that true worship springs forth. True worship can only spring from a heart that has been broken before God.

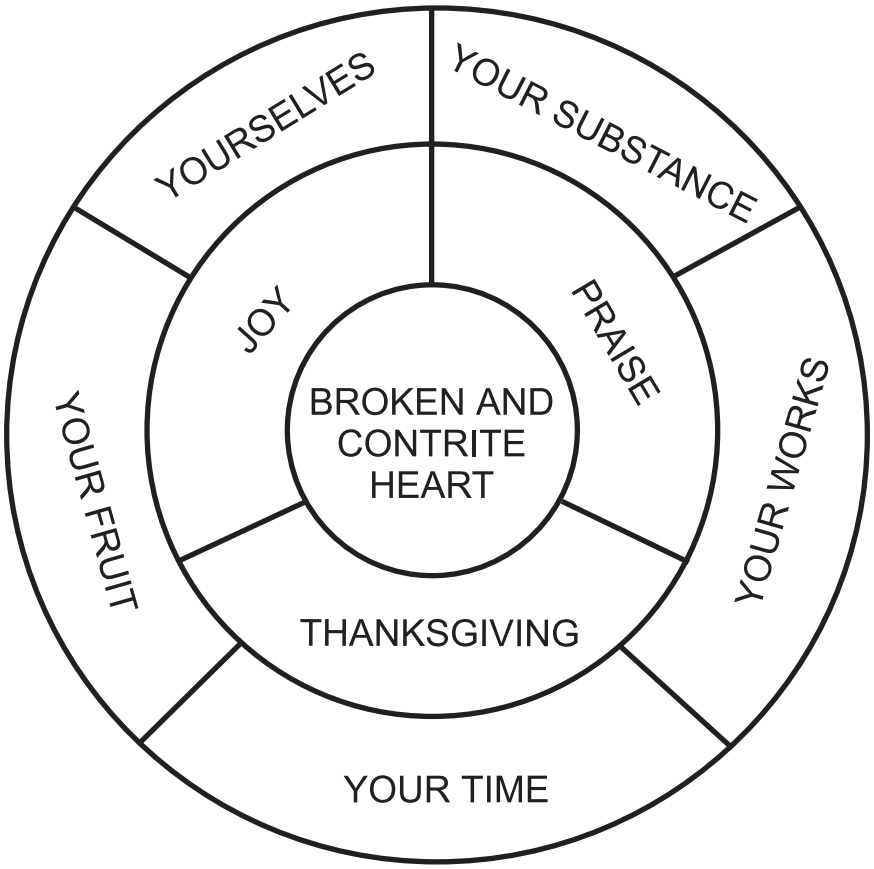


Diagram: Spiritual Sacrifices of the Spirit, Soul and Body

C. All believers in Christ are to come before the Lord and offer their spiritual sacrifices freely to Him.

There are many things that can hinder us from offering freely to the Lord.

1. Self-centeredness (II Tim. 3:1-4). When we offer sacrifice it is a selfless act on our part because we are not the objects of our sacrifice. All of us tend to be lovers of ourselves.

2. Being ruled by feelings (Ps. 54:6). When we offer sacrifices it is costly to our fleshly appetites. We must offer by faith not by our feelings based on the fact that it is the right thing to do.

   I will freely sacrifice to You; I will praise Your name, O LORD, for it is good.

3. Lack of a spirit of sacrifice (Ps. 50:5). We usually give in order to receive. In true worship we give simply because God is worthy. Receiving can be a by-product, but it cannot be the motivation.

   Bring my faithful people to me--those who made a covenant with me by giving sacrifices. –NLT

David had the proper attitude as he offered to the Lord. He did not want to offer God anything that did not cost him personally (See: I Chr. 21:22-25).

22 Then David said to Ornan, "Grant me the place of this threshing floor, that I may build an altar on it to the LORD. You shall grant it to me at the full price, that the plague may be withdrawn from the people." 23 But Ornan said to David, "Take it to yourself, and let my lord the king do what is good in his eyes. Look, I also give you the oxen for burnt offerings, the threshing implements for wood, and the wheat for the grain offering; I give it all." 24 Then King David said to Ornan, "No, but I will surely buy it for the full price, for I will not take what is yours for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings with that which costs me nothing." 25 So David gave Ornan six hundred shekels of gold by weight for the place.

D. All believers as priests are to offer praise and worship to the Lord.

1. God desires to be worshipped and praised (John 4:23-24).

But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

God desires a two-fold aspect of worship:

a. Worship in Spirit

Worship in spirit may mean two things. It may mean that our worship must originate in our spirit united with the Holy Spirit (Phil. 3:3).

For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh…

It may also mean that we are to worship wholeheartedly (Psalm 9:1).

I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works.

b. Worship in Truth

Worship in truth has two aspects as well. It means to worship sincerely or honestly. It also means to worship according to truth or according to the Word of God (John 17:17).

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

2. God is worthy of our worship and praise (Ps. 18:3; 47:6-7; 63:3-4).

God is the king of all the earth. He is a God Who is abundant in mercy and Who has provided a means whereby we all might be saved and restored to His likeness and image.

I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised; so shall I be saved from my enemies. Psalm 18:3

Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. Psalm 63:3-4

3. God commands us to worship (I Chr. 16:29; Ps. 22:23; 117:1).

If this is all that we knew about worship and praise, this would be enough for us as obedient children of God. But God never asks us to do things that are not for our good. In fact, we need to worship far more than God needs to receive our worship.

Give to the LORD the glory he deserves! Bring your offering and come to worship him. Worship the LORD in all his holy splendor. I Chronicles 16:29

4. Praise and worship are important for the believer.

From man's point of view, the worship and praise of God is very beneficial.

a. It helps us to become more God-centered instead of self-centered (I Pet. 5:5-6; II Tim. 3:1-5). As we offer praise and worship unto God we are recognizing His Lordship and right to rule over us. We are humbling ourselves before God.

"God sets himself against the proud, but he shows favor to the humble." So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and in his good time he will honor you. I Peter 5:5b-6, NLT

b. It helps us to set our minds on the things of the Spirit (Is. 26:3; Rom. 8:5-6; Col. 3:1-2). As we maintain our focus on Him, He will keep us in perfect peace.

Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. Colossians 3:2

You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Isaiah 26:3

c. It helps us develop a deeper love relationship with the Lord. We are created for intimacy and relationship with God, praise and worship help us to draw near to God (Jam. 4:8).

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

d. It prepares us to reap good things from good sowing (Gal. 6:8; Luke 6:38; Job 36:26-29; II Cor. 9:6). While we do not want to worship God for what we get in return, the fact is that God blesses those who bless Him.

For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. Galatians 6:8

e. It helps us maintain an attitude conducive to faith. Praise and worship is the language of faith. When we believe and trust in God we will praise Him in spite of our circumstances.

Note the song of faith of Habbakkuk (Hab. 3:17-19).

Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls-- yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills.

f. It releases God's power and presence in our lives (II Chr. 5:13-14; 20:21-22; Acts 16:25-26; Ps. 22:3). In other words, God inhabits the praises of His people.

…indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of

music, and praised the LORD, saying: "For He is good, for His mercy endures forever," that the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God. II Chronicles 5:13-14

g. It helps us maintain a thankful heart (Ps. 100:4). As we worship we are reminded of the goodness of God and that becomes our focus.

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

h. It purifies our hearts and minds. God has given us His Holy Spirit, the Word of God (Eph. 5:26) and prayer to purify (I Tim. 4:4-5) us as a people. He also purifies His people through praise.

i. It helps us become more Christ-like as we are changed into His image (II Cor. 3:18). We are changed into the image of the one we worship. This can happen in a negative way as well if we worship the wrong things (Ps. 115:8; 106:19-20).

They made a calf in Horeb, and worshiped the molded image. Thus they changed their glory into the image of an ox that eats grass. Psalm 106:19-20

j. It provides a means by which God can meet with us (Ex. 29:41-42 with Ps. 141:2). We have God's promise that He will meet and commune with us when we offer sacrifices unto Him.

And the other lamb you shall offer at twilight; and you shall offer with it the grain offering and the drink offering, as in the morning, for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to the LORD. This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet you to speak with you. Exodus 29:41-42

Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Psalm 141:2

5. God has a prescribed way in which we are to worship.

E. New Testament worship is according to the Davidic order.

David was the architect of worship in the Bible. His order of worship is reflected in the Psalms. The Early Church used the Psalms of David as a hymnbook because it was descriptive of their order (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

1. **The Davidic order involves exuberant, full-bodied worship reflected in the Psalms.**

   Most of the Psalms were composed in relation to worship in the Tabernacle of David not the Tabernacle of Moses where there was no singing. The Davidic order is characterized by the following:

   a. Praising God with our voice or mouth (Ps. 42:4). This includes:

      - SPEAKING (Ps. 51:15; 63:5; 66:8; 71:8; 109:30; 145:21)
      - SINGING (Ps. 7:17; 9:1-2; 33:3; 40:3; 100:4; 135:3)
      - SHOUTING (Ps. 5:11; 32:11; 35:27; 95:1-2; 132:9, 16)

   b. Praising God with our hands. This includes:

      - LIFTING (Ps. 28:2; 63:3-4; 88:89; 134:1-2; 141:2; 143:6)
      - CLAPPING (Ps. 47:1; 98:8)
      - PLAYING INSTRUMENTS (Psalm 33:2; 43:4; 92:3; 97:4-6; 150)

   c. Praising God with our bodies. This includes:

      - STANDING (Ps. 24:3; 33:8; 134:1; 135:1-2)
      - KNEELING OR BOWING (Neh. 8:6; Ps. 95:6-7)
      - DANCING (Ps. 149:3; 150:4; II Sam. 6:14)

2. **The Davidic order involves the singing of a new song to the Lord.**

   a. David continually referred to singing a new song (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; Ps. 96:1; Ps. 98:1; Ps. 144:9).

      Sing to Him a new song; play skillfully with a shout of joy. Psalm 33:3

      He has put a new song in my mouth-- praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the LORD. Psalm 40:3

      Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! Sing to the LORD, all the earth. Psalm 96:1

      Oh, sing to the LORD a new song! For He has done marvelous things; His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory. Psalm 98:1

   b. Isaiah encouraged the singing if a new song (Is. 42:10).

      Sing to the LORD a new song, and His praise from the ends of the earth…

   c. Worship in heaven involves singing a new song (Rev. 5:9; 14:3).

They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.

Revelation 14:3

d. A new song is a fresh, unknown song that is sung personally out of one's heart to the Lord to extol Him for His greatness, His attributes and His redemptive work in our lives.

e. The reasons for singing a new song can be summarized in the following passages:

- Psalm 33

  Because of His upright Word, His faithful works, His steadfast love, His marvelous creation, His absolute sovereignty, His grace manifest in choosing us.

- Psalm 96

  Because of God's name, His salvation, His glory, His greatness, His majesty, His honor, His strength, His beauty and His righteous judgment.

- Psalm 98

  Because of God's marvelous accomplishments, His supremacy, His revelation, His love and faithfulness, His impartial judgment.

- Psalm 144

  Because God defends and delivers from enemies, He provides victory over oppressors; He desires our personal prosperity and blessing.

- Revelation 5

  Because of Christ's universal redemption, His creation of the church and His servants.

Lesson 23-24
Present Truths

To understand, evaluate and enter into "present truth" we must understand that God is still speaking and restoring the church today.

I. Important statements from earlier sessions.

A. Introduction

Each generation has had its challenge of responding to the Spirit of God in order to effectively contribute to its leg of the race. We have a responsibility to God and to any future generations to do our part to see God's purpose come to pass. We have a responsibility to leave future generations better off than we were. We fulfill that responsibility by walking the present truth. The main thesis for this course could be summarized as follows:

Thesis: ***God's plan is progressive. What God began in Adam, He continued through Abraham and Israel. He will end up completing His plan in and through the Church. Each generation must build on the past and be responsive to the present dealings of God in their generation. God is speaking to the Church today, it is our responsibility to hear His voice and be established in "Present Truth."***

B. Lesson 3-4

God's method of bringing forth His purpose in the earth is to move like a contractor building a house. God is in a sense building a house—the House of the Lord. He is moving in each generation to lead that generation closer to His original purpose and goal. He does this by bringing a word to each generation to which they are challenged to respond. It is the "now" word, the "today" word, the "coming upon" them word that will bring life and meaning to their existence.

As God brings present truth to each generation His Spirit goes before that word with special times and seasons of refreshing that are meant to prepare the soil in the hearts of His people for the seed of truth that is to be planted.

C. Lesson 6

Thesis: To understand, evaluate and enter into present truth we must have certain basic understandings. We must understand the unity of God's eternal purpose, the unity of the Scriptures, the relationship of natural Israel to the Church, God's method of revelation and restoration and the historic cycle of decline, restoration and revival.

II. There have been several significant movements since the 1948 visitation.

Since the 1948 visitation God has continued to move in dramatic ways. There have been several significant movements since that time. There is plenty of room to question some of the emphases of each of these movements in terms of how they expressed themselves in practical terms, but there is no doubt that some significant things were being said in the midst of these movements.

A. The Charismatic Movement

During the Charismatic Movement that dominated the 1960's and early 70's there was a strong emphasis on the assimilation of many of the previously illuminated truths into many of the historic denominations. The Baptism of the Spirit, speaking with other tongues, and renewed worship forms were incorporated into many denominational groups. In addition many new "independent" churches were built on the principles of church government that were an emphasis of the 1948 visitation. In fact, the fastest growing churches in the world today are independent charismatic churches.

B. The Discipleship Movement

While this movement caused a lot of confusion, it also brought a focus on the importance of spiritual authority, the need for believers to go on to maturity and the development of strong Christian character. Its failure had to do primarily with methodology and the application of the truth. The word "shepherding" became a negative word and equated to "controlling" and abusive leadership. The fact that those leading this movement did not have a clear understanding of the importance of the local church also contributed to the problems that would ensue.

C. The Dominion Movement

This movement like so many others came with problems. Jack Hayford once commented that moves of the Spirit are like the waves that break onto a beach. Each wave that comes in brings with it two things—it brings in life (the positive) and it brings in debris (the negative). The Dominion Movement was flawed in terms of its biblical hermeneutic. Many who preached this doctrine did so out of scripture passages that were taken out of context. It also went to such an extreme that it almost left one to believe that God's plan of evangelism had more to do with the "ballot box" than preaching of the Gospel.

What it did bring in more of a positive way was an understanding that the Church of Jesus Christ is not going to be defeated. In fact, the church is to be the head and not the tail. The church need not be intimidated by the world. The church has a mission to touch every aspect of society and be salt and light to the world. It emphasized that Christianity is not just something that is practiced on Sunday morning, but we are to take the principles of the Kingdom into every sphere of life including the

marketplace. It emphasized that every believer extends the kingdom by bringing believers to Christ and promoting God's agenda in the earth (Gen. 1:26-28).

D. The Faith and Prosperity Movement

Like so many of the movements before, certain proponents of this movement tended to go to an extreme which led many to conclude that they were making merchandise of the Gospel. Phrases like "name it and claim it" or "if you can dream it you can receive it" became misguided mottos associated with these truths.

The truth is that God does want us to be people of faith (What is the alternative?—people of unbelief!). He wants us to step out at the word of the Lord and walk on water when Jesus beckons us. He does want to prosper his people. However, divine prosperity is not just about money. It is not about making us wealthy so that we can fulfill selfish desires. It is about fulfilling destiny and walking under the canopy of God's blessing. It is about having strong families, good friendships, whole bodies, sound minds and freedom from bondage. It is about accomplishing the mission.

III. There were some positives that came out of these movements.

While other movements could easily be added to the above list depending on one's personal perspective on the last few years, these particular movements carried with them some vital aspects of truth.

A. Covenant Relationship

The emphasis here was on the fact that in the Body of Christ we are our brother's keeper and that we should endeavor to establish relationships that focus on accountability one to another.

B. Family Life

The emphasis here was on principles of raising godly families to establish foundations for many generations. Many ministries arose with a focus on family, marriage and child rearing. Along with this many local churches put a stronger emphasis on Youth Ministry.

C. Spiritual Authority and Government

The emphasis here was that the local church is a place of spiritual authority and that we cannot be fully covered spiritually unless we are properly connected and in right relationship to the authority that God has placed in our lives.

D. Christian Character

The emphasis here was on the fact that we need more than the gifts of the Spirit if we are to fulfill the mission of Christ. We need the character of Christ. Christ-likeness is still the goal of the individual believer.

E. Cell Group Ministry

The emphasis here was on the two-fold approach to building the saints in the New Testament Church. There was the corporate gathering for the purpose of celebration and mission fulfillment and there was the smaller gathering for the purpose of evangelism and body ministry.

F. Apostles and Prophets

The emphasis here was on a releasing of these ministries in a way that truly builds the church. The functioning of these ministries in a biblical way is essential for the church to come to full completion.

G. Men's Movement

The emphasis here was on restoring men to their first responsibility of being the priest in their homes. Groups like the Promise Keepers were used to help men not to see themselves primarily as providers but also as protectors, spiritual leaders and shapers of arrows for the Lord (Ps. 127:3-5).

H. Dominion and the Kingdom of God

The emphasis here was on the "greater commission" given to Adam to subdue the earth. This involves the church getting involved in the issues of life on earth. This involves the church being a prophetic voice in all areas of society including politics, science, business, the arts and education.

I. City Reaching

The emphasis here was on believing for entire cities to be reached for the Lord. The model here is the city of Samaria that turned to the Lord under the ministry of Philip (Acts 8:4-8).

J. Pastor's Unity, Pastor's Conferences, Pastor's Prayer, City-wide Prayer

The emphasis here was on seeing the Body of Christ come together beginning with the spiritual leaders. During this season there has be a rise of pastors' and church leaders' conferences, pastors' prayer gatherings and city wide prayer. Most of these expressions cross denominational lines as God is bringing His people together.

IV. There are several "now" words and concepts that God seems to be emphasizing.

A. Prayer, Intercession, Spiritual Warfare

Prayer, of course, is something that is a part of every season of visitation. Revival usually begins when people separate themselves in prayer and fasting. We are presently in a season where many prayer movements are being birthed. They reflect a spiritual hunger in the people for God to move to a deeper more powerful level in God.

B. Evangelism, Harvest and Church Growth

As we get closer to the harvest at the end of the age, we can expect a greater emphasis on evangelism. The church growth movements of the last few years are reflective of this. Many books and plans of evangelism have been promoted in the last few years including God's Master Plan of Evangelism, Evangelism Explosion, Lifestyle Evangelism, Servant Evangelism, Spirit-Filled Evangelism, Etc. Along with that many missionary movements have seized the concept of finishing the commission and reaching the remaining unreached people groups of the world.

C. Church Planting

A significant voice in the world today is coming in the area of church planting. Many have realized that the harvest will only be retained as local churches are established to disciple, equip and release those who have come to the Lord. There seems to be a strong emphasis on church planting being the object of all missionary endeavors.

D. Signs and Wonders

Many who have seen the magnitude of the task at hand and the increasing population of the earth are contending for a greater release of the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit in the Church of today. Many are expecting the spirit and the power of Elijah to be upon the church in the last days. They see this as part of the supernatural equipment that man needs to be able to finish the commission that has been placed on the Church by God Himself.

While signs and wonders have been a part of every major movement in the last century, it is needed today in a greater and more general way. It is needed to fall upon the entire church not just a few individual superstars.

Note: For a more complete study of current movements refer to the course titled *Current Trends*.

V. What are some of the lessons that we can learn from history?

A. Learning from History

Someone has said, "The only thing we learn from history is that no one ever learns from history." They have said this because there has been a tendency at times for "history to repeat itself."

However, it is my contention that there will be a people that learn from history, do not repeat the mistakes of the past and enter into God's full purpose for the church.

As we have taken a look at the history of the Church in light of the restoration of truth to the Church there are some general principles that we can extract so that we can be better suited to "walk in present truth."

B. Principles from History

1. God always carefully prepares the world in advance of any major move of the Spirit.

2. God reveals His vision progressively.

3. Those whom God uses to bring forth a truth usually pay a high personal price for it.

4. God uses persecution to purify the church.

5. Persecution has only ever caused the church to increase in number and influence.

6. The church is defeated by accommodation and compromise, not by persecution.

7. In restoring the church, God never destroys old landmarks, He builds on them.

8. The failure of many movements is the failure to pass on the experience of the truth (not merely the doctrinal aspect of truth) to the next generation.

9. No matter how dark things may get, God always has a remnant of people through whom He will work.

10. Those from the past move of God often become the strongest persecutors of the subsequent move of God.

11. Any group that refuses to move on with God eventually rejects the truth on which it was founded. When you forget what you stand for, you become what you left.

12. Every expression of truth that God is restoring is attacked by Satan by producing a counterfeit, by pushing it to an extreme or by tainting a key messenger of the movement.

13. Groups that reject a truth based on an extreme expression of that truth often go to the other extreme.

14. God's message should never be judged on the basis of the messenger through whom it comes.

15. Every new move of God has the potential of producing an extreme element by an over-emphasis of truth at the expense of balance with the rest of the truth.

16. Movements tend to be judged on the basis of the most radical element of the movement.

17. In rejecting truth men will often twist and exaggerate facts in regard to those who practice that truth.

18. For a movement to endure, doctrinal groundwork must be laid.

19. Those who are overly meticulous about the formation of and loyalty to creedal statements often close themselves off to further understanding of truth.

20. Whenever a group adopts the attitude, "we have it all" it spells its own doom.

Act 3:19-21

Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.