

THE WAY OF TRUTH®

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**Adult & Young
People's Quarterly**

A PARTIAL HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

As strange as it may seem, yet it is true, the people of God in the earth have always been few in number and despised by the world. They have suffered, even to the burning at the stake and death in the lions' den. Because of the fact that today a huge ecclesiastical system exists, declaring to the world that in this is found the family of God, it is difficult for the true family to be seen and understood. So it seems very appropriate, in this group of lessons, that we give a picture of the true family of God and its work so that precious souls may be delivered from the bondage of sin that is so prevalent and from the deception that has blinded the eyes of so very, very many.

Dear Reader, does it seem strange to you that God should desire to build a Church or establish a people in the earth which is named after Himself? Does He not have the right to give a set of laws to govern this body of people? Of course He does; and I want to assure you that this is just what He has done and is doing.

There is only one way that there can be gathered from the Word of God two different understandings of His Word and that is for man to put his interpretation upon the Word. This has been done many times, and the result is that we have many churches, so called, to accommodate the teaching that was conceived in the heart of man under the direction of the devil and not under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, who is the only one who can rightly divide the Word of God.

In this quarter, we shall carefully and earnestly try to set before you the Holy Ghost interpretation of the Scriptures that your feet may be led aright in this dangerous and deceptive age. Be sure that the Lord Jesus is coming soon to get His bride, the Church, and they who are members of it will be those who have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb. Do not be satisfied with mere church membership; seek God for the new birth, which makes you a member of His great family, the Church of God.

THE WAY OF TRUTH

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PUBLISHERS OF CHURCH OF GOD LITERATURE

LESSON NUMBER ONE FOR APRIL 7

ISRAEL, OLD TESTAMENT PEOPLE OF GOD

Scriptures: Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4; Exodus 13:21; Romans 8:14; Exodus 19:5; I Peter 2:9, 10; Exodus 31:18; Hebrews 8:10.

Deuteronomy 8:3 And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.

Matthew 4:4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Exodus 13:21 And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night.

Romans 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

Exodus 19:5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure

unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine.

I Peter 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Exodus 31:18 And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

Hebrews 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.

Memory Verse: For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.—Deuteronomy 7:6.

Aim: To show that Israel was a type of God's people.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday Deuteronomy 8

Tuesday Exodus 19

Wednesday Exodus 13

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Exodus 31

Deuteronomy 7

I Peter 2

INTRODUCTION

God has always desired a people who would do His bidding and will. He called Abraham out from among his friends and neighbors and led him to Canaan. Through him came the twelve tribes and the nation of Israel. Not all Israelites served God; yet the nation of Israel in various ways was a type of the Church. Not all who say they are the sons of God today, are. In all ages, God has required His people to be a separate and holy people.

MEDITATIONS

THE TRUE BREAD OF LIFE—Deuteronomy 8:3—Live by bread only—God has a purpose in all that He does. In the wilderness, the chil-

dren of Israel were required to pick up their food every morning (double on the sixth day). The purpose of this was to impress on them their dependence on God. This is a lesson for us today. Christ is our Bread, and He is the Word. We need to eat of it every day. **Matthew 4:4—Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God**—The physical man does need literal bread, but we should not give all our time and attention to the literal man. What about the spiritual man? It is the Word that feeds the Church of God (Acts 20:28). We are not permitted to eat just what we like; we are to live by it all. If God has first place in our hearts, this will be our desire and delight.

LED BY GOD—Exodus 13:21—The Lord went before them—Old Testament Israel was a literal nation. In the wilderness, God led them by literal means. How blessed these people were to be led by God! Yet some complained and found fault. Those who refused His leadership were overthrown and did not enter the Promised Land.

MARKS OF SONSHIP—Romans 8:14—As many as are led by the Spirit—God leads His people by His Spirit; however, that does not mean the Spirit doesn't work through the pastor to lead a flock. He does, but is the privilege of every child of God to be filled with the Spirit and led by Him. There is only one Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of truth, and He must be permitted to direct our lives, or else we will fail even as many in literal Israel did.

PECULIAR UNDER THE LAW—Exodus 19:5—If ye will obey my voice—God planned for Israel to be a separate and peculiar people unto Him. The nations around them worshiped idols. Israel's God was no idol, and if they would obey Him, He promised to bless them above all people. God keeps His promises. We do not have to forsake God to enjoy this temporal life. We need only to keep our affections centered on Him and not on the world.

PECULIAR UNDER GRACE—I Peter 2:9—Called you out of darkness—As we study these verses, first from the Old Testament and then the New, we see that God's plan all along was to have a people who would do His bidding. Literal Israel consisted of His people, but to be accepted by Him they had to obey His Word. Spiritual Israel, God's church, is also called a nation. Although members are to be found all over the world, God still looks on His people as one. His people are holy. His people have the privilege to come directly to Him, for all are priests. His people have been called out of the darkness of sin and into the light of life. **Verse 10—Were not a people**—This refers to the Gentiles, who were not regarded as the people of God under the law; however, under grace all who come to the Lord and are saved make up His nation Israel.

THE LAW RECORDED—Exodus 31:18—Written with the finger of God—God called Moses up on the mount where Moses spent forty

days. The Lord revealed various things to him and wrote on two tables of stone, the Ten Commandments. We are not to think, however, that this was the origin of God's moral law. We have no record that any people were required to keep the seventh day before this time, but other than that, God's nature has always been holy, and His will is for His people to have His divine nature. Thus we have laws to govern our feet. They are for our good!

THE LAW RECORDED IN THE HEART—Hebrews 8:10—Write them in their hearts—Here again we see how a literal happening in the Old Testament was used for a symbolic meaning. God's plan is that all have His law in their mind and in their heart. To do this, we must have a born-again experience and live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Then God will indeed be our God, and we, His people.

OUR MEMORY VERSE—Deuteronomy 7:6—A special people—In all ages, those who loved and served God have been a special people to Him. To be a true servant of God, you must live by all the truth you know. To knowingly disobey the Word of God is to sin, and no one who willfully sins is living a holy life.

CONCLUSION

Although the aim of our lesson is to show that literal Israel was a type of God's people, I trust we will see that back in Old Testament times, to really have God's favor, people had to obey Him. His plan for Israel was that they be a separated, holy, God-fearing, law-abiding people. His will has not changed.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. What was the lesson to be learned by gathering manna each morning?
2. What is the food God has provided for the soul?
3. How did God lead Israel in the wilderness? How does He lead His people today?
4. What does it mean to be a peculiar people unto God?
5. When did God's moral law begin, or did it have a beginning?
6. Are you a citizen in God's nation today?

LESSON NUMBER TWO FOR APRIL 14

SPIRITUAL ISRAEL

Scriptures: Romans 9:6-8; Galatians 3:6, 7, 9, 26-29; 6:15; Romans 2:29; 4:11-13.

Romans 9:6 Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel:

7 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

8 That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

Galatians 3:6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

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

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye

Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Galatians 6:15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.

Romans 2:29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Romans 4:11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Memory Verse: And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.—Galatians 3:29.

Aim: To show by the Scriptures that those who are born of the Spirit are the true people of God.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday Romans 2
Tuesday Romans 9
Wednesday Galatians 3

Thursday Romans 4
Friday Genesis 17:1-17
Saturday Genesis 12:1-5; 15:1-6

INTRODUCTION

We hear much today about a little country in the Middle East called Israel. Many misrepresent God's Word, trying to show that modern Israel is still God's chosen people. In this lesson, we desire to set forth the truth in regard to God's Israel in the New Testament age.

MEDITATIONS

SALVATION MORE THAN A NAME—Romans 9:6, 7—Not all Israel, which are of Israel—Even in Old Testament times, one had to have an experience with God to have His favor. In other words, being a literal citizen of Israel did not bring favor with God. Jesus said God could make literal seed of Abraham out of stones. Hearts, take this warning! It takes something besides “church membership” to make one a citizen of spiritual Israel. It takes a spiritual birth.

IF WE LIVE AFTER THE FLESH WE SHALL DIE—Romans 9:8—The children of the flesh—This scripture refers to the children of Abraham who were born of other women than Sarah and is a type of the people today who are of the world. Those who live after the world have only one purpose in mind, and that is to devote their energies and substance to enjoying in the flesh what pleasure life can give. This, of course, is death to the spirit.

FAITH REWARDED—Galatians 3:6—Abraham believed God—To believe God, in the true sense of the word, means to obey the Word that He has spoken. Obedience to the Word of God always brings the favor of God. Saul’s disobedience separated him from God and made him a part of the world, even though he was still an Israelite, proving that “all are not Israel, which are of Israel”; but he is a spiritual Israelite and a child of Abraham who obeys the Word of God. **Verse 7—They which are of faith**—Faith in God classes all men of all ages in the same family. Again, we who believe in the Word of God and obey its teachings are called the children of faithful Abraham and are truly spiritual Israel.

TO BELIEVE IS TO BE BLESSED—Galatians 3:9—They which be of faith—There can be no greater blessing than to have the favor of God. God will bestow upon those He loves the good things that are His, and we remember that every good and every perfect gift comes from God, according to James. The final reward of faith in God is eternal life with Him in heaven.

SPIRITUAL ISRAEL ATTAINED TO—Galatians 3:26—Children of God by faith—The Galatians were Gentiles in the flesh, yet by faith in Jesus Christ they became children of God, or spiritual Israel, the spiritual seed of faithful Abraham. The Jews, or the literal seed of Abraham, rejected Christ Jesus and ceased to be the family of God and became spiritual Gentiles. The only way that anyone was ever saved was by the name of Jesus Christ, for there is no other name given under heaven whereby we can be saved (Acts 4:12).

PUTTING ON CHRIST—Galatians 3:27—Have been baptized into Christ—In the days that this was written, baptism had a far greater reaction than it does today. The Jews were against baptism, for under the law only the Gentile was baptized when he embraced the Jews’ religion. A Jew at birth became a member of the recognized family of God; therefore, it was not necessary for him to be baptized. For anyone to be baptized

meant that he had turned against the old Jewish traditions and practices and was in line with the teachings of Christ. The result of this was that great persecution followed; and if a man did not have a real experience of salvation to go with the baptism, he would never submit to the ceremony of baptism. It is different today; anyone can be baptized with or without salvation, and suffer little or no persecution. Baptism has become to many a mode of entrance into a church. Many are deceived by this false teaching.

GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS—Galatians 3:28—Neither Jew nor Greek—This sets aside the teaching that the Jews are God's chosen people today. They are not, for the only marking that God respects now is the blood of Christ applied to the soul.

SPIRITUAL ISRAEL—Galatians 3:29—If ye be Christ's—Speaking to the Gentiles, Paul declared that faith in Jesus Christ put them in line with the promise that God gave to Abraham long ago.

CEREMONIES OR RITUALS THAT DO NOT SATISFY GOD—Galatians 6:15—A new creature—It is only the saving grace of God that can change the life of any man. To follow a few prescribed traditions or man-made rules means nothing to the poor soul who is bound by the fetters of sin. A man may have the blessing of the priest over and over, but this will not change his standing before God. Every man must come to God directly himself if he would be free and enjoy God's favor. Circumcision under the law meant nothing if the heart was not right, just as water baptism means nothing today if the heart has not first been cleansed from sin. In II Corinthians 5:17 Paul declared that if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

SPIRITUAL ISRAEL IDENTIFIED—Romans 2:29—He is a Jew, which is one inwardly—To be a Jew inwardly means to do with the heart the commandments of God. A Jew outwardly is one who is born only of the flesh, but does not have the grace of God.

SPIRITUAL ISRAEL—BEFORE THE LAW—Romans 4:11—The father of all them that believe—The people of God of all ages have been those who believed and practiced the known commands of God. A believer in any age is not a sinner, and the password for any man of any age for entrance into heaven is active faith in God. We are told if there be a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man has and not according to what he has not. In other words, if a man is willing to perform the will of God but things beyond his control prevent him, such as, lack of understanding or lack of information, God accepts the will for the deed. So even before the days of Abraham, if people were willing to perform the then-unknown commands of God which were to come later, God accepted them, and they became the believers of that day. **Verse 12—Being yet uncircumcised**—Abraham was just as righteous before he was circumcised as afterward. However, had he refused to be circumcised after the command came, he would have lost all the righteousness that he possessed. **Verse 13—Through the righteousness of faith**—From this scripture

we learn that God's great plan of redemption from sin included all men of all ages who would obey the commands that He gave in the age in which they lived. Abraham seems to have been the central figure, on the part of the men of the earth, around whom this truth revolved.

CONCLUSION

Today, God's Israel is not a literal nation. Spiritual Israel is made up of all true children of God, whether they be in Africa, Asia, Russia, America, or somewhere else. The color of the skin has nothing to do with it. The literal Jews today have no more favor with God than do others. For them to be saved, they must come to Jesus and confess their sins and accept Him as Lord and Savior. The spiritual Jew is that one who is saved. He is the seed of Abraham and an Israelite.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Can anyone rely on his ancestry as a passport to heaven?
 2. Who are the children of Abraham today?
 3. Who were "the children of the flesh"?
 4. What does it mean to live after the flesh?
 5. What gave Abraham favor with God?
 6. How can we have favor with God and be a member of spiritual Israel?
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LESSON NUMBER THREE FOR APRIL 21

THE DIVINE CHURCH

Scriptures: Ephesians 5:25; Acts 20:28; Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:18-22; 3:14, 15; Acts 2:47; Galatians 1:13.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Matthew 16:18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Ephesians 2:18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

20 And are built upon the foundation of

the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord:

22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Ephesians 3:14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

Acts 2:47 Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Galatians 1:13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it.

Memory Verse: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.—I Timothy 3:15.

Aim: To show that there is but one true church and that it is composed of God's people.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday **Psalm 24**
Tuesday **Ephesians 5**
Wednesday **Isaiah 62**

Thursday **Revelation 21**
Friday **Ephesians 2**
Saturday **Ephesians 3**

INTRODUCTION

It has been the work of the devil and his ministers to distort and mar and obscure from view the beauty and specifications of the divine institution, the Church of the living God. So clever has been his deception that he has even gone so far as to call churches that bear his very character by the same name that the Father has given to His church, the bride of His dear Son. As ambassadors of the heavenly kingdom and teachers of the unsearchable riches of Christ, our duty is to set before an unsuspecting world (for most people think that anyone who has a Bible under his arm or any spire that reaches up into the heavens is owned and blessed of God) the true architecture of God's one and only building, the Church of God. The subject at hand must not be treated with indifference by anyone or cast aside as trivial in nature, for it is only the family of God that shall make its home in heaven, and no man can hope for heaven unless he has changed his life to conform to the teachings of the Bible as revealed by the Spirit of God. The many ways which men have with their various religious organizations do not lead souls to heaven but to hell. May God enlighten your mind as you study this vast subject.

MEDITATIONS

THE PURCHASE PRICE OF THE CHURCH—Ephesians 5:25—Gave himself for it—Anything for which Christ would give His life must, of necessity, be of great value. Jesus is regarded as the rarest and most valuable treasure that ever existed. Then, since He gave Himself for the Church, the Church must be of great value; and, without any doubt, must conform perfectly to the specifications that He outlined for her. No man-made organization can by any means substitute for her. Though despised by the world and poor in material things she may be, she is most highly regarded by the Father because of her purity and God-likeness. We cannot pass this verse by without adding that God also very highly regards the marriage institution, which is ordained of Him, for He commands that all men love their wives as Christ loved the Church. Let every man and woman ponder well this ordination of almighty God.

MINISTERS PLACED BY THE SPIRIT—Acts 20:28—The Holy Ghost hath made you overseers—This is irksome to the people who have set up their human organizations to place ministers and pastors; but though organizations be ever so large and influential, they shall never

change the Word and plan of God. It is still true that the Holy Ghost reserves unto Himself the sole right to call and place ministers in His church. Any religious body in which the Holy Ghost does not call and place the preacher is not the Church of God, even though it may be called by that name. This scripture further proves that this divine institution, the Church of God, was purchased by the blood of Christ, which makes her value more than tongue can tell. If you are, by the means of spiritual birth, a member of the Church of God, so live that you may be an honor to her and not a hindrance.

THE DIVINE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH—Matthew 16:18

—Upon this rock I will build—The Rock can refer to nothing else than Jesus Christ Himself, for just before this Peter had confessed that Jesus was the Christ (who is declared by the prophets to be the Rock the builders rejected, which had become the Head of the corner). Note that Jesus did not say He would build churches, but a church; He has but one. And all who do not measure to the Bible specifications are not His, and He will not claim them in the last day.

UNIVERSAL ACCESS INTO THE CHURCH—Ephesians 2:18—

Both have access—The Jews and the Gentiles are meant here, which included men of all races and places. His blood, through its redemptive power, would bring all men who would come into one family, the Church of God, the executive work being performed by one Spirit, the Holy Ghost.

Verse 19—The household of God—Previous to the coming of Christ, the Jews were counted as the household of God, and Gentiles could get into it only after they had been associated with the Jews for ten generations, but now the blood of Christ at once made any man who received its cleansing power instantaneously a member of the household of God, which is the Church of God (I Timothy 3:15). There were saints in the Old as well as in the New Testament, and we are told that men shall come from the east and west, north and south, and sit down in the kingdom of God with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, who were Old Testament saints. **Verse**

20—Foundation of the apostles and prophets—The foundation is not only considered a part of the building, but also the most important part. If the foundation does not stand, neither will the house. Here we find that the prophets are a part of the foundation of the Church of God of which Jesus is the chief Cornerstone, and it is upon this strong and sturdy foundation that the magnificent superstructure is erected. From the next verse we learn that the entire building is fitly framed together to produce a holy temple for the dwelling of God. How evident it is that the modern structures of religious architecture are not fitly framed together, but stand separate and divided! Therefore they cannot be organizations of God, for they do not conform to the divine plan. Do not be deceived. God has but one church, and it does conform to the divine pattern. **Verse 22—Ye also are**

built—The Gentiles were informed that they also were now built into the structure of which the Jewish prophets were a part of the foundation. They, too, were to serve as an habitation of God through the Spirit, or Holy Ghost.

THE SCRIPTURAL NAME—Ephesians 3:14—Unto the Father—Paul though once a Pharisee who had approached God in form by the tradition of the Jews, now being a Christian, approached the Father directly by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is most highly honored and instantly recognized in heaven. **Verse 15—Whole family in heaven and earth—**Here is unmistakable evidence that Paul understood there was only one family of God, and that family included all the saints of all ages who were now on earth and in heaven and that they bore the name of the Father, which is God. Thus the Scriptures prove that the family of God is known as the Church of God.

MODE OF ENTRY OR MEMBERSHIP—Acts 2:47—The Lord added daily—God never did leave to fallible man the task of taking members into His church, and any church that proceeds, by the power of the ministry, to receive or remove members cannot be the Church of God, even though the name may be used. There is only one way that anyone can make his way into the Church that Jesus is building, and that is by the new birth, in which case the Lord Himself writes the new names in the Lamb's book of life. Therefore, in the church that Jesus is building, or the Church of God, there can be no sinners, for Jesus does not place sinners in His church. It follows again that any church that has sinners in its membership is not the Church of God, even though it is called by that name.

PERSECUTIONS ARE CERTAIN—Galatians 1:13—Persecuted the Church of God—Paul is here speaking of his experience as a Pharisee in the Jews' religion. He testified against the saints when they were brought into court and drove them from their homes because they received Christ. He held the clothes of those who stoned Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Any church that is without persecution is not the Church of God.

CONCLUSION

Honest hearts who earnestly seek before God to know the truth of the foregoing teachings are going to be taught of the Spirit the truth of them. Do we think it strange if God desires to have a church in the earth that is named after Himself and governed by the laws He has ordained? We should not, and everyone should seek with all his heart to become a member of this great institution. Only by the new birth can anyone be made a member. Do not be satisfied with anything less than an experience of salvation that delivers from the bondage of sin and gives a knowledge of salvation.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Why do we have so many organizations in the world that declare they are the true people of God when the Bible allows for only one Church?
2. What was the purchase price of the Church of God?
3. By what means is entrance made into the divine Church?
4. What is declared to be the foundation of the divine Church?
5. Is the foundation of the Church a part of the Church?
6. Why is the Church of God certain to be persecuted?

LESSON NUMBER FOUR FOR APRIL 28

THE DIVINE EXECUTIVE OF THE CHURCH

Scriptures: Genesis 1:2; I Peter 1:11; II Peter 1:21; Acts 20:28; Romans 8:26; Acts 13:2; 15:28.

Genesis 1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

I Peter 1:11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

II Peter 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you over-

seers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Acts 13:2 As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.

Acts 15:28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.

Memory Verse: Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

—Acts 20:28.

Aim: To identify the Executive in God's church.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday **Genesis 1**
Tuesday **II Peter 1**
Wednesday **Colossians 1**

Thursday **Romans 8**
Friday **I Corinthians 12**
Saturday **Ephesians 1**

INTRODUCTION

It has always been made evident to some extent that the Church of God, a divine institution, is organized and under the leadership of Jesus Christ through the Spirit of God, who is the personality in the Godhead consigned to this great work. In speaking of this organization, Peter used these terms (I Peter 2:5), "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." It is this spiritual house that is the Church of God, and of this spiritual house that the Holy Ghost is the Executive and in which the Father and the Son dwell by the same Spirit (Ephesians 2:22). Although there are many spirits in the world, there is only one divine Spirit.

MEDITATIONS

SPIRIT PRESENT FROM THE BEGINNING—Genesis 1:2—The Spirit of God moved—This scripture has no direct bearing on the Church, but it establishes the fact that the Spirit of God, which is the Holy Ghost, was present in the world from the beginning.

THE HOLY GHOST KNOWN ALSO AS THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST—I Peter 1:11—The Spirit of Christ—Since there is but one Spirit, the Spirit of Christ and the Spirit of God and the Holy Ghost are the same Person. According to the testimony of Peter, Christ, by the Spirit, dwelt in the hearts of the prophets in the Old Testament, who were the messengers of God to God's people in that day.

MEN MOVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT—II Peter 1:21—As they were moved by the Holy Ghost—We see the Holy Ghost working as the Executive among the people of God and, at this particular time, performing the very important task of inspiring the writing of the Word of God.

THE HOLY SPIRIT PLACES THE MINISTERS—Acts 20:28—The Holy Ghost hath made—It seems perfectly in order that God should reserve unto Himself the right to place men as overseers of the Church that has been purchased with so great a price. We have many churches today which have man-made machinery set up to place the ministry. This is evidence that the organizations are men's churches and not owned of God. The Holy Spirit, having perfect knowledge, knows the need of any congregation and also the one who is able to fit properly in that congregation as pastor. If the Spirit of God were allowed to have His way, we would at once lose the spiritual and religious confusion that is in the world today.

PRAYER PROMPTED BY THE SPIRIT—Romans 8:26—The Spirit itself maketh intercession—Again, the great wisdom of the Spirit enables Him to know what the need of all men is, and the Christian who is fully led of God can easily be made to know what the most urgent need is. Through the obedient and submitted believer, the Holy Ghost makes intercession at the throne of grace. Such prayers are certain to be answered. Written prayers and intellectual prayers are of no value before the mercy seat. Prayer is one of the most important things in the life of a Christian, and since this verse teaches us that a successful prayer depends upon the moving of the Spirit, we are made to realize this importance.

THE HOLY GHOST CALLS SPECIAL WORKERS—Acts 13:2—The Holy Ghost said—Who besides the Spirit of God is able to say what qualifications a man has to have to perform the work of His church? Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. Paul's work was principally that of apostleship, and it was to this work that the Spirit was calling him. Note that the Church was fasting and praying, so earnest was her desire to see the work of the Lord prosper. God cannot use a half-hearted or a worldly-minded people. God's work is not made up of a few pie socials and bingo games. No one can be successful in true religious service unless he is led by the Spirit of God, and he who is led by the Spirit of God is certain to accomplish things that shall last for time and eternity.

THE HOLY GHOST REVEALS THE TRUTH—Acts 15:28—Seemed good to the Holy Ghost—The Jews had sought to bind upon

the Christian brethren some of the teachings of the law that had been nailed to the cross through the death of Jesus Christ. This was very displeasing to the Holy Spirit, the Executive in the Church; so He made it plain to the disciples that such things were not of Him. How can a church that is void of the Spirit have the unspeakable blessing of the leadership of the Spirit? It is utterly impossible. We cannot deny the fact that every church, regardless of what its name might be, is led and actuated by a spirit, including the Church of God. Let us hasten to add, though, that the Church of God is led by the Spirit of God and no other spirit. It follows then that all other churches are led by the spirit of Satan. If all religious organizations had the Spirit of God, there could be no division. It is an evil spirit that causes division.

CONCLUSION

This rather limited study of the work of the Spirit of God reveals the Spirit's importance to the Church. It also gives us an understanding as to why there is so much religious division in the world and why so many people do not have any power with God. In the age in which we live, men have allowed their affections to be carried away after the material blessings which come from the hand of God and are disregarding almost altogether the gracious hand that gives the blessings. This is the great error of our age, and we shall reap the damaging results in an alarming measure before too long. Oh, that men would awaken from their spiritual slumber and allow the gracious Spirit of God to take His rightful place in their hearts! How quickly He could remove all error and division and cause peace to rule in the hearts of men and wars to cease!

The one thing that causes the Church of God to stand out from all others is the fact that it is led by the Spirit of God. Satan does imitate very closely the things of God, even has churches of his own; but he who is spiritual perceives these things and is not deceived by them.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. In whom is the leadership of the Church vested today?
2. Name some of the operations of the Spirit of God in the Church today.
3. Name some of the works performed by the Spirit of God under the Old Testament dispensations.
4. What important connection has the Spirit of God with the prayers of the believer?
5. If the Holy Spirit were the only Spirit in the world, could there be more than one church?
6. In God's economy, is there any place for church boards vested with power to place ministers?

LESSON NUMBER FIVE FOR MAY 5

THE ONE FAITH

Scriptures: Ephesians 4:5; Jude 3; I Corinthians 1:12, 13; II Corinthians 11:4; Galatians 1:8, 9; I Timothy 4:1-3; Acts 16:5; II John 9-11.

Ephesians 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism.

Jude 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

I Corinthians 1:12 Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ.

13 Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

II Corinthians 11:4 For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

Galatians 1:8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto

you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

I Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

Acts 16:5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

II John 9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:

11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

Memory Verse: Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.—Jude 3.

Aim: To show that the faith of Jesus Christ does not yield itself to multiple interpretations.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday Acts 14:1-22

Tuesday Jude

Wednesday II Corinthians 11

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Galatians 1

I Timothy 4

Acts 16

INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest hindrances to the advancement of the kingdom of God among men has been the fact that instead of adhering to the one faith as taught in the Word of God, men have built for themselves many different faiths and then declared them to be the one faith of the gospel. From this practice has risen the term, "Babylon," as used in the Scriptures to

denote the plurality of religious beliefs. The word, "Babylon," means confusion, and certainly this word does describe well the state of religious affairs today. Through the medium of this lesson, we hope to prove clearly that God has but one faith for His church, and that it is the duty of mankind to find and embrace wholeheartedly that one faith.

MEDITATIONS

ONE FAITH DECLARED—Ephesians 4:5—One faith—This is clear enough, it seems, that it should be a rebuke to anyone who is making allowance for all the faiths of the world today. Since God has but one body, or Church, as related in Ephesians 4:4, certainly it must follow that there is only one faith for that Church. The Word of God, not the creeds of men, shall rule on the judgment day; therefore, let us all seek to conform our lives to the Word and not try to bend the Word to fit our lives.

ONE FAITH ENTRUSTED TO THE SAINTS—Jude 3—The faith which was once delivered—Jude helps us to understand that there is but one faith, for he uses faith singularly.

FOLLOWING PERSONALITIES OTHER THAN CHRIST—I Corinthians 1:12—I am of Paul—Christ is the center of our salvation. All that we do and say should be with the purpose of directing the worship of mankind to Him. The Church is His, and the government is upon His shoulders by the Spirit of God.

DIVISION NOT OF CHRIST—I Corinthians 1:13—Is Christ divided?—The answer is emphatically, "No," for He gave Himself once for the whole of humanity, reaching from the Garden of Eden down to the last soul who shall make his way into the world. We all know well that no other name is given except the name of Jesus whereby men may be saved, and all who are fortunate enough to get to heaven do so by the merit of His sacrifice. Oh, that the world would awaken to the need of standing together on the Word of Jesus Christ!

FALSE CHRISTS—II Corinthians 11:4—Preacheth another Jesus—Paul was very certain of the one doctrine and gospel. To gain power and worshipers, the devil conceived the idea of preaching Christ; not the true, living Christ, but one which, upon careful examination, would be found false. Such is to be rejected. It is a very common practice in our day for religious people to accept whatever they hear, without examination, which makes it easy for the devil to deceive them.

FALSE TEACHERS SHOULD BE STOUTLY RESISTED—Galatians 1:8—Let him be accursed—We see further here in this verse that Paul would teach us that we should know well the true gospel of Jesus and flatly refuse that which is not of God. The man who would lead off a soul from God by false teaching has robbed him of his most priceless treasure. He should not be tolerated, and his guilt and hypocrisy should be uncovered, lest he lead other precious souls astray.

TRULY CONVINCED OF THE TRUTH—Galatians 1:9—An angel from heaven—This scripture teaches that we can be so certain about the gospel we have received that we can withstand a heavenly angel if one should come and dare to lead us wrongly in regard to doctrine. Many do not consider this of any importance, but Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:6, “Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.” The man who is deceived is responsible, and he who is deceived shall suffer the wrath of God. It will pay well to examine very carefully all the doctrine that is presented to us for acceptance.

DEPARTURE FROM THE FAITH FORETOLD—I Timothy 4:1—The Spirit speaketh expressly—This scripture declares that men shall depart from the true faith instituted by God and will listen to doctrines advanced by devils. This is a very grave warning, for it is spoken, not in an indifferent way, but expressly, and that by the Spirit of God. This declaration of truth deserves and demands our most careful consideration. Many seducing spirits are abroad in the world, who work day and night at the art of deception. Many declare that these seducing spirits are of God. How serious is such an error, for it means destruction to the soul!

THE DEVIL CLOTHES HIS LIES WITH SCRIPTURES—I Timothy 4:2—Speaking lies in hypocrisy—Lies told in hypocrisy are told as truth. Such is the work of the devil and his preachers, who have done it so often and so flagrantly that their consciences no longer trouble them. By such characters is the gospel being perverted today. It is little wonder that we are warned to try the spirits to see if they be of God and also not to allow the vain words of men to deceive.

EXAMPLES OF DEPARTURE FROM THE FAITH—I Timothy 4:3—Forbidding to marry—Marriage is ordained of God and is honorable in all, including Catholic priests, who have renounced marriage. God declares this (renouncing of marriage by the priests) to be a doctrine of the devil, along with the teaching also practiced by the Catholics and the Seventh-Day Adventists to abstain from the eating of meat. In this land of Bibles, there is no need for any man to be deceived on these points, and the scripture is so plain that no interpretation is needed. He who thus refuses to marry, or abstains from meat for the same reason, does not know the truth.

ESTABLISHED IN THE FAITH—Acts 16:5—Churches established in the faith—It is through the ministry that God establishes men and women in His truth. How necessary it is then that the pastor preach the truth. If the minister be false and a servant of the devil, the people will likewise be the children of the devil and at the same time taught to believe that they are servants of the most high God. (Read Acts 8.)

ONLY THE TRUE GOSPEL GIVES LIFE—II John 9—Hath not God—Only by receiving the truth of the Word of God and abiding in it can we have the Lord in our hearts.

NO FELLOWSHIP GRANTED TO ONE OF FALSE TEACHING—II John 10—Receive him not—In verse seven, John speaks of those who deny that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Such a person is an antichrist and could not be a true child of God. Such doctrine is false and the man who supports a false doctrine is a dangerous character and is not to be received into our house, for there is danger that some in our household might be deceived by the false doctrine. He needs an open rebuke so that others may be warned who may not be in our household.

DO NOT WISH THEM WELL—II John 11—Partaker of his evil deeds—To wish such an one well or ask God's blessings on him is to make ourselves as he is. Rather, it is absolutely necessary that we let him know at once that we are committed to the task of destroying his false religion.

CONCLUSION

False religion has wrought far more sorrow, suffering and woe, both in this world and in the next one, than most people think. Why shouldn't it when its sole author is the devil, who desires to discredit every doctrine of God and wreck the whole of the human family? It is very necessary that we plainly lay before the people the truth in regard to the one faith and the abundance of perverted faiths that are offered to mankind today. Adhering to the one faith does not bring popularity in this time world, nor does it bring riches here; but it does bring peace of mind, which is worth more than riches, and eternal life in the world to come. Jesus earnestly prayed in St. John 17 that all His followers might be one, even as He and the Father are one. We, as Christians, are to pray the same way and work to accomplish that end.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. What causes the present unusual state of unrest in the society of man?
2. What penalty is promised to those who allow themselves to be deceived?
3. Cite the scripture that so plainly teaches there is but one divine faith.
4. To whom was this one faith of the gospel delivered?
5. What is the danger of following personalities?
6. Give two examples of departing from the faith today.
7. What must our attitude be toward those who bring us false teaching?

LESSON NUMBER SIX FOR MAY 12

THE EARLY CHURCH IN ACTION

Scriptures: Acts 1:4; 2:37-39, 41, 42; 5:3-5, 12-15, 29; 12:5.

Acts 1:4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

Acts 2:37 Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?

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

39 For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Acts 5:3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine

own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch.

13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them.

14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)

15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.

29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Acts 12:5 Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

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

—Acts 1:8.

Aim: To teach how the early church carried on Christ's work.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday Acts 3
Tuesday Acts 4
Wednesday Acts 5

Thursday Acts 10:34-48
Friday Acts 19:21-41
Saturday Acts 12

INTRODUCTION

The Church of God is a militant church. It is engaged in a great warfare against sin and Satan, the enemy of man's soul. As we review the activities of the early church, we see it is a church of power. Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, He told His followers to tarry in Jerusalem for the

coming of the Holy Ghost that they might receive power—power to live a holy life, to witness for Christ, and to preach the Word under the anointing of the Spirit. On the day of Pentecost, the Church was assembled together, being all of one mind and one spirit, and the Holy Ghost came upon them with great power. That same day Peter preached to the multitude, and some three thousand souls were saved. The apostles separated themselves from the cares of the world and gave themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Their only concern was to carry the gospel to the lost men of the earth. They were so close to their loving Savior that they greatly rejoiced to be counted worthy to suffer for His sake. Nothing could shake their confidence and faith in Him. When they were warned by the authorities not to speak any more in the name of Jesus, they had boldness and courage to say, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” The Spirit of God rested upon them, and many signs and wonders were wrought among the people.

MEDITATIONS

APOSTLES COMMANDED TO AWAIT THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST—Acts 1:4—And, being assembled—It is practically useless for anyone to set out to do things for God without the Holy Ghost. It is He who will teach us the things we need to know. It is He who will give us the power we need to overcome sin at all times. It is He who will cause the Word to go forth with convicting power so that sinners will realize their lost and undone condition and seek the Lord. The apostles were obedient to Jesus’ command that they tarry in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Ghost. They were greatly repaid for their patience, for on the day of Pentecost they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and went forth on a revival effort that brought thousands to Christ. There is nothing more joyous to the hearts of the saints than to see sinners born into the kingdom of God.

THE HOLY GHOST CONVICTS—Acts 2:37, 38—Peter preached under the anointing and the power of the Holy Ghost, supported by the earnest and fervent prayers of the eleven, and the multitude was brought under heavy conviction. The people realized they were lost and without hope and were concerned about their souls to the extent that they asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” It is a great blessing for anyone to be visited by the convicting power of the Holy Ghost, for without it no one will be saved.

THE PROMISE IS FOR ALL—Acts 2:39—For the promise is unto you—God is no respecter of persons. Christ died for the sins of the whole world. Salvation is for all who will humble their hearts, meet Bible requirements, and forsake their sinful and ungodly ways. Up to that time, salvation had not generally been preached to the Gentiles, and to show that they were also included in the promise, Peter added, “... even as many as the Lord our God shall call.”

THE WORD GLADLY RECEIVED—Acts 2:41—Then they that gladly—Salvation makes us happy. It puts a new song in our hearts and causes us to praise the Lord for His goodness to us. You will note that the verse says, “They that gladly received his word were baptized.” If our salvation has not made new creatures out of us and given us a new outlook on life, we probably do not have the genuine experience. Three thousand souls were added to the Lord one day, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 66:8, “Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.” Herein was manifested the power of a Spirit-filled church moving forward with but one aim in mind, that of carrying the gospel to a lost and dying world.

STEADFASTNESS IMPERATIVE—Acts 2:42—And they continued—True Christians cannot stand still but must be ever advancing in the Christian race. Peter exhorts us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This verse says they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and in prayers. In other words, they kept their “spiritual batteries” charged with the Holy Spirit and gave no place to the deceitful and discouraging lies of the devil. This made them exceedingly fruitful in their work for the Lord.

ANANIAS LIES TO THE HOLY GHOST—Acts 5:3-5—But Peter said—It is a fearful thing to lie to the Holy Ghost. In this case Ananias wanted to make believe that he had given his all to the Lord to the extent that he was willing to lie about it. Peter, being full of the Holy Ghost, discerned by the Spirit that Ananias was not telling the truth, but that he had kept part of the sale price for his own use. As Peter accused him of lying to the Holy Ghost, the Spirit came forth with such power that Ananias fell down dead, and great fear came on all them that heard these things. The early church had the power that was needed to meet any situation.

SIGNS AND WONDERS FOLLOW THE PREACHING OF THE TRUTH—Acts 5:12—And by the hands of—Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, He told His disciples that signs and wonders should follow them that believe, and here we have it recorded that many signs and wonders were wrought among the people. This is as it should be, and any church that is being fully led by the Holy Spirit will manifest this supernatural power. **Verse 13—And of the rest**—The early church was so Spirit-filled that no man who was not truly saved was able to join himself to it. In the first Psalm, David said that sinners should not be able to stand in the congregation of the righteous. **Verse 14—And believers were the more**—This verse tells us that multitudes were being saved and added to the Church. This is just the natural manifestation of the power of a unified, Spirit-filled and Spirit-led church. In a meeting where the Holy Spirit is free to work as He sees fit, there is bound to be much good accomplished. **Verse 15—Insomuch, that they brought**—What a wonderful demonstration of the power of God to heal! Verse 16 says that all who were

brought were healed. God has not lost any of His power, and He will heal all who come to Him today if the Church will get close enough to God so that the Holy Spirit can have complete right of way in every heart.

THE HOLY GHOST GIVES COURAGE—Acts 5:29—Then Peter and the other apostles—Our Memory Verse tells us that we shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon us. All down through the ages saints filled with the Spirit have had power to give their lives gladly and willingly for the cause of Christ. It was the Holy Spirit in their souls that enabled Peter and the other apostles, in spite of being threatened, to have the courage to say boldly, “We ought to obey God rather than men.”

THERE IS POWER IN PRAYER—Acts 12:5—Peter therefore was kept—I want particularly to call your attention to the fact that Peter’s misfortune became the burden of the whole church, and they really began to do something about it. Our verse says that prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him. They did not just pray once or twice and then forget it, but there was no letup until Peter was released. We should never become discouraged when there is a delay in our prayers being answered, for if we do, we are sure to lose the victory. We have many instances in the Bible to encourage us along this line. On one occasion Daniel prayed every day for twenty-one days before the answer came. It is our privilege and duty to hold on until the answer comes, and then the Church of today will become a church of power.

CONCLUSION

The study of this lesson brings forcibly to our minds the fact that the early church was a church of power and that each member was in complete harmony with each other. When one member of the body suffered, they all suffered, as was shown by their concern for Peter in prison, and the ceaseless and untiring effort of the Church moved God on His throne to send an angel from heaven to release him. What a mighty God we serve! In unity there is strength and the early Church had unity. They took advantage of everything that promoted strength and effectiveness. They gave themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word, and the world took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Why were the apostles told to tarry in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Ghost?
2. What is the mission of the Holy Ghost?
3. Does baptism cleanse from sin?
4. Why should baptism follow conversion as closely as possible?
5. How was Peter made to know that Ananias was not telling the truth?
6. What effect did this have on the others?
7. Name some of the things that gave the early Church its power.

LESSON NUMBER SEVEN FOR MAY 19

THE FALLING AWAY

Scriptures: II Thessalonians 2:3, 7-12; Acts 20:29, 30; I Timothy 4:1-3; II Peter 3:17, 18.

II Thessalonians 2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.

7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

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

9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Acts 20:29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

I Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.

II Peter 3:17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Memory Verse: Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

—Hebrews 2:1.

Aim: To show how the early Church drifted away from the truth.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday II Thessalonians 2
Tuesday Acts 20:1-22
Wednesday Acts 20:23-38

Thursday II Peter 3:1-8
Friday II Peter 3:9-18
Saturday Revelation 2

INTRODUCTION

It is very fortunate that history has preserved for us a record of the progress of the Church through the years. From it we learn, in detail, the things that actually happened as a result of the church's turning away from the truth of the Word of God. The Bible told us that it would happen and the result, but in history we see the actual affect upon society. Having the Bible and history in our possession, we should be able to avoid the mistakes that were made by those who made history.

MEDITATIONS

DECEPTION—THE DEVIL’S WEAPON—II Thessalonians 2:3—Let no man deceive you—The devil does not dare to come out and let people know what he actually is; neither does he dare to tell the truth; for if he did, he would speak the pure Word of God. He delights in giving the wrong meaning to the Scriptures. Thus, we are warned not to let any of his messengers deceive us. Paul declares that the end of time would not come until there was first a falling away from the true principles of Jesus Christ. The Church under the leadership of the apostles had great power and grew rapidly; but when men began to seek power and position, the early church, as the apostles knew it, began to lose its divine power, and that part which fell away degenerated into a formal institution and took the form of what is known as the Catholic Church today.

APOSTASY STARTED EARLY—II Thessalonians 2:7—Mystery of iniquity doth already work—Paul was able to recognize the mysterious hand of iniquity at work in the falling away while he yet lived. He had a very keen understanding of the truth of the Word of God and a very vivid discernment of the working of the Spirit of God. Others could not see this tendency and were willing to call all religious work the work of God. Such is the state of affairs today, and because of it, the “blind is leading the blind,” and they both shall fall into the ditch.

THE AWFUL PENALTY AWAITING THE DECEIVED—II Thessalonians 2:8—Destroy with the brightness of his coming—What an awful day that will be when the brightness of the coming of the Lord Jesus will drive away the black wickedness of men and devils! In the bright glory of the coming of Christ the truth will be revealed, and the whole world shall see the great deceptive powers that have robbed men of their inheritance in Jesus Christ.

GREAT POWER OF FALSE RELIGION—II Thessalonians 2:9—Signs and ... wonders—To give false religion the appearance of divinity, Satan has resorted to the use of his great power in the performance of things that astonish mankind. His lies are so cunningly told that the bare semblance of truth and error is not detected by most people. **Verse 10—Deceivableness of unrighteousness**—Anyone who rejects the truth of the Word of God throws himself open to a flood of false teachings. To reject the truth is to reject the Giver of truth, who is the Holy Spirit. If we reject Him, we line ourselves up with Satan, who delights in using his deceptive powers in filling the minds of men with misrepresentations of the Word of God.

IF GOD DECEIVES, WHO CAN DELIVER?—II Thessalonians 2:11—God shall send them—Why would God deceive anyone? Because he loved not the truth! The truth is precious, more precious than

fine gold. God does not intend for man to try to twist or change it. When God deceives, who can deliver? There is none.

THE DECEIVED ARE DAMNED—II Thessalonians 2:12—Had pleasure in unrighteousness—Men take pleasure in propagating their false religions, and many people are like those we read about in Acts 8, who declared the work of the false prophets to be the great power of God. The deplorable end of all such is declared by divine authority to be damnation.

FALLING AWAY FORETOLD—Acts 20:29—Grievous wolves enter—By the eye of the Holy Ghost, Paul was able to give this timely warning, and history proves that his warning was true. “Wolves” are interested in their own welfare and prosperity and care nothing for the flock of God; yet many flocks are trusting in them. Such people will awaken in eternity to find that they have been shorn of everything that is precious to the soul.

DECEPTION FROM WITHIN—Acts 20:30—Of your own selves—This is the worst kind of deception. Men who have been servants of God and were trustworthy have distorted the Word of God for the hope of gain. Of this class of people we need be cautious and follow God, regardless of whom it is we must oppose.

WARNED BY THE SPIRIT—I Timothy 4:1—The Spirit speaketh—It is always profitable to listen when the Spirit of God speaks. Again, it is the spirit of deception that leads astray. Here is adequate proof that the devil has doctrines and teachings. He does not have any Bible of his own, but his teachings are always the perversion of the Word of God.

FALSE TEACHINGS POINTED OUT—I Timothy 4:3—Some religious organizations forbid people to marry and command people to abstain from meats. These are pointed out to us by the Spirit of God as doctrines of devils. Therefore, it is evident such religions are the religions of the devil. If we allow ourselves to think, we cannot help seeing how very clearly God has tried to warn us of this existing condition, and it is certain that no one can come to the judgment bar of God and declare that warning was not given.

THE VALUE OF WARNING—II Peter 3:17—Seeing ye know these things—We have been warned by Peter also of the danger of deception. The wicked are definitely in error in regard to the Scriptures, and wickedness is attributed not only to the man who is guilty of flagrant disregard for moral law, but also many a person who possesses a very high state of religion is, in the sight of God, very wicked because he is living under doctrines and rules that are the rules of man. We readily see that the greatest care should be exercised in the matter of our religious decisions.

THE TRUTH PRODUCES STAUNCH CHRISTIAN GROWTH
—II Peter 3:18—Grace and in the knowledge—We cannot stand still in the Christian race and win. Progress is the life of Christianity. When people stop growing in the grace of God, they are beginning to fall away from God. They may retain a form of godliness, but their joy that once was in the Lord, now is derived from the pleasures of the world. Like Samson, upon his transgression, the Spirit of the Lord had departed, and he knew it not.

OUR MEMORY VERSE—Hebrews 2:1—Drift away—The Hebrew writer exhorts us to take heed to the truth of the gospel, to love it, to hold on to it, to contend for it, as Jude has said, lest at any time we drift away from it. One of the easiest things to do is drift away from the truth! You do not have to do anything to drift, but you do have to put forth effort to go against the tide, and live the gospel out in your daily life.

CONCLUSION

The falling away from the Christian faith by anyone is the result of his failure to walk in the light of the revealed Word of God. The seriousness of such a sad happening is beyond the description of words. Having once found the precious grace of God rich to our souls, it is worthwhile to put forth every effort and forsake everything that in any way would tend to deprive us of this rich treasure. Paul declared that a falling away should come, and it did, but that does not mean that you and I have to fall away. All men are not going to fall away. However, as the end of time draws near, more and more shall fall away until it will look as if all faith is going to disappear from the earth; but before it does, the Lord will come to receive His church. Wisdom requires that we stay true to the Word of God, regardless of what the cost might be.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Mention briefly some of the things that history has taught us in regard to the falling away of the Church.
2. What is the great weapon the devil is using today to hinder the cause of Christ?
3. What is meant by the “mystery of iniquity” already working?
4. What penalty awaits the man who allows himself to be deceived?
5. Wherein lies the great power of false religion?
6. On what foundation are false churches built?
7. What is the state of a man who has been deceived by God?

LESSON NUMBER EIGHT FOR MAY 26

THE DARK AGES

Scriptures: Revelation 12:4-6; 13:1-8.

Revelation 12:4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

Revelation 13:1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.

4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Memory Verse: And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.—Revelation 12:6.

Aim: To teach that the Church survived through the dark night of persecution.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday **Revelation 12:1-6**
Tuesday **Revelation 12:7-17**
Wednesday **Revelation 13:1-10**

Thursday **Revelation 13:11-18**
Friday **Revelation 17:1-14**
Saturday **Revelation 17:15-18**

INTRODUCTION

There has been a constant spiritual warfare between light and darkness, truth and error, since the beginning of time, and in the Dark Ages often this kind of warfare broke out into actual physical warfare, in which many lost their lives, and brutal persecution and slaughter of humanity were common. We hope through the use of this lesson to awaken the student further to the true nature of the conflict that has raged through the ages. The devil can persecute and he can make uncomfortable the Church that Jesus is

building, but he never has and never will, even with all his fury, be able to overcome it, thank God!

MEDITATIONS

THE CHURCH PERSECUTED—Revelation 12:4—From Revelation 1:20 we learn that stars represent angels (messengers), or ministers, of the churches. From Revelation 12:11 we learn that the dragon was defeated by the blood of the Lamb. In other words, men and women who knew God, through the power of the gospel, defeated false religion. The pagan religion of that day had upon its banners of war the insignia of the dragon. Thus, we see that the false religion of paganism, or plurality of gods, did inflict great injury on the Christian church. The woman of this verse represents the Church, for we learn from Verse Seventeen that her seed keep the commandments of God.

THE CHURCH IN MORTAL CONFLICT—Revelation 12:5—Her child was caught up—The pagan religion was able to destroy the flesh, but the souls of the martyred Christians were safely delivered to God. Some say that the man child represents Christ. This cannot be, for the mother, or woman representing the Church, is collective; therefore, the baby would of necessity have to be collective, representing all the Christians who were born into the Church. The rod of iron is the Word of God, which God intended should rule the men of the earth. It is represented as a rod of iron, not because of its hardness, but because it will not bend from its precepts. The Word is never harsh to the believer, but will certainly be to the sinner.

FALSE RELIGION WINS A TEMPORARY VICTORY—Revelation 12:6—Woman fled into the wilderness—After the Church had defeated the dragon, she began to depart from the truth, as Paul had said she would, and this caused what the dragon could not cause. It caused the Church to lose her exalted state and flee into the wilderness where she was to be for 1,260 years.

CHANGE FROM DRAGON TO THE BEAST—Revelation 13:1—A beast rise up—From Revelation 12:11 we learn that the early-morning church overcame the dragon; he was “cast down.” However, the devil, which worked through the dragon, did not give up. John saw another beast rising up out of the sea (peoples, nations; see Revelation 17:15). **Verse 2—The dragon gave him his power**—Note this verse carefully, for it shows that the beast had the same power, seat, and great authority as the dragon. The seat of power of pagan Rome was, of course, the city of Rome. The system of false religion that came up after the dragon, the Roman Catholic Church, had its seat in the very same city—another false religion, only this time under a Christian garb.

DECEIVES THE WORLD—Revelation 13:3—And all the world—As the early-morning church fled into the wilderness, the darkness of compromise, man-rule, and forms of religion swept over the then-known

world, and the Dark Ages settled upon the people. **Verse 4—They worshiped the dragon**—This beast symbolizes the religious-political system of papal Rome, but by bringing over into the supposed Christian church various forms and practices of the pagan religions, the beast caused the people, in spirit, to continue to worship idols.

ANIMAL AND HUMAN—Revelation 13:5, 6—A mouth—In Revelation when there is both the animal and the human in a symbol, it means a political and religious system. This beast had a mouth that spoke, so we have here animal and human, and, of course, the Catholic Church did rule in various countries through its power over kings. This false religion spoke blasphemies and still does. The pope claiming to be the head of the Church, the priests claiming to have power to forgive sins—these are only two of many blasphemies. The beast was to continue in supreme power for 1,260 years—one day for one year. Its blasphemies were to be against God and against His true people, those whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life. **Revelation 13:7—Overcome**—The early-morning church overcame the dragon, but Paul had prophesied that men would depart from the faith. This did happen, and the Church lost its exalted state as pictured in Revelation 12:1, 2. Now we see this beast system of Romanism overcoming the Church. This could never have happened if the Church had continued with the truth and vision of the early-morning period.

DARKNESS OVER THE WORLD—Revelation 13:8—All that dwell—We who are living today can little realize the religious darkness during the time papal Rome ruled over the western world. However, during this dark period God still had a people who were faithful to Him. This verse declares that all who dwelled on the earth worshiped the beast except those whose names were in the book of life. They, thank God, did not, and they were the true Church of God!

CONCLUSION

This vast lesson had to be treated very briefly, of necessity, but there has been enough of the truth concerning it brought to light to enable the inquiring student to understand the framework of the religious picture. Many live and think as if the world were the chief object of human pursuit, but from this study we can see that the principal objective of life lies in the spirit world, and these things that we see with our eyes are only to be used as a means to an end. Dear Reader, if your affections are set upon the things of the earth, you are certain to wake up to dismal disappointment and utter shame unless you change your living before it is too late.

It is true that one religious organization has become very great, and because of its size and wealth men yield to her appeal. But these are not the things that give a true testimony of holiness. In fact, they are quite the opposite. Do not be deceived by their appeal. The family of God has always been small, for Jesus said, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. In a few words give a description of the spiritual warfare between light and darkness.
 2. What did Jesus mean when He said that the gates of hell should not prevail against His church?
 3. Of what is the woman a symbol in Revelation 12:1?
 4. What does the man child represent?
 5. What is understood by the woman's being driven into the wilderness?
 6. How did the Church overcome the dragon?
 7. Why did the dragon give his power and great authority to the beast?
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LESSON NUMBER NINE FOR JUNE 2

THE AGE OF SECT-MAKING

Scriptures: Revelation 13:11-18.

Revelation 13:11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a

sword, and did live.

15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

Memory Verse: And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

—Revelation 13:11.

Aim: To set forth the truth concerning the rise of Protestantism.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday **Revelation 6**
Tuesday **II Corinthians 6**
Wednesday **Revelation 2**

Thursday **Revelation 13:11-18**
Friday **Revelation 18**
Saturday **Revelation 20**

INTRODUCTION

In our study of the Church, we would like to devote one lesson to what happened after the 1,260 years of papal Rome's supreme rule and before

the evening light was fully revealed, or the truth of the oneness of God's people was fully brought to light again. Just as the Church did not go into the wilderness in one literal day, so it did not come out in one literal day.

MEDITATIONS

ANOTHER BEAST ARISES—Revelation 13:11—Out of the earth—In a vision, John was shown another beast, this one arising out of the human traditions of men. It looked somewhat like a lamb, or, in other words, it appeared to be Christian, but strangely, it spoke as a dragon. As God began to reveal truth, there were some who were willing to walk in it. “The just shall live by faith” was wonderful truth, but it wasn't long until men began to build pens around themselves and the little truth they knew, and thus we have the rise of this two-horned beast, representing Protestantism. Please understand, there was a difference in the true reformation, or restoration of truth, and the Protestant sects.

BE A PROTESTANT OR DIE—Revelation 13:12—Causeth the earth—As Protestantism gained strength, it began to exercise the same kind of power as the beast before it. It made the same error as the first beast. Men brought over from papal Rome various false doctrines and caused the people to accept them and thus compelled the people, in spirit, to worship old Rome. **Verse 13—Great wonders**—As long as men walked in the light, God was with them, but when they refused more light, they went into darkness. We must remember that all “wonders” are not wrought by the power of God.

DON'T BE FOOLED—Revelation 13:14—Image—In every age, the devil has used every means possible to deceive the souls of men. As God began to bring the Church back out of the wilderness by revealing truth to hearts, the devil did all he could to stop it. I'm sure we know what an image is. We see statues of great men, an image of a king or of a president. The devil, through his deceptive power, got men to build religious organizations that they called churches. What they really were, however, were images of old Mother Rome. **Verse 15—Worship**—After the devil, through men, was able to build these images, the leaders tried to force everyone to become a member. They even put literal armies on the field of battle to try to force their way.

TO BE MARKED—Revelation 13:16, 17—Receive a mark—We hear much about the time coming when people must receive a mark or else they will not be able to buy food for their families or to sell their products. This has no reference to such literal things. This is speaking of religionists “marking” people with false doctrines, not allowing anyone to preach or teach, nor to labor in their midst unless he teaches what is agreeable to the sect in which they are laboring. You hear of different sect preachers exchanging pulpits. The preaching of the full gospel would destroy their image. The true people of God have a “seal” on their foreheads. This signifies the pure Word and doctrines of God being planted within them by the

Holy Spirit, while sect Babylon “marks” its members by its false doctrines and requires them to go by their “name” and not God’s.

DO SOME COUNTING—Revelation 13:18—Here is wisdom—“The number of the name of the beast—the first beast—is said to be the number of a man. When we enter the Romish hierarchy and search for a man the number of whose name will be six hundred and sixty-six, where could we go more appropriately than to the Pope himself, its authorized head? The Scriptures point him out particularly as the ‘man of sin,’ ‘the son of perdition’ (II Thessalonians 2:3, 4). Has the Pope of Rome a name the letters of which, used as numerals, make six hundred and sixty-six? Yes. ... VICARIUS FILII DEI—Vicar of the Son of God. Taking out of this name all the letters that the Latins used as numerals, we have just six hundred and sixty-six. U and V were both formerly used to denote five.

V	I	C	A	R	I	U	S	F	I	L	I	I	D	E	I
5	1	100	-	-	1	5	-	-	1	50	1	1	500	-	1”

—F. G. Smith, *Revelation Explained*.

Let me add to Smith’s comments this thought: Six falls short of the perfect number seven. Rome and various Protestant sects also fall short of God’s holy truth. They are all headed by man, not Christ. They all have rules that are not founded on the Word. Most of them take names that are not scriptural; thus God says, “Come out of her, my people.”

CONCLUSION

Let me make it clear that God did bless what we call the 16th Century Reformation, that He did have saved, humble people through the period covered in this lesson, but at the same time God was working and bringing light to honest hearts, Satan was working to get men to build “pens” around themselves, to form their own religious groups and make their own human rules as to what men must do to be a part of their group. God’s blessing was not on such.

The preaching of the full truth will expose the Protestant sects just as quickly as it will the Roman Catholic Church.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. What does “earth” symbolize in Revelation 13:11?
2. What was the nature of this second beast?
3. What does it mean to “make an image to the beast”?
4. How does God seal His people?
5. How does false religion seal or mark its subjects?
6. Discuss the difference between the 16th Century Reformation and the forming of various Protestant sects.

LESSON NUMBER TEN FOR JUNE 9

THE EVENING LIGHT

Scriptures: Revelation 14:1-8.

Revelation 14:1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from

among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

Memory Verse: These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.—Revelation 14:4b.

Aim: To show how God is bringing His family out into the evening light.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday Jeremiah 51:1-32
Tuesday Jeremiah 51:33-64
Wednesday II Corinthians 6

Thursday Revelation 18
Friday Revelation 11
Saturday Zechariah 14

INTRODUCTION

“There is no difficulty in identifying this company on Mount Sion as the true people of God in marked contrast with the worshipers of all corrupt and false religion. As to the chronology of the event, it is evident that we have here a continuation of the same series of prophecy beginning with the apostolic period in chapter XII, describing alternately the true church and the false church.

“At the beginning of this series the true church, symbolized by the star-crown woman, fled into the wilderness and was there lost to view; while the leopard beast and the two-horned beast of chapter XIII, symbolizing the two leading forms of organized Christianity, were brought into prominent view. It is therefore fitting that the true church should again appear and be given her proper position and work in the world before the end of all earthly things.

“That the company here brought to view represents the true church is shown by its agreement with the Church of God before the apostasy began ...”—F. G. Smith, *Revelation Explained*.

Through our last several lessons we have shown the early-morning church in action followed by the falling away, the Dark Ages, and the period of sect-making. The Church was to come out of the wilderness and once again men were to see the beauty of pure Christianity, unity, oneness, and holiness. The twelfth chapter of Revelation shows the Church in her morning glory and then fleeing into the wilderness. The thirteenth chapter shows the rise of Romanism, and later, Protestantism. In this lesson we continue with the fourteenth chapter and the evening light.

MEDITATIONS

SOMETHING TO SEE—Revelations 14:1—A Lamb—This lamb was, of course, Jesus Christ, and He was standing on Mount Zion. Some religious people would have us believe that this is heaven and that only 144,000 will go there. However, this has no reference to heaven at all. Mount Zion, or Zion, is used in the Scriptures as a type of the Church, just as other mountains and hills are used to symbolize sect churches. The 144,000 had the Father’s name written in their foreheads. This is in contrast to those in the previous chapter who had the mark of false religion.

A HAPPY PEOPLE—Revelation 14:2—Voice of harpers—D. S. Warner wrote:

“Who but the Christian is happy and free,
Filled with the glory of God?”

These people pictured here with Christ in the evening light had something to rejoice over. They not only were free from the bondage of sin, but also they were free from the bondage of false religion. **Verse 3—They sung**—John says they sung, as it were, a new song. It wasn’t new, but it had not been sung for so long that it seemed new. When the literal Jews were carried away to literal Babylon, and they were asked to sing some of the songs of Zion, they responded, “How can we sing the songs of Zion in a strange land?” Only those who are free in the glorious light of the Church of God can sing the song of freedom these sang. Let me add, the 144,000 (12,000 from each tribe) simply symbolizes the perfection and completeness of the Church.

A PURE CHURCH—Revelation 14:4—Not defiled—In the book of Revelation, women are used to symbolize churches. A pure, holy woman would, of course, symbolize a pure church. An impure woman would symbolize a sect church. These who were out in the evening light, and standing on Mount Zion with the Head of the Church, were not defiled by women. In other words, they were not guilty of spiritual fornication; they were not worshiping the beast nor his image. They were worshiping God

in Spirit and in truth, and they followed the leadings of the Lord, not the dictates of some earthly church.

GOD’S STANDARD—Revelation 14:5—No guile—In the evening time, God revealed His standard of holy living. Though many yet today contend for a sin-you-must religion, those who are in the true light know God’s standard is holiness. God’s grace is sufficient for all who are willing to take His way.

THE LIGHT OF TRUTH—Revelation 14:6—Everlasting gospel—The angel spoken of in this verse symbolizes God’s true ministers in this evening light. We see the Church restored to its exalted state. Please note, these ministers were not looking for truth; they had the everlasting gospel! It wasn’t a new gospel; it was not a new set of tablets or stones; it was the same gospel Paul, Peter and John had (for it changes not), and they had it! Their job was to preach it to all that dwell on the earth. That is still our job today. **Verse 7—Give glory to God—**We, doubtless, do not praise God enough. He is to be glorified. Let us use our voices to praise the Lord.

THE MESSAGE—Revelation 14:8—Babylon—Babylon is all false religion. When God revealed the truth in regard to the true church, He also revealed the truth in regard to the fallen state of false religion. Babylon’s wine makes people drunk on false doctrines. During the Dark Ages, all nations took part with her, but, thank God, the time came when true ministers saw her evil condition and took their stand free from her. Thank God, also, for those who heeded their call to “come out of her.”

CONCLUSION

We would invite the student to further study this subject by reading in Revelation 18 the fallen state of Babylon, and also Revelation 19 where the true church is pictured in the evening time going forth to battle for truth and right, even as it did in the early-morning period of this gospel day (Revelation 6:1, 2).

We regret that our study of this subject must be so limited.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Where did John see the Lamb standing?
2. What do the 144,000 represent?
3. Over what were they rejoicing?
4. What does it mean, “These are they who were not defiled with women”?
5. What is God’s standard for His church?
6. Do you have a vision of God’s true church?

LESSON NUMBER ELEVEN FOR JUNE 16

FALSE SHEPHERDS, OLD TESTAMENT

Scriptures: Ezekiel 13:2-10; Jeremiah 23:21, 22; 50:6; Ezekiel 34:2, 3.

Ezekiel 13:2 Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the Lord;

3 Thus saith the Lord God; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!

4 O Israel, thy prophets are like the foxes in the deserts.

5 Ye have not gone up into the gaps, neither made up the hedge for the house of Israel to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord.

6 They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The Lord saith: and the Lord hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word.

7 Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The Lord saith it; albeit I have not spoken?

8 Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore, behold, I am against you, saith the Lord God.

9 And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither

shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord God.

10 Because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace; and there was no peace; and one built up a wall, and, lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar.

Jeremiah 23:21 I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.

22 But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.

Jeremiah 50:6 My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their restingplace.

Ezekiel 34:2 Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks?

3 Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock.

Memory Verse: Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the Lord.—Jeremiah 23:1.

Aim: To show from the Scriptures that God is against false shepherds.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday Ezekiel 13:1-12
Tuesday Ezekiel 13:13-23
Wednesday Jeremiah 23:1-18

Thursday Jeremiah 23:19-40
Friday Jeremiah 50:1-20
Saturday Jeremiah 34

INTRODUCTION

Not all shepherds are God called, and not all shepherds are true shepherds. In this lesson we desire to set before the student some facts concerning false shepherds in the Old Testament. We trust it will give some insight

into the spiritual condition that exists yet today and will help you not to be deceived or led astray by those who would destroy and scatter God's sheep.

MEDITATIONS

THE SPIRIT'S INTERPRETATION—Ezekiel 13:2, 3—Out of their own hearts—Any man is certain to prophesy out of his own heart who reads the Word of God in his own understanding. The Word of God does not yield to human reasoning alone, regardless of how reasonable it may seem to the unregenerated man. The Spirit who inspired the writing of the Word knows exactly what meaning is intended in the writing, and He alone is able to give the true understanding. From verse three we learn that these prophets prophesied, but it was out of their own hearts, for the Lord declared that they had seen nothing.

DECEITFUL CHARACTER OF FALSE SHEPHERDS—Ezekiel 13:4—Like foxes—The craftiness of the fox is well-known. He kills and carries off his prey to a solitary place. These false prophets invent many things to tell the people; and if they fail in their forecasts, they hide in a desert of oily words.

FALSE PROPHET GIVES NO PROTECTION—Ezekiel 13:5—Have not gone up—These false prophets made no effort to stand in the weak places of defense in the moral line. They allowed all kinds of devilish practices to fix themselves upon the lives of the people. So it is today. Preachers will not dare to preach strongly against the evils of moving pictures, gambling, drinking, and all the vices that are threatening our nation.

FALSE PROPHETS DO MIRACULOUS THINGS—Ezekiel 13:6, 7—Seen vanity and ... a vain vision—It is not denied that the prophet saw a vision. The unfortunate part of it is that the vision was vain. It did not come from God; therefore in the end it proved disastrous. The false prophets, Jannes and Jambres, converted their rods into serpents, as did Moses (Exodus 7), but it was false and vain, for the serpent of Moses devoured theirs. The devil still has such prophets in the world.

GOD IS AGAINST THE FALSE PROPHET—Ezekiel 13:8—I am against you—Who is it who can stand against the Almighty God? No one. Yet men, for the sake of money, fame, or the good will of the world, will preach false things out of the pulpit. How short-lived will be their period of fleshly gratification! **Verse 9—Neither shall they be written**—What a foolish thing for anyone to forfeit his hope of eternal reward for the sake of temporal advantage! But millions are doing it today. Dear Reader, do not fail to try the spirits, to see whether they be of God.

BUILDING ON THE WRONG FOUNDATION—Ezekiel 13:10—Others daubed it—The spiritually unwise cannot tell a wall that is built by a false prophet from one that is built by the true. The false prophet uses the Word of God and, seemingly, speaks from it, but the wrong interpreta-

tion is given, or the wrong setting is presented. Thus, the people are deceived, and the wall will not stand the judgment day interpretations.

MAN-CALLED PROPHETS—Jeremiah 23:21—I have not sent—God declares that there are some prophets standing in the office of an ambassador of God whom He did not call. They are preaching, but the words that they speak do not come from Him. The prophets who serve the purpose of God and benefit the people must be sent of God and have His message. Religious schools can manufacture orators and smooth-tongued speakers, but they never can produce one God-called minister of the gospel.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE WORD OF GOD—Jeremiah 23:22—**Stood in my counsel—**Even though they were not God-called or God-sent, if the ministers had walked according to the teaching of the Word of God and had presented the Word of God according to the understanding that the Spirit of God gave to it, the result would have been that the people would have turned from the evil of their ways.

SPIRITUAL DISASTER—Jeremiah 50:6—Forgotten their resting place—What a terrible loss is suffered when a soul is misled from the path of truth by unscrupulous religious leaders! The soul cannot be truly satisfied until it rests in Christ. Even though the devil can give a counterfeit of the true religion, however cunningly devised it may be, it cannot bring deep settled peace and joy, which is the life of the soul.

THE SHEPHERD, A SERVANT—Ezekiel 34:2—Should not the shepherds—The teachings of Jesus tell us that he who would be greatest must be the servant of all. Here, the shepherds of Israel to whom Ezekiel refers had made the congregations servants to them. They took the money from the congregations, but failed to give any spiritual food in return. Therefore, the people languished and died spiritually.

PASTORAL CARE—Ezekiel 34:3—Ye feed not the flock—Jesus declared that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. It is necessary that the prophet who leads the people have direct contact with God and that he feed the flock the message that comes directly from heaven. If this isn't done, all effort that may be put forth is vain.

CONCLUSION

We are told that the Bible is written for our admonition so that we may read and be informed of what has happened to men of old who failed to obey the Word of God. We see plainly that there were false prophets among the Israelites, and Peter declares that as this was true, so we can expect false teachers among us. They shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them. We are not to bid such Godspeed but rather turn from them and avoid them. So once again, for the sake of

your admonition, this lesson is presented. It is expected to be a help to you in making your calling and election sure.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Name two things that through the years have been a temptation to mankind, producing false religion.
 2. Why do men prophesy out of their own hearts?
 3. From where will a man who is called of God get his message?
 4. What is meant by the statement that the prophets had not gone up to stop the gap?
 5. By what power do false prophets do their miracles?
 6. Which is more important in the life of a minister, the divine call or education?
 7. Which is the servant, the shepherd or the congregation?
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LESSON NUMBER TWELVE FOR JUNE 23

FALSE SHEPHERDS, NEW TESTAMENT

Scriptures: Matthew 24:24; II Peter 2:1; II Corinthians 11:13-15; Galatians 1:8, 9; Matthew 7:15, 21, 22.

Matthew 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.

II Peter 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

II Corinthians 11:13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

15 Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be

according to their works.

Galatians 1:8 But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

9 As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Matthew 7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

Memory Verse: Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.—Matthew 7:15.

Aim: To expose false ministers under Christian garb.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday

Matthew 7
John 10:1-30
Acts 19:13-20

Thursday
Friday
Saturday

II Thessalonians 2:1-12
I John 4:1-15
Matthew 24:13-23

INTRODUCTION

Time and again we are warned in the Bible against false prophets, or teachers. This in itself is absolute proof that there are false prophets in the world today. It is our desire in these remarks to identify these false ministers so that we can avoid them and their ungodly teachings.

MEDITATIONS

FALSE PROPHETS TO PERFORM MIRACLES—Matthew 24:24
—For there shall arise—As soon as the early church began to be successful in bringing large numbers to Christ, Satan started raising up false Christs, and for a time they seemed to have supernatural power and deceived many. This scripture has its fulfillment in the day prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, but we have in our day false ministers holding big revivals, wherein many, seemingly, are being converted. They conduct great healing campaigns where some are apparently miraculously healed. A careful examination of the methods followed in these campaigns will reveal the falsity of these ministers, and anyone with a discerning spirit will be able to detect their false spirit.

II Peter 2:1—But there were false prophets—Here is a specific prediction that there would be false teachers that would bring in damnable heresies, some of them even denying Christ. The next verse says that many shall follow their pernicious ways, and the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. Here are some of the present-day pernicious doctrines: Christ was not divine, merely a good man; Christians sin more or less every day; if we are once saved, we are always saved; there is no hell; Christ is to return to the earth and reign for a thousand years. All these doctrines are absolutely contrary to the teachings of the Bible.

SATAN'S MINISTERS—II Corinthians 11:13—For such are false
—This refers to ministers who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof (power to live a holy and godly life in this present world), ministers who have chosen the ministry as a profession without having the divine call. Verse 14—And no marvel—Paul says that there is nothing strange about this, for Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. When he deceived Eve in the Garden, he came as a bearer of good tidings, telling her how she could become wise, and that God did not mean that she would really die if she ate of the forbidden fruit. He is still deceiving the people with his cunning and crafty ways, and we must continually keep ourselves in contact with God so we will be able to tell the leadings of Satan from the leadings of God. **Verse 15—Therefore it is no great thing—**

Not all ministers who stand behind the sacred desk are the true ministers of God, and, in fact, very few of them do qualify as true ministers; so it must follow that they are false ministers. How can I make this statement? About sixty percent of our people are church members, listening to these false prophets. Generally speaking, can you tell this sixty percent from the other forty percent by their mode of living? Do not both groups attend all the ungodly amusements, such as dances, movies, mixed bathing, etc.? The answer is, unmistakably, a positive one. As you watch the crowd emerge from the theater and the fashionable church, can you see any difference? Do not the churchgoers light up their cigarettes almost as soon as they get out of the church, the same as the ones who come out of the theater? God's Word tells us that His people are few in number and that they are a peculiar people, and they are not of the world, neither do they take part in any form of worldly amusements. The Word also says that if the preachers would preach the truth of the Word to the people, they would turn from their sinful and worldly ways. Since the people have not turned from their wicked ways, it is evident that their ministers have not preached the truth to them; consequently, they are nothing but ungodly men whom Satan has cunningly transformed as ministers of righteousness, "whose end shall be according to their works."

THE FALSE PROPHET TO BE ACCURSED—Galatians 1:8, 9—

But though we, or an angel—The Word of God strongly condemns false prophets and hypocrites. In the twenty-third chapter of Matthew, Jesus called the scribes and Pharisees, the fashionable churchgoers of His day, hypocrites, fools, and blind guides, who "strain at a gnat and swallow a camel." John the Baptist termed them a "generation of vipers." Were Jesus here today, He would be as vehement in denouncing today's false preachers as He was those of His day. Paul, in speaking of false teachers, said in very plain language that if any man preached any other doctrine than that which he preached, he was to be accursed, and he deemed it so very important that he repeated the warning in the very next verse. Paul teaches us that we should deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts and that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world and that our women should not wear gold, pearls, and costly array. How many of our modern preachers are preaching this to their congregations? Does not the Word say that we must live by every Word of God, and he that taketh from the Word shall have his name taken out of the book of life? Ye false ministers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

FALSE PROPHETS—Matthew 7:15—Beware of false prophets

—Jesus warns us to be on the watch for these false ministers. He does not want us to be deceived and end up in a devil's hell. These ministers may come to us in the guise of true ministers, but by their fruits we shall know them. In the sight of God there is nothing much worse than false teachers, because they are deceiving the people and sending them to hell with their

“sugar-coated gospel.” **Verse 21—Not every one that saith**—It takes more than words of the mouth to be a true child of God. It takes holy living and true humility to be a child of God. A true Christian has a hungering and thirsting after righteousness and a burning desire to please God in everything he does. He strives to measure up to the verse that says, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” **Verse 22—Many will say to me**—Jesus tells us that there will be many stand before Him at the last day expecting to get into heaven who will recount the wonderful things they did in His name while they were here on earth. You will note that they will claim to have preached in Jesus’ name and to have cast out devils. Whom is Jesus talking about? Was he not speaking about false ministers, men and women who have been preaching error? It is easy to become deceived if we do not have a real love for truth. II Thessalonians 2:11, 12 reads, “And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” There is absolutely no hope for those who have received this delusion, for God is permitting them to believe a lie that they might be damned because they did not want to know the truth.

What a sad end awaits the false minister! He will continue in his false way, expecting to make it safely through to heaven, only to hear the righteous Judge say, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Verse 23).

CONCLUSION

A careful study of this lesson cannot help impressing the sincere seeker of truth with the fact that there are many false ministers in the land today and that they are an abomination in the sight of God. When someone kills another person, he has committed the worst possible crime in our land, and this is generally punishable with death. These false ministers are killing precious souls, spiritually, and sending them to a never-ending hell. Is it any wonder that Paul said for them to be accused? It is high time for each one of us who know the truth to “cry aloud and spare not,” to warn the people of these false ministers. We know that not all will accept our warnings, but we must search out all honest-hearted ones that they may have an opportunity to make their decision for or against truth.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. How do you account for false prophets performing miracles?
2. What are some of the false doctrines that are preached?
3. How are we to know the false ministers?
4. Does Satan have ministers?
5. How does one get a delusion?
6. What must we do to make sure of entering heaven?
7. What are you doing to warn others of these false ministers?

LESSON NUMBER THIRTEEN FOR JUNE 30

GOD'S MINISTERS

Scriptures: I Timothy 3:1-7; I Peter 5:1-4.

I Timothy 3:1 This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

3 Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous;

4 One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;

5 (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

6 Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the

devil.

7 Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

I Peter 5:1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Memory Verse: Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.—II Corinthians 3:6.

Aim: To show the divine requirements of the minister of the Church of God.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday I Timothy 1
Tuesday I Timothy 3
Wednesday I Peter 5

Thursday I Timothy 5
Friday I Timothy 6:9-21
Saturday Titus 2

INTRODUCTION

Jesus said of John the Baptist that of men who were born of women none had risen greater than John the Baptist. His greatness lay in the fact that he was the forerunner of Christ. Likewise, every God-called minister stands in a position that is greater than any the world has to offer. The heaviest responsibility that a man can carry is the responsibility of souls. The most profitable labor that a man can bestow is upon the recovery of lost souls from the bondage of sin. It is deplorable that many are supposedly laboring in this work who have not been called or sent of God. All their labors shall be in vain. Many are half-hearted, not valuing a soul as does Jesus.

God's Word tells us what a minister should be and what his work is. It is our desire to influence everyone we can to cause men to conform to the

Bible requirements in this important calling. Laymen, as well as ministers, should know the Bible requirements. If laymen understand, they can use their influence to see to it that the proper standards are followed.

From the Word of God we learn that the minister of the gospel in olden days played a very important part, not only in religious matters, but also in governmental matters. If problems arose in the affairs of state, the leader consulted the man of God, and from him, he learned the best course to pursue. It is not so today. The leaders are consulting people of the world, and, as a result, we are in a very serious plight the world over. God is still able to prosper the world through those whom He has called.

MEDITATIONS

THE MINISTERIAL CALL COMMENDED—I Timothy 3:1—He desireth a good work—Worldly standards determine a good work by the amount of money it returns. The calling of God is too great to be measured in financial values, for one soul is worth more than the entire finance of all ages. He who gives a cup of cold water in the name of an apostle shall not lose his reward. God places emphasis upon service. No man is ever called to the work of a minister for the purpose of being served. He who is called for service, and he who would be the greatest, must be the servant of all.

REQUIREMENT OF GOD'S MINISTERS—I Timothy 3:2-7—
Blameless—By the process of the new birth, any man becomes blameless in the sight of God. He is as though he had never committed any sin. If he then makes restitution wherever he has wronged his fellowmen, he is blameless insofar as his sin toward them is concerned. He has done all that is possible for him to do. Of course, from that time on he must not transgress again. **One wife—**Paul frequently found in his missionary work among the heathen that the men had many wives. They had been taught that such was proper according to the heathen religions. Many traced their ancestry back to Abraham, the man of God, who had several wives. Paul did not disrupt the established family but did lay down the rule that no such man could have a part in the ministry. In this enlightened age it is biblically impossible for a man to have two wives at one time. God never takes three and makes one flesh of them. If a man does not have Bible grounds for divorce from a wife and marries another woman, he is still the husband of the first and is living in adultery with the second. In the sight of God the latter is not his wife at all. **Vigilant, sober—**No lazy man can be God's minister. His work requires energetic application of men who are sober in habits, having full control of their emotions and desires. **Good behavior—**He must set the proper example before the world and the Church. **Given to hospitality—**He must be willing and ready to extend convenience to anyone who comes his way. As the Word says, he should not fail to entertain strangers, "for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." **Apt to teach—**Some have taken up the work of the ministry as a vocation. He who cannot impart knowledge to others with aptness has no place in the

ministry and is not called of God. **Verse 3—Not given to wine**—He must not come under the intoxicating influence of wine. Some modern ministers do. He who does is a hireling and not God's man. **No striker**—The modern striker is one who uses violence to redress the wrongs he feels he has sustained. God declares that His minister shall not use physical force to right the wrongs that he may have suffered at the hand of his fellowmen. If God's man is wronged, he is called to suffer it, as Christ did, giving to the world the proper example. **Not greedy of filthy lucre**—Money is necessary to modern life, but in the life of the God-called minister it must be the servant and not the master. Money has power, but not the kind of power that a minister needs. **Patient**—The man of God must be longsuffering with the sinner and those who may err in the way, not given to reviling and a display of harsh words against such as may offend in any way. **Not covetous**—He who is fully given to the task of carrying the gospel and who has a love for the cause of God will have no time nor disposition to be desiring the things that belong to another. **Ruleth well**—The house of the minister should be a daily example of what God expects His house, the Church of God, to be. **Children in subjection**—The ideal situation is that all the children be Christians, but very seldom is this the situation. Ofttimes a man's foes are they of his own household; nevertheless, the minister must maintain the law of righteousness in the home, and flagrant sin against the home must not be tolerated. **A man know not how**—If a man cannot keep his own house in order, it is certain that it would be an absolute impossibility for him to defend the Church of God against the pressure that would be brought against it. **Not a novice**—One recently saved or recently come from the ranks of Babylon is not sufficiently experienced to take so great a responsibility as the oversight of the Church of God, the bride of Christ. **Lifted up with pride**—Pride is an indication of self-love. He who loves himself is going to seek to turn attention and praise to himself. This will result in damage to the body of Christ. Transgression of the law of God gives liberty to the devil to do his wicked work, thus hindering the work of the Lord. **Have a good report of them that are without**—Most sinners will give a good report of the man who is living rightly, although there are some who will give a bad report, regardless of how good a man may be living. The gospel standard is a high standard; and if the minister, who stands in the public eye, lowers it, certainly a reproach will be brought on the cause. When anyone departs from the truth in one point, be it, seemingly, ever so small, it opens up the way for the devil to take greater advantage.

PETER'S EXHORTATION—I Peter 5:1—I exhort—This world does not offer to the Christian a great reward, for the saint's reward is reserved for the realization of eternal life. In our day when there are so many worldly and temporal things that seem to be desirable, it is necessary that we meet together often and exhort one another to be constant and true, not placing

our affections upon the things of the world, but looking forward to the glory of the world to come. There is a glory in the sufferings of Christ, but certainly not what the world calls glory. The glory of the world is confined entirely to the pleasures of the flesh.

GOD'S CALL NOT A BUSINESS PROPOSITION—I Peter 5:2—But of a ready mind—Accept the call of God and enter into it with all the heart, just as if it paid the highest salary known (and, in reality, it does). Give to the flock (whether large or small, learned or unlearned, black or white) the unvarnished, undiluted Word of the living God.

GOD'S MINISTER NOT A TYRANT—I Peter 5:3—Lords over God's heritage—Again, the minister is the servant of the flock (not a slave), and his first concern is the welfare of the flock. He who does not have the cause at heart is not God's man. In all things he must be an example to the flock. **Verse 4—Ye shall receive**—He who is faithful to his charge on earth shall receive the approval of the chief Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, when He shall appear.

CONCLUSION

Some may say that the requirements of a God-called minister are very hard, but such is not the case. All these things mentioned would be good conduct for anyone and produce a life in this world that would be a blessing in any community. All are in constant pursuit of happiness, but the quest is marred by the entertainment of standards which are detrimental to the soul.

The future of the Church is most certainly in the hands of the ministry, as far as the work on this side of heaven is concerned. Too many ministers are preaching a message that they believe will please the people, all at the expense of truth. Sad will be the day when such a man answers to his God. If preachers will preach the Word under the anointing of the Spirit, sinners will turn from their sin, and the kingdom of God will prosper.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

1. Why is the ministry the greatest calling known to man?
2. Why should those entrusted with the affairs of state keep in close contact with God's ministers?
3. Why should laymen know the Bible requirements of a God-called minister?
4. How can a man attain to blamelessness in the sight of God?
5. Does God call a lazy man to the ministry?
6. To whom should a minister show hospitality?
7. What does it mean to be a striker?
8. What is the temptation behind the filthy lucre?

Name _____

Class _____

A Partial History of the Church

ADULT & YOUNG PEOPLE

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