

IN THE
NAME
OF...

The Story of

New Testament Authority

Wayne Reynolds

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Preface

Eccl. 12:12, "...of making many books, there is no end; and much study is a weariness to the flesh."

We are living in a day when many books are being written about many subjects. The subject of the authority of Christ is probably the most important of all these subjects. Many disregard the authority of Christ, replacing it with their own thoughts of what *they believe* His authority should be. Men may change what *they believe* about God, but this does not change God. He is the same, even though hand join in hand against Him, Proverbs 11:21. He will yet reign on this earth. I pray this book will not be a weariness, but will be a help to the struggling Christian who earnestly desires to see God's works. Yea, to see more than just His *works*, but to see His *ways*, Psalms 103:7.

It is my prayer that God will accept this book as a small token of my appreciation of his power and authority over the affairs of men. I pray that God will use this book to be a blessing to those that may be doubting whether God has any power when they see the great strides of increasing immorality and wickedness in this sinful world.

I want to thank my fellow pastor and friend, James DuVall, for his advice on my use of the English language. Any errors you find are not the result of an error on his part, it is just that I didn't accept his advice, or made changes after he made initial corrections.

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Introduction

IN THE NAME OF...

I never really paid any attention to the phrase, "In the name of," until several years ago. I was listening to a message on cassette tape, and almost off handed the minister said, "Anytime you see in the Bible the phrase 'in the name of' it means authority." He continued preaching, not explaining what he meant. Later, after much study and rightly dividing the Scriptures, I understood what he meant. "In the name of" certainly does mean authority, or power.

Do you remember any mystery stories in which a police officer pulls up to a house and plans to search it while the villain growls, "Where is your warrant?" Why does the officer need a warrant? It is a matter of authority. I do not let strangers into my home, nor do I allow them to snoop through it. I am sure you don't either. Without a warrant, the officer has no more authority than a stranger. A warrant gives the officer authority to do something that he could not otherwise do. Suppose he signs his own warrant? Well, that won't work, will it? One cannot give himself authority. Rather, authority must come from one who already has authority, and a grant of authority is only as good as the authority of the one who gives it. Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." No man has authority, and we cannot make a self declaration that we have authority. God has reserved all authority for Himself.

Perhaps this modern example of the use of the word "name" will help to ascertain the course of this study. When you write a check on your personal checking account, the local bank will not cash that check if you haven't signed your name to the check. Your signature gives the bank the authority to withdraw funds from your account and pay that same amount to another account. The bank can do nothing with the funds in your account if you don't authorize it. The authority of God also works like this. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills; we don't. He has all power; we have no power. We can do nothing unless He gives authorization.

This study is very needful, for everything we do will be null and void unless God supplies the authority and power. The end result of this study will be to give God all the glory, because salvation is completely of the Lord Jesus Christ. If God doesn't aid us, we won't have any aid. If God doesn't pick us up, we won't have any strength. If God is not the source of our service, we have no acceptable service. If God is not our eternity, we have no eternity with Him. Everything depends on what God does for us.

We will not examine every Scripture where the phrase "in the name of" appears.

This is a very profitable study, however, for the Bible student who wants more than a surface knowledge of the Word of God. It will be surprise and bless you to discover afresh how salvation exalts the power of God.

We will not go into all the details concerning salvation, ("Calvinism" or "Arminianism") or the doctrine of the local church vs. the universal church. The purpose of this booklet is not to examine those doctrines, but to demonstrate how the phrase "in the name of" pertains to those doctrines.

The Beginning -- Acts 4:7

The Pharisees asked a very important question, "By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?" The story behind the question begins in Acts 3, when Peter and John were going to the temple about the ninth hour to pray. At the gate of the temple, they saw an impotent man begging alms. In verse 6, Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto thee, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." The man immediately leaped and walked and praised God. In using the phrase "in the name of," Peter makes it very clear whose power and authority he is using to heal the impotent man. Peter doesn't have the power or authority to heal; he only acts on God's behalf. The Pharisees didn't like this public exhibition of healing, especially since Peter and John claimed the Son of God, whom the Jews had killed, did the healing. They put Peter and John in jail and told them not to preach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:18), but God had already saved 5,000 people (Acts 4:4). Notice, the Pharisees really didn't object to the apostles preaching **about** Jesus. They might not have objected to the apostles doing miracles if **they** took the credit. They didn't want them saying that Jesus, whom they believed to be dead, had the power to heal and perform miracles. That kind of preaching very clearly implicated them in the worse kind of murder -- the murder of the only begotten Son of God. The next day (Acts 4:7), Peter and John were set in the midst of the Pharisees who asked, "By what power, or by what name have ye done this?" The Pharisees knew Peter and John were unlearned fishermen, but they could not deny they had performed a notable miracle. The Pharisees were searching for the source of the power behind the miracle. Surely they already knew. They must have known God had healed this man, but they will not admit it to themselves or anybody else. The Pharisees were like people who hear the gospel, and know it is true, but cannot believe what they know is true.

There are two words in Acts 4:7 that we want to examine: power and name. The word "power" comes from the Greek word *dunamis*, from which we get the English word "dynamite." The Pharisees ask, "By what *dunamis*, by what explosive power have you done this?" It is impossible to hide a dynamite explosion, and it is impossible to hide the power of God. The healing of the impotent man was a very sudden, public occurrence, with wide spread results. Its explosiveness revealed the power of God in such a mighty way that nobody can deny it.

Next, they use the word "name," which means authority, or character. The Pharisees are asking, "What character, or person told you to do this? Or by what

authority, who gave you the right to cause this man to be healed? How do you use this power?" The Pharisees realize a very spectacular thing had happened and they can't deny it. They are not denying that it has happened, but they are trying to deny the power of God in it. This is why they are asking Peter and John about this power.

I believe it is particularly important to notice that the Pharisees use the word "power" and "name" interchangeably. The word "name," from the Greek word *onoma*, means authority, making the word "power" the explosive strength of that authority. As we progress further into this study, we'll discover that to have authority, we have power, and if we have power, we have authority.

Peter's original statement to the impotent man in Acts 3:6 ("...in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk") is in total agreement with Peter's answer to the council in Acts 4:10, "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole." Peter is very clear in his language. He uses the word "name," "Jesus Christ," then "Nazareth." "Name" refers to the explosive power of the one called "Jesus Christ." "Nazareth" refers to the man called Jesus Christ who was from Nazareth, a city despised by the Jews as being unworthy to bring forth their Saviour. Peter wants them to see that Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom they crucified, and who is raised from the dead, is the one that gave the power to heal the impotent man. The Pharisees ought to understand what Peter is saying. They saw Jesus when the nails were driven into His hands and into His feet. They saw Him naked and lifted up with the crown of thorns on His head. They heard His cries of anguish and saw Him die. When they buried Him, they put the seal on the tomb, and then He arose from the dead. Peter's explanation reveals that Jesus is not only a man, but also God, for the power given to Him by His Father raised Him from the dead.

In verse 11, Peter goes on to explain to these lost Pharisees that Jesus Christ is the stone that they have set at naught, but He has become the head of the corner in spite of their wickedness.

Acts 4:12 says, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Peter uses the word "name" again, teaching that no one has the right, privilege, or authority to save except Jesus Christ. Salvation is more than a mere "turning over of a new leaf" or a "promise to do better." It is a life changing experience, a "dynamite" explosion of the soul that cannot be contained, or denied. It is very sad to say, but these Pharisees failed to hear the spiritual words spoken by Peter and witnessed by their own eyes and ears. They have closed their hearts to this powerful preaching, thus rejecting Christ as their personal savior.

Chapter 1

IN THE NAME OF... SALVATION

Acts 4:12,
"Neither is there salvation in any other:
for there is no other name under heaven
given among men,
whereby we must be saved."

There are many Scriptures that prove salvation is by trusting, or believing in the name, power, or authority of Jesus Christ. There is no salvation except through Jesus Christ. We will not investigate every Scripture that reveals this patently obvious truth. We will examine only those passages that speak about salvation being a result of believing in the name, power, or authority of God.

God Controls Everything

God is in control and is directly overseeing the affairs of men and guiding people's lives. This is especially evident in the book of Genesis, as God directed Noah, Abraham, and the other patriarchs. Men constantly sin, but in spite of that, God is still dealing with people, working in their individual circumstances, and receiving glory through their lives. When everything is said and done, each person can look back and say, "Look what God has done!" We often don't see God's leadership when we are in a problem, or when we are going toward a problem, but after that problem is solved, we can look back and say, "I see now what God has done."

God is in Control of Salvation

John 1:12, "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Salvation is absolutely a work of God; and, according to the Bible, there is a believing that men must do, "even to them that believe on his name." Remember the word "name" means authority, right, or power. A person believes on the power, or authority of God to save them. They are not trusting anything they are doing, but are looking unto God, who is the author and finisher of their faith, (Heb. 12:2). It is not because we look to God **before** He looks to us that we are saved, it is because God first looks to us. We receive salvation because God gives us the power to believe. We do not have this power within ourselves for we are dead in trespasses and sins, following Satan the prince and the power of the air, fulfilling the desires of the flesh just like every other lost person who ever lived on this earth.

Believing is a Work

This might be an odd thought to some, so don't think I have gone off into heresy. Continue reading and you will understand that believing is indeed a work, but it is **not** a work of the flesh. It is a work of God in the heart of the believer. In John 6:28, some followers of Jesus asked Him, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" In verse 29, Jesus replied, "...This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Jesus said believing is a work, and it is a work. But it is not a work of the flesh. There is absolutely nothing a person can do in his own strength to be saved. True believing is what a person must do to be saved. It is a work of God in the heart of sinful man, allowing the sinner to believe to the salvation of his soul.

The "Mechanics" of Salvation

The "mechanics" of salvation is illustrated in Mark 3:1-6, when Jesus healed the man with the withered hand. Jesus called him forth in the midst of the Pharisees on the Sabbath day. Obviously, the man could not use a withered hand. Jesus looked around him and said, "Is it lawful to do that which is good on the sabbath day?" Nobody answered. Jesus looked around with anger being grieved because of their hardness. He then turned to the man with the withered hand and said, "Stretch forth your hand." Could the man stretch forth his hand? Of course not, it was physically impossible. If it was physically impossible, just how did the man stretch forth his hand? God energized the man's withered hand giving that hand the necessary strength to obey the command. God given faith allowed the man to obey the command of God as God enabled him to stretch forth his hand, and it became whole as the other. That is the way a lost person believes. A lost person must first realize his inability to even move toward the Saviour for he is dead in trespasses and sins. The lost see, by the "eye-opening" power of God, that they are lost and repent of their sinfulness before God and look unto Him, believing that He is their only hope. John 1:12, "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God. Even to them that believe on His name." So the lost believe to the saving of the soul, but the **ability** to believe comes from Christ. That is why salvation is a gift, not of works lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:9).

This principle is further illustrated in John 1:12,13, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power (the right or authority) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; (authority, rank, or everything heavenly and holy which the name Jesus Christ reveals) Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Every person *must* believe, but they don't have the *ability* to believe. This shows once again that salvation is a gift from God.

Calling on the Name of the Lord

In Acts 2:21, Peter closed the introduction to his sermon on the Day of Pentecost by proclaiming, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Peter knew that people must call on the power and authority of Jesus Christ to be saved. Peter later declared in Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in

any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Later, Peter declared to Cornelius and his household, "...that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins," Acts 10:43. It must be true, then, that lost people have a "believing work" to do. The marvelous thing about lost people believing is that it can only be done when they realize their total *inability* to believe because of their inherent sinful nature. It is at this point that the helpless sinner looks to God, who has provided a perfect sacrifice for sin in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. The lost person calls on the name of the Lord, not because that happens to be the necessary "formula," but because he has absolutely no other place to turn, and he knows and believes God provides everything he needs for time and eternity.

Some people quote Romans 10:13, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" as a formula for salvation. They fail to understand verse 14, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed..." The truth of the matter is that a person can not call on Christ until he has believed! To understand this very important truth, continue reading Romans 10:13-15. These verses give us a certain procedure God has outlined so the lost will be able to call on his name. First, God must send a preacher to preach to the lost person. That preacher must then preach the gospel truth to the lost person. (I must state that the preacher is not necessarily an ordained minister of the gospel, but can be anybody God chooses to carry the gospel message to the lost.) That lost person must then hear the gospel before he can believe. He must believe before he can call upon the name of the Lord. This **is** what this passage is teaching. When this passage is clearly understood, there can be no doubt that salvation comes to a lost person through the power of God, not through any fleshly work on the part of that person. It is very obvious from this passage, before a person can believe, he must hear. Before a person can hear, God must send someone to declare the truth to him.

Ananias told Paul in Acts 22:16, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away they sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Ananias believed Paul was already saved because he called him "brother Saul" in Acts 9:17. Ananias wouldn't have baptized Paul if he hadn't been saved because he was following the example of John the Baptist who refused to baptize those who didn't have fruits meet for repentance (Matt. 3:8). Acts 22:16 is not stating that Paul was saved after Ananias spoke to him, or at the time he was baptized. He was saved on the road to Damascus when Jesus spoke to him. It is very clear that Paul wasn't saved because he trusted in something he had done. In Philippians 3:4-8, Paul declares that everything he had in the flesh was counted but dung. In Acts 9:11, Jesus told Ananias that Paul was praying. Isn't praying the same thing as calling on the name of the Lord? Sure it is. Paul was saved on the road to Damascus, then lead to Damascus, where he fasted and prayed, waiting on further directions from God.

The miracles of Christ were intended to reveal to fallen humanity that Jesus was able to do the impossible. John 2:23, "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did." These people did more than believe in Jesus, they "believed in his name." They believed in more than just a man called Jesus, they believed in the power and authority of Jesus,

the son of the living God.

When a person is saved, he can say of himself, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:11, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." The Corinthians were not justified (made legally pure) by their power, but by the name (power and authority) of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Their sins "...are forgiven you for his name's sake" (I John 2:12).

Believing, but Lost

John 3:18 says, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." This verse states that people are lost who do not believe in the name of the only begotten son of God. Why? Somebody would say, "They don't believe in Jesus." That is wrong. I want to show you that there are people who believe in Jesus, but fail to believe in His power, and authority; therefore they remain lost. They are lost because they don't believe in the name, power or authority of Jesus, the only begotten son of God. Many people believe in Jesus, and know He is the son of God, but will die and go to hell. James 2:19 states that the devils believe in one God. They even believe Jesus is the Son of God, for the demons asked him in Matt. 8:29, "Jesus, thou son of God, art thou come to torment us before the time?" The demons know who God is, and they know who Jesus is, but they don't believe in His power. The Devil is constantly fighting God, and he is going to spend eternity in the lake of fire.

John 8:12-59 is the complete record of some people who believed in Jesus without being saved. Verse 30 records, "As he spake these words, many believed on him." These people really did believe in Jesus, but they were not saved because they didn't believe they were lost! Contrast the believers in John 2:23 who were truly saved, because the power of Jesus revealed by the miracles, caused them to believe in his name (power and authority), not just to believe in him (his person). In the last days (II Tim. 3:5) men will have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof. Do you see what the Bible is teaching us? There will be people who say they believe in Jesus Christ, but in reality, they only have a *form* of religion because they don't believe in the power or authority of God. Everybody that says "Lord, Lord..." is not going to heaven!

Matt. 24:5 says, "For many shall come in my name saying I am Christ and shall deceive many." The devils know who Jesus is and there are many people today who know who Jesus is, but that doesn't mean they are saved. Every person must know who Jesus is before he is saved, but knowledge doesn't save. For example, I was raised in a Baptist church, and taught the gospel from my youth. I knew all about how to be saved, but I was lost. I didn't believe in the power of God, but I did believe in Jesus Christ, and had a knowledge, or "head belief" in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. But that knowledge didn't save me. When I was saved, I was saved by the power of God. If you are saved, you are saved by the power of Jesus Christ, not by some kind of "head knowledge" of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, just as the people in the Bible

were saved. Salvation doesn't come by education, but by divine inspiration!

Let's go back to John 8:12-59 and examine these Scriptures for a fuller explanation of why these people were not saved. John 8:21, "...When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then shall ye know that I am he..." The term "lifted up" may not mean much to us, but in the days of Christ, it meant crucifixion. The people Jesus was speaking to understood that He was talking about the time when He would be crucified. John 8:30, "As he spake these words, many believed on him." Notice that they believed on **him**. They didn't believe on His name, or His power, or His authority. We might assume these people were saved when they believed on Christ, but read on. In verse 31, Jesus spoke to those people who believed in Him, *not to another group of people*, as some commentaries' state. This point is so important, I quote verse 31, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, [then] are ye my disciples indeed." In verse 33 the **same** group of people who believed in Jesus in verse 30 claim they were never lost, or in bondage to any man. In verse 37, Christ accused those same people of going about to kill Him because His words had no place in them. In verse 39, Christ says they are not doing the works of Abraham, whom they claim as their spiritual father. In verse 44, Jesus explains that Satan is their father. In verse 48, the "believers" claim Jesus has a devil! In verse 53, they don't understand the eternity-past of Jesus, and in verse 59, they take up stones to cast at Him in an attempt to stone Him to death. Does this sound like a true believer? Or does it sound like a person that has a superficial belief? The point is this: Were those people that believed on Him really saved? John 8:44 says, "Ye are of your father the devil..." They are the children of Satan, they are lost.

What does John 8:30, "...many believed on him," mean? It means the same thing many people mean when they believe on Jesus. They have a "head belief" that Jesus was a good man or a good prophet, or a good teacher or his lessons are good to live by. It's possible to have a "head belief" or "mental assent" that Jesus is the Son of God without believing in His power or authority to save. They say, "We have made our commitment to God and we're going to do our best." They forget the Bible says "our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," (Isaiah 64:6). God doesn't want fleshly works, He wants spiritual works, and the only spiritual work is to believe on Him whom the Father hath sent (John 6:28,29).

The "Steps" of Believing

John 20:30,31 states, "Any many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." Notice the steps that bring salvation as stated in these verses.

The first *step* is "these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God." This is a "head belief" that makes a person aware of God's goodness in sending Jesus Christ to provide a way of salvation.

The second *step* is "and that believing, ye might have life **through his name.**" Many people say, "I believe in Jesus, so I must be saved." Not necessarily. Salvation is believing that Jesus has the power to wash away **my** sins. Sins are something we can't see. We can't touch them, or feel them, we just know sin is in us. We are helpless to do anything about our sinfulness, but we have learned from the preaching of the gospel that Jesus can forgive and cleanse us of sin. When we step out by faith, believing in Him as our personal savior, He forgives us of our sins, and accepts us on His righteousness.

Rom. 10:13 says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Everybody who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved, but notice he calls on the **name of the Lord**. He is calling on one who has power, because he doesn't have any power. As long as a person thinks he has the power to deliver himself from his sinfulness, he won't call on God. A lost person must come to the place to know he has nothing at all to give to God. He must see he is completely blackened with sin, with no light at all, full of sinfulness, within and without, from top to bottom, from side to side, a total sinner, without any help or hope at all. Then, and only then will he say, "Lord, only you have the power to cleanse me."

Before a person will call on the name of the Lord, he must believe that He is able to give him victory over sin. Before he believes, he must hear, and before he hears, somebody must be sent (Romans 10:13-15). The messenger reveals his standing before God, how desperately wicked and sinful he is in the sight of God. Then he turns to the one who can save him, confessing that he cannot save himself. He confesses with Peter, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

CONCLUSION

The word "name" means authority, and "power" means that explosiveness of God's power. To be saved, a person must believe on the authority, or explosive power of God through Jesus Christ. It's a life changing salvation. Good people who have a "head belief" without a "heart belief" just float along, not really believing God has any power. They just don't ever really trust Him.

Chapter 2

IN THE NAME OF... BAPTISM

Matthew 28:19,
"...baptizing them in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Ghost:..."

After salvation a person must be Scripturally baptized in order to follow the commandments of Jesus. Before baptism a saved person can do a lot of things to serve God, such as reading the Bible, witnessing to the lost and enjoying salvation, but he can't really perform lasting, satisfying service until he is a member of the Body of Christ, which is His local church. It is **in** the church of the Lord Jesus Christ that the saved begin to build on the foundation of Jesus Christ (I Cor. 3:11).

The Definition of Scriptural Baptism

Scriptural baptism involves a proper purpose, a proper candidate, a proper administrator, and a proper method. If God is not present, none of these things is present.

In the last chapter we showed how salvation comes to us by the power or authority of God. He is the only one who has the authority, or ability to save. Again, I must say that we will be studying Scripture that declares specifically that baptism is *in the name of* Jesus Christ. There are many Scriptures that talk about baptism, and we will look at some of those passages, but our main concern will be with those Scriptures that speak of baptism *in the name of* Jesus Christ.

If only Jesus has the authority to save, does anybody except Jesus have the authority to baptize? A lot of people say, "Well, it is true that only Jesus can save, but anybody can baptize; it really doesn't make any difference. Anybody can take you down to the creek and put you under, call it baptism, and go on their way." Men might call it baptism, but what does Jesus call it? If Jesus doesn't accept my baptism, I will be the loser, regardless of what men may say. We will study Scriptural baptism in three ways:

1. The authority of John, the first to baptize.
2. The authority of Christ.
3. The authority of the local church.

PART 1

The authority of John, the first to baptize

John 1:6 says, "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." We must first understand that God sent John the Baptist as a special messenger to prepare the way for Jesus Christ. He did not come on his own, or decide to baptize on his own. God gave John the power to be born, as his parents were past the child bearing age, and the authority to preach and baptize.

Mark 1:1-4 states, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." The phrase, "it is written in the prophets" is referring to Isaiah 40:3, which states, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Malachi 4:5 states, "Behold, I send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD." In Matt. 11:14, Jesus says John the Baptist is Elias, or Elijah. Therefore, we can plainly see from the Scriptures teach that God sent John the Baptist (of which Elijah is the symbol) to prepare the way of the Lord.

In Mark 1:4, the Bible states that John baptized in the Jordan River. He was the first to baptize with the Baptism of Repentance. What is the Baptism of repentance? The best way to find out is to let the Bible answer the question.

The Baptism of Repentance

Mark 1:5 states, "And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, **confessing their sins.**" John only baptized those who confessed their sins. In Matt. 3:7, the Pharisees came to John's baptism, but he said, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance, and think not within yourselves, we have Abraham to our Father." Why didn't John baptize them? Were they dressed wrong? Was there something that John *saw* that displeased him? No, it wasn't what John saw, it was what he knew had not taken place inside them. John refused to baptize them because they didn't confess their sins; thus they weren't saved. Repentance is not just a turning over of a new leaf, but having a brand new mind.

The baptism of repentance is Scriptural baptism. Without repentance, there is no baptism at all. We can put people down in the water, but that doesn't mean baptism has taken place. There must be repentance before there is baptism. They must repent and believe, then we can Scripturally baptize them into the local church.

So far we have proved that John was sent from God. He was the promised child of Zacharius and Elizabeth, born in their old age, when they were past the age of bearing

children. He was from God and he was the first one to baptize. Now let's go a little further in considering the authority of John to baptize.

The Authority of John to Baptize

Jesus Approved of John's Baptism

We must first recognize that Jesus Christ knew that John had the authority to baptize. Matt. 3:13 records that Jesus traveled all the way from Galilee to Jordan to be baptized by John the Baptist. According to John 1:28, John was baptizing near Bethabara, which is located at least 22 miles south of the Sea of Galilee on the Jordan River. Jesus probably came from the city of Nazareth in Galilee, because Matt. 2:23 tells us this is where he lived. This means that Jesus traveled at least 30 miles to receive Scriptural baptism. There are many great men that teach that Jesus was baptized after traveling more than 60 miles. I do not deny that distance. I am just being conservative in my estimation. Jesus had to walk or ride some animal this distance, because there were no modern automobiles to ride in. If they traveled 30 miles at three miles per hour, it would take 10 hours to make the trip! If they traveled 60 miles at three miles per hour, it would take 20 hours to make this trip! Jesus must have considered it very important to travel this distance to receive Scriptural baptism. Some folks place so little importance on Scriptural baptism as to question why Jesus went to all this trouble. Why didn't Jesus get somebody at Galilee to "baptize" Him and save that long trip? There was nobody in Galilee that could baptize him. There were people that could immerse him, but that wouldn't be baptism, and Jesus knew it. John was a man sent from God, given the authority to preach and baptize the believers, and Jesus knew it. Jesus was starting His personal ministry, and He was going to be obedient to God in all His life, even to death on the cross.

God Approved of John's Baptism

We must also note that God approved of Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist. In Matt. 3:16,17 we read, "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." I believe I speak for all saved people when I say our chief goal in life is to be like Jesus, to please our heavenly Father. The only way saved people can please God is to obey Him. After we have received salvation from God, the next thing we ought to do is follow our Lord in Scriptural baptism, recognizing His power and authority over us. As you continue reading, you'll discover how you can please God in your baptism.

The Pharisees Were Confused about John's Baptism

Luke 20:1-8 says, "And it came to pass, that on one of those days, as he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes came upon him with the elders, and spake unto him, saying, Tell us, by what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority? And he answered and said unto

them, I will also ask you one thing; and answer me: The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say, Why then believed ye him not? But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us: for they be persuaded that John was a prophet. And they answered, that they could not tell whence it was. And Jesus said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."

John's baptism confused theologians in other days, and still has many scratching their heads. Why wouldn't Jesus answer their question? Some think the chief priest, scribes and elders would have believed if Jesus had told them that God gave Him His authority. I really doubt that to be the case, but the point is: they didn't have the baptism of John because they didn't have any fruits of repentance. They were lost. They wouldn't believe Jesus regardless of what He said. Luke 7:29,30 says, "And all the people that heard him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him." Remember, John baptized with the baptism of repentance. The Pharisees had not been saved, so John refused to baptize them. They didn't recognize the authority of John, nor did they recognize the authority of Jesus. John was the one who prepared the way, and Luke 20:1-8 reveals that John got his power from heaven, not from men. Now let's go a little further.

PART 2

The authority of Jesus Christ to baptize

Jesus never physically baptized anyone. John 4:1,2 says, "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples.)"

Now we are getting into what constitutes Scriptural baptism. Notice, the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was baptizing more disciples than John, although he wasn't baptizing at all. The disciples of Christ were *physically* baptizing the believers. The significance of this Scripture is the principle of authority. It works like this:

- (1) God didn't physically baptize, but allowed John the Baptist to baptize on His behalf.
- (2) Jesus didn't physically baptize, but allowed His local church (his called out apostles) to baptize for Him.
- (3) When Jesus ascended up to heaven, he was not on the earth to physically baptize, therefore, the local church, which is his body (I Cor. 12:27), continued baptizing for Him.
- (4) When a person comes before a local church, confessing his salvation and expressing his desire to be Scripturally baptized, the local church allows the pastor to act on her behalf to baptize the person. The pastor physically baptizes the person, but it is the church that authorizes him to do so. The local church is the body of Christ and Christ is the head (Eph. 1:22,23).

Therefore, Christ is really doing the baptizing, just like in John 4:1,2. Jesus didn't

physically baptize then, and He doesn't physically baptize now. In that day, the disciples (the local church) baptized, and in this day, His local church continues to baptize. Jesus has declared that the local church is His physical body on earth (Eph. 1:22,23). When the local church baptizes, it is the same thing as Jesus baptizing. That's why baptism is so important and when people are "baptized" by someone without the authority of that local body, they are not baptized at all. Each local church body is a body of Christ on this earth, so when that local church baptizes, it is Scriptural baptism.

This is a good place to point out that Jesus Christ organized His kind of church during his personal ministry, not on the Day of Pentecost. Jesus said in Matt. 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." I suppose all Baptists know that Jesus builds His church upon Himself, not upon man or man's ideas. A very short summary of the beginning of the church that Jesus built reveals:

- (1.)Matt. 4:18-22 - Jesus began to call together his church from the material supplied by John the Baptist.
- (2.)Matt. 16:18 - Jesus declared to Peter that he is a "little stone" as described in John 1:42, while Jesus is the "large stone," the cliff, the rocky ground, the stone which the builders disallowed, 1 Peter 2:7.
- (3.)Luke 6:12-19 - Jesus called together a group of disciples from which He chose 12 apostles. Verse 17 states that Jesus came down from the mountain in the presence of three distinct groups of people. The first group was the 12 apostles, the second group was the company of his disciples, and the third group was a great multitude of people who came to hear him and be healed.
- (4.)1 Cor. 12:28 - The Bible tells us that God has set some in the church, **first apostles**, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. There had to be a church already organized in order for Jesus to set the apostles in that church.
- (5.)Acts 1:15 - This passage gives the membership of the first Baptist Church at Jerusalem (before Pentecost) at 120 names.
- (6.)Acts 2:41 - On the Day of Pentecost, 3,000 people were saved and **added** to them. The 3,000 souls could not be added to something that wasn't already there. The same thing could be said of Acts 2:47 where Christ added to the church daily those that should be saved.

Almost all Baptists believe these verses teach that Jesus Himself organized His church during His personal ministry. There are some folks who believe the church was organized on the Day of Pentecost, but there are no Scriptures that even remotely leave that impression.

PART 3

The authority of the local church

Matt. 28:18-20 says, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing

them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Jesus spoke these words to His church, not to the apostles or the disciples who were present. If Jesus had spoken to the apostles or to the disciples who were present, then this commission died when those people died. Jesus told His church He would be with them until the end of the world or the consummation of the age.

Jesus said "all power" is given unto me in heaven and in earth." This means that Christ has the right, privilege, and authority to do whatsoever He desires. There are three steps to the great commission,

- (1) Go and teach.
- (2) Baptize the believers.
- (3) And teach the believers to observe all things in the Word of God.

After Jesus gave the commission to the local church, He ascended into heaven (Acts 1). He has left His bride, the local church, to go into all the world because He has the power. All power is given to Him, not to churches. The Lord's church doesn't have any power outside of the power of Christ. The church of Christ, armed with the power of Christ, has all the power She needs to fulfill the great commission.

The Speech At The Time Of Baptism

Note the phrase in Matt. 28:19, "...baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Some believe this means three baptisms. They baptize once in the name of the Father, once in the name of the Son, and once in the name of the Holy Spirit. We know this is wrong because the Bible says in Eph. 4:5, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." He is revealed to us in the three different parts of the trinity, but He is only one God. Notice also that baptism shows the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. If we baptize three times, then we symbolize that Jesus died three times, was buried three times, and was raised three times. Jesus only died once, was buried once and rose once; and that is plenty for our salvation.

There is no authority in saying the words "I baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." If I stand and say those words, that doesn't necessarily mean there is Scriptural baptism. Hang on to your hat and listen! There are some qualifications for Scriptural baptism.

- (1.) It could be that the person being baptized is lost. Just because I say the right thing doesn't mean the person is baptized at all, because he is lost.
- (2.) It could be that I don't have the authority to baptize. Suppose somebody knocked on my door one day and said, "Brother Reynolds, I'll pay you \$40.00 to baptize me." I take him down to the local pond and say "I baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" and put him under the water. Is he really baptized? No. I say "by the authority of God" and put him under the water and bring him up, does that mean he is baptized? No. Why? Because the local church is the

representative of Christ's body on the earth. He is the head and the local church is His body. If the body of Christ doesn't know anything about a person being baptized, then God doesn't know anything about it, as far as authority is concerned. That's why it's important to go through His local church for Scriptural baptism and service.

What I am going to say next may sound really far out to some, but please don't tune me out. Read all I have written before you call me a heretic.

It is not necessarily Scriptural to say "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." It is just as Scriptural to say "I baptize you in the name of Jesus," or "I baptize you in the name of the Lord Jesus." Some will say, "That can't be right. All the preachers I know say, 'I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.'"

Personally, I *always* say "I baptize you in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," because that's what it says in the Book of Matthew; and I think it clarifies the issue of authority better than to say "I baptize you in the name of Jesus." Some people might think God the Father and God the Holy Spirit is left out of my baptizing if I don't include them by saying so.

I've never found a time in the Bible where the one administering baptism said, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." In fact, each time someone is baptized in the book of Acts he is said to have been baptized in the name of Jesus.

- (1.) Acts 2:38 - "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you **in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."
- (2.) Acts 8:16 - "(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized **in the name of the Lord Jesus.**)"
- (3.) Acts 10:48 - "And he commanded them to be baptized **in the name of the Lord.** Then prayed they him to tarry certain days."
- (4.) Acts 19:5 - "When they heard this, they were baptized **in the name of the Lord Jesus.**"

This gets us into a very crucial area of understanding about the authority of Scriptural baptism. You see, it's not really so meaningful that the one doing the baptizing say, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," but it is very crucial that God be there, and that His authority is revealed by what we say. This is what really counts. The speech that is made before baptism might not be what we think it ought to be, but if God is there it is Scriptural baptism.

Baptism in the Book of Acts

Salvation when Baptism is not Mentioned

Before we look at baptism in the book of Acts, it is very interesting to study the times when baptism is **not** mentioned. For example, Joseph of Arimathaea (John 19:38) was a secret disciple for fear of the Jews. Fear can sometimes play a big role in a person not making a public confession of Christ as his personal Saviour. I know, and you know, that saved people aren't supposed to have fear, but sometimes saved people do have fear. I John 4:18 says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

Acts 4:4 records that 5,000 were saved, but the Bible didn't say a word about them being baptized. There is no doubt in my mind they were afraid. After all, Peter and John had just healed the impotent man, then preached the gospel to the people in the temple. The Sadducees didn't like God continuing to manifest Himself through these disciples, so they laid hands on Peter and John, casting them into prison. Those people who believed would also be cast into prison if they made a public show of their faith, therefore, they kept quiet.

Acts 5:11-14 records that "believers were added to the Lord," but the Scripture didn't say they were baptized. The context of this passage reveals that Ananias was caught lying to the Holy Ghost about the price of some land he had sold. When he fell down dead at Peter's feet, "...great fear came on all them that heard these things." Sapphira came to Peter some three hours later, and confessed they had sold the land for so much. She also fell dead at Peter's feet. It was very clear that God would quickly judge those public believers who weren't honest in their everyday dealings. He would not let wickedness continue in His church. Verse 11 states, "...great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things." Verse 13 declares, "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them." These passages show that fear sometimes causes people to not follow through in perfect service to God. There were people who believed in Christ as their personal Saviour, but were afraid to make a public profession of faith in Christ by baptism.

Baptism in the Book of Acts

In the book of Acts, there are five major times when people are baptized.

1. Acts 2 - 3,000 baptized
2. Acts 8 - Philip baptizing at Samaria.
3. Acts 9 - Ananias baptizing Paul.
4. Acts 10,11 - Peter baptizing Cornelius and his household.
5. Paul baptizing.
 - a. Acts 16 - Paul baptizing Lydia and the jailer.
 - b. Acts 18 - Paul baptizing at Corinth.
 - c. Acts 19 - Paul baptizing at Ephesus.

1. Acts 2

Acts 2:38 says, "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."

Notice the two qualifications:

- (1.) In the name of Jesus Christ, referring to the authority of Jesus Christ. Peter did not mean that they must make sure they say "I baptize you in the name of Jesus Christ," he meant to make sure God is there, to make sure God is in it. II Peter 2:10 says, "Make your calling and election sure and ye shall never fail."
- (2.) "For the remission of sins" does not mean "in order to receive remission of sins," but "because your sins are already remitted." Peter and John the Baptist preached the same gospel, the Baptism of Repentance for the remission of sins. This is the same message that ought to be preached today.

2. Acts 8:12

Acts 8:12 states, "And when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." There were two things necessary before the people at Samaria were baptized. First, they believed the preaching of Philip concerning the kingdom of God. Second, they believed the preaching of Philip concerning the name of Jesus Christ. These people did more than just believe the facts about the kingdom and Jesus Christ, they believed in the power of Christ to bring in His kingdom and deliver them into that kingdom. Notice that baptism comes only after believing on the name of the **Lord Jesus**.

3. Acts 9

Ananias was sent from God out of the church of Damascus for the particular purpose of baptizing Paul. Paul had a special commission from God to be a missionary to the Gentiles, but in order for Paul to fulfill this calling, he must have proper authority. That is why God directed Ananias, who was a member of the church at Damascus to baptize Paul with the God-given authority of that church. Acts 9:11 says, "And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth," In verse 17, Ananias called Saul, "brother Saul," so he must have already been saved. In verse 18, Ananias baptized Saul with his God-given authority into the membership of the church at Damascus.

It should be noted that God works and directs us to work according to His revealed will, which in this age is to work through His local churches. We have already shown in John 4:1-2 that Jesus baptized through the apostles, His local church. Paul's baptism is no exception, for God instructed Ananias, under the authority of the local church at Damascus, to baptize Paul.

It is very evident that when Paul tried to join the church at Jerusalem, they refused to let him join because of his past life. Barnabas then brought Paul before the church at Jerusalem, declaring that he had at Damascus preached the Word of God with boldness. They then accepted him into their membership, and he went in and out with them. Acts

9:23-28.

4. Acts 10

Peter baptized Cornelius and his household. Acts 10:48 says, "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days." Peter baptized these Italians by the power, or authority of God, because God sent Peter to preach the gospel and baptize the believers. The Bible does not say the words, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." It is evident that Peter was obeying the commission given by Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20, and that God approved this baptism.

Note: The Lord told Cornelius to go to a certain city, for a certain man; he had a certain surname; he was living in a certain house, ask for that particular man. God always works in a particular fashion. God has a certain people to do a certain job to a certain people.

5. Pauls' Baptism

- I have divided Paul's baptizing into three sections:
- (1) Acts 16, Paul baptizing Lydia.
 - (2) Acts 18, Paul baptizing the Corinthians.
 - (3) Acts 19, Paul baptizing at Ephesus.

Before we begin this study, notice the difference between the baptizing by Paul and Peter. Any time Peter baptized he said, "I baptize in the name of..." and it is very clear that God was there, but when Paul baptized, he *never* used the phrase "in the name of."

- (1) Acts 16:14 does not say that Paul baptized Lydia in the name of the Lord.
- (2) Acts 16:30 does not say Paul baptized the Philippian jailer in the name of the Lord, just that Paul baptized them.
- (3) Acts 18:8, Paul baptized the believers at Corinth without the words "I baptize in the name of" being used.

Why does the Bible not record that Paul baptized in the name of Jesus? With every other person it always specifies that they baptized in the name of Jesus.

This problem is readily clarified by Paul in I Corinthians 1:13-15, "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name."

Paul makes it very clear that he doesn't just go out and baptize people without the proper authority. The Corinthian church had a four-way split in their church. Some of them were following Paul, some were following Apollos, some were following Christ, and some were following Peter. Paul tells the Corinthians that they have misunderstood

the entire purpose of religion. It is not to follow some man or group of men, but to solely depend on the authority and power (name) of Christ.

Paul declared specifically that he didn't baptize anybody in his own name, clearly implying that he baptized in the name (authority) of Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 1:17, Paul declared, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect." Paul says that Christ has entrusted him with preaching the gospel, (Acts 13:2, Acts 26:16) but has entrusted Scriptural baptism to his body, the local church.

Acts 19 - Paul baptized these twelve men of Ephesus when they were saved. They had been baptized with John's baptism, but they had never even heard of the Holy Ghost. Paul told them that John baptized with the Baptism of Repentance, saying they should believe on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

This Scripture especially points out the fact that there are qualifications to Scriptural baptism. These men were baptized (immersed) with John's baptism (the way John baptized) and when they were immersed, the person probably said, "I baptize you in the name of Jesus." Yet because they were lost, they were not baptized at all.

Chapter 3

IN THE NAME OF... ASKING AND RECEIVING

1. John 14:13,14,
"And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name,
that will I do that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
If ye shall ask any thing in my name,
I will do it."

2. John 15:16,
"Ye have not chosen me,
but I have chosen you,
and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit,
and that your fruit should remain:
that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name,
he may give it you."

3. John 16:23,26,
"And in that day ye shall ask me nothing,
Verily, verily, I say unto you,
Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name,
he will give it you."

4. Eph. 5:20,
"Giving thanks always for all things
unto God and the Father
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The "Health and Wealth" Gospel

The "health and wealth" gospel is a perversion of Scriptural asking and receiving. There are "religious" people who teach that asking in the name of Jesus is nothing more than asking for physical health and material wealth. Some of these people declare that they were in need of \$1,000.00, and they only had \$100.00. They felt God lead them to give their last bit of money to Him, then very soon afterwards, they came into the exact amount of money they needed. Their theory is the exact opposite of Scriptural tithing. Tithing is when we give God, through His local church, 10% of our earnings. The "health and wealth" gospel teaches that God will give us 1000% of what we give to Him. This theory is not taught in Scripture, but is the perverted thinking of those deceivers who can think only in physical or material terms. Spiritual matters are beyond their understanding.

What does it mean to ask in the name of Christ?

Asking in the name of Christ is asking in the authority or power of God. It is when a person realizes he doesn't have any power or authority to help himself, confess that Jesus Christ does have the power, and ask Him to deliver him. It is useless to pray to God to do something when we fully intend to handle things ourselves, without relying on God to direct us.

Consider the lesson in chapter one on the authority of Christ to save sinners. Only Christ can save a sinner, and He will save a sinner only when that sinner comes to him while he is still in his sinfulness, confessing that he is absolutely helpless to save himself and totally, completely dependent upon Christ to save him. It is at this point that the sinner is saved. If the sinner comes to Christ, trusting Christ 99% and himself 1%, he will not be saved, because he thinks he has some goodness to bring to Christ and is not fully trusting Him.

Next, consider the lesson in chapter two on the authority of Christ to baptize. Baptism is a life-changing experience for it is an outward submitting to the authority of Christ. It is a declaration to the world that the saved person is dead to the old life, and will, from this day forward, live like Christ would have him live. Those people who do not change their lives after baptism had no change before baptism. Baptism was not baptism to them, but a "ducking" under. Baptism is an experience of the authority of God in their lives.

The title of this chapter is "Asking in the authority of Jesus." With the background of the first two chapters, we can see that praying in the name of Jesus is a lot more than simply closing our prayer by saying "in the name of Jesus." It's always good to close our prayer with the words, "I ask these things in the name of Jesus," but saying these words doesn't necessarily mean anything. If you know that asking in the name of Jesus is the same as asking in the power of Jesus, then other people that hear you pray will understand that you are totally depending on Christ to grant your requests. The only way we can really ask in the authority of Jesus is when we have run out of all our strength. That's when we really get down to business. Many of our prayers never get "above the ceiling" because we are still clinging to our own strength, not realizing we don't have any strength.

We must come to Jesus just as the lost sinner comes to Jesus for salvation, without any strength. Exactly the same principle applies to praying in the name of Jesus. For example we can say, "We have the strength to do so and so." We can then pray in our own strength and God will leave us alone, letting us flounder in our own weakness. On the other hand, when we see our helplessness, and come to the Lord in **His** strength, He will answer our prayers. When we understand that the answer to our prayers is not in our strength, but in God's strength, He will hear and answer. God will not hear or answer a prayer that is full of pride. God will not answer our prayers when we are filled with our

own wicked ways. If a husband and wife have a very serious disagreement, their prayers are hindered before God (I Peter 3:7).

The Blessings of Having No Strength

Asking in the authority of Jesus is coming to the end of our own strength, knowing that we can do nothing. One of the most pleasurable experiences in this life is getting to the place that we can't go ahead; we cannot go back; we cannot go to the right or left; we cannot go up or down. It may not seem pleasurable, but when we get to a place like that in our life, God is there. When we fall on our knees in our heart, God is there. We may be standing up, but the knees of our heart are bent. We call on the Lord, praying, "I've reached the end. I am in an impossible situation. I cannot get out of it. I cannot find the way. There is no door opened. Lord, you and only you can fix me right now." That is when the Lord opens a door we didn't even know was there.

In Genesis 21, Hagar was cast out of the house of Abraham and Sarah. Abraham provided her some food and water, and when it was gone, Hagar hid her son under a bush because she didn't want to see him die. She went off a little way and lay down. It seemed there was no help for her and her son. Genesis 21:16,17 states that God heard the voice of the lad and spoke unto Hagar, opening her eyes so she could see a well of water. That's just the way it is with us. It is not until we reach an impassable part of our life that we realize the power of God. The problem is: we don't like those situations. Human nature works in us as much as it works in anybody else, and we don't like to be in a situation that we can't control. We're all that way; everyone of us. We'd like to know what is going to happen tomorrow. We want everything arranged in sequence, being able to control the circumstances of our lives so that things happen just like we want them to. But things don't happen like that. Not in this life.

II Cor. 12:7-10 says, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." I think Paul would say, "That's the only time I'm strong." Paul learned that the troubles and afflictions of this present world are a great and glorious thing. We ought to take the affliction of this world just like God said we ought to take them. We all have a lot of trouble with that, but it's when we began to walk by faith that we really get in touch with God and find God has the solution to all our problems. Paul's strength came not from within, but from God who gave him inner-strength. When he didn't have anything to trust in; when he got to the place that everything was falling apart; he knew that God was still there. That is the reason, sometimes, that we have so many problems. We have never learned what God wants us to learn. God has a plan, he wants us to learn to trust Him. He wants us to learn that He is able to supply anything at all that we ask for. Remember, the only time we are really asking in the name of Jesus is when we know we don't have the strength, and are looking to Jesus to supply those things we cannot supply ourselves.

Asking by Faith

Walking by faith and asking in the authority of Jesus goes hand-in-hand. Anytime we walk by sight, we can ask in the name of Jesus, but our prayers aren't answered. Anytime we walk by faith, we can ask and it will be given to us.

How does that work? Like this: When we are living by sight, we think we can control our destiny. We think we can control at least some of the aspects of our life. We think, "I can cause this to happen, and that not to happen, I can arrange this and rearrange that, I can handle these things." So we don't need to ask the Lord for anything. We're doing it all. We don't need Him, for we have control of our life. But when we begin to walk by faith, we cannot see where we are going. We cannot see the next step. It's like walking in our house at night with the lights off. When we begin to walk by faith, we don't know where everything is, but our memory, working with the Word of God, will show us where the hazards are. We avoid hazards because we are doing what God said. We cautiously put one foot in front of another, because we don't want to stub our toe on the drawer that somebody didn't close or because we thought the chair was right over there when it's actually right here. We walk cautiously when we walk by faith. But we know we can pray to God and he'll hear and answer our prayers.

The following article by the late J. E. Abbott reveals what it means to walk by faith.

One night as I lay sleeping I had this wonderful dream. I thought I was walking along a path through the woods when I came out to an open place. I thought it was a wide sandy beach running down to a long body of water. I walked down to the water and saw it was real dark and muddy. I looked across this water and saw a city on a small hill on the other side. I thought the houses were a chalk white and just glistened in the sun, as I looked. I said, "Now, that is home, that is where I want to go, but how can I ever get over there?" I looked as far as I could see to the right and then looked as far as I could to the left and all I could see was that muddy, muddy water with no way around it. As I was looking I heard a loud voice from the elements above me saying, "THIS IS THE AWFUL QUAGMIRE OF SIN."

As I was looking I saw others come down to the water and look across, then go back into the woods and drag logs and chunks down to the water, get on them, and start to go across. Some would get just a little way, others would get quite a little way farther out into the water when the log or chunk that they were on would turn, and they would slide off into the water and with a loud wail or scream, they would go down. The last thing I would see was their hands as they went under.

I was standing there wondering how I would get across, for there seemed no way to get around and all these people seemed to fail to make it across by their own works or efforts, for not one of them had got across.

As I stood there wondering what to do, I heard that same voice say,

"JUST TRUST ME AND I WILL CARRY YOU SAFELY OVER."

Without doubting or wondering when I heard the voice, I walked to the edge of the water, then lifted my foot and stepped out over the water. Just as my foot was ready to touch the water, a small mound of earth just large enough to hold my foot rose out of the water. I took another step and again another mound of earth just large enough to hold my foot rose out of the water, and I continued on that way till I had got across to the other side. When I had got across I looked down and there was not one bit of mud on my shoes. Soon I was up the little hill and in the city and, then I woke up. I lay there the rest of that night thinking about that dream. When I got up, I told my wife about the dream and told her I believed it had some kind of meaning to it.

After breakfast, I went to the field to work (for I was farming at that time). While I was working about the middle of the morning, some things begin to come to my mind, and here they are. In Hebrews chapter eleven, from verse ten to sixteen, it tells us Abraham was a pilgrim and a stranger here in this world, and he was looking for a City God had prepared for His own.

Then I thought of the song by Arthur Ingler about the Pearly White City John saw coming down. Then I thought we are all Pilgrims and strangers in this world and we are looking for that City God has prepared for His own.

Then I thought we must all go through this world of sin before we can reach that heavenly Home, and we can never make it by our own works and efforts, we will fail every time, and go down to doom and despair. But if we trust Him He will carry us safely through to our heavenly Home.

Yes, just trust Him, not a year at a time, or a month at a time, or a day at a time, but just a step at a time. When God tells us to step and it is ours to step, it is God's to furnish the firm foundation for our foot to rest upon.

Yes, if we trust Him one step at a time, He will carry us safely through this old sinful world to our heavenly Home.

I used to be a person who would get blue and discouraged very easy. But ever since I had that dream, if things get dark and discouraging it seems like I can hear that voice again saying, "JUST TRUST ME, AND I WILL CARRY YOU SAFELY OVER."

And praise His Name, He will, for I have tried Him and found it to be true.

**Help!!
I've Asked In The Name of Jesus
and
Still My Prayers Aren't Answered.**

There are those people who pray "in the name of Jesus" and nothing ever happens. So they conclude something is wrong with God. It's not that something is wrong with God. It is that those people are not asking the way God wants them to ask. I know a junior high school teacher who wants his students to call him "Mr. Gaskin." When the students called him, "Hey you," or "teach," or "Larry," he ignores them. Mr. Gaskin wasn't being mean, he was teaching his students to have respect for those in authority. God wants us to show respect for Him, and He doesn't answer our prayers when we ask in the wrong way.

Matt. 7:21 says, "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." This passage will further confirm that simply saying "in the name of" means nothing. There are a lot of people who will die and go to hell, even though they have said the "right words." Verse 22,23 reads, "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? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

These verses also fit into chapter five entitled "Satan's Power," but we are going to use the passage to show that just because we use the phrase "in the name of," does not mean that God hears our prayers, or that we are even doing the will of God. The people in this passage are saying they have preached, cast out devils and done many wonderful works in the Name of Jesus, but He said, "I never knew you." You see, the phrase is not what counts, it's the condition of the heart that makes the difference. When you are burdened about the work that must be done, God will hear your prayer. When you look on the fields that are white unto harvest, whether you are looking at the local community, or the whole world, and pray with a prayer that is totally committed to God's will, God will hear that prayer. Will God reach those people? I don't know what God will do. What God does with our prayers is His business, not ours. Our business is to be where God wants us to be, doing what He wants us to be doing, and letting Him take care of everything else. I do know this: if we're burdened about the condition of those around us, and we assemble together and talk about those things, God hears and writes it down in a book of remembrance and one of these days He will call it back (Mal. 3:16-18). God hears; God sees; and God knows when we pray earnestly. He also knows when we are just playing around.

In Nehemiah 1:1-3, Nehemiah asked about the condition of Jerusalem and how everything was going. He was told and his heart was broken. The Bible says he prayed certain days and was sad. It distressed him to the extent that he couldn't think about anything else. He was a high official in Babylon, but seemingly couldn't do anything to restore Jerusalem. As Nehemiah went about his daily tasks he devised a plan to help Jerusalem, if he only had the authority. One day he went in before the king and the king asked him why he was sad. Today, it is not a very serious offence to employers if their employees are sad, but in that day, it was a very serious offence. The king had the right to kill Nehemiah because of his sadness. Nehemiah said "Why should I not be sad when the gates of my city lay in destruction?" The king said, "What do you need?" Nehemiah

prayed and said, "Here is what I need." The king gave Nehemiah the authority to go to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls and Nehemiah went. God heard Nehemiah's prayer and granted him grace to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the wall, all because of a broken heart.

Ten Reasons Our Prayers Are Not Answered

James 4:1-11

1. James 4:1,2 says, "From whence come wars and fightings among you? come thy not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not."

There are a lot of reasons we don't have what we desire and one of those reasons is because we don't ask. Matt. 7:7,8 declares, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." Don't be surprised if you don't receive when you ask the first time.

The great prophet, Elijah, didn't receive when he asked the first time. A careful reading of James 5:17,18 and I Kings 18:44, indicates that Elijah prayed more than once to stop the rain, and more than once to bring the rain again. In II Kings 4:32-35, Elisha stretched himself on the dead child at least two times.

The widow woman in Luke 18: 1-8 cried unto the king until she was avenged. Jesus declares to us, "Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"

Don't be discouraged when it seems God isn't listening. Keep on praying, seeking, and knocking. God *will* answer your prayers.

2. James 4:3 states, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

Sometimes we don't receive what we asked for because we haven't asked that God be glorified, but that **we** be satisfied. We might say, "I've asked in the name of Jesus, but He just hasn't given like He said he would." Remember, God always does it right; we have done it wrong. If we haven't asked for the glory of God, He won't supply.

For example, all of us have had times of financial trouble. During those times, it is easy to pray that God supply our needs. But how many of us pray that our needs be supplied for God's glory? If we are praying that our needs be supplied simply so we will have the necessities of life, we are praying in vain.

3. James 4:4 says, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the

world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

God won't answer our prayers, even if we pray in his name, if we are going to mix with the world and be like the world. That's why John 15:7 says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." We must abide in Christ.

4. James 4:5 tells us, "Do ye think that the Scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?"

The Spirit that dwells in us is the Holy Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit will not intercede "...for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26) if we do not intend to use those things for the glory and honor of God. It is inconceivable that a husband would give his wife money so she could spend a night "out on the town" with another man. It is just as inconceivable that God will allow us to have things we intend to use to gratify the lusts of the flesh.

5. James 4:6 states, "but he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

God will not answer our prayers when we are full of pride. One of the most difficult things to see is pride when it is in us. It is not difficult to see pride in someone else, the problem is for me to see my pride. We must pray that God will reveal our foolish pride to us, and we shouldn't be proud of our humility.

6. James 4:7 declares, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

God doesn't hear and answer our prayers if we are serving Satan and not Him. The way to have our prayers answered is to submit ourselves to God, then resist the devil. It is impossible to resist the devil without first submitting ourselves to God.

7. James 4:8 says, "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded."

A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways, like water seeking the easiest route. Sometimes God doesn't want us to take the easiest route, but he always wants us to go His way. And when we go that harder way, God will always supply the things we need, and many of the things we want.

8. James 4:9 states, "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness."

The Bible says, "He that goeth forth weeping, bearing precious seed shall doubtless come again, rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Ps. 126:6). This Scripture means the one that isn't afflicted, and doesn't mourn and weep over lost souls

won't get any sheaves. It takes a burdened heart to get through to the Lord. Not a burden that we have made, but a burden because we see the work of God that He wants us to do.

9. James 4:10 says to, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." Let God lift us up.

10. James 4:11 says, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge." Sometimes God doesn't hear our prayers because of wickedness.

If we've not asked with a broken, humbled heart, we've not asked right at all, we've just asked. Asking aright is a very individual thing. We know that when we really pray to the Lord, He will hear and answer our prayers.

Requirements for Asking

There are actually five requirements for receiving an answer to our prayers. These are:

Requirement # 1: Believing.

Matt. 21:22 - "And all things whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

Requirement # 2: Asking in the Name of Jesus.

1. John 14:13,14 - "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it."
2. John 15:16 - "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, He may give it you."
3. John 16:23,24 - Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

Requirement # 3: Abide in Christ.

John 15:7 - "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Requirement # 4: Ask together.

1. Matt. 18:19 - "Again I say unto you, that if any two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."
2. James 4:2 - "Ye have not because ye ask not."
3. I John 3:22 - "Whatsoever we ask we receive of Him."

Requirement # 5: Ask according to His will.

I John 5:14,15 - "According to His will, he heareth us; and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him."

Conclusion

If your heart is broken because of the sinful conditions around you, then pray to the God of the universe. God will hear, and heal. If God can restore Israel as a nation, He can surely do anything else. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. Everything belongs to Him, and He is well able to do anything.

Chapter 4

IN THE NAME OF... MIRACLES

Acts 3:16,
"And his name through faith
in his name
hath made this man strong..."

Matthew 12:38-40 says, "Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

The time for doing miracles has now ended. The only true miracle we see today is the miracle of salvation, the marvelous transformation of a lost sinner into a saved sinner. We cannot deny there are a lot of swindlers in the world who claim to do miracles, but don't worry about them, just follow the Word of God and do what He said. We know that in the last days, Satan will begin to do greater and greater miracles, even as he has already begun to do. Chapter five will deal with the increase of Satanic miracles in the last days, but for now; we will restrict our study to the following four sections.

Section # 1: The Old Testament prophets performed miracles by the power and under the direction of God.

Section # 2: Jesus performed miracles by the power and under the direction of God, His Father.

Section # 3: Jesus sent his disciples to perform miracles by His power and under His direction.

Section # 4: Jesus doesn't send anybody to perform miracles today.

**Section # 1:
The Old Testament prophets
performed miracles by the power
and under the direction of God.**

The Charismatic Movement has swept the world with its own private interpretations of Scripture concerning healing, miracles, and speaking in tongues. They believe their dreams, visions, words of prophecy, and words of wisdom are more important than Scripture.

According to the leaders of the charismatic movement, if you aren't speaking in tongues, or involved in some sort of miracle, you just aren't being blessed of God. To hear them talk, you would think the Bible was full of people who did signs and wonders. But the truth is: there are only about 93 people in the entire Bible who performed miracles, 9 in the Old Testament and 85 in the New Testament.

Old Testament Miracles

It is significant that the first recorded miracle was by Moses and Aaron when the world was about 2450 years old (Exodus 4:3). Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and all the people before Moses had seen no miracle; faith was enough for them. Yet there came a generation who could not live by faith; they must live by sight. Therefore, God allowed Moses to do miracles. Matt. 12:39 says, "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign..." It was true then, and is still true today.

It shouldn't have been necessary for Moses to perform miracles in order to prove that he was sent by God. The Israelites had been praying for relief from the oppression of the Egyptians (Ex. 2:23-25), but like us, they were surprised to learn that God actually heard their prayer and sent an answer.

When Moses went before Israel and did the miracles God sent him to do, they rejoiced with great rejoicing (Ex. 4:29-31). But they were quickly discouraged and prayed that God would judge Moses when Pharaoh didn't pay any attention to the miracles, doubling their work load instead (Ex. 5:20-23). This teaches us that miracles do not make strong Christians. Israel, like us, should not require miracles to believe God's Word. We ought to believe by faith without any sign at all. Those people who need a constant stream of sensational events to keep interested in God's Word and work are simply fooling themselves with their "faithfulness."

A list of the Old Testament miracle workers and a partial list of their miracles is given below.

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|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Moses and Aaron | Exodus 4:1-9 |
| | Miracles performed before Pharaoh |
| 2. Joshua | Joshua 10:12 |
| | The sun and moon stood still |
| 3. Samson | Judges 14-16 |
| | Samson's great strength |
| 4. Samuel | I Sam. 12:18 |
| | Hail and rain |
| 5. Prophet of Judah | I Kings 13:4-6 |

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|-----------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| | Jeroboam's hand withered | |
| 6. Elijah | | I Kings 17 |
| | The drought in Israel | |
| 7. Elisha | | II Kings 2-6 |
| | Many miracles | |
| 8. Isaiah | | II Kings 20 |
| | The sun returned 10 degrees | |

A careful reading of the above Scriptures will reveal that these miracles were performed by the power of God, not by any other power. The phrase "in the name of" will not be found in these miracles, but it cannot be denied that God's power was at work.

Section # 2:
Jesus performed miracles
by the power and
under the direction of God, His Father.

Christ was the first in the New Testament to do miracles. The reason Christ did miracles was to prove in a tangible, physical way that He was the Christ. It is noteworthy that the religious leaders didn't believe Him even when they saw the miracles (John 10:22-30). It would be impossible to list all the miracles He did, for many have not been revealed to us. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30,31).

John 10:24,25 says, "Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me." Even though the Jews were plainly told who Jesus was, they couldn't really believe it. Jesus said the works he did in the Father's name declare who He is. The word "name" means that Jesus has done miracles by the power given to Him by His Father. Jesus always worked by the power of His Father, never by His own power.

Remember the line of reasoning throughout this entire book. The God of heaven, who *was* in heaven, and who *is* in heaven, has all power and He gives that power to whomsoever He will. If God didn't give power, there wouldn't be any power. First, God gave the Old Testament prophets power to perform miracles. Second, Jesus received power from His father to do all His miracles. Third, Jesus now has all power, and He gives this power to us as we seek His will for our lives. We cannot perform miracles, but we have power to do greater works than miracles (John 14:12).

Section # 3:
Jesus sent his disciples
to perform miracles by His power and
under His direction.

Mark 16:17-18 states "And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." Jesus performed miracles to prove He was the Son of God, and he also sent out many disciples to perform miracles.

In John 10:25, Jesus said he did miracles because of the power of his father. In Mark 16:17-18, Jesus was "transferring" the power to those disciples that followed Him, that they might be able to do the same things He did. And in John 14:12, Jesus declared, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to my Father."

Now let's see if the disciples really did those things Jesus said they would do.

In this section, I shall discuss every miracle in the New Testament performed in the name of the Lord. The people other than Christ who performed miracles in the New Testament are:

- (1) The seventy Jesus sent out.
- (2) The disciples and apostles.
- (3) Peter.
- (4) Paul.
- (5) Stephen and Philip.

(1) The Seventy Jesus Sent Out

The first group is found in Luke 10:1-16. While Jesus was still alive, He gave seventy disciples the power to do some of the things He talked about in Mark 16. They went into the cities they were instructed and healed the sick and cast out devils, and did many wonderful works. In Luke 10:17, the seventy returned. I don't know how much time had gone by, maybe six months, maybe a year, maybe not that long. I do know that all the miracles were done "through the name" of Christ (Luke 10:17). It was not because the seventy verbalized the words "I demand the devils leave in the name of Jesus." The devils left because of the power of God. It's not just what is uttered, it is the power of God behind what is said.

Sometimes, people "walk the aisle" and say they believe in Christ; then they are baptized, but they never grow in the Lord. They go on their merry way, and when there is trouble, they quit going to church; they quit reading their Bibles and they get mad at God and His people and His church. They're just mad all the time, acting like a bunch of

babies; and never grow in the Word. It just may be that they've never been saved. They did "walk the aisle," and said that they believed, but there is no evidence that the Holy Spirit ever moved upon them to make a change in their lifestyle.

There is another possibility that ought to be considered. II Peter 1:4-7 gives a list of Christian graces that ought to be added to the life of the believer. These graces are: living in the promises of God, faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. If these attributes are added to the believer's life, he will abound more and more in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Peter 1:8). If these attributes are not added to the believer's life, that believer will be unable to see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sin (II Peter 1:9). He is still saved, but his Spiritual immaturity causes him to be unable to discern Spiritual values.

(2) The Disciples and Apostles

The second group, the disciples and apostles, is found in Matthew 10:1-15. Christ said to them in verse 8, "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give."

The names of the 12 apostles are listed in verses 2-5. I have no reservations about believing that all these men performed miracles, including Judas Iscariot. There is no Scripture anywhere that even remotely suggests that all these men did not perform miracles. Some would say that Judas could not perform a miracle because he was lost, but I would point out Matthew 7:21-23. These lost people preached, cast out devils and did many wonderful works in the name of the Lord. Jesus said, "...I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

I have no reservations in calling Matthew 10:1-15 the "Apostolic Commission." I use this term to show the difference between this commission, which is given to the apostles, and the Great Commission, which was given to the local church. The Apostolic Commission is a *temporary* commission given only to the apostles, instructing them to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, preach the gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out devils, etc. The Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 is a *permanent* commission instructing the Lord's local churches to go into all the world, preaching the gospel and making disciples, baptizing the believers, then teaching them to observe all the commands of Jesus. This commission remains in effect until the consummation of the church age.

(3) Peter

The third group consists of one man, the apostle Peter, and is found in Acts 3:6. "Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." Was the man healed because Peter said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk"? Or was he healed because the power of God was there? He was healed by the power of God. Do you see the difference? Anybody can say, "by the power, or in the name of God, I command a certain

thing to happen," but that doesn't mean anything. It is His force, His power, that makes things happen. It's not that Peter just happened to say the right words.

Verse 11 says, "And as the lame man which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering." The lame man refuses to let Peter and John leave because he is excited about being healed. He is not praising Peter and John, but is praising God because he knows he was healed by the power of God. There are only three people, Peter, John, and the impotent man, who know God did the healing. You can imagine why the people greatly wondered.

Verse 12 tells us, "And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness, we had made this man to walk?" Everybody thought Peter and John had done this thing, but Peter said, "I didn't do anything." Verse 13, "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go." Verse 16, "And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all." Verse 16 is the key verse. In verses 13 and 16 Peter is saying that it is not him or what he said, it is the power of God that made this man whole. It is God's strength that did it, not the magic in the words. People are healed through faith in His name, through faith in His power, not by what anybody has said or done.

The story doesn't end there. The Jews didn't like the impotent man being healed, so they put Peter and John in jail. In Acts 4:7, the Jews asked a question revealing that the phrase "in the name of" and the word "power" mean the same thing, at least in the context of this study. "And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, By what power, or by what name, have ye done this?"

Acts 4:8-12 says, "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." In Verse 10, Peter gave credit to Jesus for healing the impotent man. The Jews thought they had killed Jesus when they put Him on the cross and buried Him in the ground, but He has risen from the dead and is now in heaven sitting at the right hand of the Father. Jesus proved He is alive and that the apostles possess his power by healing this impotent man publicly. This was more than the unbelieving Jews could comprehend.

They have a conference because of the seriousness of the problem before them.

They don't want to admit that God or that Jesus Christ has raised this impotent man. In Acts 4:16-18, the Jews tell the disciples not to preach in the name of Jesus. They are saying, "I don't care how long you preach, I don't care how much you preach; and I don't really care what you preach about, but don't you dare go out and tell anybody that Jesus healed this fellow." They commanded them straightly that they should not do anything in the authority of Jesus. Some would say that command must have ended the whole Christian Era. But Peter and John (verse 23) told the entire church what had happened. The whole church then prayed in the name of the holy child Jesus (verse 29,30), trusting the Lord for the right answer. When we start trusting in the Lord, we should get ready for things to happen. May God help us to trust Him for everything.

The result of praying in the name of the holy child Jesus is found in verse 31. They received additional power from God so they were able to speak the Word of God with more boldness than before. Verse 33 says, "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all."

(4) Paul

I have divided the miracles accomplished by Paul into two groups. The first group consists of those miracles where the phrase "in the name of" does not appear, and is as follows:

- (1) Acts 13:11 - Elymas the sorcerer was struck blind for a season.
- (2) Acts 14:10 - A lame man was healed.
- (3) Acts 20:10 - Eutychus raised to life.
- (4) Acts 28:5 - The viper's bite didn't kill Paul.
- (5) Acts 28:8 - Publius father was healed.
- (6) Acts 14:3, 19:11,12 - Special miracles.

Even though the words, "in the name of" are not found in the Bible record of these miracles, it is evident by a reading of the above Scriptures that Paul did these miracles by the power of God. In I Corinthians 2:1-5, Paul makes it very clear that he desires his preaching to be in the power of God. He knows the result of such preaching would be eternal, because the Spirit of God would make the message eternally effectual. In Philippians 3:1-11, Paul counted all fleshly accomplishments as dung. The only thing that will last would be eternal, heavenly things. In II Corinthians 12:9,10, Paul makes it abundantly clear that he will glory in infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses that he might know more about the power of God.

The second group of Paul's miracles is in Acts 16:16-18, where Paul cast the Spirit of divination from the damsel who followed him crying, "...these men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." Paul uses the phrase "in the name of" to show categorically that the demon is cast out, not by his power, but by the power of God.

This miracle occurs because a demon is proclaiming that people ought to listen to

Paul. Some don't think that sounds like a demon, for demons don't believe in Jesus and they surely aren't going to tell anybody to listen to Jesus, but this is the Bible record. The Bible declares that demons know Jesus is the Son of God, and even though they worship Him, they are going to spend eternity in a burning lake of fire. The Bible teaches over and over again that demons are not to preach the gospel, therefore, why did God allow this demon to draw attention to Paul, who was preaching the true gospel, and to salvation, which is only offered by God?

The solution is that God will show His authority over Satanic authority. This damsel was possessed with a spirit of divination (which means "a gateway, door-way of a building or city") and brought her masters much gain by soothsaying (which means "a prophet, as supposed to rave through inspiration"). Therefore this spirit declared itself to be the inspired entrance into religion. It is drawing attention to itself as the official "harbinger" of who is of God and who is not of God. There is no doubt in my mind that this demon had control or authority over the religion (gods) of that city, bringing her masters much gain, just as "modern" religion brings its masters much monetary gain. This demon intended to extend its religious power over the authority of God; then it would have the authority over all religions. When Paul commanded the demon to come out of her in the name of Jesus Christ, the demon recognized the authority of Christ was greater than its power, therefore, it obeyed.

Compare Paul casting out a demon by the power of God to exorcists casting out demons. An exorcist is a person who tries to have control over the demon-world by chants, incantations, seances, lighting candles, voodoo, etc. Acts 19:13 is the only occurrence of the word "exorcists" in the Bible. The exorcists in Acts 19 are false believers attempting to cast out demons in the name of Jesus. They have the right words, but they don't have the power of Jesus behind them. This again gives us the same message. It is not enough that we *say* God is there; it is important that God *is* there. Paul cast out demons by the power of God, while the vagabond Jews, exorcists by trade, attempted to cast out devils by spells and incantations.

Notice the difference in the results from Paul casting out devils, and these vagabond Jews casting out devils. When Paul cast out devils by the power of God, they came out and didn't bother anybody, but when these vagabond Jews attempted to cast out devils, they tried it second handed! They said, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." The fellow with the evil spirit leaped on the seven sons of Sceva and prevailed over them, and they fled out naked and wounded, trying to get out the door at the same time. You talk about an eye-ball scratching, the demon-possessed man sure gave them one!

Do you remember Mark 2:12, when Jesus healed the man sick with the palsy? The people said, "We never saw it done like this before." There was a marked difference between what the apostles did and the exorcists did. The apostles didn't have to throw dust in the air, or excite the emotions of the crowd. They used the power of God in a very quiet, private way, and God did His work.

(5) Stephen and Philip

The fifth and final group consist of Stephen and Philip, two of the first seven deacons.

Stephen

The Bible has very little to say about Stephen's miracle working. Acts 6:8 says, "And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." The Bible places more emphasis on his preaching and subsequent death, for there is only one verse that speaks about his miracles, but more than a chapter on his preaching and death. Every person who has studied the life of Stephen understands that he preached and died in and by the power of God. There is no doubt in my mind that Stephen also performed miracles in the power of God.

Philip

Philip, on the other hand, was able to cast out devils and heal the sick (Acts 8:7). There is a very remarkable thing to note concerning Philip's miracle working. Acts 8:12 says, "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." The Samaritans did not believe in Christ when Philip performed miracles! They believed when he preached to them concerning the kingdom of God, and the name (power) of Christ! After the Samaritans were saved and baptized, he continued doing miracles and signs; but apparently no one except Philip was able to do miracles until Peter and John, two apostles, came down to Samaria and laid hands on the Samaritans. This brings us to our next section.

The declining use of miracles

In Acts 6:6, the apostles laid hands on seven Godly men (all non-apostles). Immediately, the Bible records that Stephen did miracles among the people (6:8). After the account of Stephen (6:8-7:60), the text records the fact that Philip worked miracles in Samaria. The clear implication is that they got this ability when the apostles laid hands on them.

It also seems that non-apostles were not able to transfer their miraculous gifts to others without the aid of an apostle. When the apostles heard that the Samaritans had "accepted the Word of God" (8:14), they sent Peter and John to Samaria because the Holy Spirit "...was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (8:16). When the apostles laid hands on the Samaritans, they "received the Holy Spirit" (8:17).

Some people feel the Samaritans were not truly saved until Peter and John came, for how can a person be saved without having the Holy Spirit? It seems more likely to me, however, that "they received the Holy Spirit" means "they received the miraculous

gifts of the Spirit." For one thing, Acts 8:14 says that the Samaritans "accepted the Word." For another, in 8:18, Simon the sorcerer "saw that the Holy Spirit was given at the laying on of the apostles' hands." This implies that the Samaritans received outward, visible signs, not an inward work of grace. It seems therefore, that as a non-apostle (in the technical sense of the word apostle), Philip received miraculous gifts under the supervision of the apostles. It seems also that those receiving such gifts were not able to confer the power to others without the aid of the apostles themselves.

Section # 4: **Jesus doesn't send anybody to perform miracles today.**

We give the following three reasons why miracles are not necessary today.

1. Notice the overall purpose of signs and wonders. The first purpose is to show by natural means that Jesus is the Christ. The second purpose is to show that the apostles, the foundation of the first church, was ordained of God. The third purpose is to show unmistakable signs to the unbelieving Jews that God was turning from Israel toward His Gentile church.
2. Notice the overall view of signs and wonders. First, the book of Acts opens with a promise of the Holy Spirit, which was given on the Day of Pentecost, Acts 2:1-4. In the first five chapters of Acts, only the apostles are mentioned as performing miracles:
 1. Acts 2:43 - The apostles.
 2. Acts 3:6 - Peter and John; (who are apostles)
 3. Acts 4:33 - The apostles.
 4. Acts 5:12 - The apostles.
 5. Acts 5:15,16 - Peter (who is an apostle).

From this high point, the book of Acts concludes in Acts 28:30,31, with Paul preaching from prison in Rome. This is a picture of the work of the church while Christ is away. The church began with signs and wonders, and will conclude with the church fulfilling the great commission by taking the gospel message into all the world. Some members of His church may be in jail, but the message of salvation is never chained.

3. Contrary to what some believe, it is not necessary to see miracles to believe. Some people simply believe God's Word.
 1. In Luke 1:44, there is good indication that when John the Baptist (who was still in his mothers womb) heard about Christ being born, he believed to the saving of his soul, and that without any miracle at all.
 2. Mary and Joseph, the mother and step-father of Jesus, did not see a miracle, but submitted themselves to the will of God (Luke 1:38).
 3. Simon, Luke 2:25-32, did not see a miracle, or a halo around the head of the child

Jesus, but coming in and seeing the child, the Holy Spirit made it known to him that this was the promised one he was being kept alive to see.

4. Luke 2:36-38, Anna, a prophetess, did not do or see a miracle, but upon seeing Christ, rejoiced and gave thanks. She began immediately to tell everybody that the Christ child was born.
5. Matt. 3:5,6 records that John the Baptist was baptizing people who had been saved. These people saw no miracle, but repented at the preaching of the Kingdom.

Conclusion

Our study of miracles in the Bible has revealed that only 93 people performed miracles. These include 8 prophets in the Old Testament, the 70 disciples Jesus sent, the 12 apostles, the 2 deacons and Paul. These facts ought to show that the Charismatic doctrine of everybody doing signs and wonders is false. The modern charismatic movement is doing away with God's Word, replacing it with their own word of prophecy and word of wisdom.

The study of miracles, wonders, and signs will continue in chapter 5.

Chapter 5

IN THE NAME OF... SATAN'S POWER

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

It is very important to realize that all the power we need is from God, and without His power, we have nothing. All kinds of programs, plans and such have taken the place of God's power in churches today. Nothing that we do will take the place of God's power. We've studied about salvation, scriptural baptism, miracles in the last times, and now we will be studying about the power of Satan.

In chapter 4, we discussed the miracles of Christ. In this chapter, we will discuss the miracles of Satan that are always the exact opposite, or a mirror image, of the miracles of Christ. The beginning of false miracles was in the days of Moses, and these false miracles have grown in manifestation until this present day.

The Principal of Power Manifestation

In the very beginning of time, God manifested His power in a very great way, by creating this world in six days. But since then, the miracles of Christ have been steadily decreasing in manifestation of power. I am not saying that God has less and less power, for His power is always exactly the same. I am saying that God is revealing less and less of His power as the end time approaches. Satan is exactly the opposite.

As time progressed, the miracle manifestation by Christ has decreased and the miracle manifestation by Satan has increased. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 as the lowest power manifestation, and 10 as the greatest, the revealed power of God was a 10 at the beginning of the world and will be a 1 as the tribulation begins. Satan's revealed power started out as a 1, but has steadily increased to a 10 as the tribulation gets closer and closer.

About 2,000 years ago, at Pentecost, the believers spoke in tongues and the apostles did miracles and signs, but miracles and signs were not new in that day. Mark 2:12 reveals that "somebody" was healing people before Christ, and Acts 19:13-16 reveals that exorcism was a fairly common practice. When Jesus cast a blind and dumb

demon out of a person in Matt. 12:24, He was accused of using the power of Beelzebub, the prince of devils. What we find is that Satan can perform miracles! Paul warned Timothy (II Tim. 3:13) about the perilous times of the last days, telling him that "...evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." As the Great Tribulation nears, "...there shall arise false Christ, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matthew 24:24).

Fire From Heaven and the Principle of Power Manifestation

There are many examples I could use to show the principle of power manifestation, but to conserve time and space, I will use only the miracle of fire from heaven.

Fire coming down from heaven has always been reserved for God alone, to show His power over all.

1. Gen. 19:24 - Fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah. There is no doubt that God destroyed these wicked cities because of their great sins against Him and each other.
2. Ex. 3:2 - Moses seeing the burning bush that was not consumed. A sign that God was in the fire.
3. Ex. 9:23,24 - The seventh plague on Egypt. Fire running along the ground. Hail and fire mixed. A sure sign that God is judging Egypt.
4. Ex. 13:21, 40:38, Num. 9:15-17, Deut. 1:33 - A pillar of fire leading Israel by night. A sign of God's leadership over Israel.
5. Lev. 9:24 - Fire consuming the offering in the tabernacle. This fire from heaven showed that God accepted the work of Moses and the people in building the tabernacle and in giving the offering.
6. Lev. 10:2 - Abihu and Nadab (sons of Aaron) destroyed by fire from God for offering "strange fire" before God. This proved that it was not yet time for this "Satanic fire."
7. Num. 16:35 - Fire from the Lord consumed those offering incense. (They were associated with Korah in his rebellion against Moses.)
8. I Kings 18:38 - Fire consuming the offering in the days of drought in Elijah's day. This proved that God was stronger than the false god "Baal."
9. II Kings 1:10,12 - Fire from God destroying Elijah's enemies. This certainly left a fear in the hearts of others concerning God and His servant, Elijah.
10. I Chron. 21:26 - When David sinned in numbering Israel, God sent a plague of death on the Jews. This was stopped when David offered an offering to God and God accepted the offering by sending fire from heaven to consume it.

11. II Chron. 4:1 - Fire in the days of Solomon marked the acceptance of the temple prepared by David and built by Solomon.

The above Scriptures make it very clear that fire from heaven has been reserved for God's particular use. As the last days draw near, however, God will relinquish this miracle to Satan so people will be deceived. Note the following Scriptures:

1. II Thess. 2:11 - "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."
2. Matt. 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."
3. Rev. 13:13 - "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."

Now, compare Rev. 11:5 - "...fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed," speaking of God's two witnesses, with verse 7: the devil himself comes out of the bottomless pit to kill them. This act supposedly shows Satan's power over God's servants **and** over God Himself. The devil causing fire to come down from heaven in their sight (Rev. 13:13) deceives the unbelievers into thinking that he has defeated God and now God must do all Satan tells Him to do. The Scriptures also tell us that Satan, "...as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God" (II Thess. 2:4). During the tribulation period, Satan will be allowed the miracle of fire from heaven to deceive the people who have refused Christ as their personal savior.

Satanic Miracles

There is a difference in the miracles of Satan and Jesus. The miracles of Jesus were done in order to show that He is God and He is in control of everything; but Satan's miracles, the Bible says, are always done in order to deceive.

Satan's miracles are always a mirror image of God's miracles. A mirror image reveals two things. First, it is exactly the opposite of the real thing. Second, it is a reflection of the real thing. We have to look past the real image to see the image in the mirror. We must see the real miracles of Christ, then look past His miracles, in order to see Satan's miracles. If we look at the miracles of Satan without first looking at the miracles of Jesus, we will probably be deceived into thinking Satan's miracles are genuine. Satan will always use something in order to reflect a true miracle, just as the mirror is not the real image, but a reflection of something that is real.

The First Satanic Deception by Miracles

Gen. 3:1 says the first Satanic miracle was demon possession. The serpent, willingly allowing Satan to possess his body, mouthed Satan's words, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" It is actually Satan who deceived Adam's wife. Many people do not believe this is demon possession, even though it is quite apparent. God allowed Satan to possess the body of this animal, which is a mirror image of what Christ desires from us. He wants us to allow Him to completely possess us in such a way that we will be a witness of Him. When we speak, it will be Him speaking through us. At the beginning, that is what the Devil did with the serpent.

When God put the curse on the serpent, a lot of changes took place. The serpent lost his legs, he had to go about on his belly, eating dust, and he couldn't talk any more. (This is also true during the 1,000 year reign, because the curse of sin is still on the earth. The serpent will be able to walk and talk when the curse is removed; but then there won't be any snakes in eternity, at least I don't find any Scripture that says there will be snakes, or any other animal, in eternity.)

The Second Satanic Deception by Miracles

In Exodus chapter 7, Satan again produced mirror images of the miracles of God. Moses and Aaron were before Pharaoh telling him to let Israel leave Egypt. In Exodus 5:2, Pharaoh said, "...Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go." Ex. 7:10 says, "And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the LORD had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent." Moses, acting on the power of God, actually turned a rod into a serpent. Ex. 7:11,12 states, "Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods." Note the mirror image of Satan's miracles. The wise men, the sorcerers, and the magicians were not of God. They were of the devil, and were using the devil's tools to produce miracles. Satan's false prophets are doing the same thing today.

What is the enchantment that the wise men, the sorcerers, and the magicians used? It is a "magic" saying, or something similar to that. It is very important to notice the method used to produce a miracle. Satan will **always** use means; God will always speak, and **may** use means. Notice that the magicians cast down their rods, just as Aaron cast down his rod, which became a serpent. Notice also that Aaron's rod swallowed up their rod. God will always have the victory over Satan.

Exodus 7:21,22 - Moses held up his rod over the water to turn the water to blood. The magicians of Egypt also turned water to blood, not with their words, but with their enchantments. Remember that whatever God does, Satan is always there to imitate it.

It may be well to note a very peculiar thing right here. If Satan has so much

power, why didn't he turn the blood back into water? I'm sure the Egyptians were needing water pretty badly about then. There are at least two reasons Satan didn't turn the blood back into water. (1) God didn't allow him to have that power. (2) Satan never does a miracle before God does it. Satan is always the imitator, never the initiator.

Satan will always use means instead of just speaking. He will always use something to make the miracles work. In Revelation 13:13, he makes fire come down from heaven, but always in the sight of the image of the beast (verse 14). God never uses a "means" or "formula." He uses His "Word," which is the equivalent of His power. Matthew 8:16 says, "When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick." This Scripture makes it very plain that Jesus cast out the spirits with His word. If God wants to perform a miracle, He doesn't have to say anything or do anything. He just brings it to pass.

In Exodus 8:6,7 Moses brought forth frogs by the power of God and the magicians brought forth frogs with their Satanic enchantments.

In Exodus 8:18,19 Moses and Aaron brought forth lice upon the earth by the power of God, but Satan could not. Therefore, there is a limit to the power of Satan, but not to the power of God. This is the principal of power manifestation. God's power manifests itself on a high plane at first, then gradually decreases. Satan's power starts out on a low plane, and gradually increases. God has set a limit to the things Satan can and cannot do. As time continues to go by, Satan is allowed more power to deceive. Why would the gracious God of heaven allow Satan to deceive people? II Thessalonians 2:8-12 says, "And then shall that Wicked be revealed...Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 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."

In the book of Exodus, Satan didn't heal anybody, but his power has increased continually so that Mark 2:12 reveals that Satan had the power to heal. In the verses just previous to Mark 2:12, Jesus had healed a man sick of the palsy by saying, "...Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house." The people "...were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, *We never saw it on this fashion*" (emphasis mine, WWR). It is quite apparent that the people had seen miraculous healing before, but they hadn't seen anybody healed the way Jesus healed them. They were familiar with Satan's messengers healing by means of enchantments, or laying on of hands, or other of Satan's methods, but not by use of the spoken word only.

Exodus 8:19 - The magicians said it was the finger of God that did this. An important point to note here is that the magicians knew who they were fighting against. Pharaoh probably didn't know because the magicians had to tell him they were fighting God. Moses and Aaron, on the other hand, knew who they were fighting for. The battle for the nation of Israel is really between God and Satan, with man in the middle.

There are three classes of people involved in the eternal warfare between God and Satan

(1) Those who are fighting God and know it

These are the wise men, the sorcerers, and the magicians. These "dyed in the wool" ministers of Satan know who they are worshipping, and who they are fighting. The Bible declares these people are fools (Ps. 14:1), because they are denying and fighting the very God they know in their own heart to exist.

There are Satanic cults in this nation whose members cut off pieces of their fingers and pass them around and everybody takes a little bite just like they were taking the Lord's Supper. There have been people who have sacrificed most of their fingers.

On April 10, 1989, many newspapers across the United States carried the story about twelve human beings who were killed at the hands of a Satanic cult located near Matamoros, Mexico. Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox said, "They were cooking body parts in a big pot there on that ranch." Felipe Flores, spokesman for the Mexican Attorney General's Office, said he knew nothing about reports of cannibalism, but he added that during the ritual killings, victims' brains were cut off and put on a fire, mixed with blood, herbs, rooster's feet, goat's heads and turtles. Anthony Padilla, a photographer with *The Brownsville Herald*, said he saw Kilroy's body (one of the victims) at a Matamoros funeral home. "There was nothing inside the skull," Padilla said. (Taken from the Russellville, Arkansas, *Courier Democrat*, 4/12/89).

Rev. 13:1-4. There are people today who are worshipping Satan. They know it and they are going to continue worshipping him. The beast has the name of blasphemy on his seven heads, which represents power. God has given Satan the power to blasphemy His holy name. Earlier he didn't have this power, because it wasn't yet time. But as the end of the church age draws near, God gives Satan more and more power. Verse 6 says Satan opens his mouth to blasphemy God and the heavens are silent, for now. Verse 17 remarks that only those with the mark or name of the beast shall buy and sell. Truly, the mark of the beast is the power of the beast, because only those with his mark will be able to buy and sell.

(2) Those who are fighting God and don't know it

There are some who don't understand what is going on and are being deceived by Satan.

1. Revelation 12:10 says, "...the accuser of our brethren is cast down..." Satan is the accuser of the brethren. Do you realize that when one child of God accuses another child of God, they are doing the devils' job? That's giving Satan time to do something else. We don't really think about it, but when we start running somebody down or doing them dirty, we're doing Satan's work.

2. Matt. 7:21-23 states, "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. 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? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Notice the phrase, "in the name of." These people are actually serving Satan, but think they are serving God. This is just like the demon-possessed woman who followed Paul and Silas, saying, "These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation." Paul cast out the devil, which wasn't working for the Lord, but for Satan.

3. Rom. 2:24 states, "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written." Paul is not writing the Romish church, but to the church of God which is located at Rome. Paul says that the name of God (the power, authority) is blasphemed because of the actions of saved people.
4. James 2:1-7 describe some saved people who have no desire to blaspheme God or go against His will for their lives. But they blasphemed God because of their attitude about people. For example: Two men walk into a religious assembly, a rich man wearing a \$500.00 suit, and a poor man wearing a \$20.00 pair of overalls. If the rich is given a good place to sit, and the poor given a bad place to sit because of their clothing, the name of God is blasphemed. The rich blaspheme the name (power, authority) of God, and saved people sometimes blaspheme God by giving preference to the rich.

**(3) Those who are fighting for God
and know it:
Moses and Aaron.**

There are a few like Moses and Aaron, who have the holy calling of God and know "...whom they have believed."

You and I will fit into one of these three categories. Do we fight God and know it, fight God and don't know it, or fight for God and know it?

Some Tools of Satan

All through the Old Testament, there is a solemn warning for Israel to stay away from Satan and his people. Today, we have those same warnings in the New Testament for us to stay away from Satan and his people. Satan is alive and well, like a roaring lion, going about seeking whom He may devour.

Television

I know the television show, "I dream of Jeannie," may be cute, but it is a devil's tool. The same thing is true of the show "Bewitched." Why? What is wrong with watching these shows? Aren't they just entertainment? These productions make you think there is a good witch. After all, here is a pretty little woman, who just twitches her nose, and does all kind of good things for her "master." The show is a comedy, and it makes people laugh. Listen, there is a lot of laughing done at the devil's tools. Continue watching the situation comedies on television and you'll wind up like Lot who, "...vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." Those shows will have you laughing at adultery, homosexuality, fornication, murder, or any other thing that God would have you avoid. Television can be a good medium but it is largely being used by Satan to ruin the morals of the American people. God said it is good if we stay away from that garbage.

Let's take a good hard look at how television shows have progressed our thoughts away from Godliness and into sinfulness.

The program "Little House on the Prairie" is set about the turn of the century. It involves a good deal of family life where the dad is the true head of the family. Dad takes the family to church, leads in home worship, provides emotional and physical support for all the family members. Mother and dad are always working together for the betterment of the family, even to their own hurt. The result of mother and dad's commitment to bringing up their children God's way is easily seen in the program. The children grow up and marry. They have troubles, just like everybody else, but those troubles cause the family to grow closer to God and themselves.

The program, "The Waltons," is set a little later in time. Dad is still the head of the home, but he doesn't go to church anymore. He is too busy making a living during hard times to lead in family devotions or take an active role in bringing up the children. These duties have been delegated to mom. She provides the family with emotional and spiritual support under most circumstances, but there are occasions when neither mom nor dad has time to listen. The children must then discuss their problems with anybody they find nearby. The result of dad's non-involvement in worship and family life is readily seen as the children grow up, get married, then get divorced and move back home with their children.

Today, (1993) there are very few television programs that feature a whole family. Most programs have an incomplete family, such as a mother raising her children alone, or a dad raising his children alone. In most cases, the parents are shown to be unaware of the simplest facts of life and are mentally unable to provide any leadership. The children are the ones with all the wisdom, which they deliver to their "stupid" parents while the laugh tracts roar out canned laughter. There is no mention of spiritual matters unless it is for purposes of ridicule.

God's Warning About Satanism

I Timothy 4:1-3 records the steps Satan uses to bring people under his religious system. "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;..." This Scripture plainly teaches that the first step in departing from the faith is giving heed to seducing spirits by listening to Satan's false ministers. The second step is when the doctrines taught by these false ministers are accepted and the plain teaching of Scriptures is "thrown out the window."

Israel received a clear warning about this in Deuteronomy 18:9-14. "When you art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shall be perfect with the LORD thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do." In these verses, God is speaking to Israel, not to New Testament saints. If God didn't want Israel messing around with this trash, should we want to mess around with it? If God would punish Israel for this sin, would He punish us for the same offense?

Note the word "abomination." A study of this word will scare us to death. An abomination is different from a sin, even though an abomination is a sin. An abomination is much worse than a sin, if we could use that kind of terminology. It is a thing that God absolutely despises.

Verse 10 says, "There shall not be one among Israel." Even if Israel had 2,000,000 people, there should not be anybody at all that did any of the things listed. I know I am not Israel, and you're not Israel. Our local church is not Israel, but it would be very good if there was not one among our church body that is involved with these unclean things.

Verse 10 continues, "Maketh his son or daughter to pass through the fire." There are two meanings to this phrase: (1) parents would burn their babies as a sacrifice to their false God, or (2) they would burn an animal in place of their baby, then turn their child over to the false priest so that child could be raised and indoctrinated in their false religion. In that day, the people who worshipped these idols would build a big fire before their God and cast their baby into that fire. Sometimes they killed the baby before they burned it, and drained the blood to use as a part of their worship to their god. Sometimes they would cast the living baby into the fire and listen to it scream as it burned to death. We might say, "My, that's horrible, and there is surely nobody around that would do that today." You might also be thinking that a parent wouldn't kill their unborn baby, but the United States of America have passed a law declaring that it is legal for mothers to kill

their unborn babies. These mothers are sacrificing their unborn babies to the "god of self." The legislature has passed this law, declaring that if abortion isn't legalized, mothers will kill their babies illegally. Well, let's make them do it illegally, because God will hold us accountable for that kind of unspeakable wickedness.

We are living in a day and age when Satan is just about to take over. We might think we are a Christian nation, but this nation is saturated in sin and wickedness. I'm concerned about the things I see in the homes, the hospitals, and other public places. I am constantly shocked at the things "Christian" people watch on television. They ought to be ashamed of themselves. If you watch ungodly television programs, I pray to God that lightning will hit your television set. Don't watch those shows, it ruins your mind, gets you to thinking that that's the way it really is.

"Divination" - This is a person that tells the future through witchcraft. We can know enough of the future by reading the Bible, but we ought to remember what the Bible says in Matthew 6:34, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." There is one thing these "fortune tellers" won't tell: there is a literal burning hell, and it has enlarged herself to contain all the people that go down into it. There is a way of deliverance, Jesus Christ the Savior of the world.

Verse 10 tells of "An observer of times" - A follower of astrology. This plague is so widespread that almost everybody knows what his astrological sign is. I'm a Sagittarius. Most newspapers put the astrological charts on the comic page. Of course, that's a good place for it. Many people read those charts, and they will say the moon and stars and sun knows what is best for me to do today. Astrology is a worship of the sun and moon. Instead of doing what God says we ought to do, we read our astrological charts and do what somebody says the moon says we ought to do. This is of the devil. The Bible talks about the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9. These people didn't intend to build a tower all the way to heaven, because they were smart enough to know they couldn't build a tower so tall they could walk up to the pearly gates. It is 93,000,000 miles to the sun, and that is just a start to getting to heaven. The Tower of Babel, we are told, had the signs of the Zodiac at the top. It is a place of worship to false gods, started by Nimrod, some 4,000 years before Christ.

Verse 10 mentions "An enchanter." This is nothing more than a miracle worker who does his miracle like the magicians of Egypt, who used enchantments. An example is the "Smurfs" cartoon show. This cartoon show is training our children that the way to get what you want is by using enchantments. This is very, very wicked.

Verse 10 mentions "Witch." We might say, there are no witches around here. But back in 1975, there were registered witches in Little Rock, Arkansas, the Bible Belt of the United States. The article I have from the *Arkansas Democrat*, shows a young, blond woman about 21 years old, attending the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. She said there were many witches in Little Rock and more becoming witches every day. She said, "I don't have a wart on my nose, and I don't ride a broomstick, but I'm a witch." You

might say, that's just in those wild college towns, but we ought to know that this kind of thing is not just in college towns, but is in practically every town in this nation. A witch is male or female who whispers spells, practices magic, and is a sorcerer.

Verse 11 tells of "A charmer." This is not the kind of charmer the girls are looking for. This charmer is one who casts spells, like voodoo. You might say, there is nothing to voodoo, but Satan is in all kind of things.

Verse 11 speaks of "A consulter with familiar spirits," a person who conducts seances. You might say, "That is so far out, nobody would be involved in something like that." You would also be surprised at the people who go down to the palm reader.

Verse 11 mentions "A wizard," or conjurer of ghosts. Most of the time, it is a male.

Verse 11 warns against "A necromancer," a follower or worshipper of the dead. You say, "There is nobody who worships the dead." You should be careful; there are some folks that canonize them, and pray to them in order to get through to the living God. Satan is everywhere.

"False Prophets" - There are many examples of false prophets in the Bible, but I trust the example in I Kings 22 will suffice. In this Scripture, Jehoshaphat and Ahab have joined forces in order to fight the Syrians. Some might claim that unity is a good thing, but unity with the enemy is always bad. Jehoshaphat has no business joining forces with Ahab for God has cursed him for killing Naboth (I Kings 21:21,22). In verse 5, Jehoshaphat desires Ahab to inquire of the Lord concerning the outcome of the battle. Ahab gathers about 400 prophets of Satan. They said, "Go up; for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king." Jehoshaphat wasn't satisfied and asked for a prophet of the Lord. Ahab didn't want to call the prophet of the Lord for he said, "...I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." In verse 11, A false prophet named Zedekiah, made horns of iron and showed Ahab and Jehoshaphat what they would push with. All the other prophets agreed that they ought to go because the LORD would deliver the Syrians into their hands. The messenger who went to get God's prophet, Micaiah, instructed him to speak like all the false prophets, but Micaiah said he must speak as the LORD gives to him. We must have men to stand for God when nobody wants to hear what God has to say. We must have them. In verse 15, Micaiah told the king that God would give him the victory. Now read verse 16, "And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord." Note the phrase "in the name of the Lord." The king said to Micaiah, "You're lying to me, I want to hear what God has to say." In verse 17, Micaiah truthfully prophesies that the rulers of Israel will die and Israel will be without their leaders. In verse 18, Ahab complains that Micaiah says nothing good to him at all. Some people think preachers are always against them, but they ought to realize that preachers aren't against them; God's word is against them.

This shows that there are false prophets going out with a false gospel deceiving

many people. This happened in the Old Testament because Ahab wanted the 400 false prophets to tickle his ears. Today, there are literally hundreds of false prophets, but listen to Proverbs 11:21, "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished: but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered." II Corinthians 11:14,15 says, "...Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 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." The Bible says in II Timothy 4:3, "...the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lust shall they heap together teachers having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." Who is turning from the truth in I Kings 22? Israel. Who is turning from the truth in II Timothy? The Lord's people, particularly His church. Paul told Timothy to preach the truth now because the time is coming when God's people will not hear the truth, but they will have preachers that will tell them what they want to hear.

In Mark 2:12, the man sick of the palsy takes up his bed, carries it and leaves. All the people were amazed, saying, "...We never saw it on this fashion." These people had seen miracles before, but never had they seen a miracle like this. There is no doubt they had seen Satanic miracles by enchantments, but they had never seen anybody "speak a miracle." This is a miracle indeed. The miracles of Jesus Christ were absolutely without precedence. Please notice that Satan performed miracles and wonders and signs in the New Testament. Sometimes we assume that all miracles must be of God because the Devil is unable to do miracles. But he does and he can. It is possible for the devil to have power to heal folks. The Bible says it is so; therefore we must believe it. There are false prophets who claim to be able to heal. If they really do have the power to heal, they ought to go into the hospitals and heal everybody there. They won't do that because they can't do that. They only "heal" selected people, those with questionable ailments.

John 9:32 says, "Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind." Satan will always copy the miracles of Jesus. He never does a miracle first. Jesus will always do the miracle first, then Satan will copy it. Jesus Christ, when the world was about 4,000 years old, was the first to heal a person born blind.

Revelation 13:16-17 states "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: 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." See how great the power of Satan will become? There was a time when Satan could not keep God's children from buying and selling like everybody else, but now God has allowed him much more power than ever before.

Let's not get too worried about Satan's power. Remember that Jesus will come at the close of the tribulation period and cast Satan into the bottomless pit and the Anti-Christ and the Beast into the lake of fire. Satan will be turned loose one more time before this world is totally destroyed and the new heaven and new earth are created. After the 1,000 year reign of Christ, Satan will go out and people will follow him once again for the curse of sin has not been removed. It is only during eternity that Satan will no longer

have any power or control. Isaiah 14:15-17 declares that when Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire, those that see him there will declare, "Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms; that made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof; that opened not the house of his prisoners?"

Chapter 6

IN THE NAME OF... POWER TO SERVE

Matt. 28:18,19,
"...All power is given unto me
in heaven and earth.
Go ye therefore..."

I Serve Because of God's Power

I hope you have enjoyed this study as much as I have enjoyed preparing it. There is nothing impossible with God, and as we have studied the phrase "in the name of," I sincerely hope you have seen a small part of God's greatness.

I serve because of God's power. I don't serve because of my power, my *will* power, or my physical strength. I preach because of His power. I serve God by depending on His power, not on what I can do. If I depend on what I can do, then I depend on sin. I serve God by trusting Him, and **He** can handle anything.

First of all, let us review the principles of authority as discussed in this book.

Chapter one: Salvation is completely and totally a work of God.

Chapter two: Scriptural baptism is completely by the power of God.

1. John baptized because he was sent of God.
2. Jesus didn't baptize, but his disciples baptized because He told them to.
3. Jesus still doesn't baptize, but has authorized His local churches to baptize for Him.

Chapter three: Asking and receiving is dependent on the power of God.

Chapter four: Jesus performed miracles by the power of His Father. Miracles were intended to prove that He was the Christ.

Chapter five: Satan performs miracles because he has received permission to deceive those who would not believe.

Chapter six: God expects us to serve Him by trusting in His power. This chapter is going to use the same principle spoken about in the first five chapters. In other words, we must serve God because **He** has the power to overcome.

Until the first church realized they possessed the power of God, they were unable to do anything, but when they discovered they really possessed the power of heaven and earth, they did marvelous things because of God's power in them. The application today is: we won't do anything truly worthwhile in God's kingdom until we realize we don't have power in ourselves. We must realize we don't have adequate strength, but we know God does. We must depend on Him not only for the words that we say and the thoughts we think, but for the strength to put one foot in front of the other. We must trust Him to open our eyes to see that we don't have any strength, and to give us strength necessary to serve Him. We have to trust Him for everything.

There are many people today who have become discouraged because they are unable to see the application of Scriptures in any church or in the lives of those professing to be "Christian." Sometimes, they have closed their eyes to what the Bible says living in the power of God is, and sometimes it is because professing "Christians" have such a terrible reputation, it is difficult, if not impossible, to see Christ in their lives. We trust we will so live that men "...may see (our) good works, and glorify (our) Father which is in heaven."

How To Serve God In Power

We will study "Serving in Power" in three ways:

- (1) Knowledge gives us power to serve.
- (2) Love gives us power to serve.
- (3) Understanding gives us power to serve.

(1) Knowledge gives us power to serve.

First of all, I must say that knowledge alone is not enough for true worship and service. There is a "head" knowledge of the truth that is not worship. We must understand, however, that there must be a mental knowledge before there can be a heart (spirit) worship. John 4:24 states, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Hosea 4:6 states, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children." Israel refused to mentally learn about God and His ways. Because they refused to take the necessary time to learn what God expected of them and the blessings available to them if they would only serve Him faithfully, they ignorantly failed to obey Him. They didn't understand what God said about raising children, or anything concerning faithfulness to God. Year-after-year went by with Israel getting further and further away from the precepts set down in God's Holy Word. God sent prophets to instruct them in His ways, but Israel had grown so far away from God's perfect ways, they found it impossible to understand what the man of God was saying. God's message fell on deaf ears, and caused Israel to harm some prophets, and kill others. God was displeased with this, and in time turned from Israel to the Gentile church.

Today, however, the majority of churches have walked down the path Israel took, refusing to learn God's ways that are plainly taught in the Bible. They have failed to listen to the instruction given by the ministers God has sent, nor have they read their Bibles. Instead, they have listened to false prophets preach messages that tickle their ears. They have fallen into the trap of letting the "experts" of the world give direction to their lives, the lives of their families, and the lives of their children. Today, most people are too busy to take time to read their Bible and pray that God would direct them toward that peace that passes all understanding. They struggle to gain a small measure of peace offered by the world and pass by the greatest gift there is.

(2) Love gives us power to serve

John 17:26 says, "And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." Jesus declared again that he has told people about the power of God and he will continue to declare the power and glory of God. Why? In John 17:26 Jesus prayed "...that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." That's the reason, that all His followers would know the real love of God.

True Love Causes us to Understand the Meaning of Suffering

Hebrews 2:9-12 says, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee."

The first thing to notice about this Scripture is that the suffering Jesus endured did not make Him perfect in the sense that He was sinful and needed some sort of purifying from His sinfulness. We know, and hope you know, that Jesus had no sin, nor could He have sinned. Jesus, as the Captain of our Salvation, suffered so He could be the perfect (complete) example for us.

Notice the teaching of this Scripture:

- (1) Jesus was made lower than the angels.
- (2) Jesus suffered death for every man.
- (3) Jesus is the only one who could do this because He is the creator of all things.
- (4) Jesus Christ and those who are sanctified are one.
- (5) Jesus declared the name (power, authority) of God to the brethren.

We ought to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ, who will rule the world because he is the absolute sovereign over all things in the world. Jesus humbled himself unto

death, even the death of the cross. Because of this, "...God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11). What glory awaits us if we will simply be like Jesus!

- (1) Jesus did not exalt himself, but exalted his Father. This is what we ought to do.
- (2) Jesus publicly proclaimed that he could do nothing except by the power given to him by his Father. This is what we ought to do.
- (3) God exalted Jesus because of what He did. God will also exalt us if we give all glory to God.
- (4) God gives Jesus an everlasting kingdom. God will allow us to have a part of the everlasting kingdom of Jesus, if we privately (by trust Christ to save us) and publicly (by living for Him) declare that all power comes from God.

Hebrews 12:1-3 states, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Jesus was not full of joy because He was to endure the suffering and shame of Calvary. He endured the shame of that hour because He was looking forward to the joy of sitting down once again at the right hand of His Father. Jesus is our perfect (complete) example. Christians do not enjoy the suffering and shame of sin in their bodies and in this world. We endure these things because we are looking forward to sitting at the feet of Jesus for all eternity. If all we see of suffering is the here and now, we will soon grow weary and faint in our minds, but if we follow the example of Jesus, we will endure contradiction of sinners against us, as we strive to be obedient to our Lord Jesus Christ.

(3) Understanding gives us power to serve.

There is no doubt that knowledge and love are very important sources of power in regard to service, but we must remember that knowledge and love are quite empty if we do not have Godly understanding.

Luke 24:44-45 declares, "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." It is good to have a "head" knowledge of the Scriptures. It is also good to have a true love for the things of God. Only God can open our understanding. *Strong's Concordance* defines "understanding" as the intellect, i.e., mind (divine or human; in thought, feeling, or will); by impl. meaning:--mind, understanding. The setting of Luke 24:44,45 is shortly after the resurrection of Christ. Two disciples

were on their way to Emmaus, when Jesus appeared to them, "But their eyes were holden that they should not know him" (Luke 24:16). These two disciples talked with Jesus until their trip was completed. Jesus made as if he would go further, "But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight." Notice this point: The two disciples did not know who Jesus was even after they had spend the entire trip to Emmaus with Him! They knew who He was only after their eyes were opened. This story confirms the principle of serving with power. There must first be a "head" knowledge that comes by hearing the truth. Next, there must be a love for this truth, even if it is not completely understood. When God opens the understanding (which is much more than just opening the intellect) there is an opening of the "divine" mind, which understands more than the "human" mind can comprehend. The two disciples immediately returned to Jerusalem and tell the eleven, who are gathered together in a locked room for fear of the Jews. Jesus appeared to them and gave them ample proof of who He was, but they failed to understand until He opened their understanding. Jesus gave four proofs of his resurrection in Luke 24:39-48.

- (1) The proof of His risen body (verse 39,40). Jesus told them to handle Him and see if He does not possess the same body.
- (2) The proof of eating (verse 41-43). I do not believe Jesus ate because He was hungry. He ate before their eyes only to prove to the doubting disciples that he was the risen Christ.
- (3) The proof of Scripture (verse 44). Jesus talked to them while He was eating, telling them once again that what they see before them is exactly what He had preached to them about while He was with them.

The disciples didn't believe any of these three proofs. They believed only when Jesus opened their understanding. We can believe only when Jesus Christ opens our understanding. People will not believe any number of proofs concerning God, His Bible, Jesus Christ, or the plain truth about salvation. They are able to hear with their ears what the truth is, but they will believe only when God pours His great grace upon them and they are able to look with eyes of understanding.

- (4) The further proof of Scripture (verse 46-48). When the understanding of the disciples was opened, Jesus began at the beginning, telling the disciples once again about His suffering, His death and resurrection, and that this gospel should be preached in all the world. It is very important to note that the gospel means so much more after the understanding is opened than it does before the understanding is opened. It is the same story, but when it is heard *this* time, it is altogether new and very refreshing.

This is the point: Jesus wants us to understand exactly what He is doing and why He is doing it. He does not want us to be in the dark concerning any plans He has for us

or the world. This is why holy men of God were moved by the Holy Ghost to write the Bible.

If we are going to be like the early disciples, God must give us understanding just as He gave to them. The early disciples were not very faithful to God's teachings until *after* Luke 24:44, when Jesus opened their understanding. From then on, they were a different kind of people. They had been saved over three years, but when their understanding was opened, they became very enthusiastic about the things of God.

Look at this comparison: when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, He asked the disciples to pray for Him, but they went to sleep. We don't want to be too hard on them for sleeping because their understanding wasn't opened. They didn't understand what was going on, even though Jesus had told them! Sometimes we are just like that. We're saved, we think we are doing a pretty good job, but we are sleeping on the job. After their understanding was opened, they preached with power and conviction of the Holy Spirit, and "turned the world upside down"! If you know you ought to be doing greater things for God, but don't seem to have the necessary zeal or conviction, it just may be that you ought to ask God to open your understanding.

Another comparison can be made with the Apostle Peter. In Luke 22:33, Peter declared that he was ready to go with Jesus, both into prison, and to death. I am sure Peter *felt* he was willing to do what he said. But he didn't do what he said he would do. Why? Peter was relying on his own strength instead of the strength of God. He *felt* he was strong enough to die for Christ, but all he could do was deny he ever knew Him. Mark 14:72 records that when Peter thought about his terrible wickedness and weakness in denying Jesus Christ, he wept bitterly. This was a hard lesson for Peter, but it is a lesson he will never forget. Never again will he depend upon himself, but he will depend upon the strength of Jesus Christ. It was *Peter* that preached on the Day of Pentecost, delivering the message that God used to save 3,000 precious souls! When Peter was depending on his strength, he could only deny Christ, but when he trusted the strength of Christ, God used him in great ways. What a lesson for us!

The Servant's Eyes Are Opened

The principle of "understanding gives us power to serve" is further illustrated in II Kings 6:8-25. The King of Syria had surrounded Elisha and his servant. The servant was terrified, but Elisha said, "...Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." When God opens our eyes of understanding, fear automatically leaves.

The "Ways" or "Acts" of God?

True understanding will cause us to draw closer and closer to God. If God does not open our understanding, we will go further and further away from Him regardless of

who preaches to us, or what they preach about!

Psalms 103:7 says, "He made known his *ways* unto Moses, his *acts* unto the children of Israel." (Emphasis mine: WWR) This verse teaches us that there is a difference between the ways of God and the acts of God. Moses knew the *ways* of God, which means he knew *why* God did what He did. Israel only knew the *acts* of God, which means they knew *what* He did, but they never understood why He did anything.

For an illustration of Moses knowing the ways of God and Israel knowing the acts of God, read Exodus 19:1-20:21. Israel is camped at the base of Mt. Sinai and is waiting to receive the commandments of God. God has set bounds about the base of Mt. Sinai which Israel is not to cross. Israel does not understand the least command of God. They have heard the commands with their ears, but their actions show they don't understand. Moses understands the command, and cannot comprehend Israel disobeying the command, for when God tells him to go down from Sinai to warn the people again, Moses says, "...The people cannot come up to mount Sinai: for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it." Moses was not naive. He simply believed what God said, and would obey it. He thought Israel would also obey every command of God. He was in for quite a shock, wasn't he? Notice in Exodus 19:25, that Moses went down from Mt. Sinai and was with the people when God spoke the Ten Commandments to all Israel.

Exodus 20:18-21 records Israel's reaction to hearing the voice of God and seeing the result of His presence. "And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was."

- Notice what happened to Israel because they didn't understand the ways of God.
- (1) They were afraid.
 - (2) They thought they were going to die. This was not true at all, for God had set bounds so they wouldn't die!
 - (3) They stood afar off. They seemed to think getting close to God would bring them harm. Today, (and how very sad it is) there are some saved people who stand at a distance from God, thinking that if they get any closer, God will harm them in some way.
 - (4) They were afraid for God to speak to them. This is just like some people today who are afraid to read or study their Bibles. They had rather listen to some man preach to them. The reason? They cannot disregard God's voice, and they want to satisfy their inner longing to hear God's truth. They believe that if they listen to a man speak God's Word, they have obeyed God, but they easily cast off the preacher's words. They do not realize what a great blessing it is to worship God as He gently speaks to

our open souls through His written Word.

Notice what happened to Moses because he understood the ways of God.

- (1) He understood that God wasn't going to kill them and told them why God had appeared to them like He did. He had no fear at all, but was able to worship God in the midst of fearful Israel.
- (2) Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was. He didn't hesitate an instant, but quickly went to the place where God was, even though that place was *thick darkness*. The thickness and blackness of that darkness didn't bother him in the least because His Lord and Savior was there. He knew he was safe from all harm. What confidence Moses had as he drew closer and closer to God. What useless, senseless fear was in the hearts of Israel as they watched their leader disappear into the thick darkness!

We pray that God will open our understanding so we won't go away from God like Israel, but will draw closer and closer to God like Moses.

Understanding the Will of God

Eph. 5:17 tells us, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." We may *think* it is impossible to know what the will of God is for our lives, but that is simply not true. We can *know* what God's will is, because there are Scriptures that tell us what His will is.

There are a lot of different philosophies being taught. Some philosophies say we ought to do this, and some philosophies say we ought to do that. They all promise if we follow their instructions, things will be right. Can *all* these varying philosophies be right? Is *any* of these philosophies right? The Bible says in Eph. 5:17, "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." This verse is very needful today. If there was ever a time when we ought to understand what God's will is, it is today.

Somebody would say, If I only knew what the will of God was, then I would *do* the will of God. Listen: *If you don't do those **little** things God tells you to do every day, then you won't do the **big** things God tells you to do tomorrow.* In order to understand the will of God, we first must do what God tells us to do today.

The Bible says in Eph. 5:17 "...be ye not unwise." Proverbs 1:7 declares "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction." This is the beginning of understanding what the will of God is. The very beginning of straightening out your life, the life of a state, or the life of a nation is the fear of God. The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge. A lot of people don't fear God. In fact, a lot of people deny God can do anything about anything. The truth is: God can do everything about everything. It doesn't make any difference what it is. Proverbs 9:10 states "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." The word wisdom isn't the same as knowledge. Knowledge shall increase in the last days. While knowledge is increasing, men are going to get further and further away from God. I Tim. 3:1-7 states "This know also, that in the last days perilous

times shall come. For men shall...Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away...Ever leaning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." How can these things be? There is a difference in knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge is simply the accumulation of facts, but wisdom is the practical application of those facts. Just because you have a lot of information, doesn't mean you know what to do with that information. Eph. 5:17, "...be ye not unwise." We ought to understand what the will of the lord is. Listen: The reason you can't understand the will of God is because you do not do those things God has *already* told you to do.

Proof: There are a lot of people that say they serve God, they are doing all they know to do, but also declare they are not happy. They are *not* doing what God tells them to do. I Thess 4:3,4 states "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor." Notice the phrase "this is the will of God." The word sanctification doesn't mean to get better and better, or to become without sin. It means "to be set aside," especially to be set aside to the service of God. *This is the will of God for you.* If you are saved, this is what God's will is for you. You don't have to look for it somewhere else, **this is it!** The will of God is that you abstain from fornication. If you live an unholy life, or an immoral life, you can never know what the will of God is for your life. God will not reveal His will to an immoral person. Every one of you should know how to possess his vessel (body) in sanctification and honor.

Somebody would say, I don't know what the will of God is, and I'm not committing fornication. I Thess 5:18 states, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." Do you give thanks to God for *everything* that happens to you? If you say, "No, there are some things I'm not thankful for. I'm not thankful for my neighbor who runs his lawn mower early in the morning and I can't sleep. I'm not thankful for my in-laws or hardships. I'm not thankful for wars and rumors of wars. I'm not thankful for sickness, death and sorrow. I'm not thankful for all this wickedness in this world." The Bible says to give thanks to God for *everything*, because this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

I Thess 5:16 declares "Rejoice evermore." Do you rejoice in everything? I Thess. 5:17 states "Pray without ceasing." Do you do that? Those are little things, somebody would say. Listen: You've got to do the little things before you'll every do the big things. The Bible says, "Rejoice evermore." The Bible says, "Pray without ceasing." The Bible says "...in everything give thanks because this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." I Thess 5:19 asserts "Quench not the Spirit." I Thess. 5:20 proclaims "Despise not prophesyings" (preaching). I Thess. 5:21 states "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." I Thess 5:22 declares "Abstain from all appearance off evil." The next verse, I Thess 5:23, then states, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." If you want to know what the will of God is, do those things in your body. Use your body for the glory and honor of God. When you obey the Bible, the mystery of the will of God will open to you. You *will understand* what the will of God is for your life. Until you do those little things God tells you to do you are *never* going to see the "big picture." You've got to understand the little things God wants you to understand.

Not only understand what the little things are, but do them. When you do those little things, you'll be able to see and understand what the "big" will of God is.

There are some things that are not clearly indicated in Scripture. For example: Bill Jones wants to marry Sally Smith. Bill and Sally can search the Scripture for an answer, but there is no place in the Bible that states that Bill and Sally are to marry. What do they do? First, they study the Scriptures to make sure their marriage plans are in agreement with what God says a marriage ought to be, then they must pray to God to give each of them "His peace" about their marriage.

This is what we must do for those decisions we make that are not clearly outlined in Scripture for us. We must search the Scriptures to make sure our plans are in agreement with the general directions given by God, then we must pray that God will give "His peace" about that particular matter.