

BETHEL GOSPEL CHAPEL FOUNDATIONS OF THE FAITH

STUDY 1 THE BIBLE, THE INSPIRED WORD OF GOD

Scripture Reading: II Peter 1:15-21; II Timothy 3:14-17

Memory Verse: II Timothy 3:16

APPROACH

Foundations are always of first importance, whether in a house, in a family - in a business - in a nation, but particularly so in spiritual things. Christ said, '*Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock.*' (Matthew 7:24)

Today let us examine the first foundation of our faith, the Bible. All our beliefs, hopes and aspirations are based on the fact that this is indeed God's book. If it is merely human then our hopes are built on sinking sand. A great statesman, William Gladstone called it an "*impregnable rock*", and we sometimes sing:

*'the Bible stands like a rock undaunted,
'Mid the raging storms of time.'*

The book of nature tells about a wondrous creator whose power and wisdom formed the worlds, and it is only reasonable to suppose that such a creator would reveal Himself and His plans to His creatures. We believe the Bible is this revelation of God for many reasons, and in today's lesson we shall consider briefly seven of the most important evidences that the Bible is the Word of God.

1) ITS CLAIMS

The Bible claims to be God's Word. Such expressions as "*thus saith the Lord*"; "*the Lord spake*"; "*Hear the word of the Lord*"; '*the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it*' occur about 2,000 times in the Old Testament alone.

In II Timothy 3:16 we read "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God*". The word 'ALL' here refutes the idea of some individuals that it is only PARTLY inspired. Inspiration, of course, has reference only to the original writings, not to translations thereof. II Peter 3:2 shows that every word was inspired, and our Lord in Matthew 5:18 revealed that every "*jot and tittle*" (equivalent to our inverted comma and hyphen) were likewise inspired.

The Bible also claims that it's human authors were inspired. '- "*Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*". (II Peter 1:21)

2) ITS COMPOSITION

The word Bible is BIBLOS, meaning BOOK (2nd word of the New Testament) and its 66 books are indeed one book. This would seem like a marvelous achievement if we did not know that it was the work of a divine author. Think of the facts. The Bible books were written by some 40 authors in at least 4 languages, during a period of about 1600 years, the writers being unknown to each other and about 1500 miles apart in some cases. These authors were from all walks of life - (kings) peasants, doctors, fishermen, poets, shepherds, prophets, clerks. Their combined efforts produced a perfect volume in unity and accuracy. Moreover the proof of inspiration is deepened when we consider that the authors were Jews with an ancient eastern background, lacking the many advantages of a modern education, yet their book is quite understandable to modern readers, both eastern and western, and is recognized in modern law courts, etc.,etc., as the best guide in social affairs of modern times, and the final answer to judicial questions.

Of recent date a new and incontrovertible proof of inspiration has been brought to light through the fantastic studies of a Russian named Ivan Panin. Based on the fact that letters in the ancient Hebrew and Greek languages possess a numerical value, after a life time of study this man discovered tens of thousands of perfect combinations of sevens" and multiples of "sevens" woven into the original wording of the scriptures. The human authors could never possibly have arranged it thus. In the first verse of the Bible alone there are 14 combinations of numeral 7. Value of its nouns is 777; of its verb "created" is 203 or 29 x 7. Total Hebrew words in the verse are 7, and the total Hebrew letters are 28 or 4 x 7. So it goes on all through the book. The same amazing perfection we see in a leaf or flower, or snowflake, is seen beneath the surface of the original scriptures.

3) ITS CONTENTS

From a literary viewpoint the Bible is a superb collection of Historical, Prophetical, Poetical, Biographical, and Doctrinal manuscripts. But it is more than that, because individuals by the millions in every age have found it to have a personal message to them in their private experiences. It is likened to a two edged sword bringing conviction to the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

It is the agency by which men may receive spiritual and eternal life. Peter describes it as incorruptible seed by which we are "*born again*". No human book could ever produce such a result. (I Peter 1:23) Following this Peter describes this book as the means of sustaining spiritual life. '*As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby*'. (I Peter 2:2) Many of believers have been comforted by its promises, guided by its precepts, and enlightened by its wisdom. To them and to all it is the voice of God.

4) ITS CORROBORATIONS

Bible truth has been corroborated in many ways. One powerful proof is fulfilled prophecy. Between 500 and 600 Old Testament prophecies have been literally fulfilled, 200 of these concerning Christ. The cities of Babylon, Tyre, Nineveh, Jerusalem, are all examples of fulfilled prophecy. The Jewish people scattered in every land and nation, and their present re-gathering are prophecies being fulfilled before our eyes.

Archeologists, digging in ruins of places such as ancient Jericho have unearthed scores of relics and tablets confirming the truth of scripture. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in our own era has proven the authenticity of Isaiah and other parts of scripture. The Bible does not require us to defend its claim to divinity. IT CAN DEFEND ITSELF.

5) ITS CRITICS

From earliest times the Bible has been opposed. Diocletian, a Roman Emperor of the second and third century sought out and destroyed all existing Bibles (and Christians) he thought, but some copies were preserved for posterity. Later the Roman Catholic Church forbade it to be read and thus sought to obscure its light. Since the invention of printing, critics and atheists have tried to discredit it and refute it. Many of these critics such as Voltaire and Thos Paine have long since died, but the Bible is more popular than ever. Voltaire boasted that the Bible would be extinct in less than a hundred years. He died in 1778 and the Bible's claim is still true: "*the Word of God which liveth and abideth FOREVER*". (I Peter 1:23)

6) ITS CIRCULATION

The popularity of the Bible is another evidence of its divinity. Other "holy" books as the Koran, The Shastras, the Veda of Hindus, or the Zendavesta of Parsees, etc., have had 1 or 2 translations. The Bible has been translated into over 900 languages. New versions are springing up every year. 30,000,000 Bibles are printed every year, it is estimated, and it is placed within the reach of all classes, nations and age groups. How true are Christ 's words today - "*Heaven and earth shall pass away but my words shall NOT PASS AWAY*" Matthew 24:35.

7) ITS CHRIST

Of Scripture Christ said, "They are they which testify of me" (John 5:39), and in Luke 24:27 "He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself ". He is the great theme of the Bible and every type pointed to Him, events of History, lives of Bible characters, and prophetic predictions all had Him in view. The uniformity of its Christology is another evidence of Bible inspiration,

CONCLUSION

When Sir Walter Scott lay dying it is said he asked his secretary to bring him the book. "*What Book?*" he was asked. The great author replied "*there is only one book - the Bible*". How true!

FOUNDATIONS OF THE FAITH

STUDY 2

THE TRIUNE GOD

Scripture Reading: Acts 17:22-32

Memory Verse: Job 11:7

APPROACH

Suppose that fate should some day land us on a foreign shore among strange people. As we explore the area we discover a stately palace, beautiful in symmetry and perfect in proportions. Its furnishings are lavish; its paintings and statuary are all masterpieces; its kitchen and dining appointments are up to date, and luxury and comfort are the keynote of its living and recreation areas.

Upon enquiry from the tenants and servants of the palace we find that no one can enlighten us as to the owner, architect and maintainer of the place. Some say it is of great antiquity and had no builder, and that it is constantly maintained and renewed by causes unknown in some magical way. To our modern minds this seems ridiculous, but it is far, far more ridiculous to say, as some do, that this marvelous universe of ours and its inhabitants had no intelligent creator~no God to build and maintain the great palace of creation.

Where can we find the answer? Scientists and Philosophers through the ages have searched for God but without success. The only light on this subject is found in the Bible. Man's reasoning about the origin of the universe is like candle-light compared with the sun in comparison to the Bible. Gathering together scripture truths about God, we find He is defined as - -

- ✓ 1) A Divine Trinity
- ✓ 2) A Divine Father
- ✓ 3) A Divine Son
- ✓ 4) A Divine Spirit.

1) A DIVINE TRINITY

Sometimes we sing the old hymn:

*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty,
God in three persons, blessed trinity."*

The truth expressed in these lines is seen in I John 5:7 where he writes "*these three are one*". These three are also joined in Paul's benediction: II Corinthians 13:14 "*the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all*". The name of the three in one is used in believer's baptism, (Matthew 28:19). The trinity is seen at Christ's baptism: the son emerging from the water, the Father's voice from Heaven, and the Spirit like a dove descending on Him. (Matthew 3:16 &17)

The trinity is implied in the first verse of the Bible. In the beginning God or Elohim. Elohim is a plural noun, and further down we read, Genesis 1:26 "*Let US make man*". There are many instances of the Godhead acting in unison both in creation and redemption.

If it seems difficult to grasp the thought of three persons in one let us consider other more familiar trinities. We ourselves are three in one: body, soul and spirit. The world is one, yet it has three parts in one: animal, vegetable and mineral. Daylight is one clear white light, yet if its rays are directed through a prism a reflection of the three primary colors: red, blue and yellow, are thrown out.

□ **2) A DIVINE FATHER**

The name Father as applied to God was practically unknown in Old Testament times. There God is known as Elohim, or Adonai, or Jehovah, with varying sub-titles (as Jehovah Jireh). These titles present God's power and majesty both in creation and redemption, but not so close and intimate as the name "*Father*". It was foretold that Christ would reveal this name to us in Psalm 22:22 "*I will declare thy name unto my brethren*" and this was fulfilled at the post resurrection scene in John 20:17. In the Lord's prayer He made it begin "*Our Father*". When Philip asked "*Shew us the father*" He said "*He that hath seen me hath seen the father*". John 14:9.

In Paul's sermon on Mars Hill which is our scripture reading Paul reveals that in a natural, physical or biological sense, God is the father of all. "*We are His offspring*" he says Acts 17:28,29. In Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). But God's universal fatherhood does not apply in a spiritual sense and Christ spoke of unbelievers on one occasion as "*of your father the Devil*" (John 8:44). To become sons of God we must be born again. This new birth takes place the moment we believe in Christ as Saviour. The process is explained in John 14:12,13.

□ **3) A DIVINE SON**

Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh (I Timothy 3:16). "*The only begotten son... hath declared Him.*" (John 1:18). "*God...hath spoken to us in His Son*" (Hebrews 1:1). "*The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*" (John 1:14). Christ declared in John 14:9 "*He that hath seen me hath seen the Father*".

Proofs of Christ's divinity are many. One of them is the remarkable fulfillment of scores of prophecies concerning His birth, life, ministry, betrayal, death, resurrection, and ascension. He himself opened up the Old Testament scriptures and applied references therein to Himself. See Luke 24:27.

There are three marks which should characterize a Divine Person. These are OMNIPOTENCE or all power, OMNISCIENCE or all knowledge, and OMNIPRESENCE or always present everywhere. We see Christ's omnipotence in his miraculous cures, raising the dead, stilling the tempest, feeding 5,000 with 5 loaves and 2 fishes. We see it also in His words. They said of Him "*Never man spake like this man*" John 7:46. We see His omniscience in that "*Jesus perceived their thoughts*" Luke 5:22. His followers said "*Thou knowest all things*" John 16:30 and John 21:17. That He is omnipresent is seen in that He could cure without being physically present (Luke 7:7-10). He promises to be present where two or three gather in His name (Matthew 18:20).

His history and fame are conclusive proofs of Christ's Divine Sonship. Think of the facts. Over 1900 years ago a baby was born in a stable, laboured as a carpenter, traveled no farther from home than 140 miles, left no writings of His own, no pictures of Himself, yet even today His followers are in the millions. More pictures have been painted, more books have been written, more songs have been composed (think of Handel's Messiah) about Him than any other living person. "*What think ye of Christ?*" We can add the weighty evidence of His virgin birth, sinless life, and glorious resurrection.

❑ **4) A DIVINE SPIRIT**

"God is a Spirit" John 4:24. Although invisible to us, the Holy Spirit is a real person. His work is principally seen in the Church since Christ has returned to Heaven. While it is true that we observe the trinity working together always since the beginning, yet it seems also correct to link the Father with the work of creation, the Son with the work of redemption, and the Spirit with the work of regeneration.

Before He left Christ said *"If I go not away the Comforter will not come"* John 16:7. He ascended in Acts 1:9, and the Spirit descended almost immediately in Acts 2:4.

The Spirit acted in creation Genesis 1:2; acted in the inspiration of the Bible II Peter 1:21, and He is also working today. His work in the world is to convict men of sin (John 16:7-11). His work in believers is to regenerate (John 3:5, to seal (Ephesians 1:13), to instruct (I Corinthians 2:12,13), to empower (Acts 1:8), to baptize (I Corinthians 12:13), and He is also Director and Administrator of the Church (I Corinthians 12:4 -12).

CONCLUSION

The three persons of the trinity are beautifully linked together in the three parables of Luke 15; The Shepherd and the lost sheep representing God the Son seeking the lost, the woman and the lost silver representing the Holy Spirit stirring and convicting the soul (she swept diligently), and the Father and the lost son representing God the Father restoring the sinner to sonship in the Father's house.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE FAITH

STUDY 3

THE TRUE CHURCH

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 2:1-10
Memory Verse: Matthew 18:20

APPROACH

According to Scripture there is only one church, although as we look around today we find thousands of varying creeds and denominations. How can we find the true church which Christ termed "*My church*", Matthew 16:18. As we begin our search let us bear three things in mind:

- ✓ 1) That there IS such a church
- ✓ 2) That the true church pattern is to be found ONLY in the Scriptures.
- ✓ 3) That the New Testament principles of the ONE church GENERAL should characterize the CHURCH LOCAL in any community.

It is interesting to note that God has always been desirous of fellowship with His people. Originally He had fellowship with the angels (Job 38:7), but sin marred the relationship when Lucifer (Satan) fell through pride (Isaiah 14:12-15). "*So God created man*" we read in Genesis 1:27, that He might have the fellowship of a human family, but Satan ruined that association and man was driven from Eden, separated from God.

Amid the ruin of the race God chose an individual, Abraham, (Genesis 12:1-3) and his posterity, the Jewish nation. This too failed being based on human responsibility, and continual offerings for sin. The Cross was their culminating sin and their cry "*His blood be on us and on our children*" Matthew 27:25, has been answered in their dispersion throughout the nations. But that same cross provided the foundation for a new fellowship composed of both Jew and Gentile, called the Church. This fellowship is imperishable as it is not dependent on human faithfulness and obedience, but on Christ's FINISHED work. Because of His atonement Christ himself describes the Church as "*without blemish*" "*not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing*" Ephesians 5:25-27.

Our lesson reveals seven scriptural features of the true church:

1) THE BUILDER - Matthew 16:13 -19

Christ foretold the coming of the Church before its existence, and that He would be its founder, foundation and builder. To Peter He said, "*On this rock*" (meaning Himself) "I will build my church". This reveals the church as of Divine origin, and not a merely human institution. He would build it out of believers and that same day He said unto Peter "*I give unto thee the keys*". He thus has delegated the work of opening the Church door to His servants, that as the Gospel is preached and souls receive Christ, they are added to this divine fellowship called the church. Peter used the JEWISH key in Acts 2 to admit thousands of Jewish converts, and He used the GENTILE key in Acts 10 to bring in the Gentile believers. Christ is still building His church. "*When He ascended up on high He gave gifts unto men*". "*Some apostles, and some prophets; and some evangelists*" etc. Ephesians 4:8 - 12. They are but the workers, He is the MASTER, the Divine Architect and Builder of His church.

2) **THE BIRTHDAY - Acts 2:1-5, 41, 42**

The Church Christ had foretold was born on the Day of Pentecost. It was a special day appointed for the event, just as *"When the fullness of time was come God sent forth His Son"* Gal.4:4, so *"When the day of Pentecost was fully come ... they were all filled with the Holy Ghost ... and the same day there were added unto them about 3,000 souls ... and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."* Acts 2.

Thus the first local church was born and it consisted of *"they that gladly received His word, were baptized ... and continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers"*. Acts 2:41,42. Christ had ASCENDED to Heaven and the Holy Spirit had immediately DESCENDED to form and fill the church. The coming of the Spirit had been foretold by Christ in John 16:7-14, and still today the Spirit is in the Church to convict, gift, teach, and empower God's servants.

3) **THE BUILDING - I Peter 2:5**

We have already seen that the builder of the Church is Christ, now some thoughts about the building. Christ is the FOUNDATION and believers are the FABRIC, I Corinthians 3:12.

*"The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord,
She is a new creation
By water and the Word."*

In I Peter 2:5 we have a description of the building. It is not built of bricks and mortar, but of *"living stones"*. In Ephesians 2:22, 23, we read *"it groweth into an holy temple ... a habitation of God through the Spirit. We should never think of the church as a material building, no matter how stately and revered it may be, for it is a building not made with hands"* Hebrews 9:11. The original word which is translated church is **EKKLESIA**, and that just means *"called out ones"* or *"assembly"*.

*View the vast building, see it rise,
The work how great, the plan how wise?
Oh! wondrous fabric, power unknown,
That builds upon the living stone.*

4) **THE BODY- I Corinthians 12**

There are many similes of the church in scripture. We have already noted the figure of a building, and in I Corinthians 12 a chapter is devoted to its likeness to a BODY. Just as the human body is controlled by its head, so the church is controlled by its Head in Heaven. It is not an organization but rather an organism. Each member is related the one to the other in a common bond, jointly serving, sympathizing and functioning for the benefit of the whole body. As each member of the human body has a different function so there is diversity in the gifts of church members. All are needed; it is not a one man ministry, nor an any man ministry but an everyman ministry, as each serve in the capacity for which they have been fitted. *"If the whole body were an eye where were the hearing"* I Corinthians 12:17, etc. etc. Some are hands to work, some are feet to walk, some are eyes to see, others are tongues to speak or ears to hear. The thought of a Body also reminds us that there is only one HEAD. Christ is the Head of the body, the church. Col. 1:18.

5) THE BULWARKS - Psalm 48:13

The Psalmist in describing beloved Zion of old talks about her "towers" and her "palaces"; and says "Mark ye well her bulwarks". We can say the same about the church which has been called the spiritual Zion, Hebrews 12:22. Jerusalem's main bulwark was the Lord "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem so the Lord is round about His people" Psalms 129:2. The church's main bulwark is the Lord in her midst, Matthew 18:20. He said "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" Matthew 16:18, and though hostile forces have persecuted the church from without, and though apostates and false doctrines have sought to corrupt it within, she still remains like a house founded on a rock. The good ship of the church will withstand any storm because Christ is on board. The local church can find a strong bulwark in its prayer meeting, in a discreet and spiritual oversight, in its missionary program and systematic giving.

6) THE BONDS - Ephesians 4:3

Christ prayed for church unity "that they all may be one" John 17:21. The Apostle exhorted to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" Ephesians 4:3. How is unity maintained? It is illustrated in the structure of the Tabernacle; Exodus 26:26-28. The gold covered boards were united externally by FIVE BARS, and inwardly they were united by an unseen bar which passed through a hole in the midst of each board, and so it is spiritually with the church. The Five Bars which outwardly unite the church are named in Ephesians 4:11 -- apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and there is also an unseen bar, the bond of the Holy Spirit in their midst, (I Corinthians 3:16). The Church and Christ are one as BRANCHES in a vine, (John 15:5) as members of a body (I Corinthians 12:27) as stones in a building (I Peter 2:5).

7) THE BRIDE - Ephesians 5:25-32, Revelation 21:9

Under the figure of a BRIDE, Christ reveals that His church occupies the nearest and dearest place in His heart. This relationship expresses more particularly the future glorious place of the church in the divine program. At the second coming of Christ the church will be caught up to be with the heavenly bridegroom, (I Thess.4:17), and the bride will "make herself ready" at His judgement seat (I Corinthians 4:5), for the great event known as the "marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:7-9). There are many brides in scripture who all in some way prefigure the church as the bride of Christ, as for instance - Rebekah, Asenath, Zipporah, Ruth, the Shullamite, etc.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE FAITH

STUDY 4

RESURRECTION

Scripture Reading: I Corinthians 15:1-20

Memory Verse: Job 14:14

APPROACH

In every age man has sought to find an answer to the universal question in our memory verse - *"If a man die, shall he live again"*. The ancient Egyptians were so convinced of immortality that their entire lives were spent anticipating death, and their bible was called "The Book of the Dead". Rich and royal Egyptians were permanently embalmed at death and their weapons, treasures, and chariots were entombed with them. Centuries later, in modern days, archaeologists opening these ancient tombs find their mummified bodies perfectly preserved. They finally end up in the museum. What a CONTRAST to those who visited Christ's tomb three days after His death and burial, and they found it EMPTY! *"He is not here He is risen"* they were told. One wise man has commented 'The whole fabric of Christianity is based upon an empty tomb'

Philosophy, Science, Human Religions, Spiritualism, and others have tried unsuccessfully to answer this all important question. The same book which asked the question alone has the answer to it. One such answer is found in II Corinthians 5:1 *"We know that if our earthly house were dissolved, ... we have a building of God ... in the Heavens."* But the answer to the question of immortality is not only STATED in scripture, but it is also demonstrated in the proven fact of Christ's resurrection. If we know that Christ rose from the dead, then all resurrection is possible, and all we believe as Christians is proven true likewise. Christ's resurrection has been called "The best attested fact of history and natural science", and again - "The resurrection is the keystone in the arch of Christianity".

The great resurrection chapter is I Corinthians 15, and from that section we will consider the subject in four aspects, its:

- ✓ CONFIRMATIONS,
- ✓ AFFIRMATIONS,
- ✓ ILLUSTRATIONS,
- ✓ IMPLICATIONS.

□ I) CONFIRMATIONS I Corinthians 15:5-9

The resurrection of Christ has been overwhelmingly confirmed by accredited witnesses. He was seen singly by a woman (Mary), singly by a man (Peter), by two disciples on the Emmaus Road, by seven disciples on a lake, by eleven disciples and friends in a room, by the twelve apostles, by 500 brethren at once. Those who claim these appearances were but mental visions find it hard to explain this wide spread testimony of groups from 1 to 500 widely separated from each other. There are others who have said that the testimony of these witnesses was prejudiced because they hoped and expected to see Christ risen so much that they were ready to accept anything as the truth. But the reverse was true, because in every case when the risen Christ appeared the witnesses were taken very unexpectedly, and in sudden surprise. Consider Mary's surprise at the tomb; the dim sight of the Emmaus disciples, or the amazement of doubting Thomas.

One striking evidence of the truth of Christ's resurrection is seen in the transforming effect it had on the disciples. For example Peter, who before the crucifixion was a coward and denier of Christ, after the resurrection became a bold confessor and fearless warrior for Christianity, finally dying in its cause. Think of the transforming power the risen living Lord had on Saul of Tarsus. His vision on the Damascus Road changed him from a persecutor to a preacher. He gladly sacrificed reputation, social position, riches, honours, and exchanged them for stripes, imprisonment, and death. Would a mere fable or fancy have produced such a result?

□ **2) AFFIRMATIONS I Corinthians 15:14 -19**

In the above verses the negative side of the truth of resurrection is depicted. *"If Christ be not risen - preaching is vain, faith is vain, we are false witnesses, Christ is not raised, we are yet in our sins."* In verse 20 all the negatives are turned into positives with one stroke. *"But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept."*

Because Christ is risen He is the firstfruits of departed saints who sleep in death. It means that immortality is to be our portion too. Sometimes people say "I can't believe in life after death because no one ever came back from the dead". That is not true because it has been proved that Christ is risen. Many other things are also affirmed as well as our own immortality. There is the affirmation that because Christ lives "our preaching is not in vain", faith is not in vain, we are found true witnesses, we are not in our sins. In short all we believe and hope for is blessedly true because of the resurrection.

□ **3) ILLUSTRATIONS I Corinthians 15:35 - 44**

Such a mysterious process as resurrection brought forth questions from the incredulous of Paul's day as it does today. *"Some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?"*

To answer this the apostle offers some illustrations from nature. *"That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die ... God giveth it a body as it pleaseth Him"*. Every field of waving grain, every flowery arbor, every one of the millions of grasses carpeting the earth, every fern, every leaf, all of these living things in nature sprung from dead seeds, and all proclaim the truth of resurrection. Another illustration is seen in the new body of the butterfly which was formerly a lowly crawling caterpillar.

To illustrate the difference between the mortal body and the new resurrection body the apostle refers to celestial bodies, and how the sun, moon, and stars, differ in glory. It illustrates how much more glorious will be the state of the believer THEN than he is NOW. It is the difference between corruption and incorruption; dishonour and glory; weakness and power; the natural and spiritual; the earthly and the heavenly. (See verses 40 - 49)

□ **4) IMPLICATIONS I Corinthians 15:58**

"Therefore" concludes the apostle in the last verse, thereby implying the Christian's responsibility in the light of the truth of resurrection. *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."* **Because He arose, the life and labors of the believer are NOT IN VAIN.**

Because He is risen our whole life should be lived for Him. In II Corinthians 5:15 we read *"we should live unto Him who died for us AND ROSE AGAIN."* We hope all of us believe personally that He died and rose FOR ME. Our whole bent in life as believers should be one of expectancy, because in the truth that Christ is risen there is also the truth that Christ is coming. As Paul told the Thessalonians -- *"Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to WAIT FOR HIS SON from Heaven, whom HE RAISED FROM THE DEAD, even Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come."* I Thessalonians 1:10.

CONCLUSION

Let us never forget the solemn implications the resurrection has for the unbeliever. In the verse above quoted we read of *"the wrath to come"* In Acts 17:31 it is clearly set forth. *"Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof HE HATH GIVEN ASSURANCE UNTO ALL MEN, IN THAT HE HATH RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD."* That solemn day of judgement is described in Revelation 20:12 *"I saw the dead, small and great stand before God; and the books were opened and the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them and they were judged, every man according to his works."*

FOUNDATIONS OF THE FAITH

STUDY 5

BAPTISM

Scripture Reading: Acts 8:26 - 40

Memory Verse: Romans 6:4

APPROACH

Baptism is not essential to Salvation but it is an EVIDENCE of Salvation. It identifies the believer with the Saviour. Identification we know is most important in many other phases of life. It may be seen in a uniform as worn by a soldier, a sailor, an airman, a nurse, or a policeman. Frequently it is merely a badge, a button, or a ribbon worn on the clothing. In sport it is most necessary to identify the players on opposing teams by the use of different colored jerseys, etc. We all know that the uniform, the badge, or the jersey do not make the man or woman what they are, BUT THEY SERVE TO IDENTIFY THEM AND WITNESS TO WHAT THEY ARE. So with the rite of Baptism. We are not saved by Baptism, but we show by Baptism that we are saved. Baptism is as different from salvation as a man is from his uniform.

In Hebrews 6:9 the apostle tells us "*we are persuaded better things of you ... and things which accompany salvation*". Baptism is one of the things - which accompany Salvation. It involves a public confession of Christ when we, as it were, stand up to be counted for the Lord.

In gathering up the leading scriptures on the subject we can consider them under the following headings:

- ✓ 1) Baptism - It's Ministry
- ✓ 2) Baptism - It's Meaning
- ✓ 3) Baptism - It's Merit
- ✓ 4) Baptism - It's Mode

1) ITS MINISTRY

First of all we should recognize the truth that there are other Baptisms taught in scripture besides these that apply to Christian believers today. The late Hy. Pickering (in the Believers Blue Book) makes note of no less than seven Bible baptisms, namely:

- ✓ 1. The Baptism of Moses I Corinthians 10:1,2
- ✓ 2. The Baptism of John Matthew 3:1
- ✓ 3. The Baptism of The Lord Matthew 3:13-17
- ✓ 4. The Baptism of The Cross Luke 12:50
- ✓ 5. The Baptism of Fire II Thessalonians 1:7,8
- ✓ 6. The Baptism of The Spirit I Corinthians 12:13
- ✓ 7. The Baptism of Believers Romans 6:3,4

Much profitable ministry surrounds each of these Baptisms but our chief interest in this lesson concerns the last two which apply to us as believers, namely the Baptism of the Spirit and the Baptism of believers by immersion. The Holy Spirit Baptism occurs only once in a believers experience, and that is at the same moment when he or she accepts Christ as Saviour. At that moment of assent by faith to Christ *"By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body"* I Corinthians 12:13. This is a spiritual invisible baptism of the spirit, and all believers partake of it.

Water Baptism of believers is a voluntary, visible act on the part of the candidate. Gospel preachers are enjoined by Christ to teach and practice baptism. Matthew 28:19, and it was faithfully practiced by the early church. In the book of Acts we read the often repeated phrase: *"They believed and were baptized"*.

□ 2) ITS MEANING

The meaning of Baptism is clearly set forth in Romans 6:3-6 and Colossians 2:12. It signifies three things. First, **THAT WE HAVE DIED WITH CHRIST**. Christ died for our sins, to put them away by means of atonement, and also to deliver us from the power of sin. In Baptism we testify that we have died to sin, as Christ died **FOR** sin and **TO** sin. Second, **WE ABE BURIED WITH CHRIST**. Our Baptism also signifies our union with Christ in His entombment. Our former self, before conversion, and called in scripture *"the old man"* is **BURIED** with Christ, and we are positionally now dead **TO** sin as before conversion we were dead **IN** sin. As we are immersed in the water we testify *"that old things are passed away"*.

The story is told of one man who was baptized and after the service his pipe was discovered at the bottom of the tank. He buried a bad habit never to raise it again. Third, **WE ARE RISEN WITH CHRIST**. As we emerge from the water we testify that we are new creations in Christ" and *"all things are become new"*. *As Christ rose from the dead by the glory of God the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"* Romans 6:4. *"We witness to the fact that Christ has not only died to forgive us our sins, and impart to us eternal life, but he has also brought us into union with him in His death, burial and resurrection, and has likewise imparted the power to beckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God"* Romans 6:11.

□ 3) ITS MERITS

There are those who teach that baptism has a regenerating power, and teach the doctrine of **BAPTISMAL REGENERATION**. But Scripture is against it, teaching plainly that there is no merit in the act of baptism to save the soul. Baptismal waters cannot cleanse from sin. *"The blood of Jesus Christ ... cleanseth from all sin"* I John 1:6. Some say that Baptism is the door to Heaven, but that cannot be so as is evidenced in the case of the dying thief. Christ promised him *"Today shalt thou be with me in paradise"* even though saved and unbaptized. Some rigorously refuse church fellowship to the unbaptized, forgetting to *"receive one another as Christ also received us"* Romans 15:7.

What then are the merits of Baptism?

- ✓ FIRST: it has merit in that it is following the example of christ, who came to be baptized of John in Jordan, Matthew 3. If He was willing, why should I shun to be baptized?

- ✓ SECOND: it has merit in that it is *"the answer of a good conscience toward God"* I Peter 3:21. In our Scripture reading the Eunuch had a good conscience and when Philip asked him concerning baptism *"If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest"* what was the Eunuch's answer? It was the answer of a good conscience when he answered *"I believe"* and went down under the baptismal waters.
- ✓ THIRD: it has merit in its effect on the Christian life. Henceforth we are to be careful to *"walk in newness of life."* Romans 6:4.

❑ **4) ITS MODE**

The mode of Baptism is also significant, and the Scriptural pattern should be closely followed. There are many who have been christened and think it is Baptism. Scripture does not show any instance of Baptism being carried out by means of sprinkling or pouring water on the candidates.

The word Baptism is an untranslated Greek word "BAPTIZO". This word could not be translated because in English there is no equivalent word to describe the act. We have the words bury, dip, immerse, submerge, but Baptism means more than burying and immersing. It means to Bury and resurrect again; it means to Submerge and emerge again from the water. Baptize describes it and that word cannot be made to mean sprinkle or pour by any stretch of the imagination.

We should also consider the examples of Scripture. When the Lord was baptized of John in Jordan we read *"He went up straightway out of the water"* Matthew 3:16. Philip and the Eunuch both *"went down into the water"*, and later *"came up out of the water"*. Acts 8:38.

❑ **CONCLUSION**

After his Baptism it was said of the Eunuch that *"he went on his way rejoicing"* Acts 6:39. Since that time millions of believers have also been baptized and gone on their way singing:

*Oh, happy day that fixed my choice,
On Thee my Saviour and my God,
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its rapture all abroad.
Happy Day, Happy Day
When Jesus washed my sins away.*

FOUNDATIONS OF THE FAITH

STUDY 6

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Scripture Reading: I Corinthians 11:17-29

Memory Verse: Luke 22:19,20

APPROACH

We are all accustomed to the idea of commemoration. When a loved one is departing this life and asks a last dying request, we feel it a sacred duty to carry out their wish, and feel guilty if it is neglected. Sometimes too, a cherished photograph of a departed friend, or a keepsake locket, watch, or other trinket bequeathed to us can bring back a flood of precious memories as we periodically look at them. As a nation we like to commemorate the birth and achievements of national heroes, great national events and noted triumphs and victories, both civilian and military.

In a sense this is what Christians do when they celebrate the Lord's Supper. It is done in remembrance of His death, and at His own request: *"This do in remembrance of me"* I Corinthians 11:24. There are two ordinances which Christ has asked the believer to observe, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper. None of these ordinances have any value to the salvation of the soul, but they are of the utmost value to the soul that is saved. We do not observe them to become Christians, but we observe them because we ARE Christians.

The Lord's supper was instituted on *"the night in which He was betrayed"* I Corinthians 11:23. He thought of us amid the agony and bloody sweat of Gethsemane, when under the very shadow of the cross, his soul was troubled, and exceeding sorrowful. He planned this feast when His thoughts might easily have been engaged with His own problems. It is our privilege to carry out this request, not amid problems but in peace, *"peace through the blood of His cross"*, not in fear and bondage but in freedom and boldness.

*"Lest I forget Gethsemane,
Lest I forget Thine agony,
Lest I forget Thy love to me,
Lead me to Calvary."*

Let us in this study take five looks at the Lord's Supper:

☐ 1) THE INWARD LOOK --- EXAMINATION (I Corinthians 11:28)

"Let a man examine himself and so let him eat." It is much more important to examine ourselves than to be examined by elders or others, as to our qualifications to partake of the Supper. We need to assure ourselves that we are indeed sincere believers in Christ as our personal Saviour. There are some who teach that there is a saving power in the feast, and that it is *"a means of grace"*, but we need to examine our hearts BEFORE partaking to discover if we are true believers.

It is possible to *"eat and drink unworthily,... not discerning the Lord's body"* I Corinthians 11:29. Even as believers we should examine ourselves as to our soundness in the faith, and purity of life, and judge our attitudes towards others so that we *"keep the feast, not with malice and wickedness, but with ... sincerity and truth"* I Corinthians 5:8. *"If thy brother hath ought against thee ... first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift"* Matthew 5:23,24.

In the early church *"they that gladly received the word were baptized ... and continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine, and fellowship and in BREAKING OF BREAD, and in prayers"* Acts 2:41,42. It is not light and life that qualifies for the feast. Though believers differ as to knowledge of the truth all are agreed as to His death on their behalf, His resurrection and present session in the Holiest above. As such we remember Him worthily *"discerning the Lord's body"*.

□ **2) THE BACKWARD LOOK --- COMMEMORATION (I Corinthians 11:24,25)**

'this do in REMEMBRANCE of me' said the Lord, and indeed:

*"We now look back to see the burden thou didst bear,
When hanging on the accursed tree,
And know our guilt was there."*

The Bread is a significant emblem of the body of Christ, offered on the cross. *"This is my body"* He said, when instituting the feast. Bread had been used in the worship of Tabernacle and Temple in the Old Testament, foreshadowing the future institution of the Lord's table in the New Testament. Bread is proverbially known as the *"staff of life"*, and Christ is essential to spiritual life. It is a simple, universal symbol obtainable everywhere, and Christ is available to whosoever will, among *"all men, everywhere"*. Bread is derived from the grain, and Christ likened himself to a corn of wheat (John 12:24). The cup reminds us that *"He was the true vine"* John 15:1, whose blood was shed to produce this cup of blessing. As we partake of the elements we join with Paul in declaring *"The bread which we break is it not the communion of the body of Christ ... the cup of blessing which we bless is it not the communion of the blood of Christ"*. I Corinthians 10:16.

The supper also expresses the unity of the Church. *"We being many are one bread"* I Corinthians 10:17.

□ **3) THE UPWARD LOOK --- ADORATION (Hebrews 10:19-22, Revelation 1:5,6)**

At the supper Christ is recognized as in the midst, (Matthew 18:20). He is the centre of our worship, and He presides over the gathering.

*"Here, oh our Lord, we see thee face to face,
Here would we touch and handle things unseen."*

The object of the meeting is to worship and exalt the one who *"loved us"* and washed us from our sins and therefore the prayers and praises and scripture readings are not so much for edification as for adoration of the Lord. Following the breaking of bread is a very appropriate time for reasonable ministry for the edification of the assembly.

□ **4) THE OUTWARD LOOK ... PROCLAMATION (I Corinthians 11:26)**

"As oft as ye do this, ye do shew the Lord's death." The word shew means to proclaim. It is a proclamation to any unbelievers who may be looking on at the gathering of the love of God in Christ manifested towards us at Calvary.

The Gospel can be sometimes more clearly set forth at this meeting than at an evangelistic service. While the unsaved should not be received as participants, they should be heartily welcomed as bystanders to behold the breaking of the bread and drinking of the cup as showing forth to them the way of salvation. Then, too, there are other unseen observers as the angels who see the plan of redemption shown forth in this way. Perhaps the reference to women's headdress because of the angels (I Corinthians 11:10), applies to the angelic observance of this feast. What too must it mean for the "*Prince of the power of the air*" Satan, and his hosts, to witness this testimony to Christ's victory and Satan's defeat?

□ **5) THE FORWARD LOOK ... ANTICIPATION (I Corinthians 11:26)**

"Till He come" describes the term when this feast is to be celebrated. The earthly feast will terminate when the Lord returns to claim the Church as His bride and a new feast in glory "*The marriage supper of the Lamb*" will take its place. This is one of the many signs of Christ's coming. At every celebration of the supper the participants are aware that it is in anticipation of the second coming of Christ. Even in the carrying out of this request of the Lord there are such hallowed moments, and such a sense of the Lord's own presence that the believer considers this his or her most precious hour of the week, and an experience of Heaven on earth.

There are some who call it the Communion, and some who call it the Eucharist, but the humble follower of Christ, like the disciples of old, knows it as "*the breaking of bread*" Acts 20:7. Some celebrate it monthly, quarterly, annually, or sometimes, but the humble believer rejoices to celebrate the feast "*As oft*" I Corinthians 11:25, and remembers that "*disciples came together on the first day of the week*" Acts 20:7, and reflects that it is only "*Till He Come*" I Corinthians 11:26.

*"Till He come we take the bread
Type of Him on whom we feed,
Him who liveth and was dead.
We give thee thanks, Oh, Lord."*

*"Till He come we take the cup,
As we at His table sup,
Eye and heart are lifted up.
We give thee thanks, Oh, Lord."*