

# BETHEL GOSPEL CHAPEL

## BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

### We Believe:

- ❑ That the Bible is the inspired word of GOD, containing the only message of eternal hope for mankind. (II Timothy 3:16, II Peter 1:20-21).
- ❑ That there is only one GOD, eternal, existing in three persons - GOD the FATHER, GOD the SON, GOD the HOLY SPIRIT. (Deuteronomy 6:4, Matthew 28:19,11 Corinthians 13:14).
- ❑ That JESUS CHRIST, born of virgin Mary, was GOD manifest in the flesh, sinless and holy, (Luke 1:26:35, John 2:14, Hebrews 7:24-26).
- ❑ That JESUS CHRIST died on the cross and shed his blood for the redemption of mankind and that HE rose bodily on the third day and lives in Heaven representing those who have trusted in HIM. (I Corinthians 15:3-4, John 3:16, Hebrews 1:1-3, Hebrews 4:14-16).
- ❑ That those who reject HIS provision for salvation will be punished. (John 3: 17-18).
- ❑ That the personal return of the LORD JESUS CHRIST is imminent and that all believers, both dead and alive, will be raised into eternal life. (John 14:1-3, I Thessalonians 4:13-18)

For many years this brief doctrinal statement has appeared on the weekly bulletin at Bethel Gospel Chapel. Recently Biblical references have been added so those who were interested may confirm the source for these statements. Now, during this Mid-week Bible studies program we want to take a closer look at this statement, using it as an outline for a week by week Bible study.

In II Timothy 1:13 Timothy is told "*What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you — guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.*" Again in II Timothy 2:15 Paul says; "*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the Word of Truth.*" Clearly the Apostle Paul believed that there was a "*pattern of sound truth*" and that it was possible to "*handle or use that truth correctly.*" In studying our statement of faith our goal is to reconfirm our commitment to the truth it emphasizes. Not for intellectual stimulus but for the purpose of corporate and personal spiritual growth, so that we may be "approved of God."

These studies will recognize that there are many divergent views about the Bible and its teaching. Unfortunately many of these views are not based on "*what the Bible says,*" each week some of these views will be presented along with questions and references. You will be asked to comment on the views presented and with the help of the references given prepare for a discussion at the Bible Study. The New Testament makes many references about falsehood and false teaching, it also tells us how to act toward it. Clearly creating an argument is not profitable but searching the Scriptures together with other believers is profitable and confirming to our beliefs. It is also good preparation for becoming a more effective witness for the Truth. Adapted from "Decide for Yourself" by G.R. Lewis.

# STUDY 1 - THE BIBLE IS GOD'S WORD

## i Background:

We believe the Bible is inspired — but in what way and with what results? How could finite, sinful men state in human language the undistorted truth of God? In answering that question people differ widely on the meaning and significance of inspiration. Before examining the Biblical data for yourself, consider some of the popular views.

**A.** The Bible is inspired and authoritative because God dictated it audibly to human secretaries. Since finite and sinful men were passive and did not actively contribute to it, the Bible is inerrant. (Some fundamentalists?)

**B.** The Bible is inspired and authoritative because God prompted writers, who saw his mighty miracles and believed, to describe them for those who would not see and yet believe. Although not inerrant, these testimonies are authoritative like first-hand reports of an amazing victory in battle. ("Biblical" theologians)

**C.** The Bible is inspired and authoritative because God providentially prepared the authors' personalities and writing styles, and supernaturally superintended the writing process so that their finite limitations and sinful biases did not corrupt any redemptive truth. Although there may be errors in matters not necessary for salvation, every statement comprising the primary redemptive plan is inerrant. (Some evangelicals)

## ii Problem:

Examine each of these statements, do they adequately express the Biblical doctrine of inspiration? Make a note of what seems incorrect.

## iii Procedure:

Study the Bible's view of itself, and answer the basic issues raised by the various views.

**A.** Do such passages as the following indicate divine dictation by an audible voice?

Exodus 4:12, Numbers 12: 8, Isaiah 6:8,9  
Exodus 19:3-6, I Samuel 3:4-14, 21, Revelation 14:13  
Leviticus 1:1, I Samuel 9:15, Numbers 7:89

Summarize

**B.** Were Bible writers ever eyewitness of events described?

I John 1:1-3, Luke 1:2  
II Peter 1:16, Acts 1:21-22

Summarize

**C.** Did God providentially prepare the prophets and apostles for their work as spokesmen for him?

Jeremiah 1:5, Psalm 139

Galatians 1:15

Summarize

**D.** Were finite human beings completely passive or active instruments of God's communication with men?

Mk. 12:36, Acts 28:25

Acts 1:16, I Corinthians 14:37

Summarize

**E.** Did any Scripture originate with human initiative alone?

II Peter 1:20-21, II Timothy 3:16

Summarize

**F.** Do the claims of the New Testament imply that only some of the Old Testament is true and authoritative, or that all that it teaches is true and authoritative? Which view of the Old Testament was held by Christ and the apostolic writers?

Matthew 5:17-18, John 10:35, II Timothy 3:16

Luke 24:25, Acts 10:35, Romans 15:4

Luke 24:26-27, Acts 3:21-24, I Corinthians 10:6,11

Luke 24:44, Acts 28:23-25

Summarize

iv. Conclusion:

Sum up in your own words the important elements of your view of biblical inspiration and authority, showing how it differs from other positions and why. Be prepared to share this with your Bible Study group.

v. Application:

The Bible is a best seller, it is great literature, it teaches a good moral standard, why is it important to you personally to believe that it is God's word as well

## STUDY 2- THE TRIUNE GOD

### i. Background:

The word "god" means many things to many people. Apart from professed atheist everyone acknowledges that there is something out there, someplace. A superior force, an absolute being, sometimes one, sometimes many. Before examining the Biblical data, consider some of the popular views.

**A.** Some hold there are many personal deities. They are called polytheist. They attempt to account for unity by regarding one God supreme over all the others, or by saying all are one in mind and purpose. (Animists, non- philosophical Hindus, Shintoist, Latter-day Saints.)

**B.** Others believe in but one personal Deity. They are called monotheists. They seek to explain multiplicity by the inexhaustible wisdom in the mind of God. (Jews, Muslims, Unitarians, Jehovah's Witnesses)

**C.** God is everything and everything is God. God is not personal but an essential part of all that exists. God is not separate or distinct from everything that exists or seems to exist: Pantheism, Buddhism, New Age Movement.

### ii. Problem:

Examine each of these statements, do they adequately express the Biblical revelation of God. Make special notes of what seems to be incorrect.

### iii. Procedure:

Study the Bible's revelation of God and answer the basic issues raised by the various views.

**A.** Is polytheism scriptural? Are there many Gods or one?

Deuteronomy 6:4-5, I Chronicles 17:20, I Corinthians 8:4-6

Deuteronomy 32:36-39, Isaiah 45:18, James. 2:19

I Samuel 7:23, Mark 12:32

Summarize

**B.** When the Bible asserts that God is "one" does it exclude the possibility of diversity in unity (of the Trinity) as monotheists insist? What kind of oneness is seen in the following passages - a single undiversified sameness or a plurality in unity?

Exodus 24:3, Ezekiel 37:18-19, Philippians 1:27

Exodus 26:11, Genesis 2:24, Philippians 2:2

Judges 20:1,8,11, Romans 12:5, Acts 4:32

Summarize

**C.** Is God separate and distinct from creation, or is he an essential part within creation?

II Chronicles 6:18, Genesis 1:1, Isaiah 66:1-2, Acts 17:23-36.

Summarize

**D.** Is Jesus Christ merely a person in fellowship with God, or in addition to that, is Jesus essentially God, sharing the divine characteristics?

Matthew 1:23, John 20:28, Hebrews 1:6,8  
John 1:1, Romans 9:5, I John 5:20

Summarize

**E.** Is the Holy Spirit merely a personal being in fellowship with God, or in addition to that, is the Spirit essentially God, sharing the divine attributes?

In the following passages is his name interchangeable with that of God?

Exodus 17:2-7, Hebrews 3:7-9, John 3:6 and I John 5:4  
Isaiah 6:8-10, and Acts 28:25-27, Acts 5:3 and Acts 5:4  
I Corinthians 3:16 and II Corinthians 6:19

List divine attributes shared by the Spirit:

Psalms 139:7-10, John 15:13, Romans 8:2  
Luke 1:35,37, Hebrews 9:14  
John 14:26, Romans 15:30

Summarize

**F.** Are there passages which associate Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in a way best explained by the doctrine of the Trinity?

Isaiah 48:16-17, II Corinthians 13:14, 1 Peter 1:2  
Isaiah 61:1, 1 Corinthians 12:5-7, Jude 20-21  
Matthew 28:19

Summarize

iv. Conclusion - How do you harmonize the Bible's teaching on the oneness of God and on the distinctness of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

v. Application

**A.** On any given day of your life what difference does it make whether you are a monotheist or a Trinitarian?

**B.** Why is Pantheism a popular view among modern men and women? What is its attraction?

## STUDY 3 - JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD

### i. Background:

Students of the Bible wonder how Christ could remain God (John 1:1) and become something else, a human baby. Some people believe that the invisible God could never change into an actual man. Some, though acknowledging the true humanity of Christ cannot believe he was truly the eternal second person of the Trinity. What does the Bible teach us and what are we to believe?

**A.** There were those who claimed Jesus' life in a physical body of parts and passions could not have been real. It must have been a mirage, a dream, a mere appearance, God would be contaminated by partaking of human flesh. (*Docetists*)

**B.** Jesus, the best of men, Socinus argued, was promoted or adopted to divine status at a certain point such as his baptism. Only after that could he in any sense be called divine. (*Socinians, Unitarians*)

**C.** Jesus was more than a man, he was the first and highest created angel. Leaving that position behind he began his life as a mere man, and after his death was exalted to a higher creature-ly status than before. Never is he Jehovah God, only God's highest representative. (*Arians, Jehovah's Witnesses*)

**D.** Jesus was fully human, including a sinful nature. Even though Jesus sinned, he is the finest symbol of divine love ever revealed to man. (*Reinhold Niebuhr*)

### ii. Problem:

Do any of these beliefs represent the various aspects of scriptural teaching about Christ? If not, where do they fall short? What are they missing?

### iii Procedure:

Review the following statements and answer the questions from your study of the scripture suggested.

**A.** Did Jesus possess a real, physical body subject to birth, growth, hunger, thirst, fatigue and death?

Luke 1:30,31, John 19:28, Luke 23:46,52-55

Luke 2:7, II John 4-6, Hebrews 2:14

Luke 2:52, Mark 4:38-39 Matthew 21:18

Summarize

**B.** Did Jesus become divine at his baptism or was he the Son of God from birth?

Matthew 1:23, Luke 1:35, Luke 2:11

Summarize

**C.** Did Jesus ever sin?

John 8:46, I Peter 2:22, I John 3:5

II Corinthians 5:21, I Peter 3:18

Summarize

**D.** Did Jesus have a sinful nature?

Luke 1:35, Hebrews 7:26, I Peter 1:19

John 10:11, Hebrews 9:14, John 17:16

Summarize

**E.** Was Jesus the highest of the angels or higher than the angels?

Hebrews 1:4-5, Hebrews 1:8-13

Summarize

**F.** Was Jesus truly and fully God?

Matthew 1:23, Romans 9:5, I John 5:20

John 1:1, Hebrews 1:6, John 20:28

Summarize

iv. Conclusion:

Explain in your own words how God became man, how does your view differ from the views stated in the study.

v. Application

**A.** Why does it matter to you personally whether Jesus Christ was God or just a good man?

**B.** Explain why there is so much opposition to the belief that Jesus is God.

# STUDY 4 - JESUS: HIS SERVICE OF SACRIFICE

## i. Background

Because man's problem is a moral and spiritual "disease" his fundamental need lies in a moral and spiritual cure. The hope of man is not in his limited and inadequate quest for God, but in God's redemptive provision for man. But people picture God's saving activity very differently. Different diagnoses of the disease determine the extent of the treatment needed.

**A.** The only change necessary is in man's own repentance and self-corrected conduct. Jesus' death simply provides an example of unselfish martyrdom. If men would repent and follow his example, their problems would be solved. (*Socinus and Unitarians*)

**B.** Jesus' death is not merely the noble example of a man but a moving expression of divine grace. While a mere human example is insufficient, the moral influence exerted convinces sinners of God's love and dissipates their enmity to God. (*Bushnell, Schleiermacher, many liberals*)

**C.** It is through the atonement of Christ that all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel. The first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: Faith on the Lord Jesus Christ; repentance; baptism by immersion and laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Spirit. (*Latter Day Saints*)

## ii. Problem:

Is the Bible's teaching about the value and need for the sacrifice of Christ explained in any of these statements? What is missing?

## iii. Procedure:

**A.** In what ways was Jesus' death an example?  
Ephesians 5:2, Hebrews 12:1-3, I Peter 4:1-2  
Philippians 2:3-8 I Peter 2:21-23

Summarize



**B. Did Jesus' death exercise an influence for good upon others?**

Luke 23:42, 47 Ephesians 5:2

II Corinthians 5:14

Summarize

**C. Was the sacrifice of Christ sufficient in and of itself to provide personal salvation for repentant sinners, is there any evidence that something else is required.**

Matthew 28:18-20, Romans 1:16-17, Ephesians 2:8-9

John 5:24, II Corinthians 5:21, Titus 3:4-6

Acts 10:42-44, Ephesians 1:13-14, I John 5:13

Summarize

iii. Conclusion:

Prepare a statement which correctly expresses the teaching of the Bible on the purpose and result of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

iv. Application:

Why is it important for us personally to know that our salvation is based solely on the finished work of Jesus Christ? Be prepared to discuss the problems that arise if that were not so.

# STUDY V - JESUS: HIS PRIESTLY SERVICE

## i. Background

Curiosity, if nothing else, forces people to ask questions like; what happened to Jesus after He died, or, where is He now? Again there are several answers. Some accept only that Jesus is alive spiritually in his followers, others believe that He is in heaven like other good people, and still others that He is in heaven busy completing the work of atonement for those who achieve worthiness.

Is, "*what is Jesus doing now*" a question that can be answered with certainty?

**A.** Jesus really died on the cross and was buried safely in Joseph's tomb. What appeared to his disciples was his materialized spirit assuring them of his continuing life and imparting such instructions as were needed to direct in spreading his doctrines. (*Theodor Kein, Spiritual Resurrection*)

**B.** Having given up his flesh for the life of the world, Christ could never take it again and become a man once more. For that basic reason his return could never be in the human body that he sacrificed once for all. (*Jehovah Witnesses*)

**C.** Christ who lived in blameless obedience to his own eternal laws of righteousness offered up a complete, perfect and all sufficient sacrifice for the sins of all men. This was not the atonement for it was not made on the cross. Attended by a cloud of heavenly angels, our great high priest entered the Holy of Holies to there make an atonement for all who are shown to be entitled to his benefits. The completion of the atonement comes when Christ emerges from the Holy of Holies to lay the sins of those who have been found to be true believers upon Azazel (Satan) who carries away the sin of the world into the wilderness. (*Seven Day Adventism*)

## ii. Problem:

What really happened after Jesus Christ died on the cross? Was his resurrection physical or spiritual? How does the Biblical record correlate with these "*statements of faith*?"

## iii. Procedure:

**A.** Did Jesus really die on the cross? Or is it true that he only swooned or fainted?

Matthew 16:21-22, Luke 23:44-46

Matthew 17:11-33, Luke 23:50-54

Summarize

**B.** Was the resurrection a physical coming back to life? Or did just the spirit of Jesus live on beyond the grave?

Luke 24:30-35, John 20:24-28

Luke 24:36-43, I Corinthians 15:3-7

Summarize

**C.** Does belief in a physical substitutionary death for Jesus Christ make a physical resurrection impossible?

John 10:17, Acts 2:32-33, Ephesians 1:19-23  
Acts 2:22-25, I Corinthians 15:20-22

Summarize

**D.** Will Jesus come again? Or has he really gone away?

John 14:1-3, John 16:17-22, Acts 1:9-11

Summarize

**E.** Did the sacrifice of Christ on the cross provide for a complete atonement of sin? Or was some heavenly appearance and offering following the pattern of the Jewish Day of Atonement required?

Hebrews 1:1-3, Hebrews 9:28, I Peter 2:24  
Hebrews 9:12-14, Hebrews 10:10-12

Summarize

**F.** Is Jesus a great high priest? Is making a final atonement the purpose of his present ministry?

Romans 8:34, Hebrews 4:14-16, I John 2:1-2  
Hebrews 2:17-18, Hebrews 7:25

Summarize

iv. Conclusion: In your own words describe the purpose of Christ's priestly ministry as presented in the Bible.

v. Application:

**A.** In a practical sense why is it important that we have Jesus as High Priest representing us before the Father?

**B.** What, specifically, does his presence with the Father allow him to do for believers living for him in the world?

# STUDY 6- THE HOLY SPIRIT AT WORK

## i. Background

The Holy Spirit is given a prominent place in the New Testament, but what He does and how He works is the subject of a great deal of controversy. Some for all practical purposes ignore the Holy Spirit altogether while others make everything contingent on His initiative and energy. What is His proper place in personal salvation and Christian growth?

**A.** Some think salvation is all of man. Created in the divine image, men have not been debilitated by sin. What God commands, man is able to perform. If the Holy Spirit in any way is said to help, it is indirectly through the conscience. (*Pelagians, Unitarians, Modernists*)

**B.** Others, eliminating human responsibility, have held that salvation is all of God. What God commands man cannot perform. Sinners, totally depraved cannot understand the gospel if they would, and they would not believe if they could "see" it. Whom he pleases the Holy Spirit saves apart from any human agency. If God wants to save others he will do so apart from any human missionary endeavor. (*Fatalists, Hyper-Calvinists*)

**C.** Another group maintains that in salvation a man takes the initiative and then the Holy Spirit begins to help. In spite of the fall, through grace given to all men a sinner can understand and receive the gospel persuasively presented by Christian servants. As a result of a sinner's repentant-faith (conversion), the Holy Spirit regenerates him and enables him to live the Christian life. (*SemiPelagians, Arminians*)

**D.** Some identify the Christian life with legalistic human striving. Apart from any assistance of the Holy Spirit a person must suppress his evil desires and try to obey God's law. Motivated not by love but necessity, a person is sanctified to the extent that he has kept the commandments. (*Legalists and moralists in many groups*)

**E.** Another position maintains that the Christian may achieve a state of perfection in this life. Subsequent to conversion a believer receives from the Holy Spirit a new crisis experience. Instantaneously the old nature is eradicated and perfect freedom from sin is enjoyed. The sanctified enjoy perfect love and complete freedom from fear. They do not commit any known sin. (*Westley, Holiness and some Victorious Life advocates.*)

## ii. Problem:

The difficulty appears to be one of emphasis. What does the Bible teach is the proper place of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit and ourselves in regeneration and Christian growth?

iii. Procedure:

Answer questions arising out of these differences of opinion from your own examination of scriptural data.

**A.** Is salvation possible for the best of sinful men apart from the Spirit's gift of God's grace?

Romans 3:10,20,23, Galatians 3:21-22, Titus 3:5-7

Romans 10:1-4, Ephesians 2:8-9, Galatians 2:15-16

Summarize

**B.** Does God save people apart from human witnesses to the gospel? Or, while the Holy Spirit alone can save a man, has the Holy Spirit chosen never to save a man without some human activity?

Acts 1:8, I Corinthians 3:9, II Corinthians 3:1-8

Romans 10:13-15, I Corinthians 15:3-5

Summarize

**C.** Is regeneration, the imparting of a new spiritual life and nature, the work of the Holy Spirit alone?

John 1:12-13, Colossians 2:13, James 1:18

John 3:3-8, Titus 3:5-6, Ephesians 2:1-5

Summarize

**D.** Apart from, the help of the Holy Spirit, is the best human endeavor to keep God's commandments sufficient to fulfill the biblical standards of sanctification in the experience of a believer? (Is this because of imperfection in God's law or weakness in man's sinful nature?)

Romans 7:7, 12, 14, Galatians 2:21- 3:3

Romans 7:5, 13, 18, Galatians 3:21

Summarize

**E.** Is perfection in this life possible?

Philippians 3:12-14, I John 1:7-10, I John 1:5-6

Summarize

**F.** If perfection is impossible, does that give Christians license to persist in sin? Does the liberty of the Spirit, or of love, result in lawlessness?

John 14:23-24, Romans 6:12-18, I John 3:9-10 John 15:14  
Romans 6:22, Romans 6:1-4, Romans 8:2-4

Summarize

**G.** In the face of temptation, is the Spirit-filled Christian able not to yield (sin)?

I Corinthians 10:13, II Corinthians 4:7, 16, I John 5:3-6  
II Corinthians 2:14-16, Philippians 2: 12-13, II Corinthians 3:5

Summarize

iv. Conclusion:

In your own words explain the relation between the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the responsible action of the individual who begins and perseveres in the Christian life.

v. Application:

**A.** If a person is spiritually and finally lost who is ultimately to blame?

**B.** When one fails to achieve Christian growth over time, what is the problem? Are some Christians limited by background or personality from achieving full maturity?

# STUDY 7- MANKIND BEFORE GOD

## i. Background:

As some look upon life the most important issues are the technological, the intellectual, the sensual, or the political. But Christians know that the most crucial of all are moral and spiritual. Out of the heart are the issues of life. Disastrously, however, man at heart and center is not right. Although taboo for years, the word sin is coming back into the vocabulary of thinkers in many fields.

The English philosopher C. E. M. Joad finally came to see that 'evil' is not merely a by-product of unfavorable circumstances; it is too widespread and too deep-seated to admit of any such explanation; so widespread, so deep-seated that one can only conclude that what the religions have always taught is true, that evil is endemic in the heart of man. But not all have agreed with this analysis of man. What views have been held?

**A.** Human nature is originally good. Any evil in it results from the changes made upon it by external things. (*Mencius, B.C. 372-289*)

**B.** Human nature is neither good nor bad; it is morally neutral, and can be influenced in either direction. (*Naturalists*)

**C.** Any evil in human nature remains from a prior animal state which is being progressively overcome by the inevitable progress of evolution. In spite of any temporary setbacks, we have every reason to be optimistic about man's ability to build a utopian society. (*Modernists*)

**D.** Modernists erred because they did not take the account of man's fall into sin seriously. Fundamentalists err in taking the story of the garden of Eden literally. The truth in the Genesis myth is that every man and woman inevitably falls into sin—the sin of claiming more for himself, his ideas and his interests than their objective importance would warrant. (*Neo-orthodox theologians*)

ii. Problem: Do any of the views of man's inherent moral and spiritual condition agree with the teachings of the Bible? Do they contain any truth at all?

iii. Procedure: Answer questions basic to these various doctrines of man and sin from your own study of relevant Scripture.

**A.** Is sin merely the result of an evil environment, or is it more fundamentally a condition of the heart or core of man's being?

Proverbs 4:23, Mark 7:14-23, Mark. 12:33-37

Summarize

**B. Is the human heart:**

- (1) morally neutral,
  - (2) inclined predominantly to love God and neighbor or
  - (3) inclined predominantly to idolatry and selfishness (i.e. in a state of original sin)?
- Genesis 6:5, Jeremiah 17:9, Ephesians 2:3,  
Psalm 51:5, Romans 7:18, Isaiah 64:6

Summarize

**C. How does man's sinful heart reveal itself in life?**

- I Samuel 12:23, John 16:9, I John.3:4  
Proverbs 14:21, Romans 1:21-32  
Proverbs 24:9, Galatians 5:19-21

Summarize

**D. Does sin always appear wicked to human observation? According to the following passages, what acts may be sinful?**

- Proverbs 21:4c, Matthew 23:23, Romans 1:25  
Matthew 10:37, Matthew 23:29, James. 4:17  
Matthew 23:15, Luke 18:9-14

Summarize

**E. Are there any responsible human beings who are not sinners?**

- I Kings 8:46, Romans 3:10-20 & 23,  
Psalm 143:2, I John 1:8

Summarize

iv. Conclusion: Summarize in your own words the major elements in the biblical view of sin as you see it.

v. Application:

A. If mankind's great moral disease is not external, but internal, how should the external symptoms in our environment and culture be diagnosed and treated?

B. Suggest some ways Christians delude themselves about the sinfulness of sin. What are we looking to gain by minimizing sin?



# STUDY 8 - THE CHURCH OF GOD

## i. Background:

It is generally agreed that the Church is given a prominent place in the New Testament but apart from that, there is little agreement. Such questions as: when the church began; its authority; operating principles and services; are all subject to wide disagreement. What is the truth?

**A.** Some teach that God entered into a covenant of works with Adam, who failed, whereupon God entered into a covenant of grace, promising eternal life to those who believe. This belief affirms there is one people of God called the True Israel, the church. No distinction is made between God's Old Testament people and His New Testament people. Therefore the laws and ordinances which were mandatory in the past also apply to the church today. (*Covenant Theology*)

**B.** Membership in the Church is believed by some to be dependent on ordinances such as baptism and holy communion. These ordinances and others, in some cases, are accepted as being a means of grace. (*Several institutional denominations*)

**C.** At least three types of church government are practiced in denominational groups, each accepted as being Biblically ordained:

1. The church is governed by a hierarchy of pastors under one visible head on earth. The church as the local level is under this central authority.

2. The church is governed by sessions, presbyteries and synods representing the members. The church at the local level is usually under this central authority.

3. The church is governed by the votes of the membership itself. No higher authority is recognized. The local churches are autonomous.

ii. Problem: Is there guidance in the New Testament that would direct the governing and daily operation of the Christian church?

## iii. Procedure:

**A.** Is Israel and the Church considered in the Bible to be one and the same thing?

Matthew 16:17-18, I Corinthians 10:32, Colossians 1:25-27

Acts 1:4-5 & 8, Ephesians 3:1-12

Acts 11:15-17, Colossians 1:18

**B.** Is there evidence for the contention that New Testament Christians are responsible to keep Old Testament laws and ordinances?

John 4:21-24, I Corinthians 16:1-2, Ephesians 2:11-22, Acts 15:1-11,

Galatians 3:23-25, Colossians 2:13-17, Acts 20:7, Galatians 5:2-6

Summarize

**C.** Is God finished with his special relationship with Israel or do they have some future outside the church?

Genesis 13:14-16, Isaiah 62:1-5, 11& 12, Romans 9:1-5  
I Samuel 7:11-16, Jeremiah 31:31-34, Romans 11:25-31  
Summarize

**D.** Is membership in the church obtained by ordinances or by faith?

Romans 1:7-8, II Corinthians 5:17-18, Colossians 1:21-22  
I Corinthians 12:12-13, Ephesians 1:3-14, Colossians 2:10-12  
I Corinthians 15:1-2, Ephesians 2:1-5

Summarize

**E.** Is the church universal or does the New Testament only recognize the church locally?

Acts 8:1, Ephesians 1:22-23, Colossians 1:18-20, Acts 11:22-24,  
Ephesians 3:20-21, I Timothy 3:14-15, Romans 16:5, Ephesians 4:4-6  
Summarize

**F.** Is the governing of churches addressed in the New Testament? Who is in charge? Is there some central authority linking all churches?

Acts 14:23, Colossians 1:18, Hebrews 13:7, 1, 24 Acts 20:17, 28-31,  
I Timothy 3:1-13, I Peter 5:1-4, II Corinthians 8:22-24, I Timothy 5:7  
Ephesians 1:22-23, Titus 1:5-9

Summarize

iv. Conclusion: As a result of your study how would you define the church recognizing what is correct or incorrect in the views presented?

**A.** Please list for sharing, the three most important things to you about the church.

**B.** Are there certain unchangeable principles for the church, what are they? Are there some things that could or even maybe should be changed?

# STUDY 9 - THE CHURCH - ITS PURPOSE

## i. Background:

The world stands on the brink of disaster. Its need for the church is more evident than in more optimistic times. Christians know the Lord has called them out from the world to be separated to himself. But the Lord has also commissioned them to be ambassadors for himself to the world. Many are confused about how this dual role is to be performed. Is the responsibility primarily to edify each other through fellowship together, is it to Christianize the world, or is our ambassadorship fulfilled through evangelism?

**A.** Some say that the church is sent into the world to transform the institutions and structures of society. The church cannot be satisfied with an otherworldly, individualism or the acceptance of the status quo as providentially ordained. In different ways, in different situations the church must support whatever political system that best achieves its social action goals. (*Liberalism*)

**B.** The church's real purpose is to edify its membership. This is accomplished by worship, teaching, encouraging gift development and the caring for the spiritual and practical needs of one another. The church has a responsibility to know and obey the principles of the Bible in regard to its inward operation. (*Some Orthodox Christians*)

**C.** The church exists in the world to evangelize and win the world for Christ. Therefore its efforts and resources must be directed toward that end. The strategies and programs developed must involve an understanding of evangelism, training, and a clear understanding of what the gospel message is. Care must be taken to make the church "*visitor friendly*" by the elimination of anything that might make non-Christians uncomfortable. (*Some Orthodox Christians*)

ii. Problem: Which of the views concerning the church's purpose is most faithful to Scripture?

## iii. Procedure:

**A.** What are the church's responsibilities and rights in its relations with the governments of the world?

Matthew 12:3-17, Acts 22:22-29, I Peter 2:13-17

Acts 16:35-40, Romans 13:1-7

Acts 17:32-41, I Corinthians 2:8

Summarize

**B.** Is the church responsible to change and correct social wrongs in the world?

John 16:33

I Corinthians 1:20-21, I Corinthians 7:20-24, I Corinthians 7:31

Galatians 6:10, Colossians 2:8, 20 & 21, I Timothy 6:1

II Timothy 3:1-5, James 1:27, I Peter 2:11-12, 18

Summarize

**C.** Is the Christian to be distinct from the world morally and spiritually?

II Corinthians 6: 14-18, Colossians 3:1-10

James 1:27, James 4:4, I John 2:15-17

Summarize

**D.** Is the church's purpose to edify its membership?

Acts 2:41-47, Acts 4:32-35, Romans 12:5-10

Romans 14:19, Romans 15:5-7, I Corinthians 1:23-26

Ephesians 4:10-16, Philippians 2:1-4, Colossians 4:2

I Timothy 4:13-14, II Timothy 4:1-2, Hebrews 10:24-25

Summarize

**E.** Is the church's purpose to evangelize the world?

Matthew 28:18-20, Romans 15:14 & 15, Acts 8:4,

I Corinthians 15:1-4, Romans 1:14 & 15, II Corinthians 4:1-6

II Corinthians 5:20-21, I Peter 3:13-16

Summarize

**F.** Is the purpose of the church in D. and B. mutually exclusive or is the church to both edify and evangelize?

Matthew 28:18-20, John 13:34 & 35, I Corinthians 10:31-33

Philippians 1:25-30, Colossians 4:5 & 6, Romans 1:7

Romans 13:11-14, 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10, I John 3:16-20

Summarize

iv. Conclusion:

Sum up in your own words the purpose of the church and indicate who is responsible for fulfilling it.

v. Application:

**A.** In your opinion what is being done well in your fellowship and what needs improvement?

**B.** Try and think of some suggestions to improve our ministry and service.